

Faith, Fiction, and Fame:
Sowing Seeds in Danny and Anne of Green Gables

Kathleen Margaret Patchell

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Department of English
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Abstract

In 1908, two Canadian women published first novels that became instant best-sellers. Nellie McClung's *Sowing Seeds in Danny* initially outsold Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, but by 1965 McClung's book had largely disappeared from Canadian consciousness. The popularity of *Anne*, on the other hand, has continued to the present, and *Anne* has received far more academic and critical attention, especially since 1985. It is only recently that *Anne of Green Gables* has been criticized for its ideology in the same manner as *Sowing Seeds in Danny*.

The initial question that inspired this dissertation was why *Sowing Seeds in Danny* disappeared from public and critical awareness while *Anne of Green Gables* continued to sell well to the present day and to garner critical and popular attention into the twenty-first century. In light of the fact that both books have in recent years come under condemnation and stand charged with maternal feminism, imperial motherhood, eugenics, and racism, one must ask further why this has now happened to both *Danny* and *Anne*. What has changed?

The hypothesis of the dissertation is that *Danny*'s relatively speedy disappearance was partly due to a shift in Canadians' religious worldview over the twentieth century as church attendance and biblical literacy gradually declined. McClung's rhetorical strategies look back to the dominant Protestantism of the nineteenth century, in contrast to Montgomery's, which look forward to the twentieth-century's waning of religious faith. Although there is enough Christianity in Montgomery's novel to have made it acceptable to her largely Christian reading public at the beginning of the century, its presentation is subtle enough that it does not disturb or baffle a twenty-first-century reader in the way McClung's does. McClung's novel is so forthright in its presentation of Christianity, with its use of

nineteenth-century tropes and conventions and with its moralising didacticism, that the delightful aspects of the novel were soon lost to an increasingly secular reading public. Likewise, the recent critical challenges to both novels spring from a worldview at odds with the predominantly Christian worldview of 1908.

The goal of the dissertation has been to read *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables* within the religious contexts of a 1908 reader in order to avoid an unquestioning twenty-first-century censure of these novels, and to ascertain the reasons for their divergent popularity and recent critical condemnation.

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Finally, I would like to thank my mother Kathleen Wesson Parker for ensuring that her children had the academic opportunities denied to her and for always pushing me to achieve my personal best. Her delight in my achievements has been a reward in itself.

I gratefully dedicate this dissertation to

Dr. Janice Fiamengo

Dr. John Patchell

Mrs. Kathleen Wesson Parker

Abbreviations

<i>AP</i>	<i>Alpine Path</i>
<i>BCP</i>	<i>Book of Common Prayer</i>
<i>CCL</i>	<i>Canadian Children's Literature</i>
<i>GGL</i>	<i>Green Gables Letters</i>
HSLDAC	Home School Legal Defence Association of Canada
MBPH	Methodist Book and Publishing House
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version</i> (Bible)
<i>NKJ</i>	<i>New King James</i> (Bible)
<i>NLT</i>	<i>New Living Translation</i> (Bible)
PABC	Public Archives of British Columbia
<i>SJ</i>	<i>Selected Journals</i> (of L.M. Montgomery)

Editions of Primary Texts Cited in the Dissertation

McClung, Nellie. *In Times Like These*. 1915. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1972.

———. *Nellie McClung: The Complete Autobiography: Clearing in the West and the Stream Runs Fast*. 1935, 1945. Ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Michelle Lynn Rosa. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2003.

———. *Sowing Seeds in Danny*. Toronto: Briggs, 1908.

Montgomery, L.M. *Anne of Green Gables*. Ed. Mary Henley Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston. 1908. New York: Norton, 2007.

Preface

This critical case study of *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables* began as the first chapter of a much larger project, “Representations of Protestant Christianity in Twentieth-Century Canadian Novels,” in which I planned to look at the relationship between the Canadian novel and the changing religious climate in English-Canada over the last century. I speculated that as the condition of Protestant faith moved from its dominant position at the beginning of the century, when 98% of the population claimed adherence to a Christian denomination, to its reduced status at the end of the century, when fewer than 20% regularly attended church, novels written by authors who were raised in the Protestant faith reflected and complicated this cultural shift. I intended to look at two novels in each quarter of the century for evidence of the changes in the presentation of social, private, and institutional Protestantism, and to consider correlations between the worldviews presented in these fictional texts, their reception history, their critical history, and the condition of religious faith at different periods of the century. Because no study had related Canadian fiction to a changing religious environment over time, I anticipated that my dissertation would fill a significant gap in literary studies.

Halfway through the project, I found myself increasingly dissatisfied with having to simplify ideas and make generalizations in order not to exceed fifty pages per chapter. My fascination with the question of the disappearance of *Sowing Seeds in Danny* in contrast to the popularity of *Anne of Green Gables* had led to several conference papers on various aspects of the themes only hinted at in my first chapter. I also realized that in looking at the reception history of *Danny* and *Anne*, I could discuss many of the arguments concerning worldview shift that I intended to address in the overall project. I therefore asked for and

received permission to limit my project to the two novels so that I could examine each in greater depth.

The study of religion and literature has achieved the status of a sub-genre of literary studies in the United States and Great Britain; in Canada, however, this area has been largely ignored. In 1965 in *The Literary History of Canada*, Northrop Frye claimed that “religion has been a major – perhaps the major – cultural force in Canada, at least down to the last generation or two” (344). Nevertheless, in the last thirty years, the religious aspect of writing has been eclipsed by studies in gender, class, race, and empire. Canadian sociologist Robert Choquette theorizes that the dearth of studies of religion and literature is related to the dominance of secular humanism in Canada’s “public square” during the last quarter of the century. I propose to redress this dearth with an interdisciplinary study that combines discourse analysis and theological exegesis with social history’s sensitivity to environment and context. I believe that we cannot comprehend Canadian history and culture without knowledge of Canada’s religious foundations, and that by examining fictional literature from the perspective of a particular religious worldview, I will be adding a necessary dimension to our understanding of Canada in the twentieth century.

Disclosure of My Worldview Lens

The worldview through which I operate is evangelical Protestantism, a faith tradition rooted in the core Protestant values common to all Protestant denominations.¹ The Statement of

¹ John Stackhouse defines *Protestant evangelicalism* as “a group of movements in church history with both shared concerns and actual links” that look back to the Protestant Reformation “for its emphasis upon the unique authority of Scripture and salvation through faith alone in Christ. It adds to these convictions concern for warm piety in the context of a disciplined life and for the evangelism of all people” (*Canadian* 7).

Faith of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (see Appendix One) is a clear encapsulation of these values. Therefore when I examine the autobiographical and the fictional writing of McClung and Montgomery, I will be using that standard as a benchmark for defining Christian orthodoxy. I hope to approach my subject with academic curiosity and humility, knowing that I can reveal only one part of the truth in my study, because, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13.12, “Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror” (*NLT*). My goal is to avoid looking at these works solely from a present-day standpoint, but instead to view them simultaneously from the vista of the era in which they were written. Judgments will be made with caution and a spirit of generosity because it is arrogant to assume that change plus the passage of time equals progress, an assumption C.S. Lewis calls “chronological snobbery.”² This notion is based on the view of man as perfectible, a doctrine, advanced by Rousseau and others, that maintains not only that people are capable of achieving perfection on earth through natural means, without the grace of God, but also that we are currently in the process of successfully achieving perfection. I believe a critic needs to consider humbly the possibility that God exists,³ that man is born with a sinful nature, and that what was considered to be truth in the past needs to be examined carefully, not dismissed as conservative, simplistic, or irrelevant. I will also try to reveal the complexity of each author and not to apply labels that imply a homogeneity between them that is not supported by their words. I am always looking for balance between doctrine and practice, whether in life or in

² Art Lindsley writes,

So, far from rejecting ancient philosophies, we need the help of past ages in order to see our own times more clearly. Earlier cultures have not had the same assumptions as we have, and as we read books written in earlier times, we are given a helpful vantage point from which to see our present-day views more clearly. Rather than having “chronological snobbery,” Lewis advocated letting the “breezes of the centuries” blow through our minds.

³ See, for example, Canadian author David Adams Richards’s *God Is.: My Search for Faith in a Secular World*.

fiction, because emphasizing one over the other can lead to hypocrisy on the one hand or to apostasy on the other.⁴

I contend that my competence to undertake this study has been enriched by exposure to Christian teachings from a number of diverse sources. As well, having been born in the middle of the twentieth century, I have been equipped to understand the generation of my grandparents, who were all homesteaders on the prairies at the end of the nineteenth century and were contemporaries of Nellie McClung and L.M. Montgomery.⁵ Their view of the world, one that I was privileged to learn about as a child, had much in common with that of McClung and Montgomery, and stands in contrast to our world of the twenty-first century.

Influential Authors

I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the writing of George Marsden, especially *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (1997). Marsden advocates the opening of the academic mainstream to scholarship that “relates one’s belief in God to what else one thinks about” because religious beliefs “typically involve affirmations about reality and values that are far more specific and far-ranging than beliefs inherent to gender, race, ethnicity, or class” (4, 5). Marsden describes how the university culture has increasingly considered

⁴ Doctrine, or statements of belief, can be seen as hypocritical if one’s actions are not consistent with those beliefs; see, for example, Mrs. Bentley in Sinclair Ross’s *As For Me and My House*. Actions independent of faith may lead to apostasy, or abandonment of one’s faith; see, for example, John Keble’s *Assize Sermon on National Apostasy* (1833) in which he criticizes the prevalent liberal theology (Erastian and latitudinarian tendencies) of the Anglican Church.

⁵ My maternal grandfather, John Henry Wesson, was president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool from 1937 to 1960, was first president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture from 1936-1940, and was made a Commander of the British Empire in 1946 in recognition of his contribution “in helping to mobilize the full resources of agriculture in the support of Canada’s war effort” (<http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/wesson_john_henry_1887-1965.html>). My paternal grandfather, Reginald John Marsden Parker, was a Saskatchewan MLA from 1929 to 1944 and was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan in 1945, a position he held until his death in 1948.

religious perspectives “unscientific and unprofessional” and “trains scholars to keep quiet about their faith as the price of full acceptance in that community” (6, 7). He argues that faith-informed scholarship “can be of great relevance to contemporary scholarship of the highest standards,” whereas most of the distinguished American colleges and universities that were founded by Protestant churches no longer promote Christian scholarship and can therefore not be considered truly pluralistic (9, 11).

Barbara Pell’s *Faith and Fiction: A Theological Critique of the Narrative Strategies of Hugh MacLennan and Morley Callaghan* is another book that has influenced my scholarly journey. In her Theoretical Introduction, Pell identifies existentialism as the dominant philosophy of the twentieth century and argues that it has led to “existential alienation, despair, and angst, or anxiety, in a world of ultimate meaninglessness” (1). I have found her analysis of the intersection between faith and fiction inspirational.

Finally, for introducing me to the idea of worldview, I am grateful to have read *How Now Shall We Live?* by Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey. Colson and Pearcey demonstrate how our ideas about the world shape the way we think and live, and the importance of understanding worldview when analyzing the literature of the past.

Outline of the dissertation

- In Chapter One, I introduce my thesis, look at the historical, philosophical, and religious backdrop of the late nineteenth century, and then conduct a comparative overview of the two authors.
- In Chapter Two, I consider the religious upbringing of the two authors and examine their religious beliefs as revealed in their life writing. I also compare their reactions

to revivalist evangelical preaching to gain insight into their spiritual mind-set when they were writing their first novels.

- In Chapter Three, I analyse *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and look at the rhetorical strategies that McClung employs to communicate her worldview by means of the tropes and conventions of Sunday-School and religious fiction, of temperance melodramas, and of sentimental romantic novels.
- In Chapter Four, I study *Anne of Green Gables* and demonstrate how Montgomery's unobtrusive depiction of Christianity is mixed with a nineteenth-century Romantic view of the child and a twentieth-century shift of perspective on the role of the child in Canadian society.
- In Chapter Five, I look at the reception and critical histories of the novels in the light of the worldview shift that occurred in the twentieth century in Canada, concluding with an examination of an influential wave of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first-century critics who condemn both novels. I demonstrate how worldview theory explains these critics' negative assessment of the novels, arguing that what these critics see as the novelists' political aims are part of a fundamental value system that the critics oppose and reject.
- Chapter Six: Conclusion

Chapter One

Introduction, Historical Background, and General Comparison

“People must know the past to understand the present and to face the future.”
Nellie McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast*

In 1908, the first novels of two young Canadian women were published to immediate acclaim, and by 1909 both authors appeared on the best-seller list of the Canadian *Bookseller and Stationer*: Nellie McClung’s *Sowing Seeds in Danny* was in the number four position, while Lucy Maud Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* was number six and *Anne of Avonlea* number eight (Vipond 115).¹ In spite of the Modernist critics who denigrated both novels as sentimental escapism for children, *Anne of Green Gables* continued to sell well throughout the century, seemingly passed on from one generation to the next, whereas *Sowing Seeds in Danny* gradually disappeared from the Canadian scene until its last publication in 1965.²

In 1985, Sullivan Entertainment’s two-part four-hour miniseries adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables* garnered a viewing audience of 5.6 million when it premiered in Canada, making it the highest-rated dramatic programme in the history of the CBC and causing a surge in popular interest in the novel (Lefebvre “L.M.” 54). In the same year, the publication of the first of Montgomery’s journals led to a plethora of critical works that moved from dismissing Montgomery as a sentimental romance writer of regional idylls to discussing her as a subversive writer satirising the institutions and people of Avonlea while writing from a

¹ Beginning in 1901, the *Bookseller and Stationer*, a trade journal owned by Colonel J.B. Maclean, printed a “Canadian summary” of the six best sellers in Canada each month. Mary Vipond tallied them in 1979 to compile annual lists.

² *Sowing Seeds in Danny* has reappeared in several hard-copy versions in the twenty-first century after it was digitized as part of Project Gutenberg.

conflicted perspective. As well, *Anne of Green Gables* began to appear on university course lists outside of those devoted to children's literature, an indication of scholarly acceptance. *Anne* continues to be read worldwide in many translations; the fascination of the Japanese with *Anne* has been a particularly interesting phenomenon.³ In 1937, Prince Edward Island National Park was established and included Green Gables as an historic site;⁴ the Anne-centered tourist industry has led to the production of Anne-related books, musicals, films, and merchandise. Anne is now considered to be a Canadian icon; Cynthia Sugars and Laura Moss write of a "cult of Anne" that includes thousands of *Anne* fan clubs and websites ("L.M." 538). No similar tourism has developed around the Souris Valley in Manitoba, the setting for *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, nor has Pearl Watson, its heroine, become a household name. Although McClung is memorialized as one of the Famous Five in a statue on Parliament Hill,⁵ most Canadians are unaware that she was a best-selling author of fiction before she became a social activist.

³ The first translation of the novel into Japanese by Hanako Muraoka was published in 1952 and has remained in print ever since (Sugars and Moss 538).

⁴ The Government of Canada's National Parks website provides the following information about Green Gables:

In 1937, the house and surrounding farmland were preserved within Prince Edward Island National Park. In 1943, Montgomery was recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada as being a person of national historic significance, and in 1948 a plaque and monument were erected at Green Gables. The house and grounds are restored to portray the period setting described in the novel. Nearby walking trails with interpretive signs highlight some of Montgomery's favourite woodland haunts. Recent additions to Green Gables include a Visitor Centre, exhibits about farming and the history of Cavendish, theatres showing short presentations about Green Gables and L.M. Montgomery, a picnic-style café and gift shop. (<http://www.pc.gc.ca/voyage-travel/pv-vp/itm3-/page8_e.asp>)

⁵ In 1929, Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, and Nellie McClung won the "Persons" Case, a ruling that legally declared women as persons under the British North America Act and made them eligible for appointment to the Canadian Senate. A group sculpture on Parliament Hill created by Edmonton artist Barbara Paterson was unveiled on October 18, 2000.

The question that motivated this dissertation was why *Sowing Seeds in Danny* disappeared from public and critical awareness while *Anne of Green Gables* continues to sell well to the present day and now generates critical articles and academic books. Related to this question is a second one: Why, after having such a divergent reception and critical history, did both books come under condemnation in the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries, charged with maternal feminism, imperial motherhood, eugenic feminism, and racism? I initially considered several hypotheses.

One possibility was to argue that the Canadian readership had grown in sophistication and that readers in 1908 who caused *Danny* to outsell *Anne* were naïve readers, whereas readers later in the century were better educated and therefore preferred *Anne*. I rejected this explanation as being unprovable.

A second possibility was related to setting: *Danny* is a prairie novel, and readers in Eastern Canada found stories of the newly-opened western frontier to be exotic, a view that vanished as Western Canada came to be perceived as just one of several Canadian regions. I rejected this explanation, because Prince Edward Island was as different from central Canada as was the West.

A third hypothesis concerned structure: *Anne of Green Gables* is strongly organized around an attractive character, Anne Shirley, whereas *Danny* is structured around a series of vignettes of the townspeople of Millford, Manitoba,⁶ and the appealing character of Pearl is not as central to the novel.⁷ This objection to *Danny*'s structure could be met by reading *Danny* as a short-story cycle as defined by Gerald Lynch in *The One and the Many*, thus

⁶ As early as 1949, Edward McCourt in *The Canadian West in Fiction* observed that *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, "ostensibly a novel, is actually a series of connected short stories" (86).

⁷ Note that McClung made Pearl Watson the central character in the second and third novels of her trilogy.

aligning it with other short-story cycles such as Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, which critics also treat as a novel.⁸

The next five theories are the ones that I will engage to explain *Danny's* demise. The first is related to the authors' Protestant Christianity. McClung's foundational evangelical Christian faith is clearly communicated in her fiction and provides strong motivation for spiritual change in her characters as well as for social change, whereas Montgomery's relatively innocuous faith is relegated to the background in her novel. My theory is that as the readership in Canada became less Christian as the twentieth century progressed, Montgomery's novel remained comprehensible to readers, whereas McClung's became foreign to those with a secular worldview, who either misread it or rejected it.

The second hypothesis is related to the authors' rhetorical strategies within their fiction. McClung uses numerous nineteenth-century tropes and conventions such as those found in Sunday-School fiction, temperance melodrama, and sentimental romances, which Montgomery, to a large part, eschews (although not entirely, as I will demonstrate). Consequently, *Anne* was more accessible to a later readership that was unfamiliar and uncomfortable with these conventions.

A third explanation is related to the authors' view of the child: Montgomery's romanticization of the child as an innocent in touch with nature proved more palatable to an increasingly secular audience than did McClung's view of the child as tainted with original

⁸ The Overview to the Norton Critical Edition of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* describes the edition's critical contents and refers to it as a novel:

“Criticism” is comprised of two sections. The first presents eight scholarly interpretations, by Desmond Pacey, Silver Donald Cameron, W. H. Magee, Ina Ferris, Beverly J. Rasporich, Frank Birbalsingh, Gerald Lynch, and Glenn Willmont, selected for their contribution to critical discussion of the novel. The second brings together responses to the novel by esteemed Canadian novelists Robertson Davies, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and Mordecai Richler. (<<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/978-0-393-92634-7/>>)

sin and needing to be “born again.” Likewise, in an era that was shifting from the nineteenth-century perspective on children, in which children’s labour was culturally acceptable, to “the new normative ideal of the child as an exclusively emotional and affective asset [that] precluded instrumental or fiscal considerations,” Pearl’s working to help support the family became less acceptable to the reading public than Anne’s freedom from economic concerns (Zelizer 11).

A fourth area is related to the authors’ view of the purpose of literature: McClung wrote didactically, with the clear purpose of educating and changing her readers as well as entertaining them. Following the “art for art’s sake” trend, Montgomery chose not to write with an “insidious moral hidden away in it like a pill in a spoonful of jam!” (*SJ1* 263). Twentieth-century readers gradually rejected didacticism, agreeing with Montgomery that morals were “insidious”; lessons were supposed to be learned intuitively rather than imposed by a supposedly omniscient author.

The final hypothesis is related to the literary influences on the two authors. Because of the broad range of books that Montgomery read, she was more influenced than McClung by the philosophical Idealists of the late nineteenth century, who, in their determination to return to the “essentials” of Christianity, questioned basic tenets such as the divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and the Atonement, and imported secular ideas into their metaphysics (McKillop xviii). McClung’s more limited reading of novels such as *Robert Elsemere* by Mrs. Humphry Ward, *John Ward, Preacher* by Margaret Deland, and the social fiction of Charles Dickens, reinforced her evangelical outlook.

I will argue that these five explanations can be grouped together under the rubric of worldview (*Weltanschauung*), and that *Danny*’s disappearance was largely due to a shift in

Canadians' worldview over the twentieth century, as Canada moved from being a predominantly Christian country at the beginning of the century to a multi-cultural society in which only 20% attended church on a weekly basis.⁹ 1908 is an interesting entry point to illustrate worldview change: McClung's rhetorical strategies look back to the nineteenth century in contrast to Montgomery's, which look forward to the twentieth-century's decline in religious faith. I will argue that although there is enough Christianity in Montgomery's novel to have made it acceptable to her largely Christian reading public at the beginning of the century, its presentation is subtle enough that it does not disturb a twenty-first-century reader. McClung's novel, however, is so forthright in its presentation of Christianity, with its nineteenth-century tropes and conventions and its moralising didacticism, that the delightful humour and characterization, as well as the complex religious patterning and scriptural allusions in the novel, are lost to a largely secular reading public.

Definitions

Before describing the historical and religious background of McClung and Montgomery, I would like to give working definitions of terms that are challenging to use because of the multiplicity of possible meanings. *Religion* is the first one, and the number of definitions that have been proposed is almost infinite. In *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940*, David Marshall gives a useful definition:

The notion of the supernatural is religion's essential and distinguishing feature. Religion is a system of beliefs, values, and rituals acknowledging a

⁹ In a pre-edited version of "Who said God is dead?" *Globe and Mail*, March 17, 2006, sociologist Reginald Bibby reported that weekly church attendance in Canada "dropped to just over 30% in 1975, and to around 20% by 2000" (<http://www.reginaldbibby.com/images/g_mreligcomebackapr06.pdf>).

form of being which transcends the world and a level of reality beyond what is observable to human beings. Religious people and institutions hold that the supernatural is a living, effective, and intrusive force in the natural world and in human history. (6)

As well as identifying religion with the supernatural, I would like to distinguish between personal faith, which is an individual's relationship with the divine Transcendent, whom Christians call God, and the cumulative traditions of human religious life, which have been codified into laws, creeds, teachings, and theological systems and expressed in institutions and customs of particular religious communities.¹⁰ According to Canadian theologian Wilfred Cantwell Smith in *The Meaning and End of Religion*, it was not until the eighteenth century that the understanding of *religions* as “alternative systems of belief embodied in mutually exclusive ideological communities” came to be accepted (viii). As well as inventing names for the religious lives of people of other cultures - for example, *Hinduism* and *Buddhism*, which are Western terms for the religious life of the people of India and those influenced by Siddhartha Gautama - much scholarship has been devoted to defining the essential nature of religions in terms of belief systems, social functions, psychological effects, and ethical standpoints and lifestyles (Smith *Meaning* viii-ix).¹¹ Robert Ellwood

¹⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith demonstrates that, apart from the beginning of the Christian era, prior to the modern period the notion of a religion as a particular system of belief embodied in a bounded community was unknown:

Neither the classical Sanskrit of the Hindu and the Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, nor the Pali of the Theravada Buddhist writings, nor ancient Egyptian, nor classical Chinese, nor the Hebrew of the Jewish scriptures, nor the Greek of the New Testament, has a word for our modern concept of religion or religions. These literatures speak of such living matters as faith, obedience and disobedience, piety, worship, the truth, and the way, but not of religions as communally embodied systems of belief. (*Meaning* vii)

¹¹ Two orders of language emerge: first-order religious language is that of the expression of faith in prayer, prophecy, and proclamation, in the confession of sin, and in the spontaneous utterances of

gives a more functional definition of *religion* as the “means of ultimate transformation,” which implies changes in people that occur outside of their own ability to change, and which can be analyzed in terms of the theoretical (narrative, myth, doctrine, philosophy), the practical (rite, worship, behaviour), and social (interpersonal relationships and group structures) (53). I will try at all times to distinguish between the personal, social, and institutional aspects of religious faith.

It is also necessary to distinguish between *faith* and *belief*. Belief is the holding of certain ideas, whereas

Faith is deeper, richer, more personal. It is engendered by a religious tradition, in some cases and to some degree by its doctrines; but it is a quality of the person not of the system. It is an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one’s neighbor, to the universe; a total response; a way of seeing whatever one sees and of handling whatever one handles; a capacity to live at more than a mundane level; to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension. (Smith *Faith* 12)¹²

In other words, one does not have faith in a proposition or concept, but faith is rather the “relation of trust in and loyalty to the transcendent” that is not a compartmentalized dimension of life, but is “an orientation of the total person” (Fowler 11, 14).

love, joy, and awe in the presence of God; second-order language is the language of theology and systematic theories (Smith *Meaning* xi).

¹² Smith expands on the definition of faith:

Faith, then, is a quality of human living. At its best it has taken the form of serenity and courage and loyalty and service: a quiet confidence and joy which enable one to feel at home in the universe, and to find meaning in the world and in one’s own life, a meaning that is profound and ultimate, and is stable no matter what may happen to oneself at the level of immediate event. Men and women of this kind of faith face catastrophe and confusion, affluence and sorrow, unperturbed; face opportunity with conviction and drive, and face others with cheerful charity. (*Faith* 12)

Another term that predominates in our day is *spirituality*. In the twenty-first century, *spirituality* escapes any concrete definition, essentially referring to the values and practices related to “ultimate concern.”¹³ Unlike the Christian tradition, in which a spiritual person is often “a person of contemplative prayer and meditation on scripture” who is linked with the work and action of the Holy Spirit (Holm 80), many of those in the twenty-first century who call themselves *spiritual* choose from a range of beliefs.¹⁴

The term *worldview* can be defined as a comprehensive philosophy of life, a “blik,”¹⁵ a mental filter through which data is interpreted, or “an assumed epistemological-metaphysical-emotional set by which one interprets existence” (R. Miller 1). All persons operate from a conscious or unconscious position that both informs the assumptions that they make about the religious/philosophical questions of life and also determines their actions and choices. Theologian N.T. Wright describes the concept: “Worldviews are thus the basic stuff of human existence, the lens through which the world is seen, the blueprint for how one should live in it, and above all the sense of identity and place which enables human beings to be what they are” (124). I presume that all writers, readers, and literary critics have worldviews that shape their responses to fiction, and that imaginative literature

¹³ Theologian Paul Tillich writes:

Whatever the subject matter which an artist chooses, however strong or weak his artistic form, he cannot help but betray by his style his own ultimate concern, as well as that of his group, and his period. He cannot escape religion even if he rejects religion, for religion is the state of being ultimately concerned. (*Theology* 70)

¹⁴ For example Sally Quinn, journalist and co-founder of the *Washington Post*'s religion feature, “On Faith,” writes in “O” about the system of belief that she has formed over her lifetime: “I’ve borrowed the things that appeal to me from many religions. It’s kind of like a smorgasbord” (26).

¹⁵ “Blik” is a term coined by philosopher R.M. Hare to describe the set of profoundly unfalsifiable assumptions that govern all of a person’s beliefs. A blik is not an assertion or a concept or a system of thought but is rather what underlies the possibility of any kind of assertion about facts and their meanings. According to Hare, each person has such blik and no one can escape having them (101-102).

of a particular culture reveals the culture's worldview or religious dimension. The two foundational worldviews that vied for dominance in Canada in the twentieth century were theism and naturalism. Theism (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) postulates a transcendent God who created the universe; naturalism posits natural causes as sufficient to explain everything that exists and excludes the supernatural or spiritual.¹⁶

Following the lead of Sandra Orser in her 1992 dissertation *In Search of a Vision: Concepts of the Christian Faith in Four Canadian Novels*, I have chosen to draw most scriptural quotations from the New King James Version of the Bible. Both McClung and Montgomery were raised on the original King James Version, but much of the language in this translation has changed in meaning over the past four centuries. More modern translations of the Bible, such as the New International Version, are frequently too different from the wording that McClung and Montgomery employed in their writing to be useful. Thus my use of the New King James Version is a compromise: various aspects of language such as the use of *thee* and *thou* have been modernized, but the overall flow and phrasing of the King James Version, so important to McClung and Montgomery as writers, have been retained.

Nineteenth-Century Background

Because McClung and Montgomery wrote out of a profoundly religious personal and social context, it is necessary to examine the religious currents of their time in some detail. Most

¹⁶ Charles Colson elaborates the fundamental questions that reflect these categories:

Is ultimate reality God or the cosmos? Is there a supernatural realm, or is nature all that exists? Has God spoken and revealed his truth to us, or is truth something we have to find, even invent, for ourselves? Is there a purpose to our lives, or are we cosmic accidents emerging from the slime? (20)

historians agree on the importance of understanding the role of religion in the development of Canada and of Canadians. John Moir asserts that it is “axiomatic that religion has played a major role in the history of Canada,” both in the shaping of the nation and in the formation of its national character (“Canadian” 136). Likewise S.D. Clark has suggested that “in few countries in the western world has religion exerted as great an influence upon the development of the community as it has in Canada” (168).¹⁷ According to Arthur R.M. Lower, up until the First World War, religion “occupied a larger part in the preoccupations of the average citizen than did politics and almost as large as earning a living” (87). Lower describes Canada as “a country of intense religiosity – intense enough to draw to the revival services of Moody and Sankey in the 1880’s ‘John A.’ himself” (87).¹⁸ He declares that in English Canada, “Christianity” was equated with Protestantism with a practical Calvinist foundation in about eighty per cent of the population (87-88). Growing up in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the final decades of Queen Victoria’s reign, McClung and Montgomery were influenced by personal, institutional, and social aspects of Christianity and were exposed to many of the religious controversies of the era, because “British North Americans took their religion so seriously” (French 16). In order to understand these influences on the two authors, readers should consider French’s arguments of forty years ago, when he wrote that in order to understand the currents of the past, readers needed “to re-establish an intuitive and sympathetic understanding of a system of ideas, and a quality of

¹⁷ Goldwin French writes, “Christianity has been a powerful formative factor in the growth of this nation. With rare exceptions, however, this relationship has been described in assertions that reflect the prejudices either of the hagiographer or of the jaundiced assailant” (15). In other words, each proponent and each critic of different ways of interpreting history proceeds from a personal worldview that defines his or her perspective.

¹⁸ Note that Macdonald’s conversion occurred at an 1888 revival meeting at a church in Ottawa led by the evangelistic team of John Hunter and Hugh Crossley, who were considered to be the Canadian version of the D.L. Moody and Ira Sankey team (Kee “Heavenly” 83).

mind that is foreign to the mental and moral atmosphere of our generation” (33). In other words, readers need to be open to gaining an understanding of worldviews with which they are unfamiliar.

Most historians regard the nineteenth century as a “Christian century” in Canada as Christians “transformed a wilderness into a significant Christian civilization” (Noll *History* 284). Goldwin French describes the dominant worldview of the mid-nineteenth century in this way:

[There was] an overwhelming conviction of the existence, the presence and the power of God in human affairs. Christians . . . were persuaded that He was continuously active, guiding the course of events, rewarding and protecting His supporters, admonishing and punishing those who deviated from His path. . . . The primary criterion for evaluating any action or decision was not expediency, but its correspondence with what appeared to be God’s will for man. (18-19)

All the Protestant denominations¹⁹ had been shaped by evangelicalism and the series of religious revivals that occurred between 1780 and 1866. Under the influence of the religious experience of these revivals, theology “became not so much a fixed philosophical system of doctrine as a much looser, and consequently more pervasive, body of beliefs and assumptions concerning God, the individual, and society” (Gauvreau 7-8).²⁰ Up until the

¹⁹ Because the two authors under study were Protestants, I do not discuss the role of the Catholic Church in Canada.

²⁰ Theology is the study of a God or gods and the nature of the divine. Whether there is one God (monotheism), many gods (polytheism) or no gods (atheism), or whether it is unknown or unknowable whether any gods exist (agnosticism), and whether the Divine intervenes directly in the world (theism), or its sole function is to be the first cause of the universe (deism), whether a God or gods and the World are different (as in pantheism and dualism), or are identical (as in pantheism), are central concerns of the philosophy of religion.

1890s, Evangelical Conservatism predominated in Canada; its focus was “on God’s moral government of the world and the need for nations as well as individuals to conform to God’s order” (B. Fraser 88). Evangelicalism was the driving force behind Protestantism in Canada; according to Robert Choquette, “It made English Canada into a Protestant society with Protestant public schools, and a Protestant public agenda in matters such as alcoholic beverages, immigration, minority rights, and national objectives” (231). Mark Noll argues that evangelical Protestantism in Canada was uniquely Canadian “in balancing an American openness to innovation, optimism, and personal liberty with a British commitment to order, stability, and tradition” (*History* 276).

Dramatic changes occurred in Canada from the 1890s to the First World War. More than three million immigrants arrived, attracted by the offer of free land, while at the same time large numbers migrated from rural locations to large urban centres, leading to urban problems such as slum housing, prostitution, lack of proper sewage facilities, and unsafe drinking water. An economic boom fuelled by large-scale foreign investment and the overseas sale of wheat replaced the depression of the late nineteenth century and “was accompanied by social tension and changed relations between classes, sexes, and ethnic groups” (R. Cook “Triumph” 38). The Canadian Pacific Railway was completed in 1885, and after 1903, the Canadian Northern, the Grand Trunk, and the National Transcontinental were all given public financial support for new construction. Western Canada was being settled and developed, and two new provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, were created in 1905. New inventions such as the telephone, radio, electric lights and the mass-produced automobile were seen as heralding a new era of progress.²¹

²¹ In 1904, Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier announced to a packed audience in Toronto’s Massey Hall, “The twentieth century shall be the century of Canada and of Canadian development. For the

Evangelical Liberalism gained the ascendance in this period; Evangelical Liberals “retained their confidence in God’s governance and Christ’s lordship,” but saw themselves “called to be the agents of God’s providential progress as God’s will unfolded itself in history” (B. Fraser 93, 94).²² They also affirmed that there was no distinction between the sacred and the secular (R. Cook *Regenerators* 228). A.B. McKillop has identified a major contributing factor to the debates raging about science, religion and evolution between clerics and scientists: the central involvement of mental and moral philosophers within Canadian universities and colleges. These were men who were committed to the public good and to serving it rather than private interest, but whose intellectual inquiries undermined fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. They included members of a transatlantic community of Anglo-American Idealists, inspired by Kant, Hegel, and the Oxford scholar T.H. Green. According to McKillop, they were opponents of dogmatism and orthodoxy and were committed to critical inquiry and to “mediating the concerns of the religious and scientific communities” (xvi). Unlike their twentieth-century counterparts, these philosophers of the nineteenth-century Canadian intelligentsia were “proud metaphysicians” (xv). Although they did not reject God outright, they discarded many of the Judeo-Christian foundational tenets previously used to understand and relate to Him.²³

next seventy-five years, nay for the next hundred years, Canada shall be the star towards which all men who love progress and freedom shall come” (qtd. in Morton *Short* 131).

²² Brian Fraser describes the shift in Canada from the Evangelical Conservatism of the nineteenth century to the Evangelical Liberalism that flourished from the 1890s to the 1920s: “For the Evangelical Conservatives, a static revelation set the ideal to which history must conform. For the Evangelical Liberals, a progressive history was the vehicle through which revelation evolved” (94). The idea of social progress was based on the idea of the human species as perfectible, and Evangelical Liberals found in Jesus’ teachings a comprehensive ideal of “the full development of the full means by which the full perfection of humanity is realised” (qtd. in B. Fraser 96).

²³ Brian Fraser claims that the source of goodness for Evangelical Liberals “was not so much obedience to the law of God as loyalty to the character of Christ” (98).

Philosophical Idealism was the product of an age of increasing intellectual inquiry, which sought to reconcile the clear conflict between man's desire "to further his knowledge and enhance his understanding" and his concurrent wish "to maintain certainty of conviction" on issues of faith (McKillop x). Prominent Idealists, including John Watson, Thomas Kilpatrick, George Munro Grant, Salem Bland, and J.S. Woodsworth, questioned basic tenets of the faith so that their conception of the essence of Christianity was "a religion largely shorn of traditional doctrine and based on an organic and progressive evolution of society" (McKillop 221).²⁴ Their faith had to meet the test of reason, and they "separated the concerns of theology from those of ethics," subordinating the former to the latter (McKillop 221-22). In the tension that always exists between belief and practice, they swung towards a practical Social Gospel.²⁵

John Watson was the pre-eminent Idealist professor of Moral Philosophy at Queen's University from 1889 to 1924. Through his "rational religion," Watson was influential in liberalizing the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and his work contributed to the general trend in ideas that led to the creation of the United Church in Canada. He argued that the search for universal truth by means of intellectual inquiry would gradually result in a deeper

²⁴ McKillop notes the irony of the fact that the clear consequence of philosophical Idealism, "in its determination to return to the 'essentials' of Christianity by questioning such basic tenets as the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and the Atonement," was its contribution "to the importation of secular notions into the very religion it sought to defend" (xviii).

²⁵ The Social Gospel was a Protestant Christian movement prominent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which placed its emphasis on the application of the Christian principles of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) to society's problems. Those involved in the Social Gospel movement believed in social progressivism, were optimistic about the morality and future of humanity, and sought to harmonize Christian ethics with political action. Adherents also followed a liberal theology, and one of the results of the growing dominance of the Social Gospel movement was the parallel oppositional development of fundamentalism. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, a political party that was later renamed the New Democratic Party, was founded on Social Gospel principles in the 1930s by J.S. Woodsworth, a Methodist minister, whose writings called for the Kingdom of God on earth.

understanding of reality, one in which “at each step we feel we are penetrating a little deeper into the nature of things, and learning to re-think the embodied thoughts of God” (qtd. in McKillop 207). McKillop notes that a generation earlier, this claim would have been seen “as the height of intellectual arrogance,” because it was “an expression of a piety shorn of the Christian’s awareness that because of the sinfulness of man, he could never fully achieve identity with the mind of God, however much he might strive for it” (207). But Watson’s ideas found increasing acceptance in Canadian churches and Protestant colleges, and where reason was accepted over the Bible, there was a significant drift of Methodist and Presbyterian churches towards Unitarianism, which rejected classical Christian standards of belief as proclaimed in the Nicæan creed and the Westminster Confession²⁶ and instead drew from many faith traditions.²⁷

At least three different historiographic narratives have developed to describe and interpret the changes in religious faith in the Church and in Canadian society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The “secularist” thesis of historians such as Richard Allen, Ramsay Cook, A.B. McKillop and William Westfall presents a linear “decline and fall” view of religious faith in nineteenth-century Canada, arguing that

²⁶ At the Bible Institute run by the Methodists in London, Ontario, Reverend C.T. Scott reported in 1906:

Those in attendance at institute meetings had been told that on certain matters Jesus had clearly been mistaken; that the Bible was only one of a number of inspired religious messages, including the writings of Buddha and Socrates; that Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy could be considered a Christian prophet; and that the Bible was not the only standard of truth because “every man’s standard of truth is that which he cognizes of it.” (qtd. in McKillop 209)

²⁷ According to the website of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources, including direct experience of transcendence, the words and deeds of prophetic women and men, wisdom from the world’s religions, Jewish and Christian teachings, humanist teachings, and spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions (<<http://www.uua.org/>>).

challenges to traditional beliefs, such as Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Friedrich Nietzsche's pronouncement that "God is dead," Ludwig Feuerbach's explaining away of God "as a projection of humanity's own infinite desires," and Karl Marx's views that religious ideologies were merely attempts to cover up the reality of social oppression, led to the growth of scepticism and agnosticism and to such movements as Theosophy, Pantheism, Unitarianism, and Universalism (Pell 1). These social historians see Canada becoming progressively secular as theology shifted to philosophy, as sociology, natural science and biblical criticism challenged belief in the authenticity and authority of the Bible, and as "liberal" thinkers rejected Christianity's central doctrines of the Fall, Redemption, and the Incarnation. According to these historians, the foundations of the Christian faith were being eroded and a growing number of Canadians were clearly opting to function without religious faith, a disturbing situation for them "since Christianity was regarded as the foundation for the moral and social order" (Marshall 4).²⁸

Historians who disagree with this "secularist" thesis include writers such as Marguerite Van Die, Michael Gauvreau, Phyllis D. Airhart, and Nancy Christie. They agree that society was becoming increasingly "preoccupied with secular concerns," but they argue against the assertion that increased secularity meant less religious commitment. Gauvreau, for example, holds that the Social Gospel of the early twentieth century was "the product of a church still rich with spiritual vitality and theological resonance" (McKillop xxii). Christie and Gauvreau claim that the younger generation of clergymen after 1900 discarded what they

²⁸ David Marshall could also be added to the list of "secularists." In *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940*, Marshall describes the Social Gospel as a movement among those "who opted for a future of material more than spiritual benefit" (McKillop xxiii). He depicts "a defeated church, uncertain about its message, mission and future" as a result of "[r]eligious accommodation and the search for contemporary relevance" (McKillop xxiii).

saw as “the socially irrelevant, denominationally divisive, and elitist dimensions of the Victorian evangelical heritage” in favour of “the experiential qualities of popular revivalism and social evangelism,” which “not only stimulated a resurgence in mass religious participation, but also marked a period of renewal of Canadian Protestantism and its unprecedented expansion into all facets of social and cultural life” (xii). This group of historians also disputes the linear “secularist” thesis because it fails to explain why so many Canadian clergymen remained in the churches rather than moving into either philosophy or social science. They claim that Protestant values remained central to Canadian society well into the 1920s and 1930s, and lived on “in the core values of postwar mainstream churches and the social agencies they created and sponsored for the purpose of social service” (McKillop xxiii).

A third view, enunciated by George Rawlyk and Mark Noll, attributes the growing shift towards secularization to disintegration from within, as Evangelical Christianity “lost its collective soul to North American consumerism - the insidious antipathy to essential Christianity. The simple Christian message based upon self-abnegation and sacrifice was replaced by the narcissistic gospel of intense ‘therapeutic self-realization’” (*Wrapped* 136).²⁹ Consequently, according to Rawlyk and Noll, there was a gradual shift from Evangelical Protestantism shaping Canadian society, to society shaping the faith, especially with “the

²⁹ Rawlyk observes, “It was virtually impossible for evangelical leaders in the post-1880 period to attack frontally the insidious anti-Christian bias of consumerism. Instead, they became its ardent disciples and enthusiastic advocates of the fundamental goodness of economic growth and technological development” (*Wrapped* 138).

frequent, non-reflective equation of Christian virtues with the values of middle-class culture” (Noll *History* 284).³⁰

Each of these historiographic treatments of the religious and cultural shifts occurring at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century holds elements of truth. At the risk of over-simplification, I would argue that the “secularist” theorists depend on a definition of Christianity as intellectual adherence to traditional creeds, whereas the “anti-secularist” historians view religious vitality as experiential. To illustrate the difference between the two views, an interesting debate in *Christian Scholars Review* in 1993 pitted George Marsden, who traced a "Presbyterian" lineage for evangelicalism from the Reformation through to Old School Presbyterians, which argued for theological orthodoxy and biblical authority, against Donald Dayton, who traced a "Methodist" lineage from the Reformation to Billy Graham, which focused on individual conversion and the subjective experience of faith. Nancy Percy asks In *Total Truth*, “Which definition of evangelicalism is correct? Answer: both are” (295). Percy describes the first strand as a scholarly and rational approach and the second as a populist, generally anti-intellectual development; she argues, and I would agree, that evangelicalism needs both. I also believe that the third strand of historicism represented by George Rawlyk and Mark Noll holds true for any society that loses sight of both the tenets of Christianity and the importance of its practical outworking, the injunction to be both hearers and doers of the Word, to love both God and one’s neighbour.

³⁰ Noll writes: “When such an unfortunate equation took place, there was little Christian resistance to the instincts of materialist individualism that were becoming increasingly common in all of North America” (*History* 284).

In spite of all the undercurrents that were dislodging Protestantism from its central place in English-Canadian society and culture, Canada was still widely considered to be a Christian nation at the beginning of the twentieth century, indicated by the fact that in 1901, Protestant and Catholic churches in Canada had enough seating capacity to accommodate more than the total Canadian population, and two surveys carried out by newspapers in Toronto in 1882 and 1896 showed, respectively, 78% and 57% of seats occupied during any given service (Beyer “Religious” 276-77). As Sara Jeannette Duncan writes in *The Imperialist* in 1904, “Within its prescribed limitations, [churchgoing] was for many the intellectual exercise, for more the emotional life, and for all the unfailing distraction of the week” (50).³¹ Also at this time there was a growth in evangelical fervor and religious crusades, which saw conversions by the tens of thousands in revival services conducted by evangelists such as Hugh Crossley and John Hunter.³² At the time McClung and Montgomery were writing, most people were “churched” to some degree: they understood basic tenets of the Christian faith; they were familiar with the biblical narrative; they believed in the existence of God and prayed to Him; and they attended church on a regular basis. The church was still the centre of community life, and the local clergyman was often “an arbiter of culture” (Roper et al. “Kinds” 317).

³¹ Duncan’s narrator also writes, “The habit of church attendance was not only a basis of respectability, but practically the only one. . . . It was the normal thing, the thing which formed the backbone of life, sustaining to the serious, impressive to the light, indispensable to the rest” (50).

³² According to an obituary of Hugh Crossley, “over 200,000 publicly accepted Christ following their numerous campaigns” (qtd. in Kee “Singing” 85). Kevin Kee argues that evangelists’ use of contemporary cultural forms for religious purposes, such as Crossley and Hunter’s use of theatrical melodrama “to draw Canadians to their message of sin and salvation,” could be viewed as evidence of religious loss, but he counters this view: “By adjusting their methods to the style of the day, evangelists helped contribute to the vitality of Canadian Protestantism into the middle of the twentieth century” (*Revivalists* 3, 4).

The two main Protestant denominations relevant to McClung and Montgomery's religious background are, respectively, the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church. Methodism is an expression of Protestantism with roots in an eighteenth-century evangelistic revival movement within the Church of England led by John Wesley, along with his brother Charles and George Whitefield. Initially Whitefield and the Wesleys merely sought reform, by way of a return to the foundational tenets of the Gospel, within the Church of England, but the movement spread with revival, and soon a significant number of Anglican clergy became known as Methodists³³ in the mid-eighteenth century. The movement did not form a separate denomination in England until after John Wesley's death in 1795.

Early Methodists were drawn from all levels of society, including the aristocracy, but Methodist preachers also took the gospel message to labourers and criminals, who tended to be left outside of organised religion at that time. Laurence Coughlan, one of Wesley's followers, first represented the movement in what is now Canada when he began to preach in Newfoundland in 1766; the first sizable group of Methodists in the Maritimes settled around Chignecto, NS, in the 1770s. Methodist Episcopal circuit riders from New York State began to arrive in the Kingston region on the northeast shore of Lake Ontario in the early 1790s. In 1828, Upper Canadian Methodists were permitted by the General Conference in the United States to form an independent Canadian Conference, and in 1833, the Canadian Conference merged with the British Wesleyans to form the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. The Methodist Church of Canada was created in 1884 by the union of several pioneering groups. With the opening up of western Canada, the Methodist

³³ Wesley's methodological approach to Bible study led to the term Methodism.

Church worked to build churches in all the newly forming towns, and to send out circuit riders to bring the Gospel to small settlements.

In “The Methodists,” A. Skevington Wood asserts that “the basic theological conviction of the Methodists was ‘that justification by faith is the doctrine of the Church as well as of the Bible.’ To this was added a specific emphasis that salvation is for all, and a stress on the assurance of the Holy Spirit and scriptural holiness” (451). According to Margaret Prang in the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, Methodism “was distinctive in its Arminianism, the belief that individuals are free to accept or reject God’s grace, and that it is possible to attain ‘perfection’ (the overcoming of a will to sin) in this life” (1343). Like the Anglican Church from which it developed, Methodism kept the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion but placed more emphasis on evangelical preaching and the necessity for individual conversion.

Presbyterianism³⁴ is a form of Protestantism based on the theology of the French-born Swiss reformer John Calvin (1509-64) and his student John Knox (1505-72), who helped spread the Reformation of the sixteenth century to Scotland. The roots of the Presbyterian Church in Canada therefore lie primarily with the many Scots who emigrated to Canada.³⁵ The Presbyterian Church in Canada was formed in 1875 with the merger of four regional groups.

Presbyterian churches have traditionally emphasized doctrine based on reformed theology (Calvinism), which has been summarized by the acronym TULIP: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the

³⁴ The name is taken from the Greek *presbyteros* (elder) because Presbyterian churches are governed by elders rather than bishops (Episcopalian) or church members (Congregational).

³⁵ The Presbyterian Church in Canada is also rooted in the work and witness of French Huguenot settlers who came to Canada in the 1600s (<<http://www.presbyterian.ca/about/pcc>>).

Saints (Walker 257). In addition to the common Reformation themes of justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the importance of the Bible, Presbyterianism also reflects Calvin's distinctive emphasis on the sovereignty of God and uses a representational form of church government. The Westminster Confession of Faith is a Reformed confession of faith drawn up by the 1646 Westminster Assembly, which became and remains the "subordinate standard" of doctrine in the Church of Scotland, and in Presbyterian churches worldwide.³⁶ Presbyterians place great importance upon education, study of the scriptures, theological writings, and church doctrine as foundational to putting one's faith into practice. Mary Henley Rubio summarizes the principles of Scottish Presbyterianism that specifically influenced Montgomery, including those placing emphasis

on empowerment of *all* classes of people through education, on participatory democracy in church and civic government, on constant self-examination through one's reasoning faculties, on "plain speaking" and accessibility in rhetorical style and public discourse, [and] on valuing intellectuality and achievement. ("L.M. Montgomery" 89)

To this list, Rubio adds the Scots' moral seriousness, "their Presbyterian belief in the Protestant work ethic, their faith in the possibility of human improvement, and their insistence on setting up the best possible school systems for all their children without the

³⁶ In 1643, the English Parliament called upon "learned, godly and judicious Divines" to meet at Westminster Abbey in order to provide advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government and discipline in the Church of England. Their meetings, over a period of five years, produced the confession of faith, as well as a Larger Catechism and a Shorter Catechism. For more than three centuries, various churches around the world have adopted the confession and the catechisms as their standards of doctrine, subordinate to the Bible.

prejudice of social class” (“L.M. Montgomery” 90).³⁷ Through their emphasis on reasoning and rhetoric, Presbyterians such as Montgomery learned to debate and to critique in order to improve society (Rubio “L.M. Montgomery” 92).

Numerically, Methodists and Presbyterians were the two largest Protestant denominations before the First World War.³⁸ In terms of theology, church governance, liturgy, and worship practices, Methodism and Presbyterianism were based on different foundations, but their experiences in Canadian society drove them to cooperate in a number of areas, especially in the West, and by 1902 serious discussions about union were taking place between the two denominations (Marshall 10). Mark Noll, in *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, suggests that “many Canadian Presbyterians had been affected by evangelical preaching or conversion, and so they had a good deal in common with the Methodists as well” (274).

At the same time, however, the Presbyterian Church was being strongly influenced by Unitarianism, a movement that rejects the ideas of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ and the reality of the Holy Spirit in favour of “the oneness of God,” an idea that was found in the early church, particularly in what was known as the Monarchianist heresy.³⁹ In

³⁷ Rubio notes that although the Presbyterian religion was “militant and rigid,” its promotion of education “fostered the seeds of democratic egalitarianism” because one’s social class meant far less “than the state of one’s soul with God” (“L.M. Montgomery” 91, 93).

³⁸ Methodist statistics: In 1871, there were 578,161 Methodists, comprising 15.6 percent of the population of Canada. By 1901, 916,866 Methodists comprised 17.1 percent of the population. In 1921 prior to Church Union, 1,159,993 Methodists made up 13 percent of the population. In 1931, the United Church numbered 2,021,065, which was 19.4 per cent of the population.

Presbyterian statistics: In 1871, there were 574,577 Presbyterians, comprising 15.6 percent of the Canadian population. In 1901, 842,531 Presbyterians comprised 15.7 per cent of the population. In 1921, prior to the 1925 Church Union, there were 1,409,406 Presbyterians (16 percent), of which 872,428 remained in 1931 in the Presbyterian Church (8.4 percent of the population). (Marshall 10)

³⁹ The Monarchians, also known as Sabellians after one of their leaders, Sabellius, claimed that God existed in different “modes” but only in one mode at any one time.

“Unitarianism,” Ian Sellers traces the movement from the early sixteenth century when Renaissance ideas combined with some extreme teaching in the Radical Reformation to engender Unitarian ideas in many individuals (494-96).⁴⁰ In the rationalistic eighteenth century, many English Presbyterian and General Baptist churches began to be affected by Unitarianism, adopting first Arian and then Sabellian, Socinian or full-blown Unitarian ideas;⁴¹ by the second half of the century, both became largely Unitarian denominations (Sellers 495). Dr. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) helped to spread the movement to the United States when he emigrated there in 1794. Priestley and his successor, Thomas Belsham, interpreted the Bible in a rationalistic and optimistic way to reinterpret the verses that Christians had previously used to support the doctrine of the Trinity and the belief that man has a fallen nature.

A counter-movement led by James Martineau in England revolted against biblical Unitarianism and advocated a less argumentative religion in favour of a more refined, romantic and devotional spirituality, which found religious authority in reason and conscience. In 1816 the Divinity School of Harvard University was founded and became the centre of Unitarian thought. A theological revolution similar to Martineau’s was brought about by Theodore Parker and Ralph Waldo Emerson, using terms such as transcendentalism and anti-supernaturalism to describe their position. In Canada, many of the philosophical Idealists became Unitarians.⁴²

⁴⁰ Notably Martin Cellarius, Michael Servetus, and Bernard Ochino.

⁴¹ Arianism is the theological teaching of Arius (ca. AD 250–336), a Church priest who was deemed a heretic at the First Council of Nicea of 325 for his non-trinitarian views that denied the divinity of Christ. Socinianism is another form of non-trinitarianism, named for Laelius Socinus (died 1562 in Zürich) and his nephew Faustus Socinus (died 1604 in Poland).

⁴² In *A Disciplined Intelligence*, McKillop quotes at length from the correspondence between Idealist philosopher John Watson and J.M. Grant, a superintendent of a Presbyterian Sunday-School in

Another counter-movement to Unitarianism within the Protestant churches has come to be called *fundamentalism*. The term *fundamentalist* came into use after a set of booklets called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* were published between 1910 and 1915. They contained nearly one hundred articles by leading evangelicals of the time:

Together they defended the “fundamentals,” or basics, of the faith that newer forms of thought had recently called into question, among them assertions that the Bible is the inspired Word of God; that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for the salvation of men and women, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and would return at the end of the age in great glory; that sin is real and not the product of fevered imaginations; that God’s grace and not human effort is the source of salvation; and that the church is God’s institution designed to build up Christians and to spread the gospel. (Noll *History* 381)

The term *fundamentalist* itself was coined by Baptist editor Curtis Lee Laws in 1920 as a designation for those were ready “to do battle royal for the Fundamentals,” in protest against “that rationalistic interpretation of Christianity which seeks to discredit supernaturalism” (qtd. in Noll *History* 383).

One final note of comparison between the two churches was their reaction to the Social Gospel. Richard Allen writes, “Of the larger denominations, the Anglicans found the greatest difficulty in fielding the social gospel, the Methodists the least, and somewhere

Toronto, who had read Watson’s *Philosophical Basis of Religion* and questioned him on all of its implications. Grant concluded that if Watson was correct in his rejection of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, Original Sin, the Atonement, Eternal Life, and Christ’s bodily resurrection, then he, Grant, would have to resign his position: “It may be, . . . but I hope not, that I may have to leave the Presbyterian body and join the Unitarians, and if so my opportunity of good practical work would be all uncertain” (214).

between them lay the Presbyterians” (15). Thus McClung’s Methodism could well have allied her with the aims and practices of the Social Gospel movement.

McClung and Montgomery: A Comparison

English-Canadian novels of the period in question frequently reflected the Christian worldview of the majority of the Canadian population, and religion was a recurring focus in them.⁴³ Novels by authors such as Ralph Connor⁴⁴ paint glowing pictures of the Protestant churches in Canada as part of a nostalgic looking backwards to a time, in Orser’s slightly dismissive words, “when moral values were firmly in place and the right ones inevitably triumphed in any situation” (2).⁴⁵ Religious fiction shared in the boom in sales of fictional works at the turn of the century, encouraged by religiously oriented publishers such as Briggs,⁴⁶ Westminster, Copp Clark, and Hunter Rose (Roper et al. “Kinds” 317). Gordon Roper and his co-authors in *The Literary History of Canada* claim that the reading public, which they describe as mostly “rural or small town, middle-class and church-going, and

⁴³ See, for example, Gerald Lynch’s analysis of Stephen Leacock’s portrayal of Dean Drone and his congregation in “Religion and Romance in Mariposa – *En Voiture!*” in *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity* (86-100).

⁴⁴ Ralph Connor was the pen-name of Presbyterian minister Charles W. Gordon (1860-1937), who published forty-three novels, including *The Sky Pilot* (1899), which sold more than a million copies. He is known for the “muscular Christianity” of his novels. Clarence Karr describes Connor as one of the leading Presbyterian advocates

for the abandonment of “stultified formal and doctrinal” preaching and its replacement with non-sectarian, warm, emotional evangelicalism. His early novels provided such sermons for millions of readers; they fell in love with his well-defined characters, who served as models of exemplary Christian lives and service in modern, early-twentieth-century society. (81)

⁴⁵ In his preface to *The Man from Glengarry*, Connor writes about the Presbyterian faith of the people of Glengarry: “But deeper than all, the mark that reached down to their hearts’ core was that of their faith, for in them dwelt the fear of God. Their religion may have been narrow, but no narrower than the moulds of their lives. It was the biggest thing in them” (9).

⁴⁶ In 1880, the Methodist Book and Publishing House was the largest publishing house in Canada, publishing under the imprint of its book steward, William Briggs (Karr 64).

largely fundamentalist in training,” wanted “fictionalized morality” (“Kinds” 318, “Writers” 338).

The novels of Nellie McClung and Lucy Maud Montgomery both reflect and contend with the Christianity that was so important in their daily lives. Born a year apart, in 1873 and 1874 respectively, McClung and Montgomery evidence many similarities in their lives and writing. Both authors were raised in Protestant homes, attended Protestant churches, and were deeply influenced by the Bible, sermons, Sunday School, and church activities. Both comment on the Puritanical part of their makeup: McClung writes, “There was a stern Puritanic part of my conscience that told me I had sinned and I would suffer. ‘Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins!’” (*Clearing* 116); Montgomery saw herself operating in a tension between “the passionate Montgomery blood and the Puritan Macneill conscience,” where “Neither is strong enough wholly to control the other” (*SJI* 213).⁴⁷ On the other hand, both rejected certain Christian doctrines such as the doctrine of hell,⁴⁸ and both participated in occult practices such as “table rapping.”⁴⁹ McClung talks about reincarnation, perhaps frivolously, as a possibility: “In my next reincarnation my prayers will all be for light!” (*Stream* 420); in a letter to Ephraim Weber on April 8, 1906, Montgomery writes, “It is fascinating to suppose that we go from one existence to another,

⁴⁷ Montgomery elaborates: “The Puritan conscience can’t prevent the hot blood from having its way – in part at least – but it *can* poison all the pleasure and it does” (*SJI* 213).

⁴⁸ To combat Wes McClung’s antagonism towards his father’s “stern theology and belief in eternal punishment” (*Clearing* 291), McClung directed him to the theology in *John Ward, Preacher*, in which Helen, the heroine, “is astonished that anyone in their day could believe in hell in any literal sense. To do so, in her opinion, is to believe in a God of cruelty” (Hallett and Davis 64). Montgomery, in a letter to Ephraim Weber on March 28, 1909, writes: “Isn’t the Christian (?) doctrine of eternal torment as *hellish* as the idea it teaches?” (*GGL* 88).

⁴⁹ In *Clearing in the West*, McClung describes experimenting with table rapping and mesmerism one Hallowe’*en* night in the Parsonage (286-88). In her journal entry of January 26, 1906, Montgomery writes about being part of a table rapping session: “We made the thing do various stunts, such as standing up on one leg, walking round the room etc.” (*SJI* 317).

with the restful sleep of so-called death between! To me, the idea is a thousand fold [more] attractive than that of the Christian's heaven with its unending *spiritual joys*" (*GGL* 38).

McClung also evokes fanciful pictures of fairyland, such as when she describes the northern lights as "fluttering and dancing like long lines of fairies' petticoats hung out to dry on a windy day" (*Clearing* 77), which recalls Montgomery's reference to her imagination as "a passport to the geography of Fairyland" (*AP* 47). Both were eager readers, both considered Charles Dickens to be an influence on their writing,⁵⁰ and both were compared to Mark Twain.⁵¹ Each craved a writing career⁵² but trained to be teachers. Both refer to their literary careers as an uphill climb: McClung calls her desire to write and influence others a "shining thorny path winding up the hill" (*Clearing* 236); Montgomery refers to the lines that were "the key-note of [her] every aim and ambition" from the poem "To the Fringed Gentian":

"Then whisper, blossom, in thy sleep / How I may upward climb / The Alpine path, so hard,

⁵⁰ On receiving a set of the works of Dickens from her brother Will, McClung writes of her reaction to Dickens' writing:

As I read and thought and marvelled, a light shone around me. I knew in that radiance what a writer can be at his best, an interpreter, a revealer of secrets, a heavenly surgeon, a sculptor who can bring an angel out of a stone. And I wanted to write, to do for the people around me what Dickens had done for his people. I wanted to be a voice for the voiceless as he had been a defender of the weak, a flaming fire that would consume the dross that encrusts human souls, a spring of sweet water bearing up through all this bitter world to refresh and nourish souls that were ready to faint. (*Clearing* 235)

In *The Alpine Path*, Montgomery talks about reading Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* so often that she knew "whole chapters by heart" (49). She also told Alexandra Heilbron that she owed a great deal to her "greedy reading and rereading" of old masters such as Dickens (*Remembering* 204).

⁵¹ In *A Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel*, John Moss describes several of the qualities McClung shares with Mark Twain, including "a special genius that allows a child's precocity to flourish without the child's seeming to be a noxious, saccharine twit" (186). In "Satire, Realism, and Imagination in *Anne of Green Gables*," Mary Rubio observes that Twain and Montgomery shared similar backgrounds and "the comic touch of the ironist"; she gives an extended comparison between Twain's novels and Montgomery's, and suggests several reasons why Twain singled out *Anne of Green Gables* for praise (28-32).

⁵² McClung describes writing as "a fire in the blood, a shot in the arm" (*Stream* 312). Montgomery claims, "I cannot remember the time when I was not writing, or when I did not mean to be an author" (*AP* 52).

so steep, / that leads to heights sublime” (*AP* 9-10). Both began their writing careers by writing moralistic short stories for Christian publications; both made fun of romantic conventions, yet employed them in their novels. In the publishing arrangements for their first novels, both authors agreed to disadvantageous business arrangements with publishers/agents who took advantage of their inexperience. Both had a sense of humour that permeates their novels. McClung comments, “Laughter was the cement that would heal the breaks in this neighbourhood, laughter and something to talk of other than past sins and sorrows” (*Clearing* 231); Montgomery writes, “I think that the writer of [humour] is doing quite as much for humanity as if he wielded a more serious pen. Often times a truth can be taught by a jest better than by earnest” (*My Dear* 20-21). On a personal level, both were overjoyed at the birth of their children⁵³ and were devoted to their families, but were constrained in their writing by family and social responsibilities. Nevertheless, both received international acclaim and received sufficient income from their writing to bring them enough economic independence to enable them to hire help and to travel. In later life, both authors lamented the shifts in worldview that were taking place in Canada.⁵⁴

There are many parallels between *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables*. Both were the authors’ first published novels, and both became the first of a trilogy: *Sowing Seeds in Danny* was followed by *The Second Chance* (1910) and *Purple Springs*

⁵³ After the birth of her son Wesley, McClung comments, “I think that was the most exquisite moment I have ever known!” (*Stream* 332). Likewise, when Montgomery talks of the birth of her first son, she finds herself “engulfed in a wave of love”: “At times I am terrified that I love him too much – that it is a defiance of God to love any created thing so much. . . . Motherhood is a revelation from God” (*SJ2* 101).

⁵⁴ McClung talks to her brother Will about the worldview shift that had taken place in Canada after World War I: “But these feats of endurance sound foolish now, for the angle of life is changing” (*Stream* 466). Montgomery mourns the disappearance of gentility and refinement in post-war Canada: “Everything we once thought immovable wrenched from its pedestal and hurled into ruins. All our old standards and beliefs swept away - our whole world turned upside down and stirred up – before us nothing but a welter of doubt and confusion and uncertainty” (*SJ4* 163).

(1921); *Anne of Green Gables* was followed by *Anne of Avonlea* (1909) and *Anne of the Island* (1915). The two novels depict societies with a moral order based on the Judeo-Christian worldview, set in an idealized rural community in a post-frontier era. Both are fictional recreations of the authors' childhood communities, both demonstrate the authors' love of nature, flowers, and beauty, and both use domestic settings in which details of food and clothing are important. Structurally, both novels are built around a series of episodes.

The heroines of both novels can be read partly as fictional alter-egos of their creators; Pearl Watson and Anne Shirley display many similarities of character. Both are imaginative, and their imagination takes them into and out of difficult situations.⁵⁵ Because of their vivid imaginations, both are creative storytellers, and are often asked to tell tales to their friends.⁵⁶ Both are brave, courageously facing new situations.⁵⁷ Both are romantics: witness Pearl imagining Tom in the Edythe and Egbert story, and Anne as the lily-maid Elaine in the sinking punt.⁵⁸ Both are optimists,⁵⁹ both are loquacious,⁶⁰ both love to sing,⁶¹

⁵⁵ See Pearl's fanciful description of what she imagines when she is washing Mrs. Evans' dishes (103-07), and Anne's spirit "far away in some remote airy cloudland, borne aloft on the wings of imagination" (34).

⁵⁶ As the girls at Maudie Ducker's birthday know, "Pearl's stories had a charm" (103). Anne founds a story club to help Diana "cultivate [her] imagination" (169).

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Waterston in *Kindling Spirit: L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables* claims that McClung "conveyed more frankly the traumas of a small girl in a harsh world" than Montgomery's "gentler rendering" (77). Nevertheless, both girls face obstacles with courage.

⁵⁸ Pearl imagines Nellie Slater with "eyes like stars, lips like cherries, neck like a swan, and a laugh like a ripple of music" (186). Anne writes a story about Cordelia, "a regal brunette with a coronet of midnight hair and dusky flashing eyes," and Geraldine, "a queenly blonde with hair like spun gold and velvety purple eyes" (168).

⁵⁹ Pearl sets off to the Motherwells "with a great love for all the world" (121). Likewise, Anne exclaims to Matthew, "Isn't it splendid there are so many things to like in this world?" (23).

⁶⁰ Mrs. Motherwell exclaims to Pearl, "Lord! What a tongue you have!" and the narrator comments, "Pearl never was at a loss for words" (126, 129). Likewise, Marilla declares to Anne, "For pity's sake hold your tongue. . . . You talk entirely too much for a little girl" (33).

and both are entranced by language.⁶² Also, according to Elizabeth Thompson, both are examples of archetypal pioneer women who display in post-frontier Manitoba and P.E.I. the traits of feminine independence and the free spirit “typical of the ideal Canadian feminist of the period” (87). Prayer is an integral part of the girls’ lives.⁶³ Both girls undergo similar trials; for example, Pearl is wrongfully accused of stealing two dollars, just as Anne is charged with taking Marilla’s amethyst brooch. Each one is vindicated because each one is inherently honest.

There are also several significant differences between the two authors. McClung grew up in a loving family with five siblings; Montgomery was raised as an only child by her elderly grandparents, who showed her little love or affection. By the time she wrote *Danny*, McClung had been married for twelve years and had given birth to four of her five children. Montgomery was not married until three years after *Anne* was published. Thus, McClung’s writing was based on lived experience, whereas Montgomery’s writing owes more to an imagined ideal.⁶⁴ Another difference is that McClung deliberately integrates social reform and politics in her writing while Montgomery does not. With regards to the

⁶¹ Pearl tells Arthur, “I love singin’” (134); Anne is thrilled when Mrs. Allan says she has a good voice and suggests that she sing in the Sunday-school choir (147).

⁶² Pearl announces that she would like to see a melodeon: “Just the very name of it makes me think of lovely sounds, religious sounds, mountin’ higher and higher and swellin’ out grander and grander, rollin’ right into the great white throne, and shakin’ the streets of gold” (134). Likewise, Anne is entranced by the words of the catechism: “‘There’s something splendid about some of the words. ‘Infinite, eternal and unchangeable.’ Isn’t that grand? It has such a roll to it – just like a big organ playing’” (46).

⁶³ Note that Pearl does not doubt that God will hear and answer her prayers, whereas when she first comes to Green Gables, Anne thinks that God cannot be bothered with a poor orphan. Later Anne gains more confidence in God’s ability to hear her requests.

⁶⁴ In “Wildwood Roses and Sunshine Girls,” Irene Gammel argues that Anne represents Montgomery’s own orphanhood; Gammel demonstrates Montgomery’s “way of healing herself through dreaming up and writing ‘sunshine stories’” (15).

Church, however, it is interesting to note that their roles are reversed: McClung's picture of the church and its clergy is both flattering and positive, whereas Montgomery holds the Presbyterian church up to scrutiny and criticism, albeit in an indirect manner. McClung was acclaimed as one of the first generation of feminist writers, whereas Montgomery disclaimed any interest in women's movements and politics,⁶⁵ and instead developed a genre that focused on an empathetic depiction of childhood. Only recently have critics elucidated Montgomery's subversive critiques of institutions of her era.⁶⁶ Note that Misao Dean also finds evidence of subversion in McClung's writing, suggesting that she "subverts the formula of the domestic novel even which [sic] she uses it" ("Voicing/Language" 66).

Although McClung would have liked to develop her writing skills to a greater degree, her public activism meant that writing became a secondary activity in her life. Montgomery, however, saw herself as primarily a professional writer: "To write has always been my central purpose around which every effort and hope and ambition of my life has grouped itself" (*AP* 52). McClung had a two-fold purpose for her writing, wanting both to entertain and to edify her readers. When speaking on "The Writers' Creed" at a Canadian Authors' Convention, she took the position that no one "should put pen to paper unless he or she had something to say that would amuse, entertain, instruct, inform, comfort, or guide the reader" (*Stream* 365). Montgomery, on the other hand, although she told aspiring writers "If we have something to say that will bring a whiff [sic] of fragrance to a tired soul and to a

⁶⁵ In a journal entry on 19 December 1917, Montgomery writes: "I have never, I admit, felt any particular interest in politics. . . . And now that women have, or are soon to have, the vote I do not at all expect a new heaven or a new earth as the result" (*SJ2* 234).

⁶⁶ In *Writing a Life*, Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston describe Montgomery as "a subversive author, building secret messages of rebellion and resistance against authority (especially patriarchal authority) into her sunny stories. No doubt these messages partly explain her enormous popularity among oppressed peoples living in totalitarian regimes" (12).

weary heart, or a glint of sunshine to a tired life, then that is something worth saying, and it is our duty to try and say it” (qtd. in Karr 48), generally reacted against writing didactically or with the aim of uplifting her readers and declared, “But I *never* write of set purpose to do good or point a moral” (*My Dear* 22). Thus the two writers had different aims for their fiction. A final dissimilarity is one that I will discuss in Chapter 2, when I look at the effect of populist Methodism on McClung and scholarly Presbyterianism on Montgomery, and their consequent different responses to revivalist preaching.

In terms of the novels’ structure, Pearl is absent from several scenes in *Danny* whereas Anne is the centre of most incidents in *Anne of Green Gables*. As for differences between the two heroines, most are related to their familial situations rather than to their characters. Pearl is the oldest of nine children in the Watson family and takes on many responsibilities of a much older child. Anne is an orphan who has had similar responsibilities in previous foster homes, but when she comes to Green Gables, receives many of the benefits of an only child. In terms of character development, Pearl is firmly established in her Christian faith right from the beginning of *Danny* and the time-span of one summer does not allow for evidence of much change, whereas Anne has to learn what it means to be a Christian as she matures over a period of several years. Differences between the two novels will become evident when we look at the authors’ rhetorical strategies and presentation of Christian faith in Chapters 3 and 4.

In 1992, Ruth Compton Brouwer lamented that there had been a reluctance in English-speaking Canada “to make women’s experience in the realm of religion the *central* focus of scholarly study” and claimed that “[p]ersonal spirituality and transcendent concerns” had been largely overlooked (47, 48). She identified the ambivalent or hostile

treatment of religion in women's studies with both Marxism and a "social control framework" that associated organized religion "with patriarchal and repressive structures of authority," and she argued that in an increasingly secular age, there had been an unwillingness "to take on a realm of experience that was largely foreign to the contemporary world view" (48). My goal is to read *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables* in their 1908 context in order to breathe new life into our twenty-first-century understanding of these novels, to ascertain the reasons for their divergent (and later convergent) critical and popular fates, and to fill in some of the gaps in scholarly investigation identified by Brouwer.

Chapter Two

Nellie McClung and Lucy Maud Montgomery: Two Trajectories of Protestant Faith

“Search the facing letters, finding
Steadfast in the broken binding
All that once was I!”

Edna St. Vincent Millay, quoted by Nellie McClung in *The Stream Runs Fast*

When we think of the past we tend to assume that people were simpler in their functions, and shaped by forces that were primary and irreducible. We take for granted that our forebears were imbued with a deeper purity of purpose than we possess nowadays, and a more singular set of mind, . . . But none of this is true. Those who went before us were every bit as wayward and unaccountable and unsteady in their longings as people are today.

Carol Shields, *The Stone Diaries*

In searching for the “real” Nellie McClung and Lucy Maud Montgomery, I begin with the premise that every author writes from a particular worldview and belief about reality. As Leland Ryken claims in *Windows to the World*, “Like anyone else, writers view the world from their own perspective and from their own range of experiences. They select the material for their literary works on the basis of what they know about life, and they mold their material according to their beliefs” (86). Therefore, knowing something of an author’s life and attitudes can be useful for understanding a text. In contrast to Cleanth Brooks and the New Critics, who believed in analyzing a text independently from its author and contemporary situation, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch argues: “Literature being so personal a thing, you cannot understand it until you have some personal conception of the one who wrote it” (qtd. in Mitchell 8). I will therefore first look at the biographies and life writing of Nellie McClung and Lucy Maud Montgomery with the goal of elucidating a summary of their faith journeys. The challenge is to glean that which is real from genres that are

notoriously unstable.¹ As well, because Florence McClung Atkinson burned many of her mother's letters, journals, scrapbooks, and collections of newspaper clippings and Montgomery destroyed her original notebooks, significant primary materials are missing.² In the last part of the chapter, I will look at the differing reactions of McClung and Montgomery to evangelical revivalist preaching, briefly speculate whether these differences are due to McClung's populist Methodism and Montgomery's scholarly Presbyterianism, and suggest the impact of these differences on the representation of Christianity in their novels.

Nellie Letitia Mooney McClung (1873-1951)

Helen ("Nellie") Letitia Mooney was born on a farm in Grey County, Ontario in 1873. During her lifetime, she regularly attended the Methodist Church and, after 1925, the United Church of Canada; her many sermon-like essays and her two autobiographies provide a great deal of material confirming her Christian faith. In her first autobiography, *Clearing in the West* (1935),³ McClung gives a careful analysis of her spiritual growth. She describes the

¹ In *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith examines the challenges of reading works of self-representation and the modern blurring of the generic conventions of autobiography. She notes that originally "truthfulness" in autobiography was a question of historical facticity, rather than the present "agonizing questions of identity, self-definition, self-existence, or self-deception" (4). Theories of women's autobiography abound, especially because so often in the past, "conventions about the 'private' as well as conventions about propriety in self-revelation [were] culturally determined" (17). Smith defines autobiography as "written or verbal communication that takes the speaking 'I' as the subject of the narrative, rendering the 'I' both subject and object" (19). Biographies are likewise prone to instability because of the biases of biographers, who choose details that fit with their own worldviews and disregard those that do not.

² For example, at the PABC, the folder for 1909 in the McClung fonds is empty.

³ In "The Different Voice of Canadian Feminist Autobiographers," Helen Buss describes *Clearing in the West* as "an inspirational novel for young women" (125), suggesting the obvious fictional aspect of McClung's autobiography, whereas she believes *The Stream Runs Fast* to be in more of an essay and memoir style (134). Therefore Buss reads biographies of McClung intertextually with her

conflicts in perspective between her cheerful Irish-Methodist father and her dour Scottish-Presbyterian mother and how she navigated between them. Both parents exerted an influence on McClung, her father offering a balanced view of Christianity and her mother a strong faith in God. In *Clearing in the West*, her father explains to her that one reason Christ was sent to earth was “to show people that a Christian might be, indeed must be, polite and pleasant, and full of fun and fond of music, and pretty colours, and yet serious too and earnest” (47). McClung watches her mother praying on her knees when McClung’s brother is in a storm on Lake Superior, and both she and her father sleep well because “God would not go back on mother” (*Clearing* 50). She records her first time in church answering an altar call at a Methodist revival meeting when the Methodist minister of Chatsworth was holding special services. McClung writes: “My mother, being a Scotch Presbyterian, did not hold with revival services and testimony meetings and confessions, but father was an out-and-out Methodist, and had experienced the strange ‘warming of the heart’ that John Wesley wrote about in his Journal” (*Clearing* 36). The next day, McClung told her parents that she wanted to go back again “to make [her] peace with God,” so her mother explained that to be a Christian meant giving up mocking people, “for that was my besetting sin” (*Clearing* 36). Afterwards, McClung comments that there were times when she looked back, “like the children of Israel,”⁴ and longed for her “degenerate days,” but she hoped that she was

autobiographies to reveal “the full texture of McClung’s stifled voice” (131), just as Irene Gammell does for Montgomery in *Looking for Anne*.

⁴ McClung’s reference is to the Israelites whom Moses led out of servitude in Egypt to travel to the Promised Land (see the Book of Exodus). When encountering any difficulty, the Israelites repeatedly complained to Moses that they would have been better off if they had never left Egypt. Jesus takes up the same theme in the Gospel of Luke, when he calls men to follow Him: “No one, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (9.62).

“numbered with the blest” (*Clearing* 37).⁵ McClung was thus aware at an early age of the ideas of right living and predestination.⁶ She then describes the subsequent ups and downs her faith took as she was exposed to the realities of deaths of animals and the near-death of her sister, whose life was saved by a Methodist minister.

By the autumn of 1880, the Mooneys had moved to a homestead at the junction of Oak Creek, Spring Brook, and the Souris River in southern Manitoba. Two years later the Methodist church was built in Millford, a five-mile walk from the Mooney homestead, and at the age of ten, McClung began her formal education at the newly-built Northfield School. The school operated along Christian principles: “In the day school each morning we read first the lesson and then the daily readings. So when Sunday came we were rooted and grounded in the scripture for that day and the Bible stories flamed into reality with us” (*Clearing* 95). Consequently, McClung’s schoolteacher was influential in her Christian education: “Mr. Schultz gave us composition exercises and memory work from the Scripture lessons too, and the Bible became to us a living book overglowing with human interest” (*Clearing* 96). She describes several experiences when she was aware of God’s comforting presence, and incorporates descriptions of revivalist preaching when attending Normal School in Winnipeg (discussed later), and at a revival in Manitou.

⁵ With her usual sense of humour, McClung writes with reference to her initials NM: “The catechism helped to keep my spirits aflame. In it I seemed to have had special mention. ‘What is your name?’ was one question, early in the book. ‘M or N’ was the answer, so I hoped from that, that I was numbered with the blest and for the time, at least, continued in the way” (*Clearing* 37).

⁶ Calvinism teaches that each individual has been unconditionally predestined or foreordained by God’s sovereign decree before the world began. Those who are saved and destined to eternal life are said to be “elect,” or as McClung writes, to be “numbered with the blest,” because according to the *Westminster Confession*, “These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed: and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished” (Chapter III, <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html>).

It is worthwhile to look briefly at McClung's account of this revival, as it includes the historical event, McClung's reactions to it and to the evangelists,⁷ and the associated vocabulary that would have been familiar to her readers but that has either vanished or is caricatured in the twenty-first century. The revival was led by the Judd sisters, two young women evangelists from Ontario,⁸ and their first "notable conquest" was "the druggist, a big fellow who sang in the choir" (Wes McClung), who "in his testimony announced he was going to live for the glory of God, hereafter; and would burn all the pipes and tobacco in his store the next day. This started a chorus of 'Amens' and 'Hallelujahs'" (*Clearing* 246). The burning of the pipes set off a revival: "Crowds came to the church every night, and dozens came to the altar. Every Sunday morning people joined the church, prayer meetings were held in the afternoons; even the country people were moved" (*Clearing* 247). The revival had lasting effects on the town; the town drunk was converted after his wife asked for prayer for him: "He became a new man, with a new countenance, and one of that district's best loved citizens" (*Clearing* 248). As well,

Family quarrels were made up, old debts paid, drunkards reformed. Churches were crowded, barrooms emptied. We saw these miracles. . . This, then, was the secret of religion. It gave strength to the weak, life to the dead; it made people want to do the right thing. (*Clearing* 247)

⁷ McClung does not just describe the meetings and their influence on the town, but also her personal feelings when she became "bitterly jealous" of Maud Judd and the time she spent with "the boy from the drugstore"; she saw them "so deeply engrossed in each other" that they did not even see her: "I got a distinctly unpleasant feeling. Of course I knew their conversation was on a highly spiritual plane, but even so, she did not need to look up into his face so often; and I knew how shattering those purplish eyes could be" (*Clearing* 246).

⁸ "These young women's labours in other fields, the minister said, had been blessed by God; brands had been plucked from the burning, and many young lives turned into the paths of righteousness before the enemy had time to sow the tares" (*Clearing* 244). At the revival, "They preached and sang, and had altar calls, and after meetings" (*Clearing* 245).

Thus McClung presents a message of social change resulting from conversion, a theme that is repeated in her novels.

McClung also claims that she was influenced by the theology in two novels, *Robert Elsmere*, by Mrs. Humphry Ward⁹ and *John Ward, Preacher*, by Margaret Deland,¹⁰ both of which reflected the doubts and struggles of the late Victorian age when the foundations of orthodox Christianity were being questioned. As Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis comment, it was not surprising that McClung would take her theology from novels like these, because “[o]pposition to theological creeds and dogmas was characteristic of the times” (*Firing* 65). Nevertheless, McClung does not seem to have ever rejected the fundamental tenets of Christianity, which guided her throughout her life.

In *The Stream Runs Fast*, McClung describes how she came to write *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, first writing short stories for Methodist Sunday School publications and eventually turning a short story into the novel. In her next novel, *The Second Chance*, Christianity becomes even more prominent than in *Danny*, and Clarence Karr argues that the “greater textual need for God’s assistance in effecting the solutions in this novel” may have been a result of *Danny*’s success, giving McClung more confidence “in revealing her own strong faith the second time around” (116). Reading selections from *Danny*, *The Second Chance*

⁹ Mrs. Humphry Ward, *née* Mary Augusta Arnold (1851-1920), was an English novelist whose best-known work, *Robert Elsmere* (1888), created a sensation in its day by advocating a Christianity based on social concern rather than on theology. Robert Elsmere is a minister who loses his faith in orthodox Christianity; he no longer believes in the miracles in the Bible or in the physical resurrection of Christ. He leaves the church and devotes his life to helping the poor in London.

¹⁰ Margaret Deland, *née* Margaretta Wade Campbell (1857-1945), was an American novelist, short-story writer, and poet. *John Ward, Preacher* (1888) portrays the irreconcilable and destructive conflict between a Calvinist minister and his freethinking wife, Helen, who cannot accept the doctrine of eternal damnation.

and *The Black Creek Stopping House*,¹¹ McClung began to reach people with her reform message by giving public recitals throughout the West. She fought successfully for women's suffrage, was elected as a liberal MLA to the Alberta legislature in the same year that she travelled to England as a delegate to the Fifth Ecumenical Methodist Conference, worked for the ordination of women, petitioned the Supreme Court regarding the definition of women as *persons*, was appointed to the CBC's first Board of Broadcast Governors, was involved in the Canadian Authors' Association and the Canadian Women's Press Club, and travelled to Geneva as part of the Canadian delegation to the League of Nations, preceded by ten days of meetings of the Oxford Group (Moral Re-Armament)¹² at Interlaken.¹³

McClung's faith was a practical one, as she writes in "My Religion": "I have never been much of a theologian. Doctrinal discussions have a mouldy taste and are dusty to the palate. I believe we all know enough to live by. It is not so much spiritual food we need as spiritual exercise" (130). Therefore, because "God demands our love, not just our amiability," she argues that one's faith should be translated into action:

If we say we love God, we must love the children of men – for they are the children of God. And if we love humanity we must hate humanity's enemies.

¹¹ *The Black Creek Stopping House* (1912), a volume of McClung's short stories, was her last published fiction until *Purple Springs* in 1921.

¹² The Oxford Group was founded by the American evangelist Frank Buchman (1878-1961) in the 1920s, and later was associated with Buchman's "First Century Christian Fellowship" and "Moral Re-Armament."

¹³ It is curious that biographers such as Charlotte Gray do not mention McClung's attendance at the Oxford Group meetings, and Hallett and Davis just mention it in passing. In *The Stream Runs Fast* and in her notebooks, McClung's description of the Oxford Group is full of hope and excitement, whereas she characterizes her meetings at the League of Nations as depressingly sterile and full of helplessness and hopelessness. She writes that the nineteenth assembly of the League of Nations operated "in a spirit of fear and distrust, regret and recrimination," whereas "At Interlaken I saw the Christian message in action. Rich and poor, bishops and communists, coal miners and university professors, all united in one purpose - to know the will of God and do it" (*Stream* 522, 526).

The gardener who loves flowers must destroy the weeds. Toleration when applied to weeds, germs, dirt, mad dogs, and racial poisons ceases to be a Christian virtue. It becomes indifference and cowardice. (“My Religion” 131)

At the same time as McClung was a fervent Christian, she was also ecumenical and tolerant of other worldviews. She said that some people confuse broadmindedness with indifference, but she believed “in being broadminded in respect to other people’s opinions, particularly their religious beliefs, remembering that no one has a corner on light or grace. God reveals Himself in many ways” (“My Religion” 131).¹⁴

McClung’s biographers stress the importance of her faith in her life and writing. Carol Hancock argues that McClung’s theology was integral to her work: “All reflection that we do on her life, her writing, and activities, must be done in the light of her Christian faith”; she concludes, “Nellie McClung was an evangelist. Much of the power and energy of her public work came from her conviction that she truly had Good News for the people” (74, 118). Hallett and Davis claim that McClung’s faith was essential to her optimism because the central doctrine of the resurrection “taught that optimistic hope was as valid an emotion as pessimism, and considerably more constructive for it might direct one’s work towards bettering whatever had caused the pain” (28). They comment on the importance of the Church to McClung, the Church both as a human institution and as a spiritual reality acting through the power of the Holy Spirit: “If a true Christian spirit could be achieved, she thought, then social evils would disappear and God’s Kingdom on earth would come about.

¹⁴ McClung gives a definition of religion at the same time as she condemns intolerance:

Religion is a bridge, and as such must have two qualifications: it must carry our weight, and it must endure in the tide of great waters. If it has these two qualifications, it is a good bridge, irrespective of size, color, or shape. It is a deadly sin, I believe, to lay our axe to the arch of another man’s bridge. (“My Religion” 131-32)

Despite the discouraging results of most of her reform efforts, she retained this belief to the end of her life” (188).¹⁵ Interestingly, they also suggest that McClung’s faith may be part of what distances her from people at the end of the twentieth century: “In an increasingly secular age Nellie McClung may seem to some old-fashioned – even redundant – since her life, her point of view, and her motivation were shaped by that ‘Christian faith which was the ground of her being and her action’” (299). Randi Warne in *Literature as Pulpit* argues, “Denied ordination by virtue of her sex, McClung wrote novels, short stories, essays and newspaper columns in order to preach spiritual renewal alongside social transformation,” and “religion was a central unifying category for her life and work” (2, 6). Likewise Clarence Karr suggests that it was “her bedrock Christian faith, from which all else grew,” and “For her, faith was the single most important facet of life. It is the most prominent thread running through her personal papers and writing” because she felt “the spiritual had not kept pace with the material in the evolution of the modern world” (111, 116, 114). Thus, most critics have seen McClung’s life and writing to be consistent in their Christian perspective.

When examining McClung’s notebooks in the B.C. Archives in Victoria, I noticed with interest her many references to the Bible, to hymns, and to theological concepts, which were interspersed with brief prayers and a multiplicity of daily concerns such as a Butterick pattern number for a boy’s shirt waist (10 cents), addresses, measurements of rooms in the

¹⁵ McClung also believed in the transformative power of Jesus:

There is no greater falsehood than the belief that human nature cannot be changed. Christ knew that the evils of human nature could be cast out – the stony heart exchanged for the heart of flesh, and that fear, which is another name for hatred, could be cast out by the perfect love. . . . Everytime that we say that human nature, meaning the evils of human nature, cannot be changed we deny the success of Christ’s mission. (qtd. in Hallett and Davis 189)

house, items that needed to be bought, and a list of people who wanted her to make speaking engagements. I, too, found that McClung's faith was integrated with all aspects of her life.

Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874-1942)

Born in Clifton, Prince Edward Island, Lucy Maud Montgomery was raised in the Presbyterian Church but gradually rejected many of its doctrines, even though outwardly she was a model Presbyterian minister's wife and remained faithful to the Presbyterian Church when the United Church of Canada was formed in 1925.¹⁶ Even a cursory look at her letters and life-writings reveals the spiritual complexity and ambiguity that lies behind the authorial voice of *Anne of Green Gables*.¹⁷

Many biographers¹⁸ have discussed Montgomery's upbringing in the Cavendish Presbyterian Church where she attended Sunday School as a child.¹⁹ In *The Alpine Path*, Montgomery describes her Scottish ancestors as "loyal, clannish, upright, God-fearing folk,

¹⁶ When the majority of Presbyterian churches voted to join the United Church of Canada in a preliminary vote held in 1923, Montgomery wrote in her journal: "My Presbyterian Church has gone – I owe and feel neither love nor allegiance to its hybrid, nameless successor without atmosphere, tradition or personality"; later, she added, "[T]he Spirit of God no longer works through the church for humanity. It did once but it has worn out its instrument and dropped it. Today it is working through science" (*SJ* 132, 211).

¹⁷ As Irene Gammel points out in *Looking for Anne*, Montgomery ruthlessly burned and discarded letters, diaries and notebooks, so that the documents that exist presently, including journals, scrapbooks, photographs, and letters, do not contain Montgomery's original notebooks: "Only the distilled version that she wanted us to see was allowed to survive" (14). Gammel likens Montgomery to "the unreliable narrator in a modernist novel" (15). Gammel therefore poses two questions: "Just how reliable is the story of her life after several revisions? What ultimately is the relationship between the public celebrity author and the private woman?" ("Life" 5).

¹⁸ See, for example, Mollie Gillen's *The Wheel of Things: A Biography of L.M. Montgomery*, Hilda M. Ridley's *The Story of L.M. Montgomery*, Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston's *Writing a Life: L.M. Montgomery*, Jane Urquhart's *L.M. Montgomery*, and Genevieve Wiggins's *L.M. Montgomery*.

¹⁹ Montgomery writes, "Some of my sweetest memories are of the hours spent in that old church with my little mates, with our testaments and lesson sheets held in our cotton-gloved hands. Saturday night we had been made learn [sic] our catechism and our golden texts and our paraphrases" (*AP* 46).

inheriting traditions of faith and simplicity and aspiration” (18). In her younger years, Sunday reading consisted of the Bible, *Pilgrim’s Progress* and Talmage’s *Sermons*: “*Pilgrim’s Progress* was read and re-read with never failing delight,” and Montgomery claims she found Talmage’s *Sermons* “as interesting as fiction” (*AP* 49-50).

Montgomery’s journals and letters make frequent reference to church services, missionary meetings, choir practice, evangelistic meetings, and all the activities that made the church the hub of social life in a small Canadian town. What is fascinating about the journals and letters is the mixture of orthodox and unorthodox statements that Montgomery makes in regard to her faith; she frequently contradicts herself or negates views she has previously expressed. Many of her entries before her marriage in 1911 could be considered orthodox. In a letter to Ephraim Weber, one of her correspondents, Montgomery identifies herself as a Christian; she writes, “I call myself a Christian, in that I believe in Christ’s teachings and do my poor best to live up to them. I am a member of the church believing that with all its mistakes and weakness it is the greatest power for good in the world and I shall always do what I can to help its cause” (*GGL* 67). She talks of “the pure and awful beauty of early Christianity,” laments the corruption of the contemporary church, and claims that if the church had “retained its primitive simplicity, instead of becoming overgrown with dogma and verbiage [it] would be as potent a force today as it was when the martyrs of the Colosseum [sic] sealed their faith with their blood (*SJ1* 223). She insists that she is not “religiously inclined” but then goes on to contradict that claim:

I have always possessed a deep *curiosity* about “things spiritual and eternal.”
I want to *find out* – to *know* – and hence I am always poking and probing into creeds and religions, dead and alive, wanting to know for knowledge’ sake

what vital spark of immortal truth might be buried among all the verbiage of theologies and systems. (*SJ1* 196)

This search for “immortal truth” and the “kernel of truth in Christianity” are evidence of her desire to discover the reality that underlies theological systems, yet her motive is for the sake of intellectual knowledge, not for personal spiritual growth (*SJ1* 196, 271). Similarly, she advises another correspondent, George MacMillan, “You find it hard to reconcile your literary ideal with your religious ideal. Now, I think that is because you have possibly too narrow a view of what religion really is - perhaps you are too much inclined to regard the *letter* as religion instead of the *spirit*” (*My Dear* 20). This dichotomy between the letter of the Law and the spirit of the Law is one of the themes Montgomery explores in *Anne of Green Gables*.

On the subject of prayer, Montgomery disagreed with formal and rote public prayers. She writes,

To me prayer has always seemed something very sacred – the intimate communion between the soul and its Great Source, hardly to be breathed into words, much less uttered before others. . . . Prayer to me is an aspiration and an up-reaching, not a string of more or less selfish and material requests. (*SJ2* 112-13)

This definition is very much like Anne’s initial attitude towards prayer, when she wants to be outside in a field or the woods and to “just *feel* a prayer,” rather than kneel down and pray out loud (47).

In regards to the Bible, the Holy Book central to Protestant Christianity, Montgomery both admired it and denied that it was divinely inspired. She writes to Weber on 8 May 1905:

You know to be frank, I do not look upon the Bible as a book inspired by God. I look upon it as a book much of which is inspired with God -- a collection of the myths, history, poetry, ethics and philosophy of a singularly spiritual (taking into account the period in which they lived) people whose superior conception of the Great Intelligence fitted them to be the mouth-pieces of that Intelligence. (*GGL* 30)

Yet two years later in May of 1907, she tells Weber that she had been carefully reading at least seven chapters of the Bible every Sunday:

I congratulate you on discovering the -- Bible! I did it a year ago, though and have been reading it -- really, *reading* it -- ever since; . . . It is a wonderful book -- the crystallized wisdom and philosophy and experience of the most deeply religious people who ever existed. (*GGL* 53-4)

Montgomery explains that the Jewish conception of God in the Bible “was naturally marred by the errors of all human conceptions of the Inconceivable” (*GGL* 30); she was well aware of the impossibility of man’s finite mind completely understanding and adequately communicating things which, by their very nature, cannot be fully understood or communicated, and this led her to reject the Christian belief in the Bible as divinely-inspired.

Towards the Church, Montgomery expressed mixed feelings about her motives for attending. In 1901, she writes in her journal that she went to church because it was the

socially respectable thing to do, people would talk if she did not, and church was the place to meet others socially,²⁰ but she replaces these “miserable reasons” with what she considers to be better ones:

I go to church because I think it well to shut the world out from my soul now and then and look my spiritual self squarely in the face. I go because I think it well to search for truth everywhere, even if we never find it in its entirety; and finally I go because all the associations of the church and service make for good and bring the best that is in me to the surface – the memories of old days, old friends, and childish aspirations for the beautiful and sacred. All these come back, like the dew of some spiritual benediction – and so I go to church. (*SJ1* 262)

Here one can see Montgomery’s continuing search for truth and her nostalgia for past joys experienced at church. Invariably, the Presbyterian Church provided the standard by which she judged other churches. For example, she found the Universalist Church²¹ “quite interesting but certainly would not care for it as a steady thing. . . .The music was charming and I enjoyed the whole service but couldn’t exactly see where the religion came in.” On the other hand, she found St. Luke’s Anglican cathedral in Halifax “very ‘high’ and religious observance there had become positive mummery without pith or meaning. The kernel of

²⁰ Montgomery writes:

It’s the respectable thing to do – this is one of the flimsy [reasons] – and I would be branded black sheep [sic] if I didn’t go. Then, in this quiet, uneventful land, church is really a social function and the only regular one we have. We get out, see our friends and are seen of them, and air our best clothes which otherwise would be left for the most part to the tender mercies of moth and rust. (*SJ1* 262)

²¹ The Universalist Church merged with the American Unitarian Association in 1961 to form the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Christianity is so shrouded in the husks of ritual that it is almost lost altogether” (*SJI* 271). In every church, the “kernel of Christianity” was what she was seeking.

Montgomery believed that God had a purpose for each person’s life and had equipped each person to fulfill that purpose; she advises MacMillan in March of 1906, “The work God gives us to do and fits and qualifies us for doing must I think be *our* highest” and therefore one should do what “comes easiest and best”:

To think otherwise would argue a purposelessness in God’s dealings that I cannot admit – nay, a worse than purposelessness – positive cruelty in dealing with His creatures. . . . I do *not* believe that God ever asks or wishes any man or woman “to forgo their ideals for the sake of another and more exacting path of service.” (*My Dear* 21)

Thus, she did not doubt God’s existence or His agency, and she believed in the value of trials and difficulties as God’s means for providing discipline²² and life lessons, as she writes to MacMillan in 1906:

Yes, I agree with you that all the trials of an uncongenial environment should be regarded as discipline. I have been led to this conclusion by the marked influence my external surroundings and the life I have had to live for the past eight years has had upon my character. I see now plainly that I *needed* the training very much and that it has done me much good in many ways but chiefly in enabling me to form habits of self-control. (*My Dear* 19)

Here she is reflecting the words of Paul’s letter to the Romans where he declares, “We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance,

²² In *A History of Christian Thought*, Paul Tillich observes that Calvin saw the Church as having “three marks: doctrine, sacraments, and discipline. The element of discipline is decisive” (272).

character; and character, hope” (5.3-4), and also the words of James in his epistle where he counsels counting it all joy “when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have [its] perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (1.2-4). She again echoes Paul’s teaching when she observes that suffering has made her more sympathetic to others:

And I know one thing certainly. The discomfort and in many cases the absolute suffering I have undergone as a consequence of my environment has made me much more sympathetic for the failings and struggles and trials of others than I would otherwise have been – given me more insight into them – more understanding. (*My Dear* 20)

These words are similar to those of Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, in which he writes that God “comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble” (1.4).²³ Montgomery writes in a similar vein to Weber in May 1905: “God’s pain is indeed one of his ministering spirits. Great mysteries of soul-birth and soul-growth are bound up in it and if we have the courage and the endurance to make a friend of it it will bring great gifts to us” (29). Therefore, although at the time of her rejection of her suitor Herman Leard she thought “*nothing* could ever compensate for the suffering I endured or make it worth while,” later she saw clearly “how vastly it enriched and deepened” her life. She exclaims, “I *wouldn’t have missed that experience* to be a saint in heaven!! *Nothing* could atone to me for having missed it out of my life” (*My Dear* 31). Thus biblical teaching permeated her thinking.

²³ Note, however, that Montgomery makes no mention of God’s comfort, only of learning from her suffering and thus gaining empathy with the sufferings of others.

As a result of her characteristic Presbyterian self-examination, Montgomery was very aware of a dualism in her nature that reflected the conflict between her passionate will and her intellectual moral conscience.²⁴ Speaking theologically, she concludes:

The great lack of Christianity – its cardinal mistake – lies in the fact that it has over-emphasized the spiritual – taught that the body must be mortified – or at best, disregarded as of no importance – a false and ugly – yea, and a blasphemous doctrine – blasphemous because it lowers the “image of the Creator” below the brutes. Mind and soul can express themselves only through the body and therefore we should try to make it and keep it as perfect an instrument for their expression as possible. (*SJ1* 347)

Montgomery was thus in agreement with the foundational Biblical presentation of the wholeness of man’s nature, which view was abandoned by theological writings that incorporated the Platonic focus upon the duality of flesh and spirit.

In the years before 1911, Montgomery also voiced several unorthodox viewpoints as she wrestled with theological issues and the dogma of the Presbyterian Church, and rebelled against its restraints. Even before becoming a clergyman’s wife, she felt constrained and forced into conformity by the society she lived in: “I have to follow the old traditional paths of thought & expression or I would get into hot water immediately. Cavendish is wholesomely (?) oldfashioned and orthodox” (*GGL* 46). She complains in her journal in July 1896 about having to attend church twice on a Sunday: “We dress with weariness to the flesh and tramp to church in the heat, sit a long and mostly very dull sermon out in a stuffy

²⁴ In her journal on 8 April 1898, after the previously-quoted passage about the uncomfortable blend in her make-up of the passionate Montgomery blood and the Puritan Macneill conscience, Montgomery writes: “Passion says, ‘Go on. Take what crumbs of happiness fall in your way.’ Conscience says, ‘Do so if you will. Feed your soul on those blood-red husks; but I’ll scourge you well for it afterwards’” (*SJ1* 213).

pew and come home again not a whit better than we went - not as good indeed for we have got a headache and feel very vicious for our pains” (SJ1 162). She had an ideal Sunday in her mind, but was “such a coward” that she could not act on it, but had to “drift on with the current of conventionality”:

But I would *like* to go away on Sunday morning to the heart of some great solemn wood and sit down among the ferns with only the companionship of the trees and the wood-winds echoing through the dim, moss-hung aisles like the strains of some vast cathedral anthem. And I would stay there for hours alone with nature and my own soul.

I think that would really do me great good. But how dreadfully unorthodox and *odd* it would be. The local spinsters would die of horror. (SJ1 162-163)

One might ask, though, whether this is truly an unorthodox position, or simply a reaction to boring sermons and uncomfortable pews, and a preference for enjoying God’s creation.

Montgomery did, however, make several statements that show how her thinking deviated from orthodox Christian beliefs. In her journal entry of 7 October 1897, she traces her development from believing in a “very primitive” theology where she took everything literally, to worrying about doctrinal differences between Baptists and Presbyterians concerning baptism, to periods of “conscience spasms” when she “cried, prayed, and determined desperately to be good” (SJ1 196). But after joining the church, she realized she had made a mistake and put herself in a false position because it meant assenting to certain teachings that she no longer accepted:

I cannot recall just when I ceased to believe implicitly in those teachings – the process was so gradual. My belief in the fine old hell of literal fire and brimstone went first – it and others seemed to drop away like an outgrown husk, so easily that I knew it not until one day it dawned upon me that they had been gone a long time. (*SJI* 197)

Thus she writes to Weber that she has given up “belief in fore-ordination and election and the Virgin Birth,” although it could be argued that each of these three beliefs is man-made dogma and non-essential to the Christian faith (*GGL* 54). Montgomery was of the opinion that hell was also a man-made idea and that the doctrine of eternal torment was a “hellish” idea. She writes to Weber,

How could men ever have so libelled God? They must have judged Him from their own evil hearts. *They* would have tortured their enemies eternally if they could. God had power, therefore He would. Such seems to have been their argument. I admit that a consciousness of sin and remorse is a hell in itself. But I believe that “as long as a human soul lives it can turn to God and goodness if it so will.” (*GGL* 88)

Therefore she challenged the idea of hell for its inconsistency in the portrayal of God.²⁵

Montgomery was ignoring the issue of balancing justice and mercy in the character of

²⁵ Montgomery gives as an example an old lady, “one of the sweetest kindest creatures alive”:

She would not harm a fly and I have seen her weep bitterly over the sufferings of a wounded cat. But it puts her into a simple fury to even hint that a merciful and loving God will hardly burn for all eternity the great majority of his creatures. I cannot understand this attitude on the part of so many. Nothing seems to enrage some people so much as any attempt to take away or mitigate their dearly beloved hell. (*GGL* 63)

God.²⁶ For Montgomery, hell had nothing to do with justice, and she seems to have rejected the doctrine of hell on the grounds that it repelled her.

Montgomery had a similar opinion about heaven being a theological construct that was inconsistent with how people behaved, because “even the ideas of people who call themselves devout Christians about heaven are almost ludicrously vague and shapeless -- and they don’t seem to find the prospect especially inviting either. At least, they never seem in any hurry to go there -- far from it” (*GGL* 38). Instead, she toyed with the idea of reincarnation, a definite challenge to orthodox Christianity. In April 1906, she writes to Weber that she finds the idea of going “from one existence to another” far more attractive than the idea of the Christian heaven: “I’d rather life as it is in this world, accepting all its ups and downs, its sorrows and pains for its joys and delights, than such” (*GGL* 38). She repeats the same speculation to MacMillan in September of 1906, noting that the doctrine of transmigration held a charm for her: “In some moods I like to think of a succession of lives, following after each other with the restful sleep of death between as the night between the busy waking days. It does not seem any more incredible than unending existence” (*My Dear* 26-27). It was not until the following year that she writes on the same subject in her journal:

I want to grow better and nobler – to root out faults and prune off unsightly growths – but I want to be I and nobody else through all the ages of eternity,

²⁶ C.S. Lewis gives a particularly interesting interpretation of hell in *The Great Divorce*, in which he demonstrates that hell is not a place of retributive punishment, but is rather a choice that God allows because of His gift of free will, so that people who do not wish to be with God are not forced to be. Lewis concludes: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done’” (66-7). Jonathan Kvanvig analyses Lewis’s view: “Lewis believes that the doors of hell are locked from the inside rather than from the outside. Thus, according to Lewis, if escape from hell never happens, it is not because God is not willing that it should happen. Instead, residence in hell is eternal because that is just what persons in hell have chosen for themselves” (120).

through all the lives that are to follow this. Sometimes I take a queer, whimsical comfort out of the thought, “Never mind! Next time I’m born I’ll have what I’ve missed in this life.” (*SJ1* 329)

Thus, although Montgomery was considering the idea of reincarnation, she did qualify it as merely a fanciful possibility. She writes to MacMillan about a Sunday when there was no church service in Cavendish and she spent the greater part of the day alone in the woods. After describing the beauty of the woods, which she says did her more good “than church does *sometimes*,” she adds, “If I believe seriously in the doctrine of transmigration I should think I had been a *tree* in some previous stage of existence. I always feel so utterly and satisfyingly at home in the woods” (*My Dear* 26). The use of “believe” rather than “believed” in the conditional tense makes interpretation of her exact convictions difficult to ascertain.

Probably Montgomery’s most heretical statement concerns the divinity of Christ, a foundational belief in the Christian faith that holds that Jesus Christ was both man and God incarnate. In a letter to Weber on 28 June 1905, she writes:

Like you, I cannot accept the divinity of Christ. I regard him as immeasurably the greatest of all great teachers and as the son of God in the same sense that any man inspired of God is a son of God. Further than this I cannot, as yet at least, go. I believe that He was truly sent from and of God, as are all great teachers. And possibly he may also stand as an emblem of man in his highest and yet-to-be-attained development -- the perfect flower of the tree of life blooming before its time as an earnest of what may be. (*GGL* 35)

Montgomery does, however, qualify her statement when she grants that she could not “as yet at least” go farther than seeing Jesus as a good man, thus leaving the possibility open that she might yet change her mind. She goes on to write that she doubts that the gospels are accurate in their reporting of Christ’s words, and that Darwin’s discovery of evolution “dealt the death blow to the old theology of Christ dying for Adam’s sin. If man rose up from a lower form, as all scientists now agree, there was no ‘fall’ and consequently no need of any ‘sacrifice’ to square God and man” (*GGL* 35). Thus she believed that science had disproved the necessity of the cross for man’s salvation.

In 1908 Montgomery read lectures by Bob Ingersoll,²⁷ who had been labelled devilish when she was a child. She was amazed to find that most of what had been considered heresy now seemed commonplace:

With the exception of his disbelief in a personal God, Christ’s divinity and eternal punishment -- and as you know, the last two would not be exceptions with all ministers -- everything he states would be admitted openly or tacitly by any minister under 40 years of age today. He was howled down because he believed in evolution and denied that the garden of Eden was a historical fact, because he denied predestination, and stated that the God of the old testament was not a deity worthy of undiluted love and admiration and denied the verbal inspiration of the Bible. These were his principal “heresies.” (*GGL* 68)

²⁷ Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll (1833–1899) was a Civil War veteran, American political leader, and orator during the Golden Age of Freethought, noted for his defence of agnosticism. Raised in a devout Christian home, he turned against Christianity after his pastor father was subjected to a bigoted trial in Madison, Ohio that stripped him of his ministerial office.

Thus Montgomery aligned herself with modern liberal thinking in the Presbyterian Church. She thought that it was a good thing that the Catechism was no longer being used in Sunday Schools because the Shorter Catechism taught “things that are no longer believed – and never should have been believed. When one comes to think of it it was a hideous thing to teach children the doctrines of ‘election’ and ‘predestination.’ What a conception of God to implant in a child’s mind!” (SJ1 378). In a period of depression in December of 1909, Montgomery expresses her rebellious feelings towards God:

I feel tonight as if God were indeed the cruel tyrant of Calvin’s theology, who tortures his creatures for no fault of their own at His whim and pleasure. I feel like shrieking at Him defiantly. “Why did you create me to suffer like this? Why did you thwart every wish and instinct and sensibility you implanted in me? I will not give you reverence or love any more than a creature strapped to the rack will love or reverence his tormentor.” (SJ1 363)

She recognized afterwards that this was just a temporary black mood, but she hoped that by writing out her feelings at that time, she would later be more empathetic with others: “I shall always let it stand to make me more gentle in my judgment of rash deeds in others, when I recall the fearful thoughts that surged into my own soul, like some foul brood engendered in darkness” (SJ1 363).²⁸ Thus, in her written defiance of God, Montgomery did not evidence doubt of His existence, but she did challenge the idea of His goodness.

²⁸ There are many similarities between Montgomery’s journals, which reveal a wide discrepancy between her public and private selves, and Mother Teresa’s correspondence between her confessors and superiors in *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*. David Van Biema calls the latter

a startling portrait in self-contradiction – that one of the great human icons of the past 100 years, whose remarkable deeds seemed inextricably connected to her closeness to God and who was routinely observed in silent and seemingly peaceful prayer by her associates as well as the television camera, was living out a very different spiritual reality privately, an arid landscape from which the deity had disappeared. (2)

Critics have been divided in their opinions about Montgomery's presentation of Christianity in *Anne of Green Gables*. Gavin White argues that "there is very little religion in her books" (84), Sylvia Duvernet finds theosophic aspects in her writing, Margaret Anne Doody argues that Montgomery moves away from her Presbyterian, Calvinist faith towards a "feminine religion" that portrays transcendence "within Nature" (23), while Shirley Foster and Judy Simons identify pantheistic leanings that anticipate Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (158), and Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston refer to "the Emersonian pantheism of Anne" (Preface viii).

On the other hand, Rosemary Ross Johnston argues that it is "the strength of Montgomery's religious impulse – the ideology or system of beliefs which, in John Stephens' phrase, 'makes sense of the world'²⁹ through a belief in the Christian (and in the early books at least, with some gentle humour, Presbyterian) God – that gives the texts their structural coherence" (7). Rubio states that in Montgomery's fiction, "Presbyterian faith was core to her central characters' identity" ("Scottish-Presbyterian" 100), and John Sorfleet traces Anne's spiritual growth as her original values "based in nature and the imagination" become "enriched by Christian love and ethics" ("Pagan" 182). Monika Hilder claims that "Montgomery's exploration of faith is not a rejection of Puritanism but a recovery of the biblical roots of Puritanism, not one of deposal and substitution but of restoration and redemption. . . . [Montgomery] dramatizes the theology of grace and the importance of the childlike" ("Unholy" 41); in another article, Hilder argues that Montgomery "portrays early 20th-century Canadian society as thoroughly rooted in the Christian master-narrative of God as creator, saviour and sustainer of humanity" ("Imagining" 310). Thus Montgomery's

²⁹ John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992), 8.

complex and contradictory faith perspective is echoed in critics' varying appraisals of religion in her novel.

Two Parallel Events in the Authors' Lives

In response to a paper that I gave at Congress 2008 in Vancouver on McClung and Montgomery, Carole Gerson asked if I thought their different denominations had any influence on their respective worldviews, because McClung was Methodist and Montgomery was such a staunch Presbyterian that she and her husband resisted church union in 1925 (e-mail 27 May 2008). In answering that question, I discovered an interesting parallel between McClung and Montgomery, which occurred when each one was away from home studying to be a teacher and each was moved by evangelistic revivalist preaching. I will compare their reactions and speculate whether the difference in their responses was due to their different denominational backgrounds and whether it helps to explain their subsequent pronouncements on the Christian faith and their differing presentations of Protestant faith in their novels.

As briefly mentioned in the Introduction, evangelical Protestantism was a major influence on Canadians in the nineteenth century. A trans-denominational movement, evangelicalism was rooted in the Calvinism of the Reformation, in the Puritanism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in the Methodism of the eighteenth century (Choquette 225). In the second half of the nineteenth century, evangelicalism grew from a revitalizing movement within the Protestant churches to become the most powerful religious and social influence in Protestant Canada in its determination to proclaim the Gospel, to establish the Kingdom of God "in an English-speaking Protestant form," and to establish

Canada as the Dominion of God (Choquette 232). Evangelicalism included all those English-speaking Protestants who believed in four things: crucicentrism – the belief that Jesus Christ was their Lord and Saviour, who by his death and resurrection had atoned for their sins and brought eternal life to those who chose to follow him; Biblicism – the belief that the Bible was the word of God in which God revealed himself; conversionism – the emphasis upon the necessity of a conversion experience to Christ at a specific time and place; and activism – the call to bear witness to Christ by word and deed and thus change society in the process (Bebbington 13).

Unlike the post-Reformation emphasis on right doctrine, which the large denominations codified in the form of doctrinal statements and catechisms that condemned dissenters as heretics and rested on intellectual assent “to God as first Truth,” Canada’s First Great Awakening in the eighteenth century saw a new emphasis on a “religion of the heart” reflected in a faith that determined all aspects of the believer’s personal and social life and that rejected those who were only “Sunday Christians” (Choquette 227-8).

Revivals and evangelistic preaching were a hallmark of evangelicalism, which by the twentieth century was perceived as the middle ground between the theological liberalism of the mainline Protestant denominations and the cultural separatism of fundamentalist Christians. In studying the impact of revivals on the Maritimes and New England in the late eighteenth century, historian George Rawlyk found himself moved by evangelist Henry Alline’s pietism and spirituality and by accounts of the changes that took place in rural communities during and after revivals; these accounts overcame his intellectual scepticism

and caused him to concede the reality of spiritual experience and the importance of revivals to effect positive changes in society.³⁰ He concludes:

I no longer consider it to be academic suicide to view the evangelical tradition in a sympathetic yet critical way and to argue that it is essential for Canadian scholars both inside and outside the tradition to fit it carefully within the context both of Maritime and Canadian historical development. Not to do so, in my view, is both to distort the past and to distort the present.

(x)

I am encouraged, therefore, to look at both Montgomery and McClung in the light of their responses to evangelical preaching.

Revivalist preaching involved a return to a traditional gospel message emphasizing repentance, conversion, and holy living. The experience of conversion in revivals varied, but usually followed a pattern: “an initial phase of self-criticism or confession of unworthiness and sinfulness before God”; “the visitation of God’s blessing or grace,” accompanied by peace, “warming of one’s heart,” or joy; and the expression of a firm resolve to change from one’s sinful ways to a life that bore witness to the Gospel (Choquette 229). Thus,

³⁰ In *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline*, George Rawlyk traces his interest in Alline with a parallel reassessment of his own faith:

I had in my earlier work found it very difficult to come to grips with Alline’s pietism and spirituality since among other things, his religiosity raised fundamental questions about the essential nature of my own Christian faith. In my attempt to escape some of the implications of my changing religious views I had turned in the late 1960s to social-psychology and intellectual history, determined to fit Alline and myself into this seemingly acceptable and sophisticated scholarly paradigm. For me, all historical writing is basically autobiographical in nature. And certainly my writing has often painfully reflected my own psychological, intellectual, and religious search for meaning and stability. (ix)

evangelicals “made a specific and personal experience of conversion into the required gateway into an adult Christian life” (Choquette 229).³¹

Both Montgomery and McClung were faced with the evangelical call to conversion, and each responded differently. In her first autobiographical book, *Clearing in the West*, McClung writes about a conversion experience³² that occurred in 1889 when she was attending Normal School in Winnipeg at the age of sixteen to study for her teacher’s certificate. While in Winnipeg, she regularly attended Grace Methodist Church, but for a time she attended First Baptist Church with her friend Annie Dale, whom she admired for “her unselfish life, her kindly spirit” that made McClung “want to be like her” (212). McClung writes about enjoying the “great friendliness” of the Baptist congregation, although she was bothered by the shouting and wild gesticulations of the preacher, Reverend Alexander Grant (211).³³ Annie told her that the Reverend Grant was “a mighty man of God” and explained: “He is a revivalist. . . and a great man in his own way. He has a vision

³¹ Christie and Gauvreau comment on the “new revivalism” at the beginning of the twentieth century: “The watchword of the new revivalism was the direct, colloquial insistence on the love of Christ for the sinner, and the consequent reemphasis upon the individual’s immediate, emotional understanding of Christianity” (48). As we have seen in the Introduction, some interpreters of secularization have viewed social evangelism as tantamount to secular thought because of its rejection of theological dogma, whereas Christie and Gauvreau argue that “the emphasis placed by social evangelism on outward Christian experience as evidence of firm religious commitment resulted in a form of evangelical piety as coherent as the more intellectual adherence to the systems of Victorian theology” (xii).

³² Feminist critic Misao Dean labels the scene in *The Stream Runs Fast* in which McClung voices her resentment of the nausea of pregnancy and comes to identify with all women, her “conversion” scene (“Voicing/Language” 71). The *OED* defines conversion as “The bringing of any one over to a specified religious faith, profession, or party, esp. to one regarded as true, from what is regarded as falsehood or error. (Without qualification, usually = conversion to Christianity.)” Also, “The turning of sinners to God; a spiritual change from sinfulness, ungodliness, or worldliness to love of God and pursuit of holiness.” Dean’s usage is a good example of the shift of a term that had religious connotations up to the end of the nineteenth century, to a secularized meaning in the twentieth.

³³ In 1889 Alexander Grant accepted a call to First Baptist in Winnipeg, “opening a new chapter in the story of Baptist work in western Canada that had begun in 1873” (Airhart “Ordering” 107). He preached there until 1897, when he died in a canoeing accident.

of a lost world. He sees the stream of humanity drifting to the cataract and rushes out to warn them” (211-12). One day, in response to Reverend Grant’s preaching, McClung saw herself as “a lost soul”: “I became conscious of Sin, not isolated sins. It was Sin, black, heavy, and cold, that clutched my heart. I had all the loneliness and isolation of the damned” (212). She consequently stood up in church, a public demonstration that she felt the need of prayer.³⁴ McClung writes that she stood because “I knew I needed anything I could get”; in a meeting held after the main service, she saw “some noisy conversions” and had “every sensation of spiritual sea-sickness,” while her heart was as “heavy as lead” (212). Understanding how McClung was feeling, Annie explained the plan of salvation to her “in her sweetly persuasive way”: “She said we were all sinners until we came under the sacrifice of Christ, and then we became free and that there was no other way to find peace” (212). The two girls then prayed together. As a result of this experience, McClung was a changed person:

That night I slept a new sleep of great refreshing; psychologists may say it had a touch of hypnotism. But I know I awakened in a new world, and to a new vision of being in harmony with God.

³⁴ This call to stand is a variation of the altar call, a practice in some evangelical churches in which those who wish to make a new or renewed commitment to Jesus Christ are invited to raise their hands, stand, or come to the front, which frequently occurs at the end of an evangelical address. The altar call had its beginnings in the revivals of nineteenth-century American evangelist Charles Finney. The practice of making a public proclamation of faith is based on passages in the Bible in which Jesus states, “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10.32, Luke 12.8), and is reflected in Paul’s statement in his letter to the Romans “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (10.9).

The first change I noticed was that I was no longer afraid of the dark or of lightning or sudden death. I was emancipated from all fear, and with that came a buoyancy of spirit. (212)

Despite the ubiquity of such experiences, Hallett and Davis characterize this episode in McClung's life as a "somewhat disturbing experience" and a case of "highly emotional religious persuasion" (45). They offer several explanations for McClung's response: her "youthful inexperience"; "a vulnerable outgoing personality"; "a very sensitive but as yet immature emotional nature"; an "undirected need to be in the limelight"; a "tendency to dramatize herself in very dubious ways"; and the attractive "religious spirit" of Miss Dale whom McClung possibly wished to impress "with a display of her religious sensitivity to the Baptist concept of sin" (45). What they do not acknowledge, however, are the dramatic lasting changes that happened to McClung, which cannot be dismissed as pure emotionalism. True to countless conversion narratives, McClung experienced an inner peace "that passes all understanding" (Phil. 4.7).

McClung was later able to explain the plan of salvation to her future husband, Wes, during long theological discussions. Wes was full of doubts and found himself in conflict with church doctrines and his father's "stern" theology and belief in eternal punishment; Nellie's exposition of the "plan of salvation" that she had learned from Annie Dale in Winnipeg helped him (*Clearing* 291). McClung concludes: "I have always been grateful to the Reverend Alexander Grant and to dear Annie Dale" (*Clearing* 212). Thus her experience with evangelical preaching was life-changing. To use the vivid organic imagery of the

parable of the sower in Matthew 13,³⁵ the seed of this epiphany fell on good ground and produced much fruit.

Montgomery's experience of evangelical preaching was initially similar to McClung's. In her journal entries of May 1894, when she was twenty years old and studying for her teacher's certificate at Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown, Montgomery describes going to hear B. Faye Mills, an American evangelist who was holding a series of revival meetings in Charlottetown, causing the place to be "wild with excitement" (*SJI* 105).³⁶ The first time she heard him, she noted that Mr. Mills did not impress her "as being much of a speaker," but added that there was "something very magnetic about him" (*SJI* 105).³⁷ Her two friends were affected by the words of the evangelist: "Ida 'got converted', as

³⁵ Then [Jesus] spoke many things to them in parables, saying:

Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Jesus then goes on to explain the meaning of this parable:

Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

³⁶ According to his obituary in the *New York Times*, Mills was reputed to have made 500,000 converts in ten years (2 May 1916). He claimed that in his twelve years as an evangelist, he spoke to five million persons and converted two hundred thousand of them (McLoughlin 335).

³⁷ A reporter said that Mills was "a smooth-faced, unassuming sort of person." He called Mills' delivery "attractive by its very simplicity. There are no great flights of eloquence, no sudden outbursts of passion" (St. Paul *Daily Pioneer Press*, 11 May 1893, p. 1, qtd. in McLoughlin 330).

they say – how I hate the expression! – and I imagine Mary C. was pretty hard hit” (*SJ1* 105). Thus, Montgomery was aware of a magnetism surrounding the evangelist that was independent of his poor speaking qualities. At the same time, she was intellectually and emotionally opposed to the idea of conversions.

The following Sunday, Montgomery and Mary Campbell went to the “Big Brick,” Knox Presbyterian Church, to hear Mills speak at the 2:30 service:

Mr. Mills’ address was very fine and made me do some thinking. I have been feeling rather dissatisfied with my life this past week or so. Besides, I knew Mary Campbell really wanted to “come out” but was a little afraid of me – my sarcastic tongue and unfailing and unsparing raillery. I knew if I came out she would, too; if I turned away so would she. The responsibility was one I did not care to assume and the result was that we both signed the prayer cards³⁸ when they were passed around. (*SJ1* 105)

Montgomery thus made a public commitment to be a follower of Jesus Christ, but she was unsure of the wisdom of her decision even at the time: “After all, I hardly know whether I’ve done a wise thing. There are some things I find it very hard to believe” (*SJ1* 105). She joined 2700 others at the farewell service that same evening and comments in her journal:

³⁸ William G. McLoughlin and Michael J. McClymond both note that although Mills did not invent “decision cards,” he used them more systematically than any previous evangelist (334, 17). The card which was handed to all inquirers stated:

I have an honest desire henceforth to lead a Christian life.

Name _____

Residence _____

Church or pastor preferred _____

Date _____

(McLoughlin 334).

“The meeting was certainly very thrilling. But *feeling* and *belief* are such very different things – at least, after we begin *really* to think” (*SJ1* 105). The conflict between Montgomery’s head and heart are apparent, a tension that many Christians experience between an emotional experiential faith (the “warming of the heart” that John Wesley talked about) and an intellectual assent to core doctrines of faith.

On October 7, 1897, three years after the Mills’ meetings, Montgomery writes in her journal about the changes she had experienced in her faith journey over the years. She recalls the 1894 revival and gives three reasons for her decision to “join the church”: the first was because the “whole air seemed to be thrilling with a kind of magnetism and it was hard for anyone to resist the influence, especially one so extremely sensitive and impressionable as I am”; the second was for the sake of Mary Campbell; the third was because Montgomery was “tired of being urged and pestered and harangued every time a revivalist came around” (*SJ1* 197). She concludes: “I surrendered and ‘came out,’ too. I think it was a mistake, for I put myself in a false position. To ‘join the church’ meant assenting to certain teachings which I did *not* and *could* not accept” (*SJ1* 197). It is interesting to note Montgomery’s description of the magnetic and thrilling atmosphere in the church, which proved to be irresistible at the time.³⁹ Anyone who has experienced the movement of the Holy Spirit in a revival would recognize the phenomenon that

³⁹ I asked historian Gregg Finley, Dean of Arts at St. Stephen’s University in New Brunswick, if he thought that people made decisions at revivals because of carefully orchestrated emotionalism, or because the Holy Spirit was at work, or a mixture of both. He answered:

It was a blend of both. I am convinced that God--the Holy Spirit has been active in historic revivals. I base this view on letters/personal accounts/journals/spiritual autobiographies, etc. that I have read. But because it is not possible to “prove” God’s activity in the lives of people in the past, this topic is difficult to talk about, write dissertations about or publish, unless your audience is composed of folks who themselves have had transforming experiences in the Spirit. (e-mail 4 April 2008)

Montgomery describes; it would seem that she owed her decision to the spiritual tugging at her heart, in spite of the intellectual barriers she usually erected.⁴⁰ Intellect won out, although in her later role as a dutiful minister's wife and a staunch Presbyterian, Montgomery's public persona gave no evidence of the doubts and unorthodox beliefs that were revealed in her journals and letters as she gradually ceased to believe in the teachings of the Presbyterian Church and formulated her own "working belief" to replace that which she had outgrown (*SJ1* 197).

Another factor to be considered in the incident is the evangelist; McLoughlin notes that Mills "was one of the first and perhaps the only professional revivalist ever to break with the emphasis upon individual reform and to preach primarily a doctrine of social responsibility and social action" (336). Significantly, Mills left the Presbyterian Church and became a Unitarian shortly after the Charlottetown revival,⁴¹ so the content of his message was possibly somewhat unorthodox.

I would summarize Montgomery's many discussions of faith in her journals and letters by concluding that she expresses a fundamental belief in God the Father, an unwillingness to accept Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God, let alone as her personal Lord and Saviour, and a distrust of her emotional response to the work of the Holy Spirit. To once again use the vocabulary of Jesus' parable of the sower, it would seem that the word of God was choked out in Montgomery's life so that she was never able to enjoy an assurance of

⁴⁰ One cannot give the excuse that Mills used emotionally charged methods, because according to McLoughlin, Mills' tone was "gentle, pleading, and urgent without being strident or aggressive. Ministers praised him for the 'deep solemnity and entire absence of excitement' in his meetings" (337).

⁴¹ Montgomery writes in her journal, "Then came that time in town when B. Faye Mills – who has since gone over to the Unitarians, by the way – turned it upside down" (*SJ1* 197).

faith.⁴² Her life as a minister's wife, as she predicted in her journal in 1906, became "respectable slavery – a life in which a woman of any independence in belief or character, must either be a failure, from an 'official' point of view, or must cloak her real self under an assumed orthodoxy and conventionalism that must prove very stifling at times" (*SJ1* 321). Writing novels became a means of escape as she created an ideal world that has delighted millions of readers.

I conclude, therefore, that McClung's decision to respond to evangelical preaching and accept personal conversion aligns her with evangelical Methodism, whereas Montgomery's decision to reject evangelical preaching and the idea of conversion as well as to decline to join the Methodists and Congregationalists in the United Church of Canada, allies her with non-evangelical Presbyterians, especially those tending towards Unitarianism. The reaction of these authors to evangelical preaching parallels their treatment of Christianity in their first novels. McClung's narrative strategies, plot, and characters are based on the evangelical premise that the conversion of individuals to the Christian faith is what leads to positive social change. I believe, therefore, that McClung's experience of personal conversion translates into her foregrounding the Christian gospel in *Danny* and the consequent popular and critical demise of her fiction. Montgomery, on the other hand, who responded with regret of and discomfort with her public conversion and who voiced scepticism of fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, claimed that in *Anne* she had "cast 'moral' and 'Sunday School' ideals to the winds" (*SJ1* 331), and as a result, Christianity plays only a comparatively minor part in the novel

⁴² In 2008, Montgomery's granddaughter, Kate Macdonald Butler, revealed that her grandmother had committed suicide in 1942 (<<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/story/2008/09/22/pe-montgomery-suicide.html>>).

Chapter Three

Sowing Seeds in Danny

“ . . . and there in the sunshine, with the smell of the ripe grain in their nostrils as the minister helped him to carry the sheaves, a new heaven and a new earth were opened to Tom, and a new life was born within him, a life of godliness and of brotherly kindness, whose blessed influence has gone far beyond the narrow limits of that neighbourhood.”

Nellie McClung, *Sowing Seeds in Danny*

Nellie Letitia McClung’s first novel, *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, was published in 1908 and became an immediate bestseller. By the time of McClung’s death in 1951, *Sowing Seeds in Danny* had gone through seventeen editions and had sold more than 100,000 copies, earning her a total of \$25,000, a minor miracle in the early days of Canadian publishing (Karr 54).¹ Yet, by the last quarter of the twentieth century, McClung was known to most Canadians only for her social activism and the part she had played in the “Persons Case”; her fiction had largely vanished from popular and critical attention.

In *Literature as Pulpit: The Christian Social Activism of Nellie L. McClung*, Randi Warne examines McClung’s fiction and demonstrates the centrality of the Christian faith to McClung’s social and political activism, thus providing a more rounded view of McClung than is obtained by focusing on the feminist aspects of *In Times Like These*, her collection of polemical essays. Warne shows how McClung’s religion, feminism, and social activism were “inextricably intertwined in a common language articulating social change in the service of God’s intended justice” (191). Warne gives her opinion as to why McClung’s fiction gradually disappeared from public view as the century progressed and why

¹ By 18 August 1908, about a month after *Sowing Seeds in Danny* arrived in American bookstores, Doubleday reported it had sold over one thousand copies and had commenced the third printing, for a total of about sixty-five hundred copies. In Canada, by December 1908, McClung’s editor Edward Caswell signed a letter to McClung, “yours for the 10,000” and his prediction “was rapidly coming true” (Davis “Antiromantic” 234).

McClung's religion, literary style and type of feminism came to be seen as old-fashioned and irrelevant:

McClung had lost her voice. Her language — religious, feminist, activist — was no longer the language of common parlance. Later scholars (to continue the metaphor) came to recognize a few words here and there, but overall her speech remained disjointed and distorted. (191)

My goal in this chapter is to extend Warne's study and recover McClung's "voice," the rhetorical strategies she used that resonated at the time she was writing but that are no longer understood or appreciated.²

McClung was a reformer; social and moral reform was the preceptive aim of her fiction, and *Sowing Seeds in Danny* was the text that launched her social activism. She claimed that the true purpose of writers was to "write words that will strengthen the weak, convict the stubborn, and shed light where darkness reigns" ("The Writer's Creed"). She reacted to Wilfrid Eggleston's accusation that her "didactic enthusiasm" had marred her art, that "some of her stories are sermons in the guise of fiction," and "There is the flavor of the Sunday School hymn and the Foreign Mission Board in some of her work" (21), by responding:

I hope I have been a crusader, and I would be very proud to think that I had even remotely approached the grandeur of a Sunday School hymn. I have never worried about my art. I have written as clearly as I could, never idly or dishonestly, and if some of my stories are, as Mr. Eggleston says, sermons in

² In *The American Jeremiad*, Sacvan Bercovitch writes, "Rhetoric functions within a culture. It reflects and affects a set of particular psychic, social, and historical needs" (xi).

disguise, my earnest hope is that the disguise did not obscure the sermon.
(*Stream* 364)

The three main spheres of reform in *Sowing Seeds in Danny* are related to Christianity, temperance, and women's rights, although the latter two are intricately bound up with the first. McClung expounds frequent evangelical messages demonstrating the necessity of conversion or spiritual rebirth for societal change, as well as the importance of being doers of the Word, not just hearers, to effect this change. Ecumenical Christianity underlies *Danny*; McClung gives equal time to the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican churches.

McClung was a product of the literary era in which she was writing. In literature published from the 1890s to 1910s, religion, melodrama, reform, and emotion featured much more prominently than they did later in the twentieth century. The material was familiar: "the evangelical purpose, the old hymns, the plea for temperance, the repetition of the 'prodigal son' story" (Roper et al. 318). In addition to Dickens, McClung was inspired by Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery Christian melodrama, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which had changed the course of American history.³ As noted in Chapter One, she was influenced by prairie writer, Reverend Charles Gordon, who, writing under the pen-name of Ralph Connor, had successfully used the novel to communicate a modern religious message, and she learned theological ideas by reading novels such as *Robert Elsmere* and *John Ward, Preacher* (*Clearing* 291). Thus, as Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis comment, "the didactic novel of ideas was foreign neither to her era nor to her personal taste" (64).

³ Helen Wright claims that when McClung read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she was filled "with rage against cruelty to women and children" and "decided she could best help by joining the Woman's Christian Temperance Union" (22).

Another factor that was important to McClung's development as a writer was the activity of the religious press at the end of the nineteenth century. Clarence Karr describes the increased demand for reading material that was fuelled by the international Sunday-School movement, the proliferation of specialized church groups and laity movements, and a general rise in literacy and interest in reading. Religious presses began to respond to the demand for reading materials by providing wholesome and Christian fiction in order to counteract "salacious dime novels" (Karr 63). Like Marshall Saunders and Lucy Maud Montgomery, McClung used a religious press to launch her writing career, the Toronto-based Methodist Book and Publishing House, which became Ryerson Press in 1919 and grew to become the largest trade publisher in Canada by the early twentieth century.⁴

Many readers of McClung's era enjoyed adventure, romance, sentiment, and dramatic narrative,⁵ and did not as yet distinguish between so-called high-brow and low-brow literature.⁶ Most importantly, they were familiar with the tropes and conventions of Sunday-School and religious fiction, of temperance melodramas and tracts, and of sentimental romantic novels. McClung employs these conventions skilfully, balancing them with humour, irony, engaging plot, and strong character delineation. But it is these tropes and conventions in her book, however, that eventually contributed to its demise, distancing it from later readers who could neither understand nor appreciate them in the way readers in

⁴ Karr notes that although initially eighty percent of MBPH publications were religious titles, by 1910, this proportion had dropped to ten percent. Nevertheless, the firm "remained sensitive to the good taste and morals of their readers" (64). Karr also mentions that the firm's Board of Publication meetings opened with a hymn, included prayers, and closed with a benediction, and a portion of the profits went to the superannuation fund for retired clergymen (64-5).

⁵ Modernist critics with their "elitist, avant-garde, anti-romantic, intellectual-cultural consciousness expressed contempt for a popular culture in which adventure, romance, sentiment, and the narrative remained important elements" (Karr 9).

⁶ The terms were coined by Van Wyck Brooks in 1915 to distinguish between popular best-sellers and older elite literatures (Karr 33).

her own day had. Although there is a great deal of overlap between the above-named genres of literature, I will look at the rhetorical strategies McClung employs that recall these antecedents.

The overriding influence on McClung and the genre in which her first novel fits most comfortably is what has come to be described as Sunday-School fiction, works designed for the moral and spiritual edification of both children and adults, which operated under different assumptions than did the realistic novels of authors such as George Eliot and Henry James.⁷ In the nineteenth century, vast numbers of books were published in the mode of Christian moral instruction, several of them achieving best-seller status; most, however, have vanished because, as Stephen Rachman argues, they were derived from “the fabric of ordinary nineteenth century life,” and “the mode of moral instruction and the world in which it was valued are gone” (1).⁸ In his introductory essay to an on-line collection of nineteenth-

⁷ Mary Rubio identifies

a distinctive variety of “Sunday school literature,” a genre of 18th and 19th century writing which pretended to record the short life-history and sayings of child saints who lived perfect lives and died young, often after much suffering. Such literature, which had grown originally out of the Puritan concern for children’s souls, was given *raison d’être* by the fact that infant mortality rates were so high. The Methodist and Sunday School movements of the 19th century prolonged the distribution of this type of children’s literature, and the moralism present in it is also present in much of the secular fiction of the 19th century. (“Satire” 29)

⁸ Rachman claims that the modern American literary idiom was forged in opposition to Sunday School literature:

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain preserved his version of that world of Sunday School, rote memorization, ticket reward systems (which Tom Sawyer famously games), Bible prizes, and the juvenile literature that were part and parcel of his childhood in the 1840s. He describes the instructional style of Mr. Walters, the Sunday-School teacher, whose “voice had acquired a peculiar intonation which was wholly absent on week-days” (51). . . . Twain’s underlying point - one that has become a cliché of the twentieth century - was that Sunday school was based on an idealization of virtue at odds with the nature of children and perhaps human nature altogether, one that produced boredom, hypocrisy, and uncritical obedience. Tom Sawyer was calculated to provide a record of that idealization and to puncture it. . . . The trope of the moral at the end of the story was another of Twain’s targets; he complains that “a peculiarity that conspicuously marked and marred them [the end of stories] was the inveterate and intolerable sermon that wagged its crippled tail at the

century American Sunday-School books, Rachman notes that three of the most popular books in the United States in the nineteenth century were Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Timothy Shay Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*, and Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, each of which sold over 100,000 copies:

Each of these books bears a family resemblance to the works found in Sunday school books, each operates in an evangelical tradition, and each portrays scenes of instruction and conversion. Stowe, Arthur, and Warner represent the masterworks of a genre in which Sunday school literature is the commonplace variant.

With the exception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,⁹ each of these books has disappeared from public consciousness, just as *Sowing Seeds in Danny* has done.

In her day, McClung would have assumed that her reading audience had a store of conceptual categories that underlay both the events and the characters in her fiction, primarily a set of religious beliefs that undergirded and fixed these works “not in the realm of fairy tale or escapist fantasy, but in the very bedrock of reality” (Tompkins 85). The facts of Christ's death, resurrection, and anticipated return are the primary frame of reference in

end of each and every one of them. No matter what the subject might be, a brain-racking effort was made to squirm it into some aspect or other that the moral and religious mind could contemplate with edification” (205-6).

⁹ *Uncle Tom's Cabin* seems to have survived because of the immense socio-historical impact it had on the United States. John Carter writes: “Into the emotion-charged atmosphere of mid-nineteenth-century America *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exploded like a bombshell; . . . the social impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the United States was greater than that of any book before or since” (202-3). Legend has it that when Abraham Lincoln met Stowe in 1862, he announced, “So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!” *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has never been out of print since its initial publication. John Cawelti argues that Stowe's work was “unique in its power and impact because she integrated her attack on the social evil of slavery with the prevailing melodramatic vision of the world” (273).

her novel; they give an eschatological¹⁰ view of the destiny of both the individual and of history. This dominant worldview places Christ as the central reality of human history, “the center to which all things move and from which all other things derive their meaning and relative value” (Landow 39).

McClung’s readership would have been familiar with typology, a system of Biblical interpretation applied by Christian theologians that discovers anticipations of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work in the laws, events, and people of the Old Testament. Typology, derived from the Greek word for “mark,” posits that Old Testament events or statements are the “types” pre-figuring an aspect of Christ, who is the “antitype” to each type.¹¹ In *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, Barbara Lewalski distinguishes between Catholic allegory with its four senses of scripture, and the Protestant use of typology with its notion that there is only the “literal” sense of scripture. Lewalski writes:

Allegory was understood to involve the invention of fictions, or the contrivance of other systems of symbols, to represent underlying spiritual

¹⁰ Eschatology is a Christian term that means the study of the end of history from a religious perspective. The Bible contains many prophecies about the future, and the New Testament talks extensively about the return of Jesus Christ to this earth, usually called his “second coming,” or “parousia.” The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 24, is devoted to this topic, as are 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and much of the Book of Revelation. A literal interpretation of the Bible shows that four important events are predicted: the Millennium, a thousand-year period when Christ rules, a time of universal peace; the Tribulation, a seven-year interval when a world religious-political leader called the Antichrist takes power; Armageddon, a terrible war provoked by the Antichrist, when most people on earth will die; the Rapture, a miraculous event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 when Christ will descend from the heavens towards the Earth and believers will meet Him in the air.

¹¹ “Antitype” means “imprint”; the term is from die-stamping. Examples of Old Testament characters and incidents analysed typologically include the stories of Jonah, Joseph, Moses, Samson, Melchizedek, and Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. John Henry Newman’s “Moses the type of Christ” is a typical nineteenth-century sermon in which “the first great prophet of the Jews prefigured Christ as redeemer, prophet, and intercessor for guilty man” (qtd. in Landow 23). Thus the Old Testament was re-read and re-interpreted as anticipating Jesus Christ and the events of the New Testament.

truth or reality. Typology by contrast was recognized as a mode of signification in which both type and antitype are historically real entities with independent meaning and validity, forming patterns of prefiguration, recapitulation, and fulfillment by reason of God's providential control of history. (111)¹²

Thus, an important aspect of typological reading is the notion that historical events of the Bible pointed to and commented upon not only other events in the Bible, but also to the lives of those who were reading the text, to be "actually recapitulated in their lives" (Lewalski 131).

In the Introduction to *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows*, George Landow declares that in the Victorian age, any person who could read, whether a believer or not, would have been able to recognize scriptural allusions as well as allusions to typological interpretations of the scriptures (3). All the Protestant denominations taught the individual believer how to read and interpret the Bible typologically through sermons, tracts, commentaries, hymns, and guides to scriptural exegesis. Two sermons on a Sunday were the norm in McClung's time; the average worshiper attended some sort of Evangelical service at least once a week and read weekly periodicals that published sermons of renowned preachers (Landow 15).¹³

¹² The lines of distinction between allegory, symbolism, and typology are blurry, although all three are present in McClung's fiction. Allegory is a way of shaping a story so that the characters and the setting have both a literal meaning on the primary level and a secondary meaning on another level, as, for example, the battle between good and evil. Symbolism is the use of an object so that the attributes of the object become a substitute for some idea or entity with special significance, e.g., poppies as a symbol of Christ's death on the cross. Although often used as a synonym for symbolism or combined with allegory, typology refers more specifically to the representation of things by objects in the sense of representing an entire class or type in one symbolic representation of character or event (see Lewalski 113).

¹³ For an interesting study of religion in the Canadian family in the nineteenth century, see Marguerite Van Die's *Religion, Family, and Community in Victorian Canada: The Colbys of Carrollcroft*.

In many homes, the father read a printed sermon and a Bible passage to the assembled family, both on Sundays and on weekdays before the household retired for the evening.¹⁴

Throughout the week, many also read devotional poetry, such as Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850) and Keble's *The Christian Year* (1827), which made heavy use of biblical types, paraphrase, and allusion, thus providing yet another means of inculcating habits of Bible reading and understanding (Ladow 22).

Just as the term *hermeneutics* originally designated the interpretation of the Bible, but in the nineteenth century came to designate the general theory of interpretation of all written texts, so typological interpretation was originally applied to the Bible but came to be extended to works of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.¹⁵ Typological organization presents situations both as themselves and as manifestations of a Christian paradigm that puts all events in relation to an unchanging order and characters into recognized patterns that define their moral attributes. In "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History," Jane Tompkins explains that in typological narratives, the plot unfolds according to a preordained design, "a design that every incident is intended, in one way or another, to enforce," and the setting points "to positions on a spiritual map" (92). The presence of realistic details such as McClung's use of dialect, her minute descriptions of domestic activity, and the lovingly described prairie setting make readers think they are in

¹⁴ Mark McClung describes growing up in the McClung home:

After dinner there was always family prayer. And my father read from the family Bible, which I now have. It was always a chapter or a psalm or something like that, and on special occasions, like Easter, the whole way through the gospel according to St. Matthew, or at Christmas, it was always the Christmas story. And then, we would say The Lord's Prayer, and there was my father at the head of the table. ("Portrait" 6)

¹⁵ George Ladow suggests that when readers are ignorant of typology, they deprive earlier works of much of their context, they under-read and misread many works, and "the danger is that the greater the work, the more this ignorance will distort and inevitably reduce it" (3).

the world of material cause and effect, but these perform a rhetorical function “dictated by the novel’s ruling paradigm,” and once that paradigm is perceived, they are revealed as “the expressions of a highly schematic intent” (Tompkins 92). Likewise, depictions of character are moral and physiognomical, where realistic motivation is often incorporated with type fulfillment in a predictable combination of attributes that results in conventional types.¹⁶ Tompkins also distinguishes between the realistic novel and the typological narrative, in which the characters are “not defined primarily by their mental and emotional characteristics -- that is to say, psychologically -- but soteriologically, according to whether they are saved or damned” (92).¹⁷ Characters are related in the same way that places are, with reference to the source of their identity, Jesus Christ: “The figure of Christ is the common term that unites all of the novel’s good characters, who are good precisely in proportion as they are imitations of him” (Tompkins 94):

Therefore, what seem from a modernist point of view to be gross stereotypes in characterization and a needless proliferation of incident are essential properties of a narrative aimed at demonstrating that human history is a continual reenactment of the sacred drama of redemption. (Tompkins 91)¹⁸

¹⁶ Contrast this mode of character depiction to that of the post-Freudian era, when character development becomes largely psychological and characters are motivated by twentieth-century complexes and neuroses.

¹⁷ Tompkins demonstrates that a typological narrative “rewrites the Bible” and is formally and philosophically opposed to works like *Middlemarch* and *The Portrait of a Lady* “in which everything depends on human action and decision unfolding in a temporal sequence” (91).

¹⁸ Tompkins argues that the nineteenth-century novel functioned both as a means of describing the social world and as a means of changing it; it offered an interpretative framework for understanding the culture and, “through the reinforcement of a particular code of values, recommend[ed] a strategy for dealing with cultural conflict, but it [was] itself an agent of that strategy, putting into practice the measures it prescribe[d]” (91).

In nineteenth-century literature, authors commonly used extended typology, which worked only because the readership was well versed in biblical typology; writers could thus communicate the Christian worldview in a few words because of all the associations their readership was able to make with the Gospel story. It was an economical way of communicating moral and spiritual values of characters, events, and settings. But whereas Christian typology has a lesser event or character anticipate a later greater one, secular notions of typology patterned a later character after some greater figure that preceded him or her. By the late Victorian era, *type* came to mean “any exemplary moral or religious norm which finds successive incarnations in history” (Witemeyer 76). A character fulfilled a type when he or she completed a recognized pattern such as the lonely maiden or the orphan child, but George Landow points out that such completing of a pre-established pattern bears only partial resemblance to the operations of scriptural typology. By the twentieth century, the terms “type” and “typology” gradually lost their theological meanings, with “type” coming to represent a two-dimensional character that embodies a single idea and lacks individualization.¹⁹ As Landow observes about reading literature of the Victorian era and analysing the changes that occurred into the twentieth century:

We are here exploring the hazy, ill-defined borders between religious and secular discourse in an age when these territories continually shifted -- within the entire culture, within economic and social classes, and within the life and experience of the individual. In exploring these territories, we encounter the entire problem of the Victorian audience. Whereas the student of the

¹⁹ E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) distinguishes between flat and round characters. Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) argues that even lifelike characters are variations of stock types inherited from earlier literary genres.

seventeenth century can assume that Milton's audience, or audiences, were aware of typology, the student of twentieth-century culture has to assume that such knowledge is found only in Evangelical popular culture and the work of specialists. (225)

The challenge, then, is to read *Sowing Seeds in Danny* in the way most of McClung's audience would have read it, with an understanding of their worldview and the tiers of meaning that they would have assumed as a result of the teaching of typology that they had received. I will look at the typological symbolism conveyed in one event, the death of Polly, to demonstrate how McClung uses typological strategies to add layers of meaning and reality to her fiction, and then I will examine the many related rhetorical strategies such as biblical references, hymns, prayers, and preaching that McClung uses to reinforce her message, all of which align *Danny* with Sunday-School fiction of the nineteenth century.

The death of Polly is the type of scene that is dismissed as sentimental pathos by critics and readers in the twenty-first century, but the scene carries with it many strata of meaning that would have been highly significant for McClung's readership.²⁰ Polly is the young English girl who has been working at the Motherwells' farm and has been harshly treated. Her death is intricately connected with the poppies she has planted in the Motherwells' garden with seeds she brought from England to remind her of home. Polly has gone to the Brandon hospital with a fever, thus leading to Pearl's working for the Motherwells to replace her. During a hailstorm, Polly's poppies are spared, sheltered by the

²⁰ Isabelle White in "Sentimentality and the Uses of Death" claims that death scenes sold novels in nineteenth-century America and that this preoccupation with fictional death was frequently used "for positive and significant cultural purposes" because "the individual must leave the community to affect the community, and the death of a member of the community strengthens the community's bonds" (99, 104).

cookhouse roof that had been blown off because, in the words of Pearl, “I guess the Lord knows they’re there and he isn’t going to smash them if Polly really needs them” (165).²¹ When Pearl learns of Polly’s plight, she arranges for a box of the poppies to be sent to Polly in the Brandon hospital, unbeknownst to the Motherwells; she is spurred on by a single red poppy with white edges that seems “to beckon to her with pleading insistence” and which Pearl turns back to pick to add to the other flowers (168-69). The red poppy edged with white carries not only the meanings associated with poppies, such as sacrifice, Christ’s Passion, and the martyrdom of saints, but also multiple connotations of the colour white: purity, innocence, the sacred or divine, baptism and other rites of passage, spirituality and sanctity, and sacrificial victims (Tressider 169, 225-26).²² The poppies are passed from hand to hand “like the fiery cross,”²³ and Camilla tells Mr. Francis, who takes the poppies on the train to Brandon, that he is “upon the King’s business,” underlining the spiritual significance of the errand.²⁴

The chapter devoted to Polly’s death is entitled “How Polly Went Home.” *Home* to McClung’s readers would have signified heaven, as in the millennial promise in 2 Peter

²¹ Pearl’s faith in God’s protective agency is confirmed when she sees “The cookhouse roof had been blown off and placed over the poppies, where it had sheltered them from every hailstone” (165). Note the divine agency implied by the verb *placed*.

²² Poppies have long been used as a symbol of both sleep and death: sleep because of the opium extracted from them, and death because of their (commonly) blood-red color. Poppies are used as emblems on tombstones to symbolize eternal sleep. A second meaning of the poppy is that of the promise of resurrection after death. In Christian art, the poppy is used in depictions of the Passion of Christ. In the Greek Orthodox Church, crimson poppies represent the blood of Christ on his journey to Golgotha and on the cross (Anne Dumas, *Book of Plants and Symbols*).

²³ In Scotland, the “fiery cross,” known as the *Crann Tara*, was used as a declaration of war, which required all clan members to rally to the defence of the area. A small burning cross or charred piece of wood would be carried from town to town, passed from one permanently appointed messenger to another, and in this manner the alarm was spread across large districts in a short time.

²⁴ “King” refers to Jesus Christ. For example, in Revelation 17.14, Jesus is called “Lord of lords, and King of kings.”

3.13: “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness”; heaven is the abode of God, which those who are believers look forward to as their ultimate destination, and where “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away” is reserved for them (1 Peter 1.4). Polly, dying of typhoid, asks her nurse if there is a poppy edged with white, a type that was her mother’s favourite, and when the nurse gives it to her, Polly says it is like having her mother’s hand to comfort her in the dark. Polly’s nurse becomes one of the many saints in the novel: “And then the nurse took Polly’s throbbing head in her strong young arms, and soothed its restless tossing with her cool soft touch, and told her through her tears of that other Friend,²⁵ who would go with her all the way” (179). The nurse is reminding Polly of Jesus, who has promised never to leave or forsake her (Heb. 13.5), and Polly happily responds, “‘It’s like I was goin’ ’ome”” (179). She asks the nurse to “say that again about the valley,” and the nurse tenderly repeats “that promise of incomparable sweetness: ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”” (180). This passage is from the twenty-third psalm that the *NIV Study Bible* calls “a profession of joyful trust in the Lord as the good Shepherd-King,” which reinforces the image of Polly as one of His lambs (Barker 807). When the nurse returns, Polly has died:

The homesickness and redness of weeping had gone forever from her eyes,
for they were looking now upon the King in his beauty! In her hand, now

²⁵ *Friend* recalls the hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” written by James. M. Scriven in 1855: “What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! / What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!”

cold and waxen, she held one little silky poppy, red with edges of white.

Polly had gone home. (180)

The promise of Revelation 21.4 is that in heaven “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away”; readers in McClung’s time would have understood that this promise had now been fulfilled for Polly. Back at the Motherwells, the remaining poppies whisper, shiver and seemingly cry as “a shower of crystal drops mingled with the crimson petals that fluttered to the ground” (181). Polly’s death is thus felt even in the world of nature.

The full significance of Polly’s passing away is not revealed until later in the novel, when the grasping and worldly Motherwells are changed because of her death. Tompkins observes that the power of the dead or the dying “to redeem the unregenerate” is a major theme of nineteenth-century popular fiction and religious literature, and that dying “is the supreme form of heroism,” the equivalent “not of defeat but of victory; it brings an access of power, not a loss of it” (85-6).²⁶ This is the “upside-down kingdom” which reverses modern theories of power and could be difficult for a twenty-first-century reader to grasp.²⁷ Polly’s death, then, is wholly in keeping with the central tenet of Christianity that the highest human

²⁶ Tompkins argues that stories like this one are compelling because “they enact a philosophy, as much political as religious, in which the pure and powerless die to save the powerful and corrupt, and thereby show themselves more powerful than those they save” (85).

²⁷ In *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, Donald B. Kraybill, a Mennonite sociologist and educator, writes that Jesus calls his followers to live in an Upside-Down Kingdom favouring those suffering at society’s margins. The phrase is based on the many paradoxes of Jesus’ teaching: in Jesus’ kingdom the first will be last and the last will be first (Matt. 20:16); whoever wants to be great has to be a servant (Matt. 20.26). Likewise, the apostle Paul claims that God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1.27); Jesus was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that through his poverty we would become rich (2 Cor. 8.9). According to this teaching, things that make a person important in our world become unimportant in the Upside-Down Kingdom, and the things that seem weak and humble and poor are closer to the heart of God.

calling is to give one's life for another, as well as with the ideology of the Social Gospel that saw social action dependent on renewal taking place in individual hearts. Her death is depicted as a moment of spiritual triumph as she is "looking now upon the King in his beauty," thus testifying to the reality of the life to come after death (180). A twenty-first-century reader might well mistake "the King" for a reference to Edward VII, rather than to Christ the King, as McClung would have intended. The importance of Polly's death is made even more apparent when she is associated not only with one of the lambs loved by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, but also with Jesus himself, frequently described as "the Lamb of God."²⁸ Mrs. Motherwell guiltily remembers Polly in her sickness looking at her, and the memory of Polly's eyes reminds her of a lamb that she had helped her husband to kill. She knows that Polly is dead, "and those big eyes she had so often seen tearful, yet smiling, were closed and their tears forever wiped away" (232). Once again, the reference to Revelation 21.4 reminds the reader that Polly is in heaven, where God wipes away all the tears from the eyes of those with Him. Mrs. Motherwell recalls Polly's eyes, "dazed, pleading like the lamb's . . . or was it that other Face, tender, thorn-crowned, that had been looking upon her in love all these long years!" (234).²⁹ Polly and Jesus are thus conflated, a perfect example

²⁸ The expression "lamb of God" occurs in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, verses 29 and 36, when John the Baptist acclaim Jesus: "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." In the Old Testament, lambs were used as a sin offering in Israel as a way of providing atonement, i.e., bringing those estranged from God because of sin into unity with God. In this passage in John's gospel, Jesus becomes the substitutionary lamb, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy that described the coming Messiah as a lamb (53.7). Because of the universality of sin and man's inability to deal with it, God provided the way of atonement by means of Jesus' blood, which was shed "for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26.28). Peter also speaks of "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1.19).

²⁹ "[T]horn-crowned" identifies "that other Face" as Jesus. After Pilate had handed Jesus over to the governor's soldiers to be crucified, the soldiers stripped him, put a scarlet robe on him, and taunted him: "When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" (Matt. 27.29).

of typology, and as a result of Polly's death, the tight-fisted Motherwells become new people as they discover "the blessedness of giving" (280).

This example of a scene that was common in Sunday-School fiction reinforces McClung's overarching message that societal change comes from individuals being "born again," a concept spoken of by Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3.3: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As Dr. Clay observes in *Danny*, "a sinner is always a sinner and in danger of damnation, for which there is but one cure" (84). Readers were expected to understand that this "one cure" was repentance and being born again (or "anew") to live life in a changed way. The climax of the Motherwells' story therefore occurs when the Reverend Grantley explains the plan of salvation to a repentant Tom Motherwell, and "a new heaven and a new earth were opened to Tom, and a new life was born within him, a life of godliness and of brotherly kindness, whose blessed influence has gone far beyond the narrow limits of that neighbourhood" (281-82). Not only has Tom been "born again" but also his new relationship with God and his changed life are demonstrated by righteous living, kind deeds, and an improved society.

In order to convince her readership of the reality of what has occurred in Tom, McClung uses many rhetorical strategies common to Sunday-School fiction to create a world where spiritual realities are as authentic and as important as physical ones, where someone like Tom is sick "in body and soul" (274). She presents God as an active agent in the text, readily answering people's prayers, such as when He responds to Pearl's prayer to have her bedroom window opened by sending a hailstorm to break the window. On another occasion, He answers Pearl's fervent prayer to "put the gimp into" Dr. Clay to operate on Arthur, and Pearl calls attention to His faithfulness: "'O Lord, dear Lord, You never fail'"

(270). God is shown to be present in difficult situations. Dr. Clay, for example, acknowledges after the successful appendectomy, “I think God Himself steadied my hand”

(278). God is a reality in the characters’ lives in *Danny*.

McClung depicts human nature as fallen³⁰ but open to regeneration by means of Christ’s redemptive work and the activity of the Holy Spirit.³¹ Certain characters like the Motherwells show themselves to be in need of salvation, and McClung’s depiction of the changes in the Motherwell family is in line with Jesus’ summary of the Mosaic Law as loving God and loving one’s neighbour.³² McClung argues for the value of community rather than individualism, and for spiritual and moral values rather than material and secular ones. The Motherwell family illustrates these arguments in their initial unhappy lives of barren selfishness: “Their souls were of a dull drab dryness in which no flower took root, there was no gold to them but the gold of greed and gain” (128). They spend their lives on accumulating money and putting it in the bank where it fulfils “its highest mission” (225). Because in Millford church attendance is an indication of one’s spiritual state, Pearl is initially shocked to learn that none of the Motherwells goes to church, whereas after the Motherwells’ “way of looking at things” changes, they all go to church, and Sam puts fifty

³⁰ “Fallen” refers to the original sin in mankind because of Adam and Eve’s choice to disobey God and succumb to the wiles of Satan in the Garden of Eden.

³¹ For example, when Sam hears the words of Polly’s mother’s letters, “Sam’s face was immovable, but a mysterious Something, not of earth, was struggling with him. Was it the faith of that decrepit old woman in that bare little room across the sea, mumbling to herself that God had not forgotten?” And the narrator answers her own question: “God knows. His ear is not dulled; His arm is not shortened; His holy spirit moves mightily” (240), thus making clear the active agency of the Holy Spirit within Sam.

³² In Matthew 22.35-40, a lawyer asks Jesus, “Which is the great commandment in the Law?” And Jesus replies, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

dollars on the offering plate, demonstrating his change of heart (280-81).³³ Mrs. Motherwell confesses that she and her husband had tried to make Tom a machine like them and had forgotten that he had a soul (279). In McClung's universe the good are rewarded and the bad are reformed; hence Sam believes that Tom's using the twenty-five dollars for drink was "a punishment for his own meanness" (280). This world is far from the moral relativism of the twenty-first century.³⁴

To provide a contrast to the unregenerate Motherwells, McClung creates several saintly characters, and her readers would have recognized them as "good" and worthy of reward. Mary Barner, for example, is presented as a Christian with a servant heart, who makes a difference in people's lives and is beloved by both the adults and children of Millford.³⁵ As well as listing all the practical things Mary does for the children, everything from taking slivers out of little fingers and mending torn pinafores to helping with school homework (43-44), McClung reinforces her description of Mary's good deeds with the imagery of a halo as she prays for the children: "Unconsciously she bowed her head on her hands, and a cry quivered from her heart. The yellow sunlight made a ripple of golden water on the wall behind her and threw a wavering radiance on her soft brown hair" (53). Camilla

³³ This change of their "way of looking at things" is a reflection of Romans 12.2, in which Paul exhorts the Romans not to be conformed to this world, but to be "transformed by the renewing of [their] mind[s]."

³⁴ Moral relativism is a philosophy that denies moral absolutes. Theologian Peter Kreeft describes its three claims: "That morality is first of all changeable; secondly, subjective; and third, individual. That it is relative first to changing times: you can't turn back the clock. Secondly, to what we subjectively think or feel: there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so. And thirdly, to individuals: different strokes for different folks" (<http://www.peterkreeft.com/audio/05_relativism/relativism_transcription.htm>).

³⁵ Mary Barner has "learned the lesson early that the only easing of her own pain was in helping others to bear theirs, and so it came about that there was perhaps no one in Millford more beloved than she. Perhaps it was the memory of her own lost childhood that caused her heart to go out in love and sympathy to every little boy and girl in the village" (43).

even calls her “a dear little gray-eyed saint” in case the reader has missed the point (142). As assistant leader of the Band of Hope temperance group for children, Mary not only teaches the children about the deleterious effects of alcohol, but also inculcates Christian virtues in them.³⁶ As well, she becomes a symbol of accountability for the children and a priestly mediator rather like a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. When Bugsey Watson sings a rant against Mrs. McGuire, and Mary hears him, he sheds “penitential tears” because she has found him out, but by telling Mary he is sorry, he runs home “shriven of his sin” (59-60).³⁷ She even influences Mrs. McGuire, the bane of the Watson children, by her Christian acts of service: Mary cleans her house, cooks for her, sings for her, reads *Pilgrim’s Progress* to her, and becomes a friend to the lonely old woman (283).³⁸ In a similar way, Jesus’ model of self-sacrifice and his words from John 15.12-13 - “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” - are reflected in Dr. Clay’s agony when Pearl asks him to operate on Arthur: “‘O God!’ he moaned, ‘if I could but bring back his life with mine; but I can’t!’” (268). Thus the “good” characters reflect Jesus. On the other hand, negative emotions and wrong actions are credited to demons³⁹ and to the devil, with all three Motherwells attributing Tom’s moral failure to the work of Satan.⁴⁰ The narrator tells the reader that “the

³⁶ When Mrs. McGuire takes all the Watsons’ potatoes, “Bugsey Watson forgot his Band of Hope teaching of returning good for evil” (58).

³⁷ To be shriven means to have confessed your sins and received absolution, a sacrament offered by a priest of the Roman Catholic Church.

³⁸ Mary is romantically rewarded when Mrs. McGuire acts as cupid between her and the Reverend Grantley.

³⁹ See, for example, “the demon of discontent laid hold on Tom” (225).

⁴⁰ Tom asks how the money came to be in his father’s overcoat and his mother answers, “‘It looks as if the devil himself put it there to tempt you, Tom’” (280). Tom tells his parents: “‘It just seemed as if it was the devil himself . . . I had no intention of drinking when I took out that money’” (280). Sam

very spirit of evil laid hold on Tom” and then opines, “When the powers of good are present in the heart, and can find no outlet in action, they turn to evil” (227). McClung makes clear that the battle in *Danny* is between both the heavenly and earthly powers of good and evil, in line with Paul’s teaching: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6.12).

McClung’s vision is eschatological, and the hope of heaven motivates the good characters. For example, Pearl tells Tom to get help for Arthur because, she asks, how would they ever face his family “when we go to heaven if we just set around and let Arthur die?” (251). In other words, Pearl believes that one’s actions on earth have eternal consequences. McClung also portrays how a true Christian dies with hope, not dread. The narrator tells the reader that Arthur comes from “a race of men who feared not death in whatever form it came,” so as he lies dying, Arthur asks Pearl to write to his father that he knew no fear “and passed out of life glad to have been a brave man’s son, and borne even for a few years a godly father’s name” (263, 264).⁴¹ Peace in the face of death is clearly a gift of God in McClung’s world.

A major rhetorical strategy McClung uses that is part of the Sunday-School literary tradition is her direct and indirect references to passages from the Bible (see Appendix 2 for a discussion of the parallels between *Danny* and the Book of James), which give the novel a moral framework and authority that transcend the story itself. Christians have always

Motherwell answers, “I guess the devil had a hand in it, he was in me quite a bit when I put it there” (281).

⁴¹ At the same time, Death is personified as “the grim old enemy” (271) and McClung provides frequent symbolic reminders of the inevitability of death and the necessity of being prepared for it, such as when Tom notices a human skeleton in Dr. Barner’s office when he is afraid that Arthur has died because of his drunken negligence.

attached central importance to the Bible, and over the last two thousand years, the Bible has shaped the development of Western civilization more than any other written work (Moberly 176).⁴² David Lyle Jeffrey in the preface to *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* argues

[that] for literature in the English-speaking world no text has continued to exert a more formative influence than the Bible, and, correspondingly, that the fading recognition of biblical narrative, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, has shadowed into nearly intractable obscurity many of the greatest secular texts in our literary heritage. (xi)

The Bible contains many different types of writing, but at its core stand the stories that tell how God spoke and acted in human history,⁴³ beginning with the Old Testament depiction of creation, the Fall, and the calling of the nation of Israel, climaxing in the New Testament with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and projecting into eternity in the Book of Revelation. The Bible is considered to be divinely inspired⁴⁴ and “the definitive world-and-life view source for the believer” (Samples 108). The Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* gives Scripture supreme doctrinal authority, deeming it the final court of appeal in all matters of faith and practice for the Church and the individual Christian. Although when McClung was writing *Danny* in 1908, “higher criticism” of the Bible continued to challenge

⁴² Walter Moberly asserts that without a good knowledge of the Bible, an intelligent understanding of Western civilization is not possible (176).

⁴³ William Westfall claims that up until the middle of the nineteenth century, the Bible “was not only a history text; it was the only history text” (29).

⁴⁴ Paul writes to Timothy:

[F]rom childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3.15-17).

its authority as the inerrant word of God by treating it only as the product of human beings writing at a particular historical time, the Bible was still held in high esteem by the majority of people and was “part and parcel” of the culture because it was being constantly read, discussed, studied, and taught (Noll *History* 407).

A key biblical quotation occurs in *Danny* when the nurse from the Brandon hospital writes to the Motherwells, thanks them for sending poppies to Polly, and concludes with “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me” (230). She is commending the Motherwells with Jesus’ words found in Matthew 25.40, demonstrating how kind deeds done for the poor are actually done for Jesus;⁴⁵ the irony is not lost on the reader, because it is Pearl who has sent the poppies.

Pearl’s speeches are full of biblical references, such as during her imaginative stories of doing housework. As she sweeps the floor, she pretends she is “the army of the Lord that comes to clear the way from dust and sin, let the King of glory in. Under the stove the hordes of sin are awful thick, they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil! But I say the ‘sword of the Lord and of Gideon!’ and let them have it” (106); the passage includes scriptural references from Psalm 24, John 3.19, and Judges 7.18. Pearl sometimes pretends that she is a biblical character: she becomes like the woman in the

⁴⁵ Jesus tells his disciples about the future time when he will return to judge the nations:

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” (Matt. 20.34-40)

parable of Luke 15.8 who has lost a piece of silver and sweeps the house diligently until she finds it (106). She even identifies with Paul and Silas singing in the prison at midnight (Acts 16.25): “‘Do what Ye like, Lord,’ they wur thinkin’. ‘If it’s in jail Ye want us to stay, we’re Yer men’” (247). References such as these demonstrate Pearl’s submission to God’s will in her life, as well as her deep familiarity with the Bible.⁴⁶ Most of McClung’s readership would have known the references and would no doubt have found them comforting and inspirational rather than opaque, old-fashioned, and unfamiliar.

McClung also uses hymns to provide an authoritative framework similar to that of the Bible. Hymns are songs of praise to God in Christian worship, and are usually metrical compositions. The Bible itself contains more than five hundred references to singing, including fifty direct commands to sing to God. Christians over the centuries have incorporated singing in their worship services because the Church Fathers believed that music was divinely created “so that man might praise his Maker with holy text and song” (Portnoy 3). In the sixth century, St. Benedict developed plainsong hymns in Latin. During the Reformation, the reformers wanted hymns based on scripture that could be sung in the vernacular, especially metrical versions of the Psalms. Martin Luther⁴⁷ opined:

The Devil takes flight at the sound of music, just as he does at the words of theology, and for this reason the prophets always combined theology and music, teaching of truth and the chanting of Psalms and hymns. After

⁴⁶ McClung’s father-in-law, the Rev. J.W. McClung, gave his personal opinion as to why Pearl deserved praise: “Pearlie is the finest in modern fiction and it is because of her Christlikeness – her evangelical character. . . . I am more than delighted that the reading public delight to have one who is not ashamed to avow her love for the teachings of our great Master” (qtd. in Savage 62).

⁴⁷ Martin Luther (1483-1546) played a large role in the development of hymnody, writing hymns that are sung to this day such as *Ein’ feste Burg* (“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”). Luther wrote: “Music is the art of the prophets, the only art that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us” (qtd. in Krueger 1).

theology, I give the highest place and greatest honour to music. (qtd. in Krueger 1)

Isaac Watts⁴⁸ began the reform of congregational singing in England in the eighteenth century by starting from the principle that texts should express the religious feelings of the people, rather than be solely scripturally based. Hymns became a central feature of Methodist worship; many of them were written by Charles Wesley⁴⁹ to stir congregations and teach theological concepts.⁵⁰ The publication in 1861 of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* reached annual sales of 500,000 and by 1912 had sold more than sixty million copies (<<http://www.music-for-church-choirs.com/hymns.html>>). In McClung's time, hymn singing not only took place in church services but also occurred recreationally in homes when families and friends gathered together.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Isaac Watts (1674-1748) is known as the "Father of English Hymnody." His best-seller, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, appeared in 1707. Watts wrote more than six hundred hymns, many of which are still sung today.

⁴⁹ Charles Wesley (1707-88) produced over 7,000 sacred songs and poems. According to A. Skevington Wood, Wesley's hymns had at least as great an effect as his brother's sermons: "They not only expressed the joys of Christian experience but also taught the truths of Scripture" ("John" 448).

⁵⁰ According to pastor David Krueger, "Next to the Bible, a good hymnal is the church's best theological textbook" (4).

⁵¹ *The Canadian Encyclopedia* notes that many adults and children in nineteenth-century Canada were familiar with a wide range of hymns, singing them not just in church but in social and home groups as well:

During the last half of the 19th century several factors combined to lend a stimulus to hymn singing. Most important were the arrival of trained musicians from England, Scotland, and the USA and the formation of music schools. Nearly all churches in the cities and towns had organs; melodeons and pianos were to be found in country churches. In devout homes families would often gather around the melodeon or follow the lead of a flute or another instrument to sing hymns. . . . Singing occurred at least three times in every service "on the Lord's Day" . . . and a good deal more often than that in the Methodist's daily life. (<<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0001682>>)

In her use of hymns in *Danny*, McClung accesses the affective properties of music, which musicologists have discovered can have profound effects on the mind and on health.⁵² Her audience would have been familiar with both the words and the melodies of many of the hymns McClung uses, and the melodies evoked by the words would have added an extra dimension to the text.⁵³ The Christian teaching in these hymns is thus reinforced by the music, because the fusion of lyrics and melody brands words into the human brain.⁵⁴

Many of the hymns in *Danny* are eschatological in focus and millennial in content, and would have brought to the mind of readers their hope of eternal life. McClung frequently gives just one or two lines of well-known hymns, which would have recalled the whole to readers. For example, Mrs. Motherwell remembers “We shall be where suns are not, / A far serener clime,” lines from the 1842 hymn “A Few More Years Shall Roll” by Horatius Bonar, an evangelistic hymn that looks forward to believers’ being with Christ in heaven after death and anticipates his return on earth.⁵⁵ On a humorous note, Pearl has the

⁵² In *The Secret Power of Music*, David Tame writes, “[Music] gives us a framework of emotional experiences and mental concepts which tend to shape how we view the world” (149). He warns that it has been easy for modern man, “born and raised within a society permeated with the philosophy of materialism and reductionism, to fall into the trap of regarding music to be a non-essential and even peripheral aspect of human life. And yet such a viewpoint would have been regarded by the philosophers of antiquity to be not only irrational, *but also, ultimately, suicidal*” (13-14). He claims that whereas before the twentieth century, serious music was “anchored upon spiritual ideals,” “Today serious music is more devoid of idealistic foundations than at any period during the history of man” (73, 72).

⁵³ In *Music in the Life of Man*, Julius Portnoy notes that words added to music produce a music “richer than pure melody or prose alone could produce” because whereas words “inform and enlighten us about facts and events in the word,” music “induces introspection, suggestions to search within ourselves” (132, 33).

⁵⁴ For example, the ancient Greeks sang their dramas because they knew that music could help them remember words more easily. Napoleon reportedly understood the enormous power of music: “Give me control over he who shapes the music of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws” (qtd. in O’Donnell 1).

⁵⁵ The hymn includes the following:

dishes singing “Are we yet alive and see each other’s face,” a well-known Methodist hymn by Charles Wesley; in a more serious vein, when suspected of stealing two dollars, she quotes “sowin’ in the sunshine, sowin’ in the shaddah” from “Bringing in the Sheaves,” a hymn often sung at harvest time, which also looks forward to meeting the Lord after death. Arthur, as he lies dying, recalls “Other lights are paling . . . for we go to thee,” Anna B. Warner’s hymn from her 1852 novel, *Dollars and Cents*. Likewise, Mrs. Watson sings “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains”⁵⁶ in anticipation of Pearl’s homecoming, and while interpolating instructions to the family, “never drops a stitch in her singin’” (297). Thus McClung employs hymns from a wide variety of sources.

McClung’s most powerful use of hymns occurs in the scene at the Slaters’ party. Arthur Wemyss plays a melody by Mendelssohn on the piano and then sings “We Would See Jesus, for the Shadows Lengthen,” ten lines of which are quoted in the novel;⁵⁷ the narrator writes of the impact of the “divinely tender hymn, and the longing of it, the prayer

A few more years shall roll, / A few more seasons come, / And we shall be with those that rest / Asleep within the tomb. / Then, O my Lord, prepare / My soul for that great day; / Oh wash me in Thy precious blood, / And take my sins away.

A few more suns shall set / O’er these dark hills of time, / And we shall be where suns are not, / A far serener clime. / Then, O my Lord, prepare / My soul for that blest day; / Oh wash me in Thy precious blood, / And take my sins away. . . .

‘Tis but a little while, / And He shall come again / Who died that we might live, who lives / That we with Him may reign. / Then, O my Lord, prepare / My soul for that glad day; / Oh wash me in Thy precious blood, / And take my sins away.

⁵⁶ This missionary hymn by Reginald Heber (1819) reflects Jesus’ parting words to his disciples in Matthew 28.19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”

⁵⁷ Part of the appeal of the hymn is its connection to Arthur’s spiritual hunger and longing for home, where his father is an Anglican rector:

Closely linked to the young man’s love of home was his religious devotion. The quiet Sabbath morning with its silvery chimes calling men to prayer; the soft footfalls in the aisle; the white-robed choir, his father’s voice in the church service, so full of divine significance; the many-voiced responses and the swelling notes of the “Te Deum” – he missed it so. (216)

of it [which] was not his alone, but arose from every heart that listened” (216-17). The narrator assesses the power of the words and of Mendelssohn’s music on those at the party:

Perhaps they were in a responsive mood, easily swayed by emotion. Perhaps that is why there was in every heart that listened a desire to be good and follow righteousness, a reaching up of feeble hands to God. The Reverend Hugh Grantley would have said that it was the Spirit of God that stands at the door of every man’s heart and knocks.⁵⁸ (217)

The hymn thus gives the narrator an opportunity to present an evangelical revivalist message, and the listeners’ emotional response to the message is intended to be a renewed focus upon righteousness in their lives. The presence of the Holy Spirit is assumed, as are the promises of the life to come with Jesus, for the hymn concludes with the line, “we go to Thee.” This same party ends when Mr. Slater, in whose “Methodist heart” a spiritual hunger has been revived by the singing of “We Would See Jesus,” requests the group to sing “God Be with You Till We Meet Again” (218).⁵⁹ The words are made even more moving by the pathos of consumptive Little Billy, “face to face with the long struggle and its certain ending,” singing clearly above the others (218). Thus McClung orchestrates the scene to

⁵⁸ This phrase is from Jesus’ words to the Church in Laodicea in Revelation 3.20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” This passage is used frequently as part of an evangelical message calling people to admit Jesus into their lives.

⁵⁹ Jeremiah Eames Rankin (1828–1904) composed the hymn in 1880, and it was published with the tune “God be with you” by William G. Tomer (1833-1896) in *Gospel Bells* in 1880. Ralph Vaughn Williams (1872-1958) composed the tune “Randolph” to go with Rankin’s text; it was first published in *The English Hymnal* in 1906. Rankin, a Congregational minister and President of Howard University, comments on his hymn-text, “It was written as a Christian good-bye; it was called forth by no person or occasion, but was deliberately composed as a Christian hymn on the basis of the etymology of ‘good-bye,’ which means “‘God be with you’” (<<http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/PsH/316>>).

include music and the touching words of hymns to compel an emotional response in her readers.

As well as hymns, McClung uses the strategy of including many published prayers, especially from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.⁶⁰ For example, in the throes of the pain of appendicitis, Arthur recalls the litany from the *Book of Common Prayer*: “From lightning and tempest . . . Good Lord, deliver us!” (263), and immediately its meaning becomes real to him: “He had prayed it many times, meaninglessly. But he clung to it now, clung to it desperately. As a drowning man” (263). Thus rote liturgical prayer suddenly becomes vividly personal, spontaneous, and sincere. Arthur has Pearl repeat the Prayer of General Confession from the Order for Morning Prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer* (266), his way of confessing his sins to prepare his soul “to meet his Maker” (269). Likewise, Dr. Clay, in his agony of fear to operate on Arthur in case he causes yet another man to die, echoes this same Prayer of General Confession: ““O God, be merciful to a poor, blundering, miserable wretch!”” (269).⁶¹ McClung also includes prayers by well-known authors, such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Bring us to our resting beds at night . . . and grant us in the end the gift of sleep,” from “At Morning” in *Prayers Written at Vailima* (263). Her sources are widespread and ecumenical, and each prayer adds to the richness of the foundations of the text and authenticates its religious orthodoxy, an important criteria for her readership.

⁶⁰ *The Book of Common Prayer* is the book of liturgical services and prayers used in the Church of England and the Anglican Church of Canada (“The Church of England in the Dominion of Canada” (1918)). The first edition, published in 1549 in the reign of Edward VI, was a product of the English Reformation following England’s break with the Church of Rome. The Anglican Church of Canada did not get its own *Book of Common Prayer* until 1918; prior to that it used the 1662 Church of England *BCP*.

⁶¹ The actual words are “But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders; Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults, Restore thou them that are penitent” (*BCP* 4).

As well as prayers from written sources, McClung puts many sermons of her own creation into the mouths of her characters and her narrator. A sermon is an address of religious instruction or exhortation, often based on a passage from the Bible, and frequently delivered during a church service, although the term can also be applied to a serious speech that administers reproof.⁶² McClung's audience would have been familiar with evangelical preaching, as we have seen in Chapter 2. The Presbyterian minister Hugh Grantley confronts Sam Motherwell, who is "nominally" Presbyterian (72), with a preaching masterpiece, following the format of evangelists such as the Judd sisters and the John Hunter/Hugh Crossley team, which identifies the man's sin, calls for his repentance, and presents the possibility of redemption and regeneration.⁶³ To counteract Sam's greed and materialism, Grantley first reminds him of how the Lord has blessed him: "The Lord sends you seed-time and harvest. . . has given you health of body and mind, sends you rain from heaven, makes his sun to shine upon you, increases your riches from year to year" (75). He meets each of Sam's objections to giving money to the church and points out how he has sinned against God: "God owns one-tenth of all that stuff you call your own."⁶⁴ You have cheated Him out of His part all these years, and He has carried you over from year to year, hoping

⁶² The good Parson in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* "Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche" (*General Prologue* 1.481). The sermons of John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Swift, and Laurence Sterne form an important part of eighteenth-century literature (Bond and Jeffrey 633).

⁶³ Kevin Kee observes: "Drawing on passages of the Bible, the evangelists attempted to convince their listeners of the need of repentance for sin, the possibility of redemption in Christ, and the opportunity for regeneration with the help of the Holy Spirit" ("Revivalists" 22).

⁶⁴ Christians are expected to tithe, i.e., to give one-tenth of their income to support the local church. Tithing is an Old Testament concept, a requirement of the Law by which all Israelites were to give ten percent of everything they earned and grew to the Tabernacle/Temple (Leviticus 27.30; Numbers 18.26; Deuteronomy 14.24; 2 Chronicles 31.5). The New Testament nowhere commands that Christians submit to a legalistic tithe system, although Paul states that believers should set aside a portion of their income in order to support the church (1 Corinthians 16.1-2).

that you will pay up without harsh proceedings” (76). Grantley then diagnoses Sam’s sickness:

You are a rich man in the world’s goods, but your soul is lean and hungry and naked. Selfishness and greed have blinded your eyes. If you could see what a contemptible, good-for-nothing creature you are in God’s sight, you would call on the hills to fall on you. (76)

Then, in a revivalist style of preaching that has all but vanished in the twenty-first century, Grantley tells Motherwell that if he does not change, he will go to hell: “You shall lie down and die like a dog. You shall go out into outer darkness” (76-7).⁶⁵ Sam is most shocked, not by Grantley’s words, but by the fact that the minister has given his twenty-five dollars back to him. But now the money seems tainted, and “the very touch of the bills [is] distasteful to him!” (78). Grantley’s words have made him feel a sense of guilt, the first step on his road to salvation.⁶⁶ Likewise, readers are led to apply Grantley’s condemnation of Sam to their own lives and to question whether they, too, deserve censure.

Many times it is the narrator who intervenes to preach to the reader, and authorial exhortations sometimes interrupt the action of the novel.⁶⁷ The narrator uses several classic rhetorical strategies⁶⁸ common in nineteenth-century fiction: asides to the reader,⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Parables in Matthew 8, 22 and 25 consign people to outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁶⁶ Note that Grantley does not continue with an exposition of redemption in Christ and rebirth by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps as a “nominal Presbyterian,” Sam would have been taught these things previously.

⁶⁷ Authorial teaching and preaching are generally condemned as didacticism in our century. Didacticism is an artistic philosophy that has come into disrepute since the “Art for art’s sake” movement at the end of the nineteenth century. McClung’s audience would have been quite comfortable with the didactic elements in *Danny*.

⁶⁸ A rhetorical device or resource of language is a technique that an author or speaker uses to evoke an emotional response in the audience (the reader(s) or listener(s)). These emotional responses are

apostrophes to the characters, and apostrophes to the reader.⁷⁰ Asides to the reader are sometimes short comments, as when Mary takes her father out of the hotel where he has been having a drunken theological argument with another Scot, and the bartender declares, ““This is no place for women, anyway,”” to which the narrator adds, ““which is true, God knows”” (36-37). Thus the narrator emphasizes the wickedness of the bar by inserting a personal opinion. Apostrophizing an absent character is another strategy that McClung uses to increase the drama of a scene. As Arthur lies dying, the narrator addresses his father, far away in his “dignity and formalism,” because “in the gathering shadows there stalks, noiselessly, relentlessly, that grim, gray spectre, Death”:

On thy knees, then, oh Rector of St. Agnes, and blend thy prayers with the feeble petitions of her who even now, for thy house, entreats the Throne of Grace. Pray, oh thou on whom the bishop’s hands have been laid, that the golden bowl be not broken nor the silver cord loosed, for the breath of thy fifth son draws heavily, and the things of time and sense are fading, fading, fading from his closing eyes. (265-66)

central to the meaning of the work or speech, and should also get the audience’s attention. Wayne Booth, in the Preface to his influential book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), writes that his subject is “the rhetorical resources available to the writer of epic, novel, or short story as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world upon the reader” (n.p.).

⁶⁹ The use of asides is a dramatic device to guide readers’ attitudes to the action or to let readers know what a character is thinking. Asides are important because they increase readers’ involvement in a novel by creating a sense of kinship with the narrator and by giving them vital information pertaining to what is happening inside a character’s mind.

⁷⁰ Apostrophes are rhetorical devices that interrupt the discussion or discourse and directly address a person or personified thing, either present or absent. Their most common purpose in prose is to give vent to or display intense emotion, which can no longer be held back. A biblical example occurs when Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem before his crucifixion. He laments: ““O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!”” (Luke 13.34).

As part of this apostrophe, McClung incorporates the personification of death as a stalking, noiseless, relentless, grim, gray spectre. She echoes several biblical passages here, including Hebrews 4.16: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,” as well as the words of Ecclesiastes 12.6, familiar to her readers, which enjoin people to remember their Creator before “the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.”⁷¹ She recalls the apostolic succession whereby Arthur’s father has been commissioned by a bishop whose authority is historically traceable back to the original Twelve Apostles, thereby legitimizing his own ministerial authority to pray to God, and her language in this passage echoes the majestic King-James style of *The Book of Common Prayer*. McClung also uses the repetition of “fading” to underline Arthur’s ebbing life forces. The combination of rhetorical devices effectively increases the drama of the scene and heightens the tension of the battle between life and death that Pearl is fighting with her “feeble petitions.” Asking for the prayers of someone on the other side of the Atlantic takes the spiritual battle to a higher level.

The narrator also acts as a spiritual guide to the reader by revealing details of divine action in the story that would otherwise not be knowable. When Hugh Grantley questions his own worthiness in relation to Mary and humbly thinks Dr. Clay is more worthy of her, he groans aloud, and the omniscient narrator reveals that “He who hears the cry of the child or of the strong man in agony drew near and laid His pierced hands upon him in healing and benediction,” demonstrating that Jesus, the omnipresent healer and redeemer, is there to

⁷¹ McClung brings in a strong allegorical element with this passage from Ecclesiastes, which is a figurative description of the decay and dissolution of life. The life of man is likened to a golden bowl containing oil for a lamp, suspended by a silver cord. The lamp was a familiar symbol of life in antiquity (Hendry 577).

comfort Grantley as he travels “by the thorn-road” in His footsteps (287-88). Thus the narrator reminds readers of the divine power that is available to ordinary men and women if they call out to God for help.

Sometimes the narrator reveals more about a character than the reader could learn from the character’s words and actions. For example, the narrator discloses that Dr. Barner could still inspire confidence in his patients, in spite of his alcoholism: “This was the old man’s good gift that even his years of sinning could not wholly destroy. God had marked him for a great physician” (37). At other times, the narrator speaks in a philosophising or moralising voice when giving a general address to the reader. For example, after a description of the prairie in the morning, McClung writes:

There is no hour of the day so hushed and beautiful as the early morning, when the day is young, fresh from the hand of God. It is a new page, clean and white and pure, and the angel is saying unto us “Write!” and none there be who may refuse to obey. It may be gracious deeds and kindly words that we write upon it in letters of gold, or it may be that we blot and blur it with evil thoughts and stain it with unworthy actions, but write we must. (224)

This is the strain of didacticism that was common in Sunday-School fiction of the day, which has since fallen out of favour, taking McClung’s work with it, but which would have provided comfort and instruction to her readers.

Temperance melodrama was another antecedent to *Danny* that provided many of its rhetorical strategies that lost favour in the twentieth century. Temperance⁷² was a major

⁷² Temperance is one of the four Cardinal Virtues and means the practice of moderation. Temperance movements were originally aimed at generating temperance – moderation – in drinking of alcoholic beverages, but eventually moved to complete prohibition of alcohol. Temperance was high on the agenda of evangelists such as Dwight L. Moody, who visited Toronto in 1884 and Winnipeg in 1897,

cause in the nineteenth century, to the extent that popular temperance literature is now considered to be a genre. It was addressed in plays, tracts, sentimental novels, poems, short stories, periodicals, hymns, and popular songs, and poets such as Wordsworth, Shelley, and Kipling were commended for their temperance stands (Blocker et al. 381). The American Temperance Society, founded in 1825, claimed to have issued more than five million temperance tracts and 150,000 bound volumes of temperance tracts by 1851. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the most successful North American work of the century, dealt with temperance as well as slavery; it was translated into twenty-five languages, making its international influence on the promotion of temperance incalculable (Carter 202).

Many Canadians in the late Victorian era were preoccupied with the moral, physical and social dangers presented by alcohol. As proponents of what has come to be called "evangelical feminism," the women in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union,⁷³ to which McClung belonged, expressed their concerns about the destructiveness of alcohol and the problems it caused in families and in society.⁷⁴ Modeled after the Christian churches, WCTU meetings opened with a prayer and a hymn, included additional hymn singing, a

and revivalists such as the team of Hugh Crossley and John Hunter, which during the late nineteenth century visited and revisited most Canadian cities. The response of Sir John A. Macdonald at the end of a seven-week revival led by Hunter and Crossley resulted in his becoming "a changed man" (Kee "Heavenly" 83).

⁷³ A Canadian branch of the WCTU was founded in 1874 under the leadership of Ontario's Letitia Youmans.

⁷⁴ From the WCTU fonds at the McCord Museum (P590):

The goal of the WCTU was to protect the home from evil influences and strengthen family life, but its primary objective was to promote total abstinence from alcohol. As part of its pro-family program, the WCTU fought to have prohibition laws passed (and later antitobacco and antidrug laws), but also to support causes such as women's suffrage and the abolition of prostitution. A Christian movement, it encouraged Bible readings and prayer recitation in schools. The WCTU also took a strong interest in marriage licences, citizenship and new immigrants, as well as in causes such as world peace and child welfare.

(<<http://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/>>)

collection, and an address by a minister, and ended with a benediction (Mitchinson 165). According to Wendy Mitchinson, “religious faith was the cornerstone of a temperate society” and therefore the WCTU supported measures that strengthened the Church, including the movement to maintain the observance of the Sabbath (165). Central to their program was childhood education, both in the school classroom and in extracurricular clubs such as are portrayed in Millford, Manitoba’s “Band of Hope.”⁷⁵

Almost every issue of importance to the temperance cause was introduced by stereotypes in theatrical melodrama: the evil city, tavern owners and liquor distributors; the women and children victimized by the ruinous effects of alcoholism; the inebriated father, ineffective head of the family. Melodrama employed two reform tactics: “moral suasion” (appealing to the fallen hero’s moral sensibilities) and the “experience speech,” a didactic and sentimental account of the drunkard’s fall into sin, his or her reaching bottom, and subsequent reform. Because the formulas of the plays included moral lessons important to social crusaders and reformers,⁷⁶ temperance plays attracted audiences formerly opposed to the theatre on moral grounds. Gradually the rhetoric and formulas of both stage and tracts appeared in fiction, which came to be known for overdrawn and stereotypical characterizations, coincidences, extremes of good and evil, and appeals to sentiment.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Bands of Hope were after-school clubs sponsored by the WCTU. Members were expected to sign the “triple-pledge” in which they foreswore alcohol, tobacco, and foul language. Children wore blue neck scarves embroidered with “Band of Hope” in white, and badges of red, white, and blue were looped into buttonholes. Children could earn temperance medals for making speeches, creating posters, or performing songs and recitations (Sharon Anne Cook in Blocker et al. 677).

⁷⁶ In “Comic Fictional Modes,” Northrop Frye writes, “In melodrama two themes are important: the triumph of moral virtue over villainy, and the consequent idealizing of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience” (*Anatomy* 47).

⁷⁷ Clarence Karr notes: “Used to heighten dramatic tension, trap the interest of the reader, and provide surprises, melodrama usually involves coincidences, which sometimes stretches the credulity of the reader” (38).

McClung's hero Charles Dickens used melodrama to bring about social change; in *Oliver Twist*, he defends his use of melodramatic extremes: "It is the custom on the stage, in all good murderous melodramas, to present the tragic and the comic scenes, in as regular alternation, as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky bacon" (174). Elaine Hadley argues that Dickens adopted the melodramatic mode in order to resist the alienating and classifying effects of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, whose operations were the explicit context for *Oliver Twist*'s initial chapters.⁷⁸ She suggests that the social content and influence of this melodramatic mode⁷⁹ have been largely ignored because melodrama was overshadowed by the more prominent doctrines of Romanticism and, later in the century, High Realism. In the Summary of *Melodramatic Tactics*, she writes that in contrast to Romanticism,

the melodramatic mode resisted the classification of English society and Romantic poetry's interiorization of the subject by insisting on the continued vitality of traditionally public, social formations, especially status hierarchies, which constituted identity in terms of familial and communal relationships.

(n.p.)

⁷⁸ Hadley explains the cultural changes against which Dickens was reacting:

Throughout the eighteenth century, deferential, "familial" feelings among the ranks had been nurtured through highly public displays of punishment and benevolence, one of which was the scene of relief staged by the old poor laws prior to 1834. In these parish rituals, the impoverished appealed to their local gentry for the assistance they considered a birthright. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 intervened in these public exchanges, imposing a system of relief based on a mainly economic version of modern classification. This not only altered the rules of exchange between the ranks, but also changed the constitution of personhood for those involved in the transactions. By means of the melodramatic mode, Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, like theatrical melodrama, stages this conflict between the old law and the new in terms of the older law's assumptions. ("Summary" 1)

⁷⁹ Hadley notes that by mid-century, "stage melodrama and its distinctive style of presentation had become so common in most London theatres that plays of a melodramatic cast no longer identified themselves as such; in most respects melodrama was drama" (*Melodramatic* 1).

Thus McClung's use of melodrama provided her readership with a comforting societal perspective on the importance of community and "the essential 'rightness' of the world order" (Cawelti 45).⁸⁰

McClung uses melodramatic techniques in an overall form that is comic rather than tragic.⁸¹ Some of the characteristics common to melodrama that appear in her novel include stereotypical characters such as the daughter suffering because of her father's alcoholism (Mary Barner), the wife enduring the abuse of an alcoholic husband (Mrs. Skinner), and the aged mother who will be sent to the workhouse if she does not receive money in time (Mrs. Bragg); coincidences such as the twenty-five dollars that the Reverend Grantley returns to Sam Motherwell being echoed in the twenty-five dollars worth of damage done by the hail storm, and the same twenty-five dollars being used by Tom Motherwell to pay for drinks for everyone in the Millford hotel bar; the use of pathetic fallacy, such as when Arthur gets steadily sicker, heavy clouds fill the sky, the stars disappear, the sky grows darker and darker, and the doctor arrives when the night is "at its blackest" (255, 267); and personification of the elements:

[The wind] raged and howled with increasing violence around the granary
where Arthur lay tossing upon his hard bed. It seized the door and rattled it in

⁸⁰ In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, John Cawelti discusses the "social melodrama,"

which synthesizes the archetype of melodrama with a carefully and elaborately developed social setting in such a way as to combine the emotional satisfactions of melodrama with the interest inherent in a detailed, intimate, and realistic analysis of major social or historical phenomena. . . . The appeal of this synthesis combines the escapist satisfactions of melodrama – in particular, its fantasy of a moral universe following conventional social values – with the pleasurable feeling that we are learning something important about reality. (261)

⁸¹ Karr claims that McClung's approach was "less rhetorical and more human than the WCTU's more typical shock method of the melodramatic story" (110).

wanton playfulness, as if to deceive the sick man with the hope that a friend's hand was on the latch, and then raced blustering and screaming down to the meadows below. (259)

Techniques such as these intensify the emotional impact of dramatic scenes and moments of crisis. McClung counters these melodramatic techniques with realistic details of setting such as the granary, fanning mill, and piles of grain bags, and the credible symptoms of appendicitis, such as Arthur's loss of appetite, fever, and abdominal pain. Readers would have accepted the melodramatic style because it coincided with their worldview and valuation of the triumph of virtue over vice.

McClung also conveys her temperance message through her depiction of the children's group, the Band of Hope. Based on Christian principles,⁸² it educates the children of Millford about the evils of alcohol; membership involves vowing "never to touch, taste nor handle alcoholic stimulants in any form as a beverage and to discourage all traffic in the same" (51). Part of the program includes lessons providing information about "the effect of alcohol on the lining of the stomach" (46); when Arthur becomes sick, Pearl concludes that his illness is not due to drinking "alcoholic beverages that act directly on the liver and stomach, drying up the blood, and rendering every organ unfit for work," information that comes straight out of the Band of Hope manual (245). At Band of Hope meetings, children are allowed to "tell stories or ask questions relating to temperance," and McClung uses this opportunity to insert many humorous comments, songs, recitations, and tales. Meetings conclude with a hymn such as "Oh, what a happy band are we!" followed occasionally by

⁸² Elements of nationalism are also incorporated in the program, such as "we're for home and mother, / God and native land" (49), although the nationalism in Bugsey Watson's recitation, which includes "To love my parents and Uncle Sam, / Keep Alcohol out of my diaphragm," is somewhat suspect in a Canadian context.

slabs of fresh taffy, because the leaders have learned that “when temperance sentiment waned,” taffy “had a wonderful power to bind and hold the wavering childish heart” (45). Thus in a light-hearted way (humour as taffy for the reader?), McClung introduces many of her pro-temperance principles.

She also incorporates three temperance tales with many elements of melodrama: the stories of Skinner, Dr. Barner, and Tom Motherwell. The Skinners’ story ends on a hopeless note, demonstrating that alcohol does kill body and soul. Dr. Barner’s has a more hopeful ending: with the help of the spiritual input of Reverend Grantley, he is able to keep sober, and McClung thus shows that alcoholism can be defeated. Tom Motherwell’s temptation by drink is short-lived, but McClung implies that had he not had a change of heart, his fate would have been the same as Skinner’s.

As well as telling melodramatic stories of the dangers and evils of alcoholic beverages, McClung provides an alternative to drinking alcoholic beverages in the enjoyment of the beauties of nature. For example, as Pearl walks on the prairies,

The exhilaration of the air, the glory of the waving grain, the profusion of wild flowers that edged the fields with purple and yellow were like wine to her sympathetic Irish heart as she walked through the grain fields and drank in all the beauties that lay around. (124)

These images of wine and drinking lead to Pearl’s innocent intoxication: “the golden flowers, the golden fields, the warm golden sunshine intoxicated Pearl with their luxurious beauty” (128). Likewise, intense emotion can imitate inebriation; in Dr. Clay’s agony before he operates on Arthur, he sways “like a drunken man” (268). McClung implies that alcohol is not necessary in order to experience joyful living and strong emotions.

McClung also integrates biblical passages in the every-day speech of her characters to present a temperance message. Dr. Clay, for example, quotes “‘Who hath sorrow, who hath woe, who hath redness of eyes?’ Solomon, was n’t it, who said it was ‘they who tarry long at the wine?’” (85), from Proverbs 23.29-30. Not only is his familiarity with the Bible evidence that the doctor is one of the “good” characters, but also it provides a subtle temperance message. Pearl, too, includes temperance verses when she tells a story to her friends about washing Mrs. Evans’ dishes. She describes the dishes as “‘all drunk, not a sober man on board,’” and the dishes that sink to the bottom become an object lesson about “‘what whiskey is doin’ for them’” (106). But Pearl is not sorry for their drowning because, as she quotes from Proverbs 20.1, “‘wine is a mocker, strong drink is ragin’, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise’” (105). Thus with a combination of humour and biblical proofs, McClung delivers her temperance message.⁸³

As well as incorporating Sunday-School and temperance antecedents, McClung writes in the tradition of the sentimental romance.⁸⁴ The term “sentimental” originally meant that which appealed to the emotions;⁸⁵ eventually “sentimentality” came to be a pejorative term applied to scenes in novels or to novels themselves that were effusively or insincerely

⁸³ Linda Quirk argues that McClung’s writing has failed to transcend its time and place partly because of the “moralistic indictment of ‘demon alcohol’” in *Danny*, which lacks “both perspective and subtlety.” Quirk writes,

Modern readers may not understand the central place of the temperance movement in early Canadian society, and, thanks to the changes effected by McClung and her contemporaries, we may not appreciate the implications of alcohol-induced domestic violence at a time when women and children had few legal rights. The novel is a temperance sermon in disguise. (1)

⁸⁴ Cawelti argues that the sentimental romance falls under the archetype of melodrama in that it is “the fantasy of a world that operates according to our heart’s desires. . . [in a] world bearing out the audience’s traditional patterns of right and wrong, good and evil” (45).

⁸⁵ During the eighteenth century, shedding tears when moved by emotion was considered to be a sign of good breeding among both men and women. In the nineteenth century, scenes of sentimentality such as the death of Little Nell in Charles Dickens’ *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41) brought tears to the eyes of even hardened critics in its day.

emotional, and it became synonymous with terms such as maudlin, mushy, tear-jerking, or schmaltzy. Just as it is necessary to distinguish between the genre of temperance melodrama and the stereotypes associated with the genre, it is necessary to distinguish between sentimentality as a rhetorical device and sentimental romantic literature as a genre. As a device, sentimentality is a type of writing used to induce a tender emotional response in the reader that is frequently disproportionate to the situation. As a genre, the sentimental novels of the nineteenth century, also known as domestic novels, were among the most popular and successful forms of fiction in North America, although they were excluded from the literary canon.⁸⁶ These novels focused on the intimate details of women's private lives, and women were depicted as the morally pure guardians of spirituality and virtue. Recent critics argue that sentimental/domestic novels are less formulaic than initially perceived, and they have interpreted them as expressions of proto-feminism and as attempts to celebrate the traditional role of women in society. Jane Tompkins argues persuasively:

The very grounds on which sentimental fiction has been dismissed by its detractors, grounds that have come to seem universal standards of aesthetic judgment, were established in a struggle to supplant the tradition of evangelical piety and moral commitment these novelists represent. In reaction against their world view, and perhaps even more against their success, twentieth-century critics have taught generations of students to equate popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness,

⁸⁶ The sentimental novel has historical roots in Europe, particularly in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1747-48) and *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), both of which tell of men attempting to seduce virtuous women. The sentimental novels of the 1760s and 1770s in England exhibited the close connection between virtue and sensibility in repeated tearful scenes; a character's feeling for the beauties of nature and for the grief of others was interpreted as a sign of a pure heart. Noted for its predilection for refined feeling that privileged emotion over reason, the sentimental novel generally preferred the private to the public sphere.

religiosity with fakery, domesticity with triviality, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority. (82)⁸⁷

In the nineteenth century, the “sentimentalists,” women authors writing for women and about women, were both strong moralists and proponents of domesticity. In their commitment to traditional community values, they deplored society’s materialism and urged a return to Christian values to replace what they perceived to be a moral vacuum in their countries. As women, they were restricted to the private domestic sphere, but as writers, they sought to influence the public sphere from which they were excluded. To proselytize their readers, their fiction frequently became didactic essays; as Mary Kelley writes of the sentimentalists, “Uncertain of themselves as artists, they harbored no doubts that their art should have a moral purpose” (438). As we have seen in the discussion of Sunday-School fiction, Jane Tompkins argues that sentimental writers used “the central myth of their culture, the story of Christ’s death for the sins of mankind,” as the basis of their writing (104). Presenting melodramatic and simplistic plots as well as characters that seem stereotyped to modern readers, the sentimental novel insists that religious conversion is the only antidote to social ills and that reality can only be changed “by conversion in the spirit because it is the spirit alone that is finally real” (Tompkins 90). Thus there is a broad overlap between the tropes and conventions of sentimental fiction, Sunday-School fiction, and temperance melodrama; all are based on the same worldview, in which spiritual realities are the eternal truths that give meaning to life.

⁸⁷ Tompkins describes how critics have viewed writers of sentimental fiction: “Self-deluded and unable to face the harsh effects of a competitive society, they are portrayed as manipulators of a gullible public who kept their readers imprisoned in a dream world of self-justifying clichés” (83).

As I will illustrate in Chapter 5, Nellie McClung was largely denigrated and dismissed by modernist critics as a writer of sentimental romance. W.H. New, for example, argues that McClung's deliberate use of sentimentality, when coupled with didactic satire, "invited its own demise" (*History* 98-9). But authorial playing on emotions was not denigrated in McClung's time. When Edward Caswell, McClung's editor, first read the manuscript of *Danny*, he told her that its pathos had caused tears to stream down his face, and he was not ashamed to admit to them.⁸⁸ Certainly McClung plays on the emotions of her readers in scenes such as Polly's death, but Jane Tompkins argues that the tears that we ridicule in our day were the sign of redemption in the past, because "not words but the emotions of the heart besp[oke] a state of grace" (89). Emotional experience is given authority in the text, foregrounding what could be denigrated as pathos in scenes such as Little Billy McLean's singing. It is the sentimental impact of Mrs. Bragg's letters to Polly that causes Mrs. Motherwell to break down and sob, "Oh God be merciful, be merciful" (238); her turning to God occurs as a result of an appeal to her sensibility. As Karr observes, McClung plays on the emotions of her readers, invites them into her stories and expects "renewal and transformation to follow" (110). Her readership was not ashamed to be moved emotionally by her writing.⁸⁹

Just as McClung uses sentimental rhetoric and scenes, so she also makes fun of sentimental romances, especially when Pearl tells Tom the story of Egbert and Edythe, from "Wedded and Parted, and Wedded Again," and transposes Tom and Nellie Slater into their roles (186-87). Pearl thinks in terms of all the stereotypical literary tropes of romance;

⁸⁸ British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Nellie L. McClung Papers, Add. MSS 10, Box 10, File 1, Caswell to McClung, 26 April 1906.

⁸⁹ See Savage's *Our Nell*, pages 62-3, for several reader responses.

because she has learned all about frustrated love from the romances her mother has read to her, the Motherwells become the “cruel and designing parents” of the “Wedded” story. She worries that Tom will pine away like Egbert, so she repeats to Tom, “Keep a stout heart and all will be well,” the only words that have saved Egbert “from the silent tomb where partings come no more” (187). She assumes that Tom chews tobacco, a “plunge into dissipation,” because he has been crossed in love, and imagines that he will go on to be a robber or a pirate or kill a man and be led to the scaffold, “and he would turn his haggard face to the howling mob, and say, ‘All that I am my mother made me.’” (187). McClung’s use of alliteration, exaggeration, and wild ideas makes fun of Pearl’s imagination gone to extremes.⁹⁰ Likewise, Pearl’s unrealistic ideas about “poor Nellie Slater standing dry-eyed and pale at the window” are juxtaposed with a laughing Nellie feeling sorry for Tom living with his dour parents (188-89). The irony is that while McClung makes fun of romances such as the story of Egbert and Edythe, she fulfils the genre in practise, with both Camilla and Mary Barner marrying their true loves, in keeping with the conventions of the sentimental romance.

Despite the novel’s many sentimental elements, many of the reasons for *Danny*’s popularity in 1908 are still valid today. McClung’s humour is masterful, probably her most effective rhetorical strategy of all.⁹¹ One has only to read her description of Dr. Clay’s horse Pleurisy or her narration of Pearl’s imaginative games to be entranced by her wit.⁹² Pearl,

⁹⁰ Pearl herself also acts out romantic plots, such as when she lives the part of the knight from a recitation she had made, who keeps his promise to live for a year only: “Her step was proud, her head was thrown back, her brown eyes glowed and burned; there was strength and grace in every motion” (193).

⁹¹ Sandra Campbell writes of McClung’s “gift for rendering the life of the small-town West and her ability to embed her political and social ideas in comic fiction” (244).

⁹² The examples are countless. John Moss writes:

funny, fervent, and brave, keeps the reader laughing because of her childish interpretations of life and her own delightful sense of humour. One of her characteristics is frequent conjecture about illness; she attributes mental and emotional problems to physical illness or other realistic explanations, such as when she asks Tom if Nellie Slater is “tooberkler” because his parents won’t let him go near her (186).⁹³ Her distortions and misunderstandings of illness are amusing, for instance when she tells Mrs. Motherwell she cannot sleep in the room she has been assigned because it is “full of diseases and microscopes” (152). Part of the humour is in McClung’s transcription of Pearl’s speech with its childish mispronunciations. Pearl talks of someone who “died a drunkard with delirium trimmings” and a lady who died because she had “a tumult in her insides” (168, 222). Likewise, Pearl’s misspellings in her diary, such as “it’s offel to be in love,” keep the reader chuckling (220). In her diary, Pearl makes comments such as “There’s wild parsley down on the crik. Mrs. M. sed ‘t wuz poison, but I wanted to be sure, so I et it, and it is n’t,” revealing her child-like logic (220). Pearl also mentions in her diary the Anglican minister’s visit when he had given them a dandy prayer: “He didn’t make it – it was a bot one” (220). Both the spelling and the idea behind the “bot” prayer are humorous, summing up the difference between a liturgical religious tradition, in this case based on *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the more spontaneous evangelical tradition with which Pearl is familiar. Also in her diary, Pearl writes poetry that turns the non-romantic elements of farm life into verse: “The little lams

Whether it is one of the Watson children begrudgingly awarding another a chew of his gum for going to bed in midday so that yet another can wear the only decent pair of pants among them; or whether it is a maliciously delightful description of character (“she was known to have a leaning towards canned goods”), or a play on words (“Mrs. Ducker considered it more serious to drop a final *g* than a dinner plate”), the humour abounds. (*Reader’s* 126)

⁹³ When Mrs. Motherwell speaks kindly, Pearl asks if she is not well. Mrs. Motherwell admits she did not sleep well: “That’s the mortgage,” Pearl thinks. When Mrs. Motherwell adds that she had had dreadful dreams: “That looks more like cancer,” Pearl assumes (234).

are beautiful, / There cotes are soft and nice, / The little calves have ringworm, / And the 2-year olds have lice! It must be very nasty, / But worrie, what's the use; / Better be cam and cheerfull, / And appli tobaka jooce" (221).⁹⁴ In her diary, she also appraises herself in a way that older readers appreciate; she says she will be "gittin on to be thirteen soon": "13 is pretty old I gess. I'll soon turn the corner now and be lookin' 20 square in the face" (222). Her colloquial speech ("Ain't he a peach?" (89)), her sincere but funny prayers, her songs where she changes the words of known songs to suit her own situation (129), and the stories she tells the other girls to make household chores come alive, all contribute to the comic tone that makes McClung's messages so palatable.

Humour is not the only strength of McClung's writing; her beautiful descriptions of the prairies rival Montgomery's depiction of Prince Edward Island. McClung's prairie readers would have especially appreciated the authenticity of scenes that were different from other parts of Canada, her descriptions of species of flowers and birds found only on the prairies, and her use of the prairie vernacular. Thus it is not surprising that *Winnipeg Town Topics* declared *Sowing Seeds in Danny* "the sweetest, the sanest and most accurate pictures of the ordinary everyday life of the farms and villages of the whole West that has been written, or is ever likely to be written" (undated clipping, PABC, vol. 29).

All of these different elements are incorporated into a text that adeptly balances various tensions. Humour balances pathos: immediately after the poignant singing at the Slaters' party, McClung places Pearl's hilarious diary entries. Humour also balances religiosity; for example, Mrs. Slater takes full part in the dancing in spite of arguing that she had not danced for years because she was "a Methodist bred and born" (204), and when she

⁹⁴ McClung's transliteration of the prairie accent is refreshingly accurate, when she writes of the "crik" (creek) and being "cam" (calm).

successfully navigates a complicated square dance, Mr. Slater teases her and says she is “a wonderful woman for a Methodist” (206). Romance also balances religion, and at the Slaters’ party we see the blossoming romances between Tom and Nellie Slater and between Jim and Camilla leading to their singing together, “We would see Jesus, for the shadows lengthen” (217). Most centrally, McClung balances an idealist philosophy that believes in the possibility of change in humans alongside a realistic view that portrays errant human behaviour due to original sin. She is aware of the challenges of a rapidly changing society at the beginning of the twentieth century, while valuing faith, family, and community to deal with all the challenges. She offers both a feminist and a conservative perspective, demonstrating that women have the capacity to improve society when given the same rights and opportunities as men, and at the same time validating their hard work, duty, and self-sacrifice to achieve success. Finally, she is both a story-teller and a reformer; her stories keep the reader interested enough to absorb her didactic messages related to faith, temperance, and women’s rights. As Randi Warne opines, the stories are “inspirational,” but they also “express the realities of prairie life in such a way that McClung’s readership could be genuinely empowered by following Pearlie’s example — as, indeed, was McClung’s express intention” (25).

Because it incorporates the rhetorical strategies of Sunday-School fiction, temperance tracts, melodrama, romances, sentimental novels, women’s reform literature, adventure novels, and local-colour fiction, *Sowing Seeds in Danny* might be dismissed as “formula fiction,” but I would argue that it is not merely formula fiction, precisely because of its multi-generic aspects. All novels fit into one or more generic categories, and an author who uses many of the conventions of earlier popular genres is able to introduce new ideas

and themes within the comfort of commonly accepted older ones. As Mary Vipond argues, “The authors of popular fiction, by attempting to reconcile contemporary experience with the ideologies of the past, take their readers one step at a time toward the acceptance of truly new ideas” (97). John Cawelti likewise maintains that what is called *formula fiction* should not be judged inferior to canonical literature, but is rather an artistic type of its own, frequently valid largely for its own period rather than for all time; it serves a particular purpose, requires considerable talent to be executed successfully, and deserves to be studied in its own right (300). *Sowing Seeds in Danny* was immensely popular a hundred years ago, but partly because of the shift of religious worldview in Canada and the rejection of nineteenth-century literary tropes and conventions, McClung’s skilful rendering of her vision for a better society no longer speaks to a twenty-first-century reader. Therefore, recovering McClung’s voice as understood by her readership of 1908 is an important step in understanding her message in the present day.

Chapter Four

Anne of Green Gables

“Some people are naturally good, you know, and others are not. I’m one of the others.”
Anne Shirley in *Anne of Green Gables*

Lucy Maud Montgomery’s first published novel, *Anne of Green Gables*, was released in 1908 and became an immediate bestseller. Within five months it had gone through six printings and sold more than 19,000 copies worldwide; in its first year, Montgomery earned \$7,000, at a time when the average yearly income for a woman on PEI was \$300 (Kjelle 15-16). By the time of Montgomery’s death in 1942, more than 800,000 copies had been sold worldwide, and new editions continue to be released in the twenty-first century (Gerson “Dragged” 49).

Anne Shirley is so central to Montgomery’s novel that in this chapter I will concentrate on showing how her portrayal looks forward to the twentieth century rather than back to the nineteenth. I will look at the Christian view of the child from a historical and theological perspective, and then analyse several aspects of *Anne of Green Gables* that demonstrate that Montgomery has not, as she claimed, completely erased the conventions of Sunday-School fiction in her novel. I will then look at the Romantic elements of the portrayal of Anne, which complicate an assessment of the Christian worldview in the story. Finally, I will show how Montgomery’s view of the child reflects and anticipates changing sociological and psychological attitudes towards childhood, which continue to find acceptance in the twenty-first century.

Montgomery’s writing registers the shift in worldview that was occurring in her day. Unlike McClung, who used nineteenth-century tropes and conventions such as those found

in Sunday-School fiction, temperance melodrama,¹ and sentimental romances,² all based on a Christian worldview, Montgomery eschewed these conventions to a large extent, making *Anne* more accessible to a later readership unfamiliar and uncomfortable with these conventions and the Christian worldview. Whereas McClung's foundational evangelical Christian faith is communicated in her fiction and provides the motivation for spiritual and social change, Montgomery's vague faith is in the background rather than in the foreground of the novel, and therefore is not a barrier to twenty-first century secular readers. Mary Rubio notes the "decentering of religion" in the era of change in which Montgomery was writing: "Montgomery registers the massive shift in the early twentieth century away from a teleological world to a secular one: theology [was] losing its position as the site for human discussion of evil" ("Scottish" *Norton* 332). Rubio argues that Montgomery's novel not only depicts this era of change but also contributed to it because it was read and reread by so many adults and children.

Montgomery's portrayal of Anne as an innocent demonstrates the shift in the Christian view of the child that occurred during the nineteenth century, as various currents came together to affect theological attitudes towards childhood. A major study of the history of conceptions of childhood appeared in 1960 in Philippe Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood*, in which Ariès explores the origins of the modern nuclear family and argues that the notion of childhood should be seen as the product of modern western societies. He contends that in

¹ The issue of temperance is very muted in *Anne*, surfacing only in the episode in which Diana becomes drunk on Marilla's raspberry cordial. Irene Gammel in *Looking for Anne* notes that during Montgomery's era, "temperance was the perennial hot topic in the Literary and in Sunday school periodicals"; she suggests that this episode is "Maud's satiric response to the didactic preaching of the temperance movement," yet in having a child become drunk, she also provided "ammunition" for the Prohibitionists (131, 132).

² Montgomery makes fun of sentimental romances by her descriptions of Anne's juvenile writing of stories such as "The Jealous Rival; or, in Death Not Divided" (168).

medieval society, as soon as a child could live without his mother or nanny, he belonged to adult society. Roger Cox summarizes Ariès' assumptions:

Childhood is a socially constructed concept which varies by time, geography, culture, and economic and social status; the relationships between the biological child and the social construction of childhood is complex and produces the varied lived experience of children, difficult to assess in the present, often deeply inaccessible in the past; we can attempt to understand current preoccupations, ambiguities and anxieties about childhood by seeing them as part of a legacy from the past. (5)

Ariès' work motivated many scholars to investigate conceptions of childhood in various periods of history, several of whom have challenged Ariès' conclusions. In her Introduction to *The Child in Christian Thought*, Marcia Bunge demonstrates how the definitions of childhood changed repeatedly under the influences of Puritanism, the Enlightenment, the Romantics, and the Evangelical revival, and how the attitudes of influential theologians differed on the basis of whether or not they viewed children as inherently sinful, as naturally good, or as possessing the potential for both good and evil. Bunge notes that assumptions about Christian perspectives on children have frequently been shaped by studies of the religious roots of child abuse, which uncovered the pedagogy of the absolute obedience of children to parents, the sinful nature of children, and the need to "break their wills" at an early age with harsh physical punishment; she observes that this view of children as sinful "can appear to be hopelessly out of touch with common psychological conceptions of children that emphasize their potential for development and their need for loving nurture" (5). Bunge argues, however, that the concept of original sin in children can lead to varied

treatments of children, ranging from physical punishment to loving compassion. The essays in *The Child in Christian Thought* provide a corrective to secular authors who assume that the concept of original sin is a key obstacle to the humane treatment of children.³

The shifting view of childhood has been influenced by teachings of the Church, whose outlook has also changed over the centuries, partly because a careful study of the Bible reveals varied beliefs about children. There are biblical texts that speak of children as gifts of God, signs of God's blessing, and sources of joy, as well as those that depict children as ignorant, capricious, and in need of education and strict discipline; there are also texts that urge parents to love children with Christ-like compassion and not to provoke them to anger (Bunge Introduction 11). Of particular note is Jesus' treatment of children at a time when children occupied a low position in society:

He receives them, blesses, them, touches them, and heals them and is indignant toward those who have contempt for them. Jesus identifies with a child and equates welcoming a little child in his name to welcoming himself and the One who sent him. He depicts children as models for adults wishing to enter the kingdom of God, as models of greatness in the kingdom, and as vehicles of divine revelation. (Bunge Introduction 11)

Thus it is not surprising that theologians have had varied attitudes towards children as they have wrestled with issues such as whether infants should be baptized.⁴

³ For example, Hugh Cunningham in *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* claims that the more sympathetic and humane treatment of children in the eighteenth century was prompted by the decline in belief in original sin, by the rise of secularism, and by the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (61-2).

⁴ Many Protestant denominations see baptism as a public manifestation of a person's conversion; because only an adult or older child can be converted, baptism is inappropriate for infants or for children who have not yet reached the age of reason (generally considered to be the age of seven). The Catholic Church has always understood baptism as a sacrament that accomplishes several

The complexity of Christian attitudes towards children warrants a look at the historical background of the subject, because theologians through the ages have seriously reflected on issues of child rearing, education, and moral and spiritual formation. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), considered by many Protestants, especially Calvinists, to be one of the theological fathers of the Reformation, articulated the concept of original sin; he claimed that infants are born sinful and express sinful tendencies, but they are not yet guilty because they cannot yet commit actual sins (Stortz 79). Thomas Aquinas (1224?-74), considered by many Catholics to be the Church's most important theologian and philosopher, melded Augustinian theology with Aristotelian philosophy to emphasize children's potential for spiritual growth (Traina 106). Martin Luther (1483-1546), the initiator of the Protestant Reformation, is characterized by his complex teachings, seeing children simultaneously as saints and sinners (Strohl 134).⁵ John Calvin (1509-64), an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation, was the most pessimistic of theologians in his view of the extent of human depravity, but he saw children as gifts of God and examples to adults. Although many of his followers emphasized the presence of original sin in children, Calvin did not (Pitkin 164).

Under the influence of Calvin's teachings, the Puritan⁶ movement developed in England in the sixteenth century and consisted of those who sought "higher standards of pastoral care, personal piety and national righteousness" (Packer 444). Looking at the influence of Puritanism, historian Roger Cox observes that the twentieth-century study of

things, the first of which is the remission of sin, both original sin and actual sin, but only original sin in the case of infants and young children, because they are considered to be incapable of actual sin.

⁵ In his letter "To the councilmen of all cities in Germany," Luther asked, "[F]or what purpose do we older folks exist, other than to care for, instruct, and bring up the young?" (qtd. in Strohl 159).

⁶ "Puritans," i.e., the pure ones, was a contemptuous word coined in the 1560s as a label for Anglicans who wanted their church to adopt various Reformed practices.

Puritanism faces two obstacles: firstly, Puritanism must be understood as the product of religious belief, and as Oxford don Margarita Stocker opines, “religion in a period as proud of its scepticism as our own evokes and offends all manner of prejudices” (qtd. in Cox 11). Cox argues that in order to understand Puritanism, we need to feel “the depth of belief in heaven and hell, in the sinfulness of human beings and in the boundless grace of God that could be felt by a Puritan parent” (11). Secondly, our view of Puritanism has been shaped by the evaluation, perceptions, and prejudices of many intervening eras “through a lens not of our own making” (Cox 11). We are left with two conflicting accounts: one that sees Puritanism as the enemy of “all that is progressive, reasonable and loving,” and the other that views Puritans “as the pioneers of the bourgeois family, the advocates of a rational, ordered and serious approach to the business of social reproduction” (Cox 12). Certainly Puritan literature reveals a range of attitudes towards children, from viewing them as demonstrating total depravity to seeing them positively as innocents.⁷

The Enlightenment, a movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, began a process of casting off external authorities and bringing everything under the control of reason. John Locke (1632-1704), one of the most influential of Enlightenment thinkers, proposed that the mind was a blank slate or *tabula rasa*; contrary to Cartesian philosophy, he maintained that babies are born without innate ideas and that knowledge is determined by experience derived from sense perception. Although interpreters of Locke’s ideas frequently

⁷ Richard Heitzenrater notes the prevalence of religious terminology in Puritan literature that counteracts the stereotypical view of Puritan harshness: “‘to become as a little child,’ ‘to believe as a child,’ ‘teachable as a little child,’ ‘innocent as a child.’ These phrases, echoing biblical language, appear throughout Puritan and evangelical rhetoric. In fact, this literature often refers to the soteriological goal in terms of one becoming ‘a child of God’” (281).

consider him to have been at odds with the conception of children as sinful,⁸ others have demonstrated that Locke's view of human beings was more complex than has been recognized and was in many ways congruent with the Protestant idea of fallen human nature in his concern with human selfishness and inordinate self-love (Bunge "Education" 275-76).⁹

In the eighteenth century, attitudes towards children diverged between secular and religious perspectives, and childhood began to be seen as a stage of life to be valued for itself rather than as a preparation for adulthood or heaven.¹⁰ The influential philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) became associated with the idea that children are naturally pure and innocent; Ariès calls the publication in 1762 of Rousseau's *Émile ou de*

⁸ See Hugh Cunningham in *Children of the Poor*, in which he claims that the "pessimistic view" of children conceived and born in sin is "openly at odds both with the Lockean conception of the child as *tabula rasa*, and with the more positively sentimental idea that children are the embodiment of innocence" (48). In *Children and Childhood*, Cunningham argues that "in many respects moderate parenting bore the imprint more of Locke than of the Bible" (54).

⁹ In *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), Locke notes that humans have a "Natural Propensity to indulge Corporal and present Pleasure, and to avoid Pain," and therefore children need to be taught to deny their own desires and follow what reason dictates (qtd. in Bunge "Education" 275). Quoting W.M. Spellman in *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity*, Bunge demonstrates that Locke thought that "'our first actions are guided by self-love' and a natural love of 'dominion' and that a child's unbridled quest for 'propriety and possession' constitutes the root of almost all of the injustice and contention that disturb human life" ("Education" 275).

¹⁰ Cunningham argues that the key to these changes was the long-term secularisation of attitudes to childhood and children:

It was not that people suddenly ceased to be Christian, but that for many their Christianity narrowed in its range, became less all-embracing as an explanation for natural phenomena and as a guide to action. . . . But there was a long-term, if interrupted, decline in belief in original sin, so that by the mid-nineteenth century it flourished only on the margins of Christianity; and with that decline children were transformed from being corrupt and innately evil to being angels, messengers from God to a tired adult world. They also came to be seen to a greater degree as endowed with a capacity for development and growth the motor for which was more Nature than God. The art of child-rearing became one of hearkening to Nature, giving free rein to growth, rather than bending twigs to a desired shape. (*Children* 61-2)

l'éducation, “the discovery of childhood” (qtd. in DeVries 334; Ariès’ chapter title 33-49).¹¹

Rousseau argued that it was the evil influences of society that spoiled the natural goodness of children; therefore, a child should be raised “according to the genius of nature” (DeVries 334). On the other hand, John Wesley (1703-91), Rousseau’s contemporary and founder of Methodism, was associated with a view of children as being inherently corrupt, unable to know or do what is “right” in an adult sense (Heitzenrater 280).¹² Richard Heitzenrater demonstrates that Wesley’s concern for children indicated a more compassionate view than one might have anticipated, given his writings on original sin and his strict regulations for Methodist schools (279).

By the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, the impact of Rousseau and Wesley was being felt in the burgeoning of Romanticism¹³ on one hand and the Evangelical revival¹⁴ on the other. The Romantics, following along the lines of

¹¹ In *Émile*, Rousseau writes, “Il n’y a point de perversité originelle dans le cœur humain” (“There is no original perversity in the human heart”) (Livre second).

¹² In 1770, Wesley read Rousseau’s views on education and wrote, “How was I disappointed. Sure a more consummate coxcomb never saw the sun!” (*Journal and Diaries V in Works*, 22.214, qtd. in Heitzenrater 288).

¹³ Romanticism was a literary movement and a profound shift in sensibility that occurred roughly between 1770 and 1848. Barbara Garlitz argues that Wordsworth’s “Immortality Ode” had “as powerful an influence on nineteenth-century ideas of childhood as Freud has had on present-day [1960s] ones” (qtd. in Cunningham *Children* 74). “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” contains the oft-quoted phrase, “The Child is father of the Man.” Theologically, Romanticism tends to posit an alternative framework in place of the Christian narrative of creation, fall, exile, and redemption:

The Romantic narrative suggests a quasi-Pelagian state of humanity’s *original* goodness at the “dawn of consciousness”; it attributes the fall to the advent of society and, more specifically, to its use of reason sequestered from “life”. . .; and it sees redemption (and progress) as coming in the form of *originality*, specifically through the reconciling power of the poetic *imagination*. (Masson 118)

¹⁴ Historian Élie Halévy argues that the religious revival that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially that of the Methodists, so transformed the people of England that the nation was changed morally. According to Halévy, it was because of Evangelical revitalization that England did not have the violent revolutions that convulsed the continent of Europe from 1789 on. Herbert Schlossberg writes:

Rousseau, saw the child as innocent, while the evangelicals began to idealize the saved child as a spiritual guide, with a diminishing emphasis on original sin. This sensibility towards childhood can be seen in the writing of theologians of the Romantic period. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), often referred to as the “father of modern theology,” claimed that religious experience was introspective; he replaced the rational investigation of religious belief with a vague, subjective belief in God as “whatever people felt dependent on” (qtd. in Drane 448). Schleiermacher regarded children as worthy of respect and dignity and as models for adults because he felt that children possess a spiritual perspective necessary for Christian faith; in their vulnerability and dependence, they mirror the relationship between God and humanity:

Trust and acceptance of dependence are natural in children, while most adults only grudgingly learn to accept their utter dependence on God. Moreover, children live in the moment, accepting their feelings and perceptions as they have them. Unlike adults, who are driven by their ambition to focus more and more on past and future, children have the gift of presence, or being-there. (DeVries 348)

For Schleiermacher, eternal life was precisely such a communion with God in the present, and adults needed to recover a “childlike ability to be present in the moment” if they were to experience the full blessing of Christian faith (DeVries 348).

If we assume that a revolution is more than a change in governance, that it entails a change in sensibilities of the society - people thinking differently, looking at life differently, having a different world view - then it ought to be concluded that a revolution did take place in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was not a coup or a succession of coups, as in France, but a change of heart and mind that was so profound as to make England a different place. (1)

Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), whose influence was felt later in the nineteenth century, was considered to be the “quintessential American theologian of childhood” (Bendroth 350). In *Christian Nurture* (1847), Bushnell argues against extreme views of childhood sinfulness with the memorable proposition that “the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise” (qtd. in Bendroth 350). Bushnell saw childhood faith as a gradual process of enlightenment and asserted that the seeds of faith exist in the heart of even a newborn child. Margaret Bendroth contends that Bushnell’s “systematic attentiveness to the emotional nuances of parent-child relationships places him at the center of a cultural shift in middle-class American family life,” from the Victorian stress on gender roles and hierarchy to an ideal that emphasized “companionship, play, and emotional intimacy between parents and children” (350). Bushnell’s romantic, optimistic assumptions about childhood reflect the shift from the earlier depiction of children as evil to one that assumed the probability of their being good, even the possibility of their perfection: “Childhood was a time of special innocence and purity; the more enthusiastic proponents of this essentially Romantic view saw children as more intuitively religious than people at any other stage of life” (Bendroth 357-58). Bendroth notes that to conservative Calvinists, Bushnell’s arguments “sounded suspiciously Unitarian, if not overtly Pelagian,¹⁵ in other words, dangerously presumptive of human moral ability” (360). It is interesting to observe the profound influence of Romanticism within Bushnell’s theological writings.

¹⁵ Pelagianism received its name from Pelagius (354–?), a Roman monk; it designates a heresy of the fifth century, which denied original sin as well as Christian grace. Pelagianism views humanity as basically good and morally unaffected by the Fall. With regards to salvation, it teaches that man has the ability in himself (apart from divine aid) to obey God and earn eternal salvation. Pelagianism is overwhelmingly incompatible with the Bible and was opposed by Augustine, which led to its condemnation as a heresy at the Council of Carthage in 418 and ratified at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Various forms of Pelagianism have continued to appear to the present day. (<<http://www.theopedia.com/Pelagianism>>)

Literature of the nineteenth century also fixed in the public mind the idea of the child as pitiable (e.g., *Oliver Twist*), “fresh from God,” and “the embodiment of a force of innate goodness which could rescue embittered adults” (Cunningham *Children* 74).¹⁶ Therefore, in the first decade of the twentieth century, which was predicted to be “the century of the child,”¹⁷ Montgomery was writing under the influence of theological streams that had been initially disparate but that became complexly interconnected in their view of the child.¹⁸ As we will see in the analysis of the dilution of Christianity in *Anne*, Anne appears both as an innocent and as a spiritual guide to adults such as Marilla.¹⁹ She models an intuitive faith that is not based on dogma, and thus she also represents a theologically liberal²⁰ child.

¹⁶ George MacDonald, in *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), gives a nineteenth-century rendering of the Victorian child as a mixture of Rousseau’s and John Wesley’s traditions:

The whole ways and look of the child, so full of quiet wisdom, yet so ready to accept the judgement of others in his own dispraise, took hold of my heart, and I felt myself wonderfully drawn towards him. It seemed to me, somehow, as if little Diamond possessed the secret of life, and was himself what he was so ready to think of the lowest living thing – an angel of God, with something special to say or do. A gush of reverence came over me, and with a single *good night*, I turned and left him in his nest. (Ch. XXXV)

¹⁷ The Swedish feminist Ellen Key published *The Century of the Child* in 1900, based on the premise that the next century would be “the century of the child, just as much as this century has been the woman’s century. When the child gets his rights, morality will be perfected” (qtd. in Cunningham *Children* 163).

¹⁸ Shirley Foster and Judy Simons argue that thematically and structurally, *Anne of Green Gables* “positions itself between two generic literary poles – the Evangelical representation of the sinful child who achieves redemption through self-discipline and obedience to Divine teaching, and the Romantic myth of youthful innocence whose entry into the adult world is a process of corruption and disenchantment” (169). They also see it as a version of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, “in this case a more liberal and secularized one” (169).

¹⁹ Hilder suggests:

In true subversion of a patriarchal religion that emphasizes rationality at the expense of imagination, construes piety as an emotionally distant rather than an engaged activity, and assumes that pious, knowledgeable adults provide the map of salvation for sinful ignorant children, Montgomery shows how the attempt to educate Anne becomes a delightful and ironic exercise in the deepening religious education of Marilla. (“Unholy” 44)

²⁰ Liberal theology is not dependent on any Church dogma or creedal statements; it replaces a belief in the inerrancy of scripture with a view of the Bible as a collection of narratives that interpret Jesus in historical terms rather than miraculous or spiritual ones: “This more secular emphasis meant that

Although Gavin White famously wrote that there is “very little religion” in Montgomery’s novels (84), a close reading of *Anne of Green Gables* reveals a text that several critics argue is founded on a Christian worldview; according to them, Christianity is the intertext that undergirds characterization, setting, actions, and narrative.²¹ Rosemary Ross Johnston asserts, “The oppositions and conflicts that occur when, in *Anne of Green Gables* in particular, orthodoxy is set against spirituality, truth against pretence, and law against love, constitute a significant part of thematic infrastructure; they also of course lie at the core of the Christian message” (9).²² I agree with Johnston that the Christian foundations of *Anne of Green Gables* are important to the novel, “the rich palimpsest beneath the layers of meaning” (7); Sullivan Entertainment discarded many of the novel’s Christian aspects in the influential 1985 *Anne of Green Gables* production, thus impoverishing the story (see Appendix 3). I will therefore examine the many ways that Montgomery incorporates a Christian worldview by tracing Anne’s spiritual journey and prayer life, by identifying biblical undercurrents in the text, and by looking at how Montgomery critiques the Presbyterian Church and suggests how it could be reformed. But in reading critics such as Johnston, Monica Hilder, and John Sorfleet, I am mindful of the dangers that Barbara Pell warns against in *Faith and Fiction*, where she argues that by viewing a novel with compassion and neglecting theological judgement, “grace may degenerate into a vast

attention was paid to Christ’s moral example and social teachings, not the atonement or resurrection. God was no longer understood to be outside history and beyond human comprehension” (Marshall 250).

²¹ Critics have diverging views of religion in *Anne*. For example, Mary Rubio traces the Presbyterian influence on Montgomery’s writing; Gavin White finds evidence of Transcendentalism in the novel; Irene Gammel sees *Anne* as essentially pagan; and Sylvia DuVernet finds evidence of Theosophy, although more in the *Emily* series than in the *Anne* series.

²² Note that Johnston uses the term *orthodoxy*, not in the sense of holding correct religious doctrine, but in the negative sense of holding to received conventional opinions without questioning them.

indulgence which is not salvation” (7). I therefore appreciate the work that these scholars have done to foreground the Christian message in *Anne*, but believe it is important to note the non-Christian elements that reflect both Montgomery’s uncertain faith and the liberal theology of the Presbyterian Church in her day.

In the tradition of Sunday-School fiction, *Anne of Green Gables* is a story about redemption, the spiritual development of an imaginative orphan girl who grows from a spiritually illiterate child with only an intellectual knowledge of God, to one who is intuitively drawn by the love of Jesus and the love of her new family and friends to become a growing Christian²³ whose life demonstrates Christian love and self-sacrifice and who in turn positively influences Avonlea people like Marilla.²⁴ Hilder argues that Montgomery’s premise is that only those with a childlike faith will enter the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus tells his disciples in Mark 10.15, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it”: “Anne is the child-saviour who points the way to God. Her faith is the map that helps Marilla and the reader out of the maze of legalistic religion” (“Unholy” 50). *Anne* can also be seen as a wish-fulfilment text intended to find the “vital spark of immortal truth” in Christianity (*SJ1* 196); while she was writing the novel, Montgomery was wrestling with theological issues, “really” reading the Bible (*GGL* 53), and having “chats on theology and philosophy” with the local Presbyterian minister, Ewen McDonald, whom she would eventually marry (*SJ1* 321).

²³ Note that Montgomery never presents Anne as perfect; her refusal to forgive Gilbert even after he repents of his hurtful words and asks for her forgiveness, demonstrates Anne’s pride, considered to be one of the seven deadly sins.

²⁴ Margaret Atwood contends that Marilla is the character who goes through essential transformation: “*Anne of Green Gables* is not about Anne becoming a good little girl: it is about Marilla Cuthbert becoming a good – and more complete – woman” (225).

On the other hand, Irene Gammell in *Looking for Anne* points out the ways that Montgomery strays from the Sunday-School tradition. Gammel focuses on Montgomery's letters to Ephraim Weber, where she can be seen to be flirting "with a more complex side of life that transcended Sunday school tradition":

Maud's imaginative side, the side that liked to dream and invent, was particularly fascinating to her. It was a side that went counter to Sunday school teaching and preaching but that she could explore in her letters to Ephraim. She was becoming bored with stories that inevitably culminated in a simple moral at the end. (52)

Therefore, Gammel concludes that Montgomery endows Anne with faults so that Anne "breaks the template of the perfectly good and virtuous, but uninteresting, Sunday school heroine" (54).

The most obvious Sunday-School elements occur in the first seven chapters of the book.²⁵ An imaginative, talkative child, full of wonder at the beauty of the landscape and naming everything she sees as if she were in a pre-lapsarian Eden, Anne is initially presented as a pagan.²⁶ The reader senses an innocence in Anne that belies the Calvinist concept of original sin, the idea that all people inherit an inclination to do wrong and a

²⁵ In the Introduction to the Broadview edition of *Anne of Green Gables*, Cecily Devereux notes that the first seven chapters of the novel are "the most 'Sunday Schoolish,' bringing Anne to the point of saying her first prayer" (15-16). Devereux claims that there is a lot of Sunday School influence throughout the book because "Anne's story is . . . directed toward an exemplary and 'moral' conclusion" (19).

²⁶ Matthew calls her "this freckled witch"; Marilla comments that Anne has "bewitched" Matthew, and then says, "She'll be casting a spell over me, too" (19, 31, 35). Marilla also announces to Matthew, "She's next door to a perfect heathen" (48).

desire to go their own way rather than obey God.²⁷ When she arrives at Green Gables, Anne knows *about* God, but does not know Him personally. Marilla asks her if she knows who God is, and Anne responds “promptly and glibly”: ““God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth”” (46). These terms from the Presbyterian catechism are meaningless to Anne, who has had a negative attitude towards God ever since Mrs. Thomas told her that God had made her hair red on purpose. If Anne is “next door to a perfect heathen,” it seems to be because “heathens” have been responsible for much of Anne’s misunderstanding of the meaning of religious faith.

One interpretation of the novel is that Anne comes to know God through Jesus, by means of an encounter with Him through a chromolithograph of a painting by Benjamin Roberts Haydon entitled “Christ Blessing Little Children.”²⁸ Marilla finds her “with her hands clasped behind her, her face uplifted, and her eyes astar with dreams. The white and green light strained through apple-trees and clustering vines outside fell over the rapt little figure with a half-unearthly radiance” (50). The imagery underlines the sacredness of the experience, as Anne explains to Marilla how she identifies with the scene:

“I was just imagining I was one of them – that I was the little girl in the blue dress, standing off by herself in the corner as if she didn’t belong to anybody, like me. She looks lonely and sad, don’t you think? I guess she hadn’t any father or mother of her own. But she wanted to be blessed, too, so she just

²⁷ Question 18 of the *Shorter Catechism* asks, “Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?” The answer is: “The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it” (<<http://www.opc.org/sc.html>>).

²⁸ *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables* identifies the lithograph as the “Painting of Christ blessing little children” by Gar Van Vogelstein from the 1890s.

crept shyly up on the outside of the crowd, hoping nobody would notice her – except Him. I’m sure I know just how she felt. Her heart must have beat and her hands must have got cold, like mine did when I asked you if I could stay. She was afraid He mightn’t notice her. But it’s likely He did, don’t you think? I’ve been trying to imagine it all out – her edging a little nearer all the time until she was quite close to Him; and then He would look at her and put His hand on her hair and oh, such a thrill of joy as would run over her!” (51)

In her imagination,²⁹ Anne has drawn close to Jesus and has experienced complete joy in his presence, but Marilla rebukes her for being irreverent, just like the disciples in the painting who were trying to keep the children away from Jesus. Marilla tells Anne that “it doesn’t sound right to talk too familiarly about such things,” because Marilla is uncomfortable with the idea of a personal relationship with Jesus that Anne yearns for or has found, if one accepts the reading of Hilder, Johnston, and Sorfleet (51). Hilder writes about this scene with italics to underline its importance:

Marilla is largely unable to grasp that *the childlike quest for familiarity with the divine is central to spirituality*. For the time being, Marilla remains oblivious to what the reader discovers – *that true and deeply transformative*

²⁹ Theologian A.W. Tozer distinguishes between “imagination” and “imaginary”:

As God created us, we all have to some degree the power to imagine. That imagination is of great value in the service of God may be denied by some persons who have erroneously confused the word “imagination” with the word “imaginary.” The gospel of Jesus Christ has no truck with things imaginary. The most realistic book in the world is the Bible. God is real. Men are real and so is sin and so are death and hell! The presence of God is not imaginary; neither is prayer the indulgence of a delightful fancy. The value of the cleansed imagination in the sphere of religion lies in its power to perceive in natural things shadows of things spiritual. A purified and Spirit-controlled imagination is the sacred gift of seeing; the ability to peer beyond the veil and gaze with astonished wonder upon the beauties and mysteries of things holy and eternal. The stodgy pedestrian mind does no credit to Christianity! (n.p.)

piety is an emotionally-engaged activity between the divine and the individual and that childlike faith opens onto a familiarity with and understanding of God that narrow adult rationality cannot comprehend.

(“Unholy” 48)

According to Hilder, Anne’s personal connection with Jesus is set up as the model for the beginning of true religious faith. Sorfleet confirms this view, and notes that it is only after this encounter with Jesus that Anne “reads, learns, and admires the Lord’s Prayer: in doctrinal terms, she comes to the Father through the Son” (178). Much of the rest of the novel then develops the theme of Anne’s gradual maturing in the Christian life.

Just as in Sunday-School fiction, Anne’s prayer life is a central concern in the text, and Anne’s approach to the question of true prayer provides a contrast to the adults of Avonlea.³⁰ Montgomery discusses many forms of prayer: spontaneous prayer as demonstrated by Anne; public prayer, such as the long prayers of Mr. Bell in the Presbyterian Church;³¹ formal personal prayer, such as Anne’s first prayer at Green Gables; and the Lord’s Prayer, the model prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 6.10-14. On her first evening at Green Gables when Marilla tells Anne to say her prayers, Anne announces, “I never say any prayers,” and Marilla responds, “Don’t you know it’s a terrible wicked thing not to say your prayers every night? I’m afraid you are a very bad little

³⁰ Eerdmans’ Handbook to Christian Belief defines prayer:

[Prayer is] the believer’s conscious practice of relationship with God, sometimes taking the form of worship, sometimes of meditation, sometimes of intercession. Words are often used, though some people pray in thought only. All prayer is a two-way relationship. It is the central activity of the Christian life. (472)

³¹ According to Ricky Carvel, the original idea behind long prayers in the Presbyterian Church was to pray on behalf of a congregation who might not pray much on their own: “Faced with a congregation of folk who were just there on a Sunday because that was the done thing, the ministers of old felt the need to do all the praying for the congregation” (n.p.).

girl” (46). But Anne’s idea of praying is to go out alone into a big field or into the deep woods: “I’d look up into the sky – up – up – up – into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I’d just feel a prayer” (47). As Anne will observe later, “Saying one’s prayers isn’t exactly the same thing as praying” (67), and Montgomery frequently contrasts the accepted Presbyterian practice of listening to long prayers in church³² with Anne’s personal spontaneous prayers that Montgomery presents as more authentic communications with God. For example, Anne tells Marilla about her first experience at church hearing Mr. Bell’s long prayer: “He was talking to God and he didn’t seem to be very much interested in it, either. I think he thought God was too far off to make it worth while. I said a little prayer myself, though ‘Thank you for [the sunshine on a row of white birches], God,’ two or three times” (71).³³ Montgomery is clearly valorising a Romantic type of prayer like that of Wordsworth, who found the divine, the sacred, and the spiritual most readily out of doors.

Before she comes to Avonlea, Anne has associated prayer with ugliness, joylessness, and unpleasant duty. She has been prejudiced against the Lord’s Prayer by the

³² Unlike the Anglican Church in Canada that follows the order of services in *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Presbyterian Church recognizes variable forms in the conduct of public services: “Directories of worship have been adopted as aids to the ordering of the various offices, but their use is optional. The services are generally characterized by extreme simplicity” and consist of hymns, prayers, readings from the Scriptures, and a sermon (<<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12392b.htm>>).

³³ Emily Carr demonstrates a similar attitude to Presbyterian prayers. In the first chapter of *Klee Wyck*, Carr writes about visiting an “Indian” village on the west coast of Vancouver Island:

After breakfast came a long [Presbyterian] prayer. Outside the kitchen window, just a few feet away at the edge of the forest, stood a grand balsam pine tree. It was very tall and straight.

The sizzling of the Missionaries’ ‘trespasses’ jumped me back from the pine tree to the Lord’s Prayer just in time to ‘Amen.’ (4)

Note that “Presbyterian” was excised from the Clarke, Unwin educational text of 1951 in order to eliminate any perceived anti-missionary material (Bridge 9).

superintendent of the asylum Sunday-School who “‘had such a cracked voice and he prayed it so mournfully. I really felt sure he thought praying was a disagreeable duty’” (51). At Green Gables, she is drawn by the poetic and musical language of the Lord’s Prayer and takes it as a pattern for her own genuine communication with God. Her first prayer is a combination of what she perceives to be required formality and her sincere verbalization of Marilla’s suggestion that she thank God for her blessings and ask Him humbly for the things she wants.³⁴ She applies both her intellect and her imagination to her next prayer, and she tells Marilla, “‘I thought out a splendid prayer after I went to bed, just as I promised you I would. It was nearly as long as a minister’s and so poetical’” (50). Length and beautiful words are the criteria she applies to prayer making at this stage of her journey. Marilla shows spiritual insight when she recognizes that the standard “‘Now I lay me down to sleep’” prayer³⁵ would not be suitable for “‘this freckled witch of a girl who knew and cared nothing about God’s love, since she had never had it translated to her through the medium of human love’” (47). The story of *Anne of Green Gables* deals with this translation of God’s love through the love of people such as Matthew, Diana, the Allans, Miss Stacy, and Marilla. As human love is shown to her, Anne grows in her knowledge of God and learns to articulate her felt prayers; her prayers deepen but never lose their genuineness.

³⁴ The editors of *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables* note that the story of an orphan girl being taught to pray “‘had an immediate appeal for a Victorian audience’” (97). For example, *Jessica’s First Prayer* (1867) was a popular work by Hesba Stretton, the penname of Sarah Smith (1832-1911). Jessica is a “‘street-Arab’” and her awkward first prayer “‘affects the reader with both its comedy and its pathos’” (97). The editors claim that Montgomery is offering “‘a subtle critique of this kind of pious narrative’” (97).

³⁵ “‘Now I lay me down to sleep’” is a classic children’s prayer from the eighteenth century. The version printed in *The New England Primer* is likely the one that Marilla was thinking of: “‘Now I lay me down to sleep, / I pray for God my soul to keep; / Or if I die before I wake, / I pray for God my soul to take.’” Gammel suggests that this passage offers “‘subtly subversive criticism’” of the prayer, which “‘was virtually omnipresent in the popular religious magazines and newspapers of the era’” (*Looking* 133).

At first, Anne's prayers are related to her state of mind. When Anne is happy, prayer comes easily.³⁶ She initially questions the efficacy of prayer: when she has prayed for a white dress with puffed sleeves, but Marilla has only made serviceable plain ones, she whispers to herself, "I prayed for one, but I didn't much expect it on that account. I didn't suppose God would have time to bother about a little orphan girl's dress" (68). Anne's expectations of God are low because she still sees herself as an unloved and unlovable orphan. Likewise, her perception of God is that he is not omnipotent, and she does not expect Him to be able to change people. After Mrs. Barry refuses to let Anne see Diana, Anne announces: "There is nothing more to do except to pray, and I haven't much hope that that'll do much good because, Marilla, I do not believe that God Himself can do very much with such an obstinate person as Mrs. Barry" (109).³⁷ In this case, however, Anne's prayers are answered, and she is allowed to see Diana again; she tells Marilla, "I assure you, Marilla, that I feel like praying to-night and I'm going to think out a special brand-new prayer in honour of the occasion" (122). That she is still "thinking out" prayers as she did on her first night at Green Gables seems to indicate an intellectual rather than a spontaneous communication with God.

One might therefore question whether Anne is developing a more formal prayer life as she matures, or whether her prayers are still natural and artless. A key scene that answers

³⁶ Anne tells Marilla, "I'm so happy. I could pray right now and not find it a bit hard" (66); after meeting Diana for the first time, Anne exclaims that she is the happiest girl on Prince Edward Island: "I assure you I'll say my prayers with a right good-will to-night" (76).

³⁷ The implication that God could coerce people to change their actions against their will is an error that Tyndale University Professor of Theology Victor Shepherd calls "a mistake that is still perpetrated in the Church" (33). He contends that God cannot act against His true nature, and therefore cannot coerce people to act against their wills.

this question is when Anne plays the part of the lily-maid Elaine, and her flat boat sinks.

Anne tells Mrs. Allan afterwards:

“I was horribly frightened. . . . I prayed, Mrs. Allan, most earnestly, but I didn’t shut my eyes to pray, for I knew the only way God could save me was to let the flat float close enough to one of the bridge piles for me to climb up on it. . . . It was proper to pray, but I had to do my part by watching out and right well I knew it. I just said, ‘Dear God, please take the flat close to a pile and I’ll do the rest,’ over and over again. Under such circumstances you don’t think much about making a flowery prayer. But mine was answered, for the flat bumped right into a pile for a minute . . . I said a grateful prayer at once, and then I gave all my attention to holding on tight, for I knew I should probably have to depend on human aid to get back to dry land.” (180)

Note that Anne’s natural instinct is to ask God for help in her time of danger and to do her part as well; her prayer is real and from the heart, rather than “a flowery prayer.” Anne has, however, learned to “say her prayers,” for when Marilla does not permit her to go with Jane Andrews to the White Sands Hotel, Anne is bitterly disappointed and tells Diana, “I felt so heart-broken that I wouldn’t say my prayers when I went to bed. But I repented of that and got up in the middle of the night and said them” (186). Nonetheless, there is no suggestion that Anne prays because she is coerced to do so. After finding out that she has tied for first-place in the Queen’s entrance exams, Anne murmurs “a prayer of gratitude and aspiration that came straight from her heart. There was in it thankfulness for the past and reverent petition for the future” (211). Likewise, in Anne’s grief after Matthew’s death, “she knelt by

her window in the darkness and prayed, looking up to the stars beyond the hills” (235).

Prayer as communication with God has become real to Anne.

Also in keeping with Sunday-School fiction, Anne demonstrates many of the Christian virtues. As described in 1 Corinthians 13, Anne aspires to live closely to the ideal of Christian love.³⁸ She is naturally generous,³⁹ shows selflessness,⁴⁰ is sensitive to the hurts of others,⁴¹ and is quick to repent of her misdoings.⁴² She frequently expresses her gratitude to others and does not take their kindness to her for granted.⁴³ She easily loves kindred spirits such as Matthew and Mrs. Allan, and she works at loving others “like Mrs. Lynde, that you have to try very hard to love. You know you ought to love them because they know so much and are such active workers in the church, but you have to keep reminding yourself of it all the time or else you forget” (147).⁴⁴ Anne learns to see the good in people, even Superintendent Bell who visits her after she breaks her ankle:

“Why, even Superintendent Bell came to see me, and he’s really a very fine man. Not a kindred spirit, of course; but still I like him and I’m awfully sorry

³⁸ 1 Cor. 13.4-7: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

³⁹ One example is when Anne saves the “chocolate sweeties” Matthew has bought her in order to share them with Diana (77).

⁴⁰ When Marilla has a headache, Anne says to her, “I do truly wish I could have had the headache in your place, Marilla. I would have endured it joyfully for your sake” (13).

⁴¹ Anne tells Marilla that the pedlar’s story about wanting to bring his wife and children out from Germany touched her heart: “I wanted to buy something from him to help him in such a worthy object” (174).

⁴² After seeing her green hair, she tells Marilla, “I repented of being wicked, I can tell you. And I’ve been repenting ever since” (175).

⁴³ When Marilla says she can join the Queen’s class, Anne tells her, “I’m extremely grateful to you and Matthew. And I’ll study as hard as I can and do my very best to be a credit to you” (195).

⁴⁴ After the Exhibition, Anne makes a discovery: “Mrs. Lynde was there that day, and I never knew how much I really liked her until I saw her familiar face among all those strangers” (188).

I ever criticized his prayers. I believe now he really does mean them, only he has got into the habit of saying them as if he didn't." (152-53)

Josie Pye is a stumbling block for Anne in her attempts to lead a Christian life of love. Anne accepts Josie's telling her that she looked "like a perfect scarecrow" with her hair cut short as a punishment that is her due; she does not retaliate, but instead forgives her enemy: "I just swept her one scornful look and then I forgave her. It makes you feel very virtuous when you forgive people, doesn't it?" (176). The last comment reveals that Anne is not perfect. But when she is older, she becomes aware that she has changed: "Josie Pye took first prize for knitted lace. I was real glad she did. And I was glad that I felt glad, for it shows I'm improving, don't you think, Marilla, when I can rejoice in Josie's success?" (188). In spite of this improvement, Josie Pye continues to be difficult to love. Anne later tells Marilla, "I've almost decided to give up trying to like Josie Pye. I've made what I would once have called a heroic effort to like her, but Josie Pye won't be liked" (237).⁴⁵ So Anne's attempts to show Christian love to Josie are not always successful, just as it takes her several years to forgive Gilbert.

As in Sunday-School fiction, Anne often discusses the ideas of wickedness and goodness and how they are worked out in human and moral terms. The Presbyterian Church, frequently represented by the voice of Rachel Lynde,⁴⁶ believes in original sin, whereas the

⁴⁵ Both Marilla and Mrs. Lynde offer their pithy opinions as to why Josie is such a thorn in the side for Anne. Marilla comments, "Josie is a Pye . . . so she can't help being disagreeable. I suppose people of that kind serve some useful purpose in society, but I must say I don't know what it is any more than I know the use of thistles" (237). Mrs. Lynde offers a biblical explanation (see Hebrews 11.13): "There's been some Pye or other going to Avonlea school for the last twenty years, and I guess their mission in life was to keep school-teachers reminded that earth isn't their home" (242).

⁴⁶ Rachel Lynde is frequently quoted by the residents of Avonlea. For example, when the girls plan to act out Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine," Ruby Gillis questions whether it is right to act a part, because "Mrs. Lynde says that all play-acting is abominably wicked" (179).

Romantic view was that a child was innocent until corrupted by the world. Before her arrival at Green Gables, Anne has been told frequently that her behaviour was wicked.⁴⁷ Therefore, she announces, “It’s certain I’ll never be angelically good” (20), but “if I could be good I’d dance and sing all day because I was glad of it” (140). In other words, Anne would like to be good but senses that she is incapable of goodness in her own strength, an attitude compatible with the Presbyterian belief in original sin. When she thinks she would like to be a minister’s wife, she believes it would be impossible:

“[O]ne would have to be naturally good and I’ll never be that, so I suppose there’s no use in thinking about it. Some people are naturally good, you know, and others are not. I’m one of the others. Mrs. Lynde says I’m full of original sin. No matter how hard I try to be good I can never make such a success of it as those who are naturally good.” (146-47)

Her vision of herself as not naturally good confirms the teachings of the Presbyterian Church,⁴⁸ whereas her belief in the possibility of natural goodness is a Romantic idea.⁴⁹ Anne therefore makes many resolutions to be good, although she struggles with the tension

⁴⁷ Anne tells Marilla, “Mrs. Thomas often told me I was desperately wicked,” and “Mrs. Spencer said it was wicked of me to talk like that, but I didn’t mean to be wicked. It’s so easy to be wicked without knowing it, isn’t it?” (49, 17).

⁴⁸ The same image of herself as being naturally sinful also precludes her in her own mind from going out as a foreign missionary: “That would be very romantic, but one would have to be very good to be a missionary, and that would be a stumbling block” (155).

⁴⁹ It would be interesting to do a theological analysis of these passages to determine whether Montgomery is satirizing Calvinist notions of Election and/or examining popular misunderstanding of Presbyterian doctrine and/or demonstrating the un-Christian attitudes of the people of Avonlea in the guise of spiritual piety.

between goodness and beauty.⁵⁰ For example, when Marilla cuts her green hair off, Anne tells her,

“I mean to devote all my energies to being good after this and I shall never try to be beautiful again. Of course it’s better to be good. I know it is, but it’s sometimes so hard to believe a thing even when you know it. I do really want to be good, Marilla, like you and Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacey, and grow up to be a credit to you.” (176)

Anne pursues goodness and righteousness, because she recognizes that she is not innately good, but beauty is still the desire of her heart. Thus, when Rachel Lynde voices some of the teachings of the Presbyterian Church, Anne reacts to her legalism⁵¹ with an astute observation to Marilla:

“I do really want to be good; and when I’m with you or Mrs. Allan or Miss Stacy I want it more than ever and I want to do just what would please you and what you would approve of. But mostly when I’m with Mrs. Lynde I feel desperately wicked and as if I wanted to go and do the very thing she tells me I oughtn’t to do. I feel irresistibly tempted to do so. Now, what do you think is the reason I feel like that? Do you think it’s because I’m really bad and unregenerate?” (202)

⁵⁰ Anne believes that beauty enables goodness. When Marilla begins to make fashionable dresses for her, Anne comments, “It is so much easier to be good if your clothes are fashionable. At least, it is easier for me. I suppose it doesn’t make such a difference to naturally good people” (186).

⁵¹ *Legalism* can mean the excessive adherence to law or formula, adherence to the Mosaic Law rather than to the Gospel, or the doctrine of justification by works. It is important to distinguish between the Law and legalism, because Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5.17-18).

Anne's words and reactions are similar to those of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Church in Rome. Paul claims that it is through the Law that he becomes conscious of sin (3.20) and is faced with a dilemma: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (7.19). Paul goes on to ask who shall deliver him "from the body of this death" and he answers resoundingly, "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (7.24-5). It is therefore "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that has freed him "from the law of sin and death" (8.2). So it is Mrs. Lynde's voicing of the Law that causes such a contrary reaction in Anne. Montgomery's overriding message is the importance of the Spirit as opposed to the Letter of the Law. Montgomery does not preach openly in her novel, but readers in her day would have been familiar with the biblical echoes in this passage and would have made the connection.

Like the heroines of Sunday-School fiction, sanctification⁵² is the path Anne follows to become more like the image of God. In thoughtfully appraising her behaviour and contemplating her faults "on Sunday afternoons, that is, when [she] think[s] specially about such matters," Anne follows the Presbyterian emphasis on self-examination (202). Pride is considered to be a major sin, and Anne is usually quick to identify pride in her life. After having her green hair cut off, she realizes, "I never thought I was vain about my hair, of all things, but now I know I was, in spite of its being red, because it was so long and thick and curly" (176). She regrets the pride that she has exhibited in her long-cherished resentment against Gilbert Blythe, because "she had forgiven and forgotten without knowing it. But it was too late. And at least neither Gilbert nor anybody else, not even Diana, should ever suspect how sorry she was and how much she wished she hadn't been so proud and horrid!"

⁵² The *Shorter Catechism* of the Presbyterian Church outlines three stages in Christian growth: justification, adoption, and sanctification.

(198). The irony is that it is pride that keeps her from confessing her change of attitude. It takes Gilbert's generous act of giving her the Avonlea school to enable her to apologize to him; she tells him, "I forgave you that day by the pond landing although I didn't know it. What a stubborn little goose I was. I've been – I may as well make a complete confession – I've been sorry ever since" (243). Anne's humility shows how far she has overcome her pride. But it is Anne's willingness to sacrifice her personal ambitions and give up her Avery scholarship to stay with Marilla after Matthew's death and Marilla's growing blindness that especially show Anne's Christian love and selflessness.⁵³ The three virtues of 1 Corinthians 13⁵⁴ have been fulfilled in her life as she has moved from lack of faith to faith, from hopelessness to hope, and from lovelessness to both giving and receiving love.

In the final lines of the novel, Anne whispers, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world" (245), from Browning's verse drama "Pippa Passes."⁵⁵ Hilder declares that the concluding lines seal Anne's journey "from the lonely orphan seeking wellness to confidence in its abiding presence" ("Unholy" 51). Johnston suggests:

The closure has Anne, and everyone else, in their rightful place because "God's in His heaven"; the underlying premise, symbolically represented in the beginning and then played on and built upon by story, is that God is Love, and that it is love, not law or orthodoxy or convention, which must become the initiating stimulus of any real God-centred "religious" behaviour. (12)

⁵³ Anne does not consider her actions to be self-sacrificial. Her idealism and positive attitude shine through as she announces, "I shall give life here my best, and I believe it will give its best to me in return" (241).

⁵⁴ 1 Cor. 13.13: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

⁵⁵ Many critics have commented on the significance of these lines. For example, Susan Drain points out that the phrase is a counterpoint to Mrs. Lynde's first reaction when she hears of Anne's coming to Avonlea: "Well, the world was certainly turning upside down" ("Community" 11).

In *The Fragrance of Sweet Grass*, Elizabeth Epperly maintains that this phrase is not just an expression of well-being “but it is meant to be appreciated in the context of the danger around the unsuspecting Pippa. The line is a reminder to readers and to those who hear Pippa within the poem that good may be powerful, but it is constantly threatened by evil” and therefore “expresses Anne’s determination as well as her happiness. Anne is choosing to believe in harmony and joy, not just chirruping over a pretty evening” (35). Sorfleet concurs with Epperly: “In spite of troubles, in spite of change, she trusts in God’s providence. . . and the lines suggest that, like Browning’s Pippa, Anne, too, has become an influence for spiritual good in a world where evil is all too common” (179). Thus, the critics seem to agree on the spiritual import of the conclusion of *Anne*, even if their definition of “spiritual” varies.

Another heritage of Sunday-School fiction in *Anne of Green Gables* is a biblical intertext that adds a layer of meaning to both speech and description.⁵⁶ Anne frequently uses biblical language, and echoes of both the Old and New Testaments fill her speech. ““The world doesn’t seem such a howling wilderness as it did last night”” (33), she announces on the morning after her first night at Green Gables, reflecting the “howling wilderness” of Deuteronomy 32.10. When she remarks that if her father’s name had been Jedediah, “it would have been a cross,” the Norton Edition gives the reference as Luke 23.26, where Jesus is forced to carry his cross to his place of crucifixion, but it is more likely referring to one of the six times in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke that Jesus talks about taking up one’s cross and following Him. Anne speaks of biblical concepts such as repentance (63), hell (64), the crucifixion (96), sin (161), blessing others by “heaping coals of fire” on their

⁵⁶ Rea Wilmschurst identifies only seven biblical quotations in the text as opposed to thirty-five in *Rilla of Ingleside*, but I found many more than seven.

heads (from Proverbs 25.21-22) (105, 121), and “the bitterness of death” (from 1 Samuel 15.32) (196). Anne’s words after she has been forbidden to see Diana may sound theosophical - ““The stars in their courses fight against me, Marilla”” (108), but the phrase comes from Judges 5.20: “The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” Likewise, when Anne describes the sea as “all silver and shadow and vision of things not seen,” she is echoing the definition of faith given in Hebrews 11.1, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (219). The narrator also frequently uses biblical phrases,⁵⁷ God and his standards are frequent topics of conversation, and the narrator gives God various designations such as “Providence” and the “Great Presence” (42, 234). Biblical similes and metaphors abound; Matthew’s talking to a girl is as hard as “bearding a lion in its den” just as is Anne’s facing of Aunt Josephine, both reflecting the story of Daniel in the lions’ den (15, 129). Anne has a “long visitation of dumbness” at the sight of the Avenue, like Zacharias in Luke 1.20 when he learns that his aged wife is expecting a baby; Anne comes out of her reverie “with the dreamy gaze of a soul that had been wandering afar, star-led,” like the wise men who followed a star to find Jesus (Matt.2.1-16) (21). The biblical palimpsest adds a richness to the text that present-day readers who are biblically illiterate frequently miss. Compared to McClung, however, there are far fewer biblical quotations, and there are no hymns or sermons. Montgomery has largely broken away from the Sunday-School tradition of quoting biblical texts; her biblical references are much more subtle than in the typical nineteenth-century children’s story.

⁵⁷ Rachel Lynde’s dire predictions of wrong are characterized as “Job’s comforting” (12), Marilla sets “her face against” Matthew’s smoking (a frequent Old Testament phrase) (30), a note is described as “most fearfully and wonderfully twisted and folded” echoing Psalm 139.14 (113), the Queen’s preparation class “gird[s] up their loins for the fray” from two passages in Job (203), a chapter entitled “Vanity and Vexation of Spirit” is from Ecclesiastes (171), and death sets Matthew apart “as one crowned” (Psalm 103.4) (234).

Montgomery has also largely divorced herself from the didacticism common in Sunday-School fiction. In “Didacticism in Modern Dress,” John Townsend points out that during the nineteenth century, it was taken for granted that children’s books had a didactic purpose, which could be instructional or moral, or serve the ideals of Empire or the values of self-help (55). Didacticism began to break down with the *Alice* books, *Treasure Island*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, where notice is given in the latter that “persons attempting to find a moral . . . will be banished” (2). Townsend notes that today nearly all the didactic books of the past are dead; the ones that have survived are those that rejected didacticism or transcended it,⁵⁸ but he suggests that the didactic spirit is not completely dead because the “urge to instruct the young is deeply built into human nature” (55). Nevertheless, it is clear that twentieth-century readers gradually rejected overt didacticism, agreeing with Montgomery when she wrote to George MacMillan:

I cannot think that everyone ought to write with only a “didactic or elevating purpose” in view. In fact, I question if anyone should or if any good is gained by so doing. . . . If we write truly out of our own heart and experience that truth will find and reach its own. (*My Dear* 21)

Karr claims that Montgomery’s rejection of didacticism is one of the reasons for her continuing popularity, but that she nevertheless expected her readers to be more than entertained: “There were hidden messages that would instruct and guide – messages more likely to be received by a modern, secular audience than if she had highlighted and preached

⁵⁸ Townsend offers Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* as one of the few didactic novels that has survived to the present.

them” (126). Thus any lessons to be learned would be through a reader’s intuition, rather than through the author’s preaching.

In spite of Montgomery’s protestations, however, the author/narrator is a strong presence in the text, providing both an omniscient perspective and a moralizing voice. When Anne first comes to Green Gables, the narrator adds a note of pathos: “And up-stairs, in the east gable, a lonely, heart-hungry, friendless child cried herself to sleep” (31); the next morning, “Anne’s beauty-loving eyes lingered on it all, taking everything greedily in; she had looked on so many unlovely places in her life, *poor child*; but this was as lovely as anything she had ever dreamed” (italics mine) (32). The narrator is here guiding the reader to a certain attitude. Likewise, the narrator frequently intrudes into the text with moralizing, not unlike Marilla who feels she has to add a moral to whatever she says to Anne.⁵⁹ For example, the narrator opines, “For we pay a price for everything we get or take in this world; and although ambitions are well worth having, they are not to be cheaply won, but exact their dues of work and self-denial, anxiety and discouragement”; as well, the narrator tells the reader near the novel’s end, after Anne has made her choice to stay at Green Gables, that Anne “had looked her duty courageously in the face and found it a friend – as duty ever is when we meet it frankly” (228-29, 239). Passages like these are very close to McClung’s style of writing. The narrator also guides the reader by giving moral evaluations of some of the characters, such as Miss Josephine Barry: “Miss Barry was a rather selfish old lady, if the truth must be told, and had never cared much for anybody but herself. She valued people only as they were of service to her or amused her” (190). At the conclusion of the novel, the

⁵⁹ The narrator tells the reader, “Marilla was as fond of morals as the Duchess in Wonderland, and was firmly convinced that one should be tacked on to every remark made to a child who was being brought up” (52).

narrator reveals omniscience with regards to Anne's future, and also speaks with a voice of moral guidance:

Anne's horizons had closed in since the night she had sat there after coming home from Queen's; but if the path set before her feet was to be narrow she knew that flowers of quiet happiness would bloom along it. The joys of sincere work and worthy aspiration and congenial friendship were to be hers; nothing could rob her of her birthright of fancy or her ideal world of dreams.
(245)

The narrator is extolling the value of work, ambition, and friendship, along with imagination and idealism. Try as she might, Montgomery cannot keep didacticism completely out of the text.

As often occurs in Sunday-School fiction, the church plays a central role in *Avonlea*, and indirectly, Montgomery both criticizes the church and suggests how it could improve.⁶⁰ Anne serves as a foil to expose the Avonlea Presbyterian church and how far it has strayed from the vibrant life of the early Christian church. When Anne goes to church for the first time, she arrives with her hat adorned with fresh flowers, and the minister preaches from Revelation 3.2-3.⁶¹ The editors' note in the Norton Critical Edition dismisses this reference as "a passage warning of imminent death" (72), but it signifies much more. The message to

⁶⁰ Hilder argues that Montgomery critiques the Presbyterian Church and its arid "truncated rational Christianity" by exposing the pseudo-Christian beliefs held by Avonlea people in salvation by works rather than by faith and grace, and by condemning their adherence to the letter of the Law, rather than to its spirit ("Unholy" 41).

⁶¹ Revelation 3.2-3: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

the Church in Sardis⁶² from the Holy Spirit is that although the Church of Sardis is attractive on the outside and has the reputation of being alive and active, it is corrupt and dying on the inside; the Church therefore is being called back to the basic Christian truths the people of Sardis believed when they first heard the gospel. This passage can be read as Montgomery making a covert call for people to return to the truth of the gospel as it was before being distorted by man-made dogma.⁶³

The unfriendly reception that Anne receives on her first day at church when the Avonlea girls stare at her and whisper to each other “behind their quarterlies,” and nobody makes “any friendly advances, then or later on” (69), characterizes the Avonlea Presbyterian church as closed, judgmental and un-Christian. Miss Rogerson, Anne’s Sunday-School teacher, is a middle-aged spinster who has been teaching Sunday-School for twenty years and whose uninspired method of teaching is to ask the printed questions from the quarterly.⁶⁴ Anne is able to answer the questions promptly, but the narrator wonders “if she

⁶² Sardis was once the capital of ancient Lydia in Asia Minor. It was known for its woollen industry and its profligacy. Although in the past it had had a name for spiritual achievement, at the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation, “licentiousness marked the Christians as well as the pagans” (Beasley-Murray 1285).

⁶³ John Sorfleet suggests, “The message to the congregation and minister – to apply their faith and not to let it stagnate – is one that Anne with her hat is visibly representing: she is the little child that shall lead them – all, of course, in accordance with the earlier message of the ‘Christ Blessing Little Children’ picture” (181).

⁶⁴ In her journal, Montgomery talks rather uncharitably about her three “old-maid” Sunday School teachers:

None of them did anything to make Christianity beautiful or appealing or even clear to me. Indeed, they rather prejudiced me against it, since they were “Christians” and I somehow had the idea that to be a Christian meant to be as ugly and stupid and – and – well, as *unromantic* as those “good” women were. They made me feel – and I believe that this feeling is still firmly embedded in my subconscious mind – that *religion* and *beauty* were antagonists and as far as the poles asunder. They gave me the same feeling towards it as they did towards matters of sex – that it was something necessary but ugly – something you were really ashamed of, although you had to have it – or go to hell! As for “heaven,” I don’t remember that they ever discussed it but I thought it was a rather dull though gorgeous place where we did nothing but stand around and sing. Not even my dearly beloved “What must it

understood very much about either question or answer”; this is rote learning, not very meaningful to an imaginative child like Anne, and she reports to Marilla that Sunday-School “was horrid” (69). Not just at the asylum Sunday School, but also in the Avonlea Presbyterian Church, Anne has come to associate religion with gloominess. Nevertheless, she continues to be drawn by beautiful language, and the words of the Nineteenth Paraphrase⁶⁵ thrill her so that she can hardly wait to recite it (71). In spite of her initial boredom at church, Anne attends regularly and becomes involved in all of its activities, singing in the Sunday-school choir, attending prayer meetings, and participating in social events such as the Sunday-school picnic and missionary concerts. The church is presented as largely a centre of social pursuits in Avonlea.⁶⁶

To counter the initial negative portrayal of the Presbyterian Church, Montgomery brings an ideal clergy-couple to Avonlea, Mr. and Mrs. Allan:

The new minister and his wife were a young, pleasant-faced couple, still in their honeymoon, and full of all good and beautiful enthusiasms for their chosen life-work. . . Old and young liked the frank, cheerful young man with

be to be there” could counteract this impression. As for the personality and teachings of Christ, I had as little idea of their real meaning as the young heathen for whom I occasionally gave my “five cent pieces” or went around collecting with a “Mission Card.” (SJ1 378)

Note the opposition between religion and beauty that Anne also voices.

⁶⁵ Paraphrases are lyrical renderings of sections of the Bible, set to music in a fashion similar to that of metrical Psalms. Within a Presbyterian hymnbook, the Paraphrases are usually printed in a section separate from Psalms and Hymns.

⁶⁶ David Marshall asserts that at the turn of the century, churches attempted to deal with a more secular consumer-oriented culture by harnessing many of the new leisure activities directly to the church: “The modern church housed many functions, such as Sunday schools, temperance activities, and missionary societies; but it also hosted literary and debating clubs and sponsored many leisure activities, including organized sports and games”; by these means, they hoped to produce “a larger number of communicants” (128).

his high ideals, and the bright, gentle little lady who assumed the mistressship of the manse. (139)

Mrs. Allan in particular becomes Anne's spiritual mentor and Christian role model, and she illustrates Montgomery's ideal minister's wife.⁶⁷ She provides Anne with a different picture of what it means to be a Christian and the joy that faith can bring in a person's life. Anne tells Marilla in her most explicit statement about wanting to be a Christian:

“Mrs. Allan said we ought always to try to influence other people for good. She talked so nice about everything. I never knew before that religion was such a cheerful thing. I always thought it was kind of melancholy, but Mrs. Allan's isn't, and I'd like to be a Christian if I could be one like her.” (139-40)

Thus Mrs. Allan is Montgomery's portrait of a joyful Christian, and Anne observes, “I can just feel she's glad she's a Christian and that she'd be one even if she could get to heaven without it” (140). This definition of a Christian is empty of theological orthodoxy, but rather than using biblical proofs or narratorial intervention, Montgomery gives a detailed picture of Mrs. Allan's character and actions that demonstrate her Christian faith. Mrs. Allan's response to Anne's liniment-flavoured cake shows her compassion and empathy: “Surveying her with laughing eyes” and “genuinely disturbed by Anne's tragic face,” Mrs. Allan helps Anne to see that the inedible cake is not the tragedy that Anne thinks it is, and asks to see her flower garden. She is also very encouraging to Anne because she does not

⁶⁷ She is another “kindred spirit,” and Anne falls “promptly and whole-heartedly in love” with her (139). As Sunday-School teacher, Mrs. Allan lets her students ask as many questions as they want, much to Anne's delight. Anne characterizes Mrs. Allan as angelic, “just like a seraph,” and as a result of meeting her, Anne even thinks she would like to be a minister's wife when she grows up (146). When the Allans admire her floral decoration of the tea table, Anne feels that Mrs. Allan's approving smile is “almost too much happiness for this world” (142).

pretend to be perfect, but tells Anne she was a dunce at geometry too, was a dreadful mischief when she was a girl, and was always getting into scrapes (147, 170). Mrs. Allan is kind and generous with her time, visiting Anne fourteen times after she breaks her ankle, which astonishes Anne “when a minister’s wife has so many claims on her time!” (153). She does not preach at Anne, but communicates joy and acceptance;⁶⁸ Anne comments, ““She is such a cheerful person to have visit you, too. She never tells you it’s your own fault and she hopes you’ll be a better girl on account of it”” (153). Unlike Mrs. Lynde, the voice of judgement and law, Mrs. Allan is the merry voice of love and compassion.⁶⁹

Mrs. Allan also provides spiritual guidance to Anne; the two of them have frequent heart-to-heart talks, and Anne spends many “pleasant Saturday afternoons at the manse” having serious and satisfying discussions (180, 198, 211, 232). Mrs. Allan provides her with religious counsel on subjects such as “besetting sins,” thus guiding Anne along the spiritual path of sanctification (167). Mrs. Allan also provides moral guidance,⁷⁰ and instead of the gloom and boredom that Anne initially associated with Christianity, Mrs. Allan connects art, beauty and joyfulness with the Protestant faith.⁷¹ Thus both by word and deed, Mrs. Allan influences Anne’s behaviour, setting her a standard to live by and acting as someone to

⁶⁸ Proverbs 15.13: “A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.” Nehemiah 8.10: “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Marilla defends Mrs. Lynde as “a good Christian women” who “means well”: “There isn’t a kinder soul in Avonlea” (202). Thus Montgomery’s portrayals of Christians are complex, not stereotyped.

⁷⁰ For example, Anne believes the pedlar when he says his dye will turn her hair raven black because ““Mrs. Allan says we should never suspect any one of not telling us the truth unless we have proof that they’re not”” (174). Although this last example exposes the danger of having an overly idealistic perspective on human nature, the principle that Mrs. Allan is teaching is foundational to relationships built on trust.

⁷¹ In Anne’s bedroom, the walls are “adorned with a few good pictures given Anne by Mrs. Allan” (212).

whom Anne feels accountable.⁷² Anne therefore models herself on Mrs. Allan and wants to be like her when she is a grownup (167, 170).

Mr. Allan also has an influence on Anne; he brings theological soundness along with a living faith to the Avonlea Presbyterian Church.⁷³ Mr. Allan inspires Anne to be and do her best and even to want to be a minister (if she were a man),⁷⁴ and he obviously holds her attention in church because she frequently quotes his “magnificent sermons” (196, 201, 202). In her detailed portrayal of how the Presbyterian Church could be reformed if led by true Christians, Montgomery reveals a serious interest in the role of the Church as the heart of the community.

As we have seen, Romanticism had a profound influence on Protestantism in the nineteenth century. As well as presenting Anne as a theologically liberal child, Montgomery romanticizes her, along the lines of Rousseau, as an innocent in touch with nature, a portrayal likely more agreeable to an increasingly secular audience than McClung’s view of the child as tainted with original sin and needing to be “born again.” Montgomery critics have debated whether her view of nature in *Anne of Green Gables* is Christian, Romantic, or pagan,⁷⁵ and the waters of this hotly-debated and complex issue⁷⁶ are muddied even further

⁷² At the horse race, Diana offers to bet ten cents that the red horse will win. Anne tells Marilla afterwards: “I didn’t believe he would, but I refused to bet, because I wanted to tell Mrs. Allan all about everything, and I felt sure it wouldn’t do to tell her that. It’s always wrong to do anything you can’t tell the minister’s wife. It’s as good as an extra conscience to have a minister’s wife for your friend” (188).

⁷³ As part of assessing candidates for the position of minister of the Avonlea Presbyterian Church, Mrs. Lynde has questioned Mr. Allan thoroughly on all points of doctrine and has decided that “his theology is sound”; Anne approves of Mr. Allan “because his sermon was interesting and he prayed as if he meant it and not just as if he did it because he was in the habit of it” (139).

⁷⁴ See Montgomery’s similar statement in a letter to G.B. MacMillan: “I believe I would have made a good *preacher*” (*My Dear* 17).

⁷⁵ Paganism is a “religion of spirituality without any reference to an authoritative, revealed revelation. It emphasizes the adoration and appeasement of spirits, and is primarily animistic in

when nineteenth-century writers such as George MacDonald talk about “Christian pantheism” (245).⁷⁷ In defining a Christian perspective on nature, Protestant theologians have argued for a dual view of divine revelation, which they call the “two books theory”: “God is the author of both the figurative book of nature (God’s world) and the literal book of Scripture (God’s written Word)” (Samples 110). The Belgic confession, a Reformed confession of 1561, uses this same metaphor under the heading “The Means by Which We Know God”:

We know him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God. . . . Second, he makes himself known

context and nature (Roberts 380). The concept of pantheism is contained within modern paganism; pantheism asserts that God is everything and everything is God, and it views all of reality as one.

⁷⁶ Scott Masson notes that Romanticism’s “demonstration of a goodness to be recovered, or created, is a seminal ‘spiritual’ aspect of Romantic writing”:

This consonance makes Romanticism appear to be an ally to the Christian faith, and some have seized upon it as such, including most notably the liberal wing of the Anglican church in the nineteenth century. For them, Wordsworth’s insistence on humanity’s innate “spiritual sense” presented a bulwark against the increasingly prevalent mechanistic and deterministic views of human nature. In practice, however, Romantics followed their Enlightenment predecessors in denying the validity of the revelation of God in the Bible or the validity of the church’s witness to him. The change lies in the fact that the Romantic identifies the active power behind both in the person of the poet. (118)

⁷⁷ In *A Dish of Orts*, MacDonald is speaking about Wordsworth, and he announces, “The very element in which the mind of Wordsworth lived and moved was a Christian pantheism” (245). He goes on to expand his idea:

Wordsworth is the high priest of nature thus regarded. He saw God present everywhere; not always immediately, in his own form, it is true; but whether he looked upon the awful mountain-peak, sky-encompassed with loveliness, or upon the face of a little child, which is as it were eyes in the face of nature - in all things he felt the solemn presence of the Divine Spirit. By Keats this presence was recognized only as the spirit of beauty; to Wordsworth, God, as the Spirit of Truth, was manifested through the forms of the external world. (247)

“Christian pantheism” is an oxymoron. Theologically, Christianity and pantheism are opposed: in the former, God is creator of the universe; in the latter, God is one with the universe.

to us more openly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own. (qtd. in Samples 110).

The view of nature as holy reflects the Genesis view of the Creation as “good” and the Psalmist’s claim, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (24.1). Romantic poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge looked forward to a time when “the other great Bible of God, the Book of Nature” would become transparent to us, and when we would “regard the forms of matter as words, as symbols, valuable only as being the expression, an unrolled but yet a glorious fragment of the wisdom of the Supreme Being” (367). Thus there is a broad and complex overlap between Christianity and Romanticism.

Johnston is one of the critics who considers Montgomery’s writing about nature to be based on the Christian worldview. She gives a detailed analysis of the symbolism and images of Anne’s first drive to Green Gables along the Avenue, which is “arched over” with apple trees, “one long canopy of snowy fragrant bloom”; the air is “full of a purple twilight” and the “painted sunset sky” shines “like a great rose window at the end of a cathedral aisle” (21). Johnston argues that this scene “evokes a church, churches are places of worship, it is God the creator who is worshipped there” (11). The imagery continues when Anne first sees the ocean as “a glory of many shifting hues – the most spiritual shadings of crocus and rose and ethereal green” (22). By the time Green Gables comes in sight, “the symbolism becomes explicit” (11): “To the west a dark church spire rose up against a marigold sky” and over Green Gables, “a great crystal-white star was shining like a lamp of guidance and promise” (24). The groundwork for Anne’s arrival at her physical and spiritual home has been laid.

The same imagery is frequently repeated throughout the text; for example, Anne walks through Violet Vale “with reverent steps and worshipping eyes, as if she trod on holy

ground” (132). Thus Anne is aware of the divine in creation, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made” (Romans 1.20). Johnston concludes:

Ideologies are the rich palimpsest beneath the layers of language that make up story; they give the story its texture and are the material of its cohesion.

L.M. Montgomery’s innate conception of the world is God-created and God-oriented, and it is upon this premise that the *Anne* series has been encoded.

(17)

Certainly Anne appreciates God’s creation and tells Matthew, ““The world looks like something God had just imagined for His own pleasure, doesn’t it?”” (119).⁷⁸ Anne loves to see the sun rising from her bedroom window: “It’s new every morning, and I feel as if I washed my very soul in that bath of earliest sunshine” (214-15).⁷⁹ When Anne props the printed prayer-card of the Lord’s Prayer against a jug full of apple blossoms, Sorfleet suggests that this combination “symbolizes the idea that a healthy Christianity has room for the values associated with nature – beauty and vitality and life – as well as the printed word” (180).

Anne has a special relationship with flowers, and imbues them with spiritual qualities: a tea rose is “a song and a hope and a prayer all in one” (230); mayflowers might be “the souls of the flowers that died last summer and this is their heaven” (132); amethysts could be “the souls of good violets” (81). Anne plants on Matthew’s grave a slip from a white Scotch rose-bush his mother brought to the Island from Scotland and hopes that he has

⁷⁸ Note the biblical echoes: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4.11).

⁷⁹ Anne’s words echo Lamentations 3.22-4: “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

roses like them in heaven: “Perhaps the souls of all those little white roses that he has loved so many summers were all there to meet him” (236). Anne’s anthropomorphization of flowers by giving them souls brings up the question of whether Anne’s comments are merely romantic musings or theological deviance.⁸⁰ A range of religious attitudes towards flowers was expressed in the nineteenth century, from William Wordsworth in “Lines Written in Early Spring,” suggesting, “‘Tis my faith that every flower / Enjoys the air it breathes!” to Congregational minister and abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher writing in 1858, “Flowers are the sweetest things God ever made, and forgot to put a soul into” (*Life Thoughts*).⁸¹ Christian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins explicitly states his admiration of nature in his journals, writing, “I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it” (qtd. in J. Miller *Disappearance* 313). At the other end of the theological spectrum, the romantic French poet and writer Gérard de Nerval⁸² penned the lines, “Each flower is a soul opening out to nature” (408).⁸³ Certainly the suggestion that flowers have souls is a pantheistic concept, but Anne’s imaginative fancies could also be construed as merely romantic reflections.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Northrop Frye declares, “The Bible is emphatic that nothing numinous exists in nature, that there may be devils there but no gods” (*Double* 26).

⁸¹ Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) left behind the Calvinist orthodoxy of his famous father, the Reverend Lyman Beecher, to popularize liberal Christianity.

⁸² Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) is noted for his religious syncretism of mythology, the Cabbala, and Swedenborgian theosophy.

⁸³ From the sonnet *Vers dorés*, published in *Les Chimères* (1854): “Chaque fleur est une âme à la Nature éclore.”

⁸⁴ The Romantic poet William Wordsworth writes:

One impulse from a vernal wood
 May teach you more of man;
 Of moral evil and of good,
 Than all the sages can. (“The Tables Turned”)

Likewise, some critics have considered Anne's imaginative evocations of fairyland to be pagan. The narrator more than once suggests that Anne belongs to fairyland: she wanders "waist deep among the bracken, singing softly to herself, with a wreath of rice lilies on her hair as if she were some wild divinity of the shadowy places;" she comes dancing up the lane "like a wind-blown sprite" (96, 144). Anne still believes in fairies and tells Diana, "Every night, before I go to bed, I look out of my window and wonder if the dryad is really sitting here, combing her locks with the spring for a mirror. Sometimes I look for her footprints in the dew in the morning" (141). Even at fourteen, her imagination invests the real world with a magical element: "All the little wood things . . . have gone to sleep, just as if somebody had tucked them away until spring under a blanket of leaves. I think it was a little gray fairy with a rainbow scarf that came tiptoeing along the last moonlight night and did it" (192). The issue of the relationship between fairy-tales, myth, and Christianity has been debated frequently over the past two hundred years. Christian authors such as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien condone fairy-tales as pointing to ultimate reality.⁸⁵ G.K. Chesterton became a Christian partly because of what he, in *Orthodoxy*, calls "The Ethics of Elfland." Therefore, I believe that Anne's imaginative evocation of fairyland does not necessarily indicate paganism, but once again could be an example of her romantic imaginings.

The Christian poet John Keble writes:

The works of God above, below,
 Within us and around,
 Are pages in that book, to show
 How God himself is found. (*The Christian Year*, Septuagesima Sunday)

The two poems are theologically comparable.

⁸⁵ See, for example, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" by Lewis and "On Fairy-Stories" by Tolkien.

In *Looking for Anne*, Irene Gammel argues for paganism in *Anne of Green Gables*, when she lists the many ways that Montgomery has resurrected the rituals of the Druids:⁸⁶

In the tradition of the Druids, she deified nature; venerated groves, lakes, hills, and ponds; and worshipped the beauty of the sun and the moon. Anne was endowed with an extraordinary spiritual gift: her imagination and her understanding of nature's beauty never failed to inspire the emotions of others. Anne's religion is an earthly spirituality that belonged to the White Way of Delight and Lover's lane. She is herself a creature that belongs to the irreverent world of wood nymphs and dryads. This pagan world poked fun at solemn Sunday school decorum. (84)

Gammel goes on to assert that when Anne is bored in church, she moves imaginatively among the white birches and “discovers something akin to spirituality. Her soul's expansion requires no institutional blessing. Maud's parody had bite, for she loved to flirt with the idea of a pagan spirituality in which religion and nature blended” (134).⁸⁷ Gammel observes that Montgomery “spiced up the church with pagan ferns, bringing the natural world into the church” just as Anne does when she decorates her hat with wildflowers on her first Sunday in the Presbyterian Church.

While compelling, Gammel's interpretation of Montgomery's view of nature may be challenged. In claiming that Montgomery decorates the church with “pagan” ferns, Gammel

⁸⁶ Druids were ancient Celtic priests, magicians, or soothsayers in Gaul, Britain, and Ireland; very little is known about them outside of legend. Druids began to figure widely in popular culture with the advent of Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century. Modern Druidism, or Neo-Druidism, was based upon theories about the Iron Age Celtic druids, which are no longer considered to be historically accurate and have no demonstrable historical link to the ancient Celts or their culture.

⁸⁷ Gammel refers to Montgomery's letters to Ephraim Weber, in which she “shared her pagan spiritualism, her belief that heaven was a rather boring place, and that Christ might have been a willful imposter” (*Looking* 135).

is perhaps considering the neo-druidic classification of ferns as sacred trees or powerful protective plants to which fairies are attracted. But one could just as easily view ferns as part of the natural habitat of Prince Edward Island, such as when Montgomery mentions “the ferns growing up in the shadowy nooks” in her journal (*SJ1* 239). The decoration of churches with seasonal greenery was and is an accepted practice in Protestant churches, with special emphasis placed on seasonal celebrations.⁸⁸ Gammel’s perspective seems one-sided, and when she calls Anne “an irreverent little heathen who pokes fun at sanctimonious church practices,” she seems to be ignoring the many ways in which Anne’s Christian development is underlined (135). There is no doubt, however, that Montgomery incorporates Romantic elements of paganism and pantheism in her celebrations of nature and of Anne’s place in nature.

In addition to the Romantic dilutions of the Christian and Sunday-School fiction aspects of *Anne*, Montgomery presents the child Anne from sociological and psychological perspectives that reflect and anticipate twentieth-century currents of thought about children.⁸⁹ Social historians have looked at the alteration in the economic evaluation of children in the nineteenth century, as the cash value for children’s work became a public issue at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Child labour had existed previously, but with the increase in population and education, children’s bad working conditions and low pay were made public in England, not just by official reports but also by writers such as Charles

⁸⁸ The December 25, 1892 issue of the *New York Times* carried the headline, FINE CHURCH DECORATIONS; CHRISTMAS GREENS AND FLOWERS IN PROFUSION. CATHOLIC, EPISCOPALIAN, AND PRESBYTERIAN DENOMINATIONS MAKE ELABORATE DISPLAYS. The article goes on to say, “For weeks the decorations have been planned, and to-day the church, interiors are beautiful with evergreens, pine, laurel, and all sorts of bright flowers” (10).

⁸⁹ Holly Blackford notes: “Despite her Victorian accoutrements and context, Anne signals acceptance of a new twentieth-century lens on the child as a psychological construct interior to the adult who develops from a child” (xv).

Dickens. The public outcry, especially among the upper and middle classes, helped stir changes in the welfare of young workers.⁹⁰ In 1833 and 1844, the first general laws against child labour, the Factory Acts, were passed in England; in Canada, provincial legislation regulating child labour in factories and mines was enacted in the 1870s and 1880s (Barman 409). These laws decreased the number of child labourers, though child labour continued into the 20th century.

Because Canada at the end of the nineteenth century was a preindustrial, mostly rural society, Canadians needed children for the work that they could do: “Making a virtue out of a necessity, English Canadians viewed work as the central characteristic of a good upbringing and proper education” (Sutherland 10). An earlier view of children that saw them as partially formed and potential adults is reflected in *Danny* and in Marilla’s attitude: “[C]hildren were a resistive, refractory (from the ‘Old Adam’ they carried in their bones), but nonetheless basically plastic raw material. Out of this tough matter, parents and other adults could, if they were persistent enough, fashion moral, hard-working, productive adults” (Sutherland 11). Morals and good work habits were inculcated “by precept repeated at home, at school, in Sunday school, in books and in papers, and by the example of their parents and other adults”; adults in the nineteenth century “would have been baffled by twentieth-century concerns for the emotional life of . . . children” (Sutherland 11). Nevertheless, from the 1880s to the 1920s, sentimental “social constructions” of children and childhood gained currency and became widely acceptable social truths (Hendrick 9).

⁹⁰ Politicians and the government tried to limit child labour by law, but factory owners resisted; some felt that they were aiding the poor by giving their children money to buy food to avoid starvation, and others simply welcomed the cheap labour.

Sociologist Viviana Zelizer discusses the transformation in the economic and sentimental value of children between the 1870s and the 1930s, and through her analysis, we can see how Pearl fits an earlier model of wage-earning child and member of a lower class, while Anne is presented as a more modern and higher-class “economically worthless” child. Zelizer notes that in agricultural families, children assumed a variety of work responsibilities between the ages of five and seven and therefore had direct economic value, but in cities by the mid-nineteenth century, “the construction of the economically worthless child had been in large part accomplished among the American urban middle class” (5). Instead of relying on his child as old-age insurance, the middle-class urban father began insuring his own life to protect the unproductive child. On the other hand, the economic value of the working-class child increased in the nineteenth century, and working class urban families in the late nineteenth century depended on the wages of older children and the household assistance of younger ones (Zelizer 6). Child labour laws and compulsory education gradually destroyed the difference between classes. The writing of Felix Adler⁹¹ was influential in the shift; in 1905, Adler proclaimed that to make a profit out of children was to “touch profanely a sacred thing” (qtd. in Zelizer 6). Thus in the first three decades of the twentieth century, “the economically useful child became both numerically and culturally an exception” and “the sentimentalization of child life intensified” (Zelizer 6).⁹²

⁹¹ Felix Adler (1851-1933) was an American rationalist intellectual of German-Jewish origin and founder of the Ethical Culture movement.

⁹² Zelizer contrasts turn-of-the-century children with twenty-first century children who are both economically worthless and expensive (In 2009, estimates of the cost of raising a child in Ontario varied from \$182,190 to \$300,000 (<<http://canadianfinanceblog.com/2009/10/13/>>)), and any chores that children perform are seen as character building. While children learn to spend their parents’ money long before they begin to earn their own, people expect nonmonetary benefits from children such as “love and affection and the feeling of being a family” (Zelizer 4).

Zelizer asks why the sentimental value of children's lives increased when their contributions to the household disappeared and why the market price of an economically useless child far surpassed the monetary value of a nineteenth-century useful child.⁹³ She argues that the "expulsion of children from the 'cash nexus' at the turn of the past century, although clearly shaped by profound changes in the economic, occupational, and family structures, was also part of a cultural process of 'sacralization' of children's lives" (11).⁹⁴ Thus whereas in the nineteenth century, the market value of children was culturally acceptable, later "the new normative ideal of the child as an exclusively emotional and affective asset precluded instrumental or fiscal considerations" (11). She concludes:

The economic and sentimental values of children were thereby declared to be radically incompatible. Only mercenary or insensitive parents violated the boundary by accepting the wages or labor contributions of a useful child. Properly loved children, regardless of social class, belonged in a domesticated, non-productive world of lessons, games, and token money.

(11)

Pearl's doing housework for Mrs. Evans and babysitting the Evans' son Algernon, as well as paying off the family debt by working for an unfriendly farm family under terrible living conditions, is a contrast to Anne, who although expected to help Marilla with household

⁹³ By the 1930s, childless couples were paying large sums of money to purchase babies. Courts began to award increasingly large sums to compensate parents for the loss of a child in cases of accidental death.

⁹⁴ Sacralization is the sense of objects being invested with sentimental or religious meaning.

duties as part of her training, is never required to earn money, but only to attend school and be educated.⁹⁵

The use of these economic ideologies to explain noneconomic variables has been challenged by sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.⁹⁶ Whereas Marxist historical materialism identified economic forces as key causal agents of all social change, Durkheim and Weber disputed such market determinism. At the turn of the century, Georg Simmel in *Philosophy of Money* (1900) traced the historical dissociation between money and personal values. He identified the important role that Christianity had played, because Christianity “sacralized human existence, setting life above any financial consideration” (Zelizer 19). Later sociologists also decried the growth of economic studies devoid of cultural context; according to Lester Thurow in *Dangerous Currents*, arguing that individuals are “rational utility-maximizers” is a form of intellectual blindness (qtd. in Zelizer 17). Zelizer concludes, “Money’s successful conversion of all items into a quantifiable cash equivalent clashes with the modern belief in the uniqueness of human values” (19). Although the reasons for the “sacralization” of children are disputed, the reality of the trend is not.

⁹⁵ Had Anne been a boy, the Cuthberts’ expectations would have been different, as a boy would have been expected to do the work that Matthew eventually hires a French-Canadian boy to do. Marilla expresses the older utilitarian attitude towards children – “What good would she be to us?” – whereas Matthew expresses a more modern (and also Christian) view: “We might be some good to her” (30).

⁹⁶ Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist, economist, and politician, wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5), which is considered to be a founding text in economic sociology and sociology in general. In it, Weber traces the independent impact of religious ideas, values, and attitudes on economic activities. Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) was a French positivist sociologist, who, along with Weber and Karl Marx, is commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science. He, too, attempted to integrate the economic and non-economic dimensions of social life (see <<http://www.emile-durkheim.com/>>).

Another factor that influenced attitudes towards children was the introduction of compulsory schooling in the 1870s and 1880s.⁹⁷ When compulsory schooling replaced wage-earning as the accepted occupation for children aged five to around twelve, a concurrent shift in attitudes towards childhood took place. In the rhetoric of the 1890s, children were not “plastic clay” to be moulded and shaped after a human pattern, but within them was “a seed of divine life” to be nurtured and tended according to their individual natures (Sutherland 17).⁹⁸ In *Danny*, the emphasis is on Pearl’s work, whereas Anne’s success at school represents an achievement that is valorized by the adults of Avonlea. Anne thus became a role-model who inspired generations of twentieth-century girls with her academic aspirations and achievements.

Therefore in several ways Montgomery’s Anne is a twentieth-century child who appeals to many different age groups and cultures. Whether *Anne of Green Gables* is foundationally Christian, as critics like Johnston, Hilder, and Sorfleet argue, or whether it is pagan, which DuVernet and Gammel contend, or whether it is a mixture of Christian, Romantic, and pagan elements that translate Montgomery’s wavering faith, which is my viewpoint, the religious aspects of the novel are muted enough that they do not interfere with twenty-first-century secular readers’ understanding and enjoyment. Mark Noll argues that just as sermons in North America have tended to be moralistic rather than doctrinal or

⁹⁷ Prince Edward Island introduced the first province-wide common schooling system in 1852 (*Statistics Canada Catalogue* No. 11F0019 No. 251, 7).

⁹⁸ This is the rhetoric of the kindergarten movement. Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), a German pedagogue, created the concept of the “kindergarten,” a children’s garden, and changed the way we think about early childhood education. He designed balls, wooden blocks, tiles, sticks and rings to demonstrate that children learn by playing. Froebelian societies in Toronto, Ottawa, London, and Winnipeg led to the developing belief in the influence of environment on children: “Since a child was a ‘plant’ rather than a ‘marble being’ to be ‘pounded into shape,’ both parents and teachers had to be sure that his physical, spiritual, and educational setting were well suited to growth” (Sutherland 18).

traditionalist, so, too, has much North American literature “aimed to shore up morality rather than promote specifically Christian dogmas or defend the claims of a particular church” (*History* 409). He notes that Christianity in North America “has been marked by a persistently optimistic tone” and therefore “it is not surprising that literature with religious overtones is often marked by an idealistic romanticism that in the end boils down to an affirmation of cozy domestic bliss” (*History* 409). I believe that *Anne of Green Gables* fits Noll’s description, with its optimism, idealism, romanticism, and theological liberalism. One has to be careful, though, not to dismiss the potential for even such diluted Christianity to have a conversion effect on readers. Presbyterian minister Heather Jones⁹⁹ writes that, although her family had no commitment to organized religion and she did not grow up going to church, through reading *Anne*, she was touched by the Spirit of God: “I am forever indebted to Lucy Maud Montgomery. Because she shared her faith through her novels, I grew into faith. Her ability to integrate a deep awareness of God in her writing taught me something of who God is” (11). In spite of the personal doubts Montgomery expressed in her journals and letters, these words of praise from a Christian minister give a glimpse of the spiritual influence that Montgomery has had on her readers over the past century

⁹⁹ The Reverend Heather Jones was ordained in the Presbyterian Church in 1992:

She has served congregations in the Presbyteries of Seaway-Glengarry, Oak Ridges, and East Toronto. She was also appointed by International Ministries to serve the Presbyterian Church in Northern Malawi from 1998 to 2001. Currently [2009] she serves as Synod Youth Ministry Consultant (interim, part-time), Coordinator for the Teacher/Leader Program, and Convener of the Presbytery of East Toronto Youth Committee.
(<http://www.standrewshh.ca/2009-events.php/>)

Chapter Five

Divergent Paths: Critical and Reception History of *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables*

Does it never give thee pause, this other strange item of it, that men then had a soul, - not by hearsay alone, and as a figure of speech; but as a truth that they knew, and practically went upon! Verily it was another world then. Their Missals have become incredible, a sheer platitude, sayest thou? Yes, a most poor platitude; and even, if thou wilt, an idolatry and blasphemy, should any one persuade thee to believe them, to pretend praying by them. But yet it is pity we had lost tidings of our souls: - actually we shall have to go in quest of them again, or worse in all ways will befall!

Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Book II, Chapter II (1843)

As we have seen, Nellie McClung's *Sowing Seeds in Danny* initially outsold Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, but whereas *Anne* is still being published and read today, *Danny* all but vanished into obscurity. In the following pages, I chart the changing popular and critical reception of each novel, beginning with their similar trajectories of initial popularity and subsequent modernist denigration in the 1920s, succeeded by a wide divergence by the final two decades of the twentieth century as *Anne* became a focus of feminist attention that *Danny* largely failed to secure. Recently, the critical history of the two novels and their authors has reconverged as they have come under fire by postcolonial feminist critics for their alleged maternal feminism, imperialism, racism, and eugenic politics. This overview clearly demonstrates the powerful role played by scholars in influencing how works are regarded, and it suggests the negative effects of the tendentious strain of much recent criticism.

When *Sowing Seeds in Danny* was first published, the *New York Times* praised it for its "humour and sentiment exhibited in homely lives" (qtd. in Karr 190), and later described it as a "sweet little story" that had taken "firm hold on the affections of a large circle of readers" (23 October 1910). Canadian poet Earl Birney recalls that his mother loved Nellie

McClung's novels because she identified with Pearl in *Danny* and found great pleasure in McClung's "sharp eye for the small realities of the prairie experience and her sympathetic understanding of farmers' families" (4).¹ When I asked my elderly aunt, who grew up in Saskatchewan, whether she had read *Danny*, she exclaimed, "Everyone read Nellie McClung!" In 1908, at a time when 4,000 copies was considered a good sale for a novel in Canada, *Sowing Seeds in Danny* sold 9,600 copies in the first six months after publication and another 12,500 by December 1911; through the 1920s, it continued to sell at an average of seven hundred copies per year (Vipond 103, 111). *Danny* went through seventeen editions by the time of McClung's death in 1951, having earned her an estimated \$25,000 (Karr 54). After its last publication in 1965, it was not available until this century, when it appeared online as an e-book under Project Gutenberg. It has since been republished in both hardcover and paperback formats in at least ten different editions between 2004 and 2010, as well as in special Thesaurus editions as e-books.

Anne of Green Gables was also an immediate best-seller, went through thirty-two editions in five years, kept Montgomery in the top-ten list of the *Bookseller and Stationer*, a prominent trade magazine, in five of the ten years following its publication, and earned her over \$22,000 by 1919 (Karr 72, Vipond 105, Gerson "Author" 309). Mark Twain called Anne "the dearest and most moving and delightful child of fiction since the immortal Alice" (qtd. in MacMechan 210). Unlike *Danny*, *Anne* has never been out of print, is currently

¹ Birney writes,

Mrs. McClung could scarcely lose with my mother in any case: Nellie was a Methodist (the next best thing in my mother's eyes to a Presbyterian), a crusader for "temperance" (i.e., no liquor at all, except brandy for heart attacks), also for female suffrage and for the international peace which women's votes would bring. (4)

available in countless editions, and has generated musicals, a prequel, and the burgeoning PEI tourist industry.

After their initial bestseller status, both novels were generally ignored by modernist critics, derided for their popularity,² or dismissed as regional idylls or sentimental romantic fiction, in spite of the anti-romantic strain that is strong in both. The two novels were read by children and adults, and this implied audience was important, because as Shirley Foster and Judy Simons note, McClung and Montgomery produced their fiction “in the context of a literary world in which it was impossible to be both a ‘serious’ and a ‘juvenile’ author” (151).³ Several critics have traced the critical responses to McClung and Montgomery. For example, in “Anne of Green Gables Goes to University,” Carole Gerson elaborates on the wide range of academic responses to Montgomery in the 1920s, which ranged from Professor V.B. Rhodenizer’s assessment of the Anne series as “a comédie humaine unparalleled in Canadian fiction” to W.A. Deacon’s opinion that “Canadian fiction was to go no lower” than *Anne of Green Gables* (18). Likewise, Janice Fiamengo carefully traces McClung’s legacy among scholars, one that reflects “deep ambivalence, ranging from reverence to opprobrium” (“Legacy” 151).

By mid-century, the two best-selling authors of 1908 were being treated with varying degrees of indifference. Arthur L. Phelps in *Canadian Writers* (1951) ignores McClung but writes about Montgomery with an ambivalent mixture of modernist condescension and guarded praise. He dismisses her popularity as a result of being read by an “uncultured and

² In 1946, novelist Hugh MacLennan condemned critics for their ongoing anti-popular stance: “They automatically assume that if a novel sells more than 10,000 copies, it is *ipso facto* bad” (qtd. in Karr 191).

³ Foster and Simons note the appeal of *Anne* to adults as well as children, functioning as it does on two levels, “exploring contemporary ideologies of girlhood and female behaviour, and textually enacting therapeutic recall” (153).

unsophisticated” readership and of writing that “makes no pretension of being ‘literary’ in quotation marks” and is naïve: “Its innocence seems always on the edge of suggesting close cousinship with ignorance – ignorance of life” (87-90).⁴ He argues that Montgomery should not be dismissed just because she is popular, because she writes “with direct unpretentious simplicity, [and] through her Anne, was able to communicate something of what she knew. I suppose that is the secret of a modest sort of regional literature” (92). Gabriella Ähmansson analyses Phelps’ confused reaction to Montgomery’s writing and concludes that he was “honestly trying to explain a phenomenon” that was incomprehensible to him (23).

Desmond Pacey’s *Creative Writing in Canada* (1952) also dismisses *Anne of Green Gables* as a “children’s classic” to which “it would be silly to apply adult critical standards,” and then goes on to condemn both the novel and its readership:

The tone throughout is that of pleasant whimsy, the didacticism is, for the most part, implicit and unobtrusive, and the sentimentalism a little less cloying than is usual in books of its type. . . It had all the features of the kind of escape literature which a materialistic and vulgar generation craved. . . sweetly-sad, innocent and pathetic. (106)

Pacey rates *Sowing Seeds in Danny* slightly higher: “Nellie McClung (1873-1951) came much closer to giving us a true account of prairie life, but even her books stress the virtues

⁴ Nevertheless, Phelps discovers to his surprise that he enjoyed reading Montgomery’s books because they were “a relief from the tension and self-conscious craftsmanship and experimental techniques of many contemporary works presumably much more important and widely publicized. The proclamation is, I suppose, that one need not be ashamed of this sort of writing” (88). He also admits, “The unpretentiousness and innocence may be the kind of honest simplicity that does have life and even art in it” (88).

of the pioneers and neglect their vices” (103).⁵ Pacey wants novelists to engage with the modern era:

It is when we look deeper that the weaknesses and faults of this regionalist movement become apparent. Instead of challenging the values of the new industrial society, these writers ignored its existence. Instead of seeking to show how the old ideals could be adapted to the needs of a new generation, they sought merely to turn the clock back. (103)

Thus he condemns both novels as escapist fiction that clings to “old ideals.” Gordon Roper, S. Ross Beharriell, and Rupert Schieder in the *Literary History of Canada* (1976) see McClung as more of a realist:

Nellie McClung had resolved from the first to write about life as she saw it around her. She saw life directly, but her crusading spirit led her often to present what she saw in the forms of the Methodist and temperance literature of the day. . . . Her writing was directed by a necessity for telling the truth, by a moral zeal, and by a strong Christian purpose; she had little use for any other artistic standards. (“Writers” 345)

About Montgomery, they comment: “Miss Montgomery’s letters reveal an intellectual depth and a speculative mind which is seldom evidenced in her fiction” (345). Thus they do not consider the fiction of either author to have aesthetic value. In “Best Sellers in English Canada, 1899-1918” (1979), Mary Vipond classifies both books as “domestic” or “family”

⁵ One has to wonder if Pacey had read the novel with its “sinful” characters such as the three Motherwells. He condemns these and the authors of other “regional idylls” by judging that “not one of them was an artist of even second rank. Their characters are one-dimensional, their plots are either absurdly melodramatic or absurdly trivial - . . . their ideas are mere platitudes and their style is plodding and inept” (104).

or even “home and Jesus” fiction, which she claims was “mainly read by teenaged girls and their mothers” and was notable for [the] excess of ‘syrupy pathos, sentiment, and optimism” (104). Vipond therefore assigns both novels to the category of the “saccharine school” of fiction (105).

Frequently the two novels were conspicuous by their absence in books of criticism. D.G. Jones in *Butterfly on Rock* (1970) mentions neither Montgomery nor McClung; George Woodcock in *The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century* (1975) ignores both Montgomery and McClung in favour of Leacock, Grove and Stead; D.J. Dooley in *Moral Vision in the Canadian Novel* (1979) makes no mention of Montgomery or McClung, nor does W.J. Keith in 1985 in *Canadian Literature in English*.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, John Moss paid attention to both authors, but he gave conflicting evaluations in two of his books. In *Patterns of Isolation* (1974), he considers *Sowing Seeds in Danny* to be a moral treatise: “The Pearl Watson novels are blatantly moralistic, distorting life and the natural world to their rhetorical purpose” (123). In the same book, he describes *Anne of Green Gables* as “the most famous of Canadian regional idylls” in which moral precepts are blended “in a mixture of subtle delicacy and good-humoured bombast that makes it endearing even when it seems most self-satisfied” (124). Later, however, in his *Reader’s Guide to the Canadian Novel* (1981), he praises *Sowing Seeds in Danny* in glowing terms⁶ and compares McClung favorably with Mark

⁶ Moss writes:

It is difficult to imagine anyone’s not liking McClung’s novels. Nellie McClung, the woman, is justly celebrated today by feminists, but her fiction, exemplified by *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, is now largely forgotten or ignored (or, worse yet, wrongly dismissed as “evangelical” writing). . . . McClung writes with an acutely developed social consciousness – she deftly ridicules hypocrisy at every level of society, moving from one level to another without a trace of condescension (in itself a revolutionary achievement for her time). She displays a strong moral bent, but tempered always with an abundance of irony and wit. This

Twain, both in “the rare ability to be sentimental without being sappy or silly – there is always just that touch of cynicism to keep things in order” and in her skill “at capturing dialect” (185). He concludes that Pearl Watson at twelve “is self-sufficient and capable, as appealing as Tom Sawyer ever was, and twice as smart” (186). He also compares McClung’s narrative to a Kurelek painting, in which “the details come together to make the whole a finished work” (186). He praises McClung’s humour and gives extensive examples of humorous situations, characters, and plays on words. But whereas he discusses *Danny* in the adult section of his book, he puts *Anne* in the chapter on “Canadian Novels for Young Readers” and does little more than summarize the plot.

In 1966, Elizabeth Waterston’s article on Montgomery in *The Clear Spirit: Twenty Canadian Women and Their Times* broke new ground in her respectful treatment of Montgomery, identifying her as “an important craftsman” and finding in her novels “a subtle and illuminating use of archetypal patterns” (199). In the same volume, Eleanor Harman discusses McClung in “Five Persons from Alberta”; she dismisses *Danny* as “largely a temperance tract, sentimental and moralistic in the fashion of the time,” although she adds that the book had “wit, human understanding, and delightful dialogue” (166). Ten years later, in *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*, Gwen Matheson and V.E. Lang called attention to McClung’s fiction: “Her literary talent alone, especially for humour and effective rhetoric, ranks Nellie McClung among the most outstanding English-speaking feminists” (9).

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, an increase of scholarly interest in popular best-sellers, especially by women writers, brought Montgomery to increasing

book deserves to be read – indeed celebrated. It is a fine work of humour, with an irreverent charm and a guileless innocence about it that quite sensibly rewards virtue with money; a childlike book that only the jaded could not enjoy. (*Reader’s* 185)

prominence.⁷ After the publication of the first of her journals in 1985 by Oxford University Press and the hugely popular television dramatization of her novel in the same year, she rose in both popular and critical awareness; with the increase in feminist scholarship, she was no longer relegated to the invisible sphere of the sentimental, the popular, and the feminine. Gerson traces the large increase in scholarly publications, the movement of academic attention from studies in children's literature to studies related to adult Canadian culture, and the growth in "middle-brow" popularity as evidenced by polls taken at the end of the century. Reprints of *Anne* in "austere" New Canadian Library editions with scholarly covers for university courses and *Afterwards* by canonical authors such as Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, and Jane Urquhart added to Montgomery's academic significance and also signaled the novel's new canonical status, as did the publication of a Norton Critical Edition in 2007 ("University" 27). Conferences on Montgomery attracted large gatherings, culminating in 2008 in the Canada-wide exhibit on *Anne of Green Gables* and an exhibit symposium as part of Congress 2008 in Vancouver.

From 1965 until 2003,⁸ McClung's novel was out of print and largely disappeared from Canadian consciousness. Various opinions have been offered for the disparity in the critical and reception history of the two books. At a Symposium on Early Canadian Literature held in 2010 at the University of Ottawa, Gerson suggested that one of the reasons for Montgomery's success was the sophisticated American publishing apparatus that

⁷ Gerson identifies three layers of cultural activity related to best sellers: "commodity value" as demonstrated by titles and spin-offs listed in *Books in Print*; "academic canon" as measured by the frequency of an author's appearance as the subject of scholarly publications and graduate theses; and "the middlebrow layer of the 'average intelligent reader,'" lying between the "modernist literary avant-garde" and consumers of mass entertainment ("University" 17-18).

⁸ Project Gutenberg published an on-line edition of *Danny* in August, 2003, and several paperback editions were published afterwards.

supported *Anne*, compared to the much smaller Canadian one that published *Danny*.⁹ Most other critics have related *Danny*'s disappearance to its didactic style and moralizing content. Randi Warne argues that "the increasing dominance of a school of literary criticism which emphasized form over content virtually guaranteed that intentionally didactic fiction like McClung's would be discounted" (*Literature* 5). Likewise, Susan Jackel in the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* judges that McClung's "penchant for pathos and moral uplift dates her fiction" (691). Hilda Thomas in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1990) considers that McClung's "characters are stereotypes, her work loosely structured, sentimental, and consciously designed for moral uplift," although she admits that McClung's work "remains readable for its shrewd observation of human absurdity and its detailed description of the rural countryside and people" (92). Donna Bennett asserts that "morally correct writing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century took the form of fictionalized tracts" in works such as Nellie McClung's *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, "which subordinated the aesthetics of the literary text to that of the ethical lecture" (225).

Four exceptions to the negative assessments of McClung have appeared in the last two decades: Elizabeth Waterston's *Children's Literature in Canada* (1992), Randi Warne's *Literature as Pulpit: The Christian Social Activism of Nellie L. McClung* (1993), Carol Hancock's *Nellie McClung: No Small Legacy* (1996), and Janice Fiamengo's "A Legacy of Ambivalence: Responses to Nellie McClung" (2002). Waterston calls McClung's *Danny* "a book of deserved and enduring popularity" in which McClung, "a deft and humorous

⁹ In *Beyond the Provinces: Literary Canada at Century's End*, David Staines contrasts the publishing situation of early twentieth-century authors such as Montgomery, Connor and Leacock with authors at the end of the century such as Carol Shields, Michael Ondaatje, and Rohinton Mistry; the former "found their major publishers abroad, with their Canadian publishers buying copies from the American or British publisher or borrowing the original plates," while the latter "found their first and major publication with Canadian firms" (27, 26). For a discussion of McClung's and Montgomery's publishing experiences, see Karr 58-79.

storyteller and an early women's rights activist, preaches some of the old morality of self-help and piety" and "an evangelical doctrine of Christian charity" (83-4). Waterston notes that although McClung mocks sentimental didacticism, she "sows seed of her own: ideas about the problems of the immigrants, about addictions, especially alcoholism, and about the persecution of the powerless" (84). Warne's book-length study of McClung's fiction demonstrates how, through the character of Pearl Watson, "the religious bases of McClung's feminism and political and social activism are made flesh" (23). Hancock defends the Christian foundation and purpose of McClung's fiction, and Fiamengo explores "the rhetorical complexity, situational diversity and figurative multiplicity that abound in McClung's texts" (158).

But after diverging in their popular and critical reception, McClung and Montgomery have recently come under joint attack by the Academy for their maternal feminism, imperial motherhood, eugenic feminism, and racism. A comparison of this stream of criticism with that of sympathetic critics reveals opposing and irreconcilable worldviews. As I have argued, McClung presents an overt Christian message through several rhetorical strategies that look back to nineteenth-century Sunday-School fiction. Likewise, Montgomery's more subtle Christian message reflects her search for the "kernel of Christianity" in personal faith, for the "primitive simplicity" of early Christianity in the Presbyterian Church, and for an appreciation of the holiness of nature that has been God-created. The feminist and post-colonial theorising that sheds such a different light on McClung's and Montgomery's writing has at its core, I argue, a misunderstanding and rejection of "mere Christianity";¹⁰

¹⁰ C.S. Lewis expounds the idea of "mere Christianity" in a book of the same title adapted from a series of BBC radio talks made between 1941 and 1944. The term means the essential tenets of the Christian faith upon which all Christians can find unity.

these critics disparage a great deal that is essential to the Christian faith and misinterpret the worldview out of which both authors were writing.

Much of the negative criticism of McClung and Montgomery comes from the body of literary criticism loosely termed feminist.¹¹ While critical of didactic works such as McClung's and Montgomery's, feminist criticism has a didactic purpose of its own. Rather than a specific interpretive technique or exploration of a hypothesis, it attempts to transform society; believing that women have been unjustly marginalized and victimized by the structures of society, it argues that the situation needs to be remedied and that literary criticism can make a contribution to feminist goals (Gallagher "Feminist" 232). In particular, deconstructive feminism seeks to destabilize binary oppositions, especially the opposition between male and female; critics such as Julia Kristeva argue that the feminine is a philosophical position of marginality rather than "a biological, psychological, or cultural essence" (Gallagher "Feminist" 240).¹² Susan Gallagher suggests that Christian critics, "operating with the biblical understanding of the equal value of male and female persons and perspectives," can appreciate many of the efforts of feminist critics, especially in their more recent emphasis on the social and cultural contexts of literature,¹³ in their insistence

¹¹ It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss in detail the various and complex aspects of feminist criticism and gender studies. My overall goals are to articulate the criticisms of McClung and Montgomery made by critics in these streams, and to identify the incompatibilities they enunciate with the worldview from which McClung and Montgomery were writing.

¹² On the other hand, feminist social constructionism is a more pragmatic feminist approach that locates women's texts in relation to specific socio-cultural situations. See, for example, Nina Baym's *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1829-1870* (1978).

¹³ Warne criticises early McClung criticism because it failed "to account for the external realities which determined discourse" (*Literature* 187).

that “no criticism is neutral, objective, or impersonal,”¹⁴ and in their belief that the aesthetic and ethical can be addressed in literary criticism (245, 246).¹⁵ The deconstructive feminists, however, have attacked McClung and Montgomery for the binary oppositions in their works, challenging a 1908 worldview based on the Genesis creation story, which understood male and female as divinely created and complementary.¹⁶

The anti-Christian underpinnings of such feminist attacks are evident in feminist historian Carol Bacchi’s *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (1983), which concludes that the suffragists were predominantly members of an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant social elite, dominated by professionals and the wives of professionals; according to Bacchi, their endorsement of suffrage for women was part of a larger reform program designed to “impress certain values upon society, Protestant morality, sobriety, and the family order. ‘Women’s Rights’ in their view of things meant the right to serve” (3).¹⁷ Bacchi therefore concludes that the failure of the suffrage movement to alter opportunities for women stemmed from the fact that “they had no desire to restructure sex roles” (146):

¹⁴ Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* contends that “no criticism is ‘value-free,’ that we all speak from a specific position shaped by cultural, social, political and personal factors” (43). This approach is compatible with world-view theory.

¹⁵ Gallagher writes,

So-called objective criticism carries its own set of values, which elevates concepts of beauty and paradox above concepts of right and wrong by claiming that as critics we should only be concerned with the former. Feminist critics, however, consciously acknowledge and purposely apply their values in their criticism and believe that the aesthetic and the ethical can be distinguished but not separated. (“Feminist” 246)

¹⁶ Genesis 1.27: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (1.27). Also in Genesis 5.2: “He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.” Note that Mankind is the translation of *adam*, the lower-case generic term for *homo sapiens*.

¹⁷ In her put-down of the “right to serve,” Bacchi demonstrates her anti-Christian bias, because Christianity is based on the idea expressed in 1 Peter 4.10 that each one “should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

In the reformers' hands, woman suffrage lost all identification with the feminist call to enter and compete in the male domain. Since their new social order depended upon the proper training and nurturing of the next generation, emphasis was placed on the importance of home-life and on the need for women to develop expertise in homemaking duties. Motherhood acquired a new prestige as a career. Therefore, it ought not to be surprising that, in the aftermath of winning the vote, all the traditional barriers to female participation in extra-familial activities remained. (147)

She adds that because "their social status, their religion, and their ethnicity coloured their vision," they fell short of what she would have had them accomplish (148).

Randi Warne points out that Bacchi works from the assumption "that McClung's faith was an impediment to her feminism, rather than the cause of it" ("Social Gospel" 350). Warne sees Bacchi as misreading McClung, both because of Bacchi's definition of feminism and because Bacchi assumes that the public sphere is the proper "locus for truly 'human' activity":

Women's traditional experience, and the values and perspectives arising out of experiences like mothering are considered of less value than competing with men on men's terms. . . . Accepting patriarchal culture's devaluing of women's experience as an objective assessment, Bacchi does not consider the potential significance of a mutual redefinition of public and private spheres.

(Literature 140)

Thus Warne identifies Bacchi's unconscious appropriation of patriarchal attitudes, and claims that her negative evaluation of religious feminists causes her to misread textual

evidence in McClung, a tendency characteristic of a certain stage of feminist scholarship that ignores the “powerful challenge to the status quo” of first-wave feminist activism (*Literature* 141).

Historian Ernest R. Forbes also challenges Bacchi’s conclusions. He argues that Bacchi’s goal to reassess reform leaders with an emphasis on class leads to at least three problems: “The repetitive invocation of class often gives the impression of reductionism, the condemnation of past women leaders raises the question as to whether their motivation has been fully understood, and the sample analysis suggests a lack of sophistication in the interpretation of quantitative data” (90).¹⁸ Forbes claims that Bacchi’s study is a “historiographic regression,” abandoning as it does Catherine Cleverdon’s panoramic regional approach in *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* for a narrow focus on Central Canada (90). He furthermore advocates replacing the image of the prohibitionists “as frustrated puritanical zealots bent on suppressing the pleasure of others,” because a detailed examination of the prohibition movement in Nova Scotia suggests that the prohibitionists “were motivated primarily by a desire to eliminate the roots of human unhappiness. They wanted to create a new society in which crime, disease and social injustice would be virtually eliminated” (13). Forbes points out that Bacchi’s juxtaposition of terms such as *liberal* and *conservative*, which had different meanings in the past from those of the present day, leads to confusion, and he finds it hard to accept the degree of oversimplification in her arguments (92).¹⁹ He claims that in trying to establish class as the determining factor, Bacchi “minimizes the importance of a distinct women’s perspective.

¹⁸ Forbes challenges Bacchi’s statistics, pointing out that the study sample is small, its members far from typical, and the generalizations drawn sometimes exaggerated.

¹⁹ Forbes cites as an example of oversimplification Bacchi’s attribution of the rise of the Social Gospel to a decline in the size of church congregations.

Thus the temperance movement is treated as monolithic and pronounced non-feminist in nature” (93). He also criticizes Bacchi for taking publicly-stated rationales for conduct as synonymous with actual motivation. He notes that this is an illegitimate strategy, because successful women leaders of necessity became “experts at dissimulation and deference in a male-dominated society,” especially after their legislative defeats in the late 1890s (94, 97). Within the anti-feminist climate that ensued, whenever possible leaders avoided taking a confrontational stance on feminist issues and for that purpose “the maternalistic philosophy was very useful” (98). Forbes therefore argues that Bacchi’s “revisionist skepticism” needs to be countered with more balanced and mature scholarship.

I have gone into such detail about Warne and Forbes’s critiques of Bacchi’s writing because of the influence Bacchi has had on subsequent critics. For example, in *Practising Femininity: Domestic Realism and the Performance of Gender in Early Canadian Fiction* (1998), Misao Dean cites Bacchi as a primary proponent of the argument that the suffragists’ praise of women’s domestic duties suggests a belief in the sexual division of labour. Dean also mentions Warne’s opposing perspective that McClung’s endorsement of women’s domestic role was a rhetorical strategy “designed to counter specific arguments from her opposition” rather than her actual views (“Voicing/Practice” 120 n.1).²⁰ But although she presents both sides of the controversy, Dean herself voices a post-modern worldview in her dismissive attitude towards McClung’s faith:

[McClung s] concept of “truth,” like the idea of “reality” which justifies her fiction, is drawn from the dregs of nineteenth-century idealism, and depends upon a popularly articulated progressive cosmology which represents “truth”

²⁰ Dean concludes that this controversy “is instructive for the way it points out the contradictions inherent in heterosexual feminist ideology” (“Voicing/Practice” 120 n.1).

as only partially available to a fallen humanity, and in need of constant revision as human understanding becomes more adequate to its demands.

(“Voicing/Practice” 92-3)

Derogatory terms such as *dregs* and quotation marks around *truth* emphasize Dean’s condemnation of an ideology that she deems passé. Likewise, in her Introduction to *In Times Like These*, Veronica Strong-Boag criticizes McClung for a “mistaken belief in feminine moral superiority” and for a lack of radical ideology because her mind was formed “by a Victorian belief system and a Methodist social gospel”:

She failed, as did the majority of American feminists, to provide modern women with satisfactory identity models. Instead, in a newly secular world and an increasingly permissive society, she left women with a missionary role which emphasized the centrality of the maternal experience. McClung’s rural sympathies made her analysis appear ever more irrelevant in an urban age. (xix)

Carol Hancock labels Strong-Boag’s denigration of McClung’s “rural sympathies” “urban arrogance” (118).²¹ Strong-Boag’s identification of the modern age as *secular* and *permissive* could well be seen to give credence to McClung’s “missionary” purpose to reform society.²² Perhaps most egregiously, her appraisal of Christian influence is misinformed; for example, when she claims that the suffragists “rejected the Pauline

²¹ Linda Kealey notes that reformers were concerned about the increase of urbanization and its attendant social problems in Canada from 1880 to 1920, when Canada’s urban population rose from 1.1 million (25 percent of the total population) to 4.3 million (40 per cent) by the end that period (4-5).

²² As Hancock notes, McClung “preached liberation for women because that was consistent with the gospel. . . . She believed that women, out of their own experience, have a unique and positive missionary role” (118).

doctrine of feminine inferiority” (viii), she ignores the body of Paul’s writing that affirms that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3.28).²³ Thus much of her critique of McClung is based on stereotyping rather than on an understanding of the complexity of Christian doctrine.²⁴

Strong-Boag and Michelle Lynn Rosa, in their Introduction to McClung’s *Complete Autobiography*, likewise evidence a strong anti-Christian and post-colonial bias when they write that the Canadian colonists set out “with the help of a Protestant god” and that the “Christian faith succored them in their intrusion on others’ lands” (10). They argue that McClung’s writing was shaped by “other ways of being, such as heterosexuality and religion,” both of which they find problematic (19). Thus a growing body of criticism was developing by the end of the twentieth century that dismissed McClung for writing what the critics considered to be old-fashioned and non-conducive to women’s “liberation.”

In contrast, *Anne of Green Gables* was praised in the 1990s for not valorizing gender binaries. In 1995, Shirley Foster and Judy Simons argued that “In prioritizing female experience and capacities, the novel also deconstructs essentialist notions of gender, and

²³ Feminists point out the scriptures that limit women’s participation in the church, but these have been shown to be related to the cultural situation at the time Paul was writing, and not to his fundamental position that all are equal in the sight of God.

²⁴ Hancock sees Strong-Boag’s assessment to be “predicated on inherent biases” and a “tangle of presuppositions”:

Lumping McClung with “the majority of American feminists” is unhelpful and inappropriate. Others have argued that McClung demonstrated a particularly Canadian brand of feminism. Since McClung’s activism was provoked by economic, political, religious and regional issues particular to Canada, I think that they make the stronger case. (118)

Matheson and Lang, for example, write of McClung’s “particularly Canadian brand of feminism - acknowledging the complexity of human problems rather than reducing everything to a single issue, not tolerating fools gladly and yet being on the whole, good-humored rather than rancorous, preferring the bite of wit to the vehemence of denunciation” (19).

stresses how formulations of sexual identity are cultural, rather than biological,” and that Anne “disrupts assumptions about gendered behaviour, replacing [the Cuthberts’] binary polarizations with an ideology of individual worth which emanates from a feminized perspective” (161, 162).²⁵

This positive appraisal of *Anne* from a feminist perspective was countered by Cecily Devereux’s increasingly negative judgments of both McClung and Montgomery, and her use of *Danny* and *Anne* as exemplars of repressive totalitarian ideologies.²⁶ Beginning with “New Woman, New World: Maternal Feminism and the New Imperialism in the White Colonies” (1999), in which she uses McClung as one of two examples of her thesis, Devereux shows how the perceived association of the New Woman with the degeneration of “the race” led to turn-of-the-century feminists’ adoption of pro-imperial and pro-domestic rhetoric, thus transforming “the transgressive New Woman into an icon of maternal imperialism, . . . ‘the mother of the race’” (178). In the same year, she discusses Montgomery in similar terms in the article, “‘Not one of those dreadful new women’: Anne Shirley and the Culture of Imperial Motherhood,” writing that *Anne*, too, counters “the new woman with the idea of woman as ‘mother of the race’” (129). Devereux combines her critique of both McClung and Montgomery in “Writing with a ‘Definite Purpose’: L.M. Montgomery, Nellie L. McClung and the Politics of Imperial Motherhood in Fiction for Children,” which appeared in *Canadian Children’s Literature* in 2001. She repeats her

²⁵ Foster and Simons suggest that *Anne* “does not reinforce the doctrines of separate spheres or prioritize essentialist behavioural ideologies. Thus what might be considered gender-specific qualities or roles are not tied to biological sex” (163). Much of Foster and Simons’s appraisal of *Anne* can be applied to *Pearl* as well; both are equally spunky heroines who transcend gendered roles.

²⁶ I have singled Devereux out for a detailed discussion of her writing because she is the most influential critic who has accused both McClung and Montgomery of being maternal feminists with an imperialist, racist and eugenicist agenda.

critique of each author in her Introduction to the Broadview edition of *Anne of Green Gables* (2004) and expands it in a full-length book published in 2005, *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism*, in which she indicts Montgomery as well as McClung. Building on Bacchi's work, Devereux brings charges against both authors that have since been accepted by critics as a true picture of McClung's and Montgomery's purposes and limitations.

The first charge Devereux brings against both authors and their novels is that of maternal feminism, which Devereux sees as a major limiting factor of the first wave of feminist activism. In *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s* (1979), Linda Kealey defines the term:

“Maternal feminism” refers to the conviction that woman's special role as mother gives her the duty and the right to participate in the public sphere. It is not her position as wife that qualifies her for the task of reform, but the special nurturing qualities which are common to all women, married or not. In some senses maternal feminism de-emphasizes or subordinates personal autonomy in favour of a (relatively) wider social role. (7-8)

Kealey suggests that support for this view of female nurturing abilities came from the social sciences, in which “the notion of separate male and female temperaments gained a ‘scientific’ basis” that justified women's being assigned a specialized role (8). She notes that maternal feminism and the notion of Christian stewardship were initially closely connected (12). But in the same collection of essays, Wayne Roberts condemns this idea of Christian stewardship, calls maternal feminism “moralistic feminism,” and traces how the “vigour and experimentation identified with the new woman” became transformed from campaigns for

“uplift reform” into “prim moralism” (17, 19). He claims that the movement of women professionals into the “helping professions” such as teaching and nursing was an extension of “familial subordination” to the public arena, which reinforced “the ideology of separate spheres” and placed women “in networks of confining structures and obligations”:

Women professionals became hostages to the new ideology as they adapted to survive. In the process, their rights became conditional on special attributes – self-denial rather than self-advancement, helping others rather than themselves and service rather than leadership. (39)²⁷

Roberts therefore considers the gains made by the first generation of women activists to be “limited” and “ultimately disappointing” (45). His negative appraisal of maternal feminism denies the Christian worldview in which many of these women were living and working, and replaces it with a secular and naturalistic worldview that many of these same women were combating at the same time as they were struggling to improve the living conditions of women and children. Taking a more sympathetic view of women’s activities in the WCTU between 1874 and 1930, Sharon Anne Cook comes to a very different conclusion than Roberts. She argues that the culture that characterized women activists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on an evangelical vision for society that “created a liberated climate for women,” empowered them, and caused them “to approach temperance as a moral and religious issue, not simply a social one”; she claims that “it was evangelicalism’s support for the ideology of the central place of home and family that

²⁷ These attributes that Roberts condemns as inimical to the emancipation of women are fundamental ideal traits of all Christians, male and female, as they seek to deny themselves and serve others before themselves, acting in the style of servant leadership. In each of the first three gospels, Jesus says to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16.24, Mark 8.34, Luke 9.23).

continued to validate the progressive behaviour of these conservative women” (*Sunshine* 7). Phyllis Airhart similarly shows how the Methodist mandate for religious activism created a public function for women: “Daily life was invested with religious significance as men and women aspired to conform their personal behaviour, homes, and communities to evangelical ideals” (*Serving* 26). In a study of American women activists, *Women Called to Witness*, Nancy Hardesty challenges the conventional wisdom that any movement for women’s rights is a secular one because of the claim that religion is inherently oppressive toward women.²⁸

Devereux, however, criticizes both Pearl and Anne for modelling maternal feminism. She sees Pearl as “the epitome of the feminist figure of the mother of the race,” an “incipient ‘mother-woman,’ instinctively compelled to perform maternalist work in the story” (*Growing* 64, 67). Therefore she describes Pearl’s imaginative tale of washing dishes based on biblical accounts as a “seemingly light and mocking treatment of Christian social reform,” rather than the evangelizing work that I would argue Pearl is doing with her friends (*Growing* 6). Likewise, she sees Anne as a child whose “salient characteristic is . . . her motherliness” and whose choice to forgo her scholarship and stay at Green Gables for Marilla’s sake becomes evidence of choosing “domestic duty” over “education and independence” (“Not One” 124, 122). Thus she ignores the fact that Anne will be engaging in a professional position as teacher at Avonlea School, as well as caring for the woman who has enabled her to obtain an education; instead, Devereux creates a binary opposition that is not supported by the text. Her blanket condemnations also ignore the paradoxes of Christian faith, which preclude such polarization.²⁹ Devereux concludes that Anne “has come to

²⁸ Hardesty locates the roots of American feminism in the evangelical revivals that occurred in the early nineteenth century.

²⁹ Twentieth-century theologian A. W. Tozer observes:

believe that her primary vocation is domestic, and that ‘happiness’ is to be found at home, within what are represented as the already determined boundaries of ‘womanly’ duty” (“Not One” 123). The quotation marks around *happiness* and *womanly* seem to indicate Devereux’s disparagement of these two concepts.³⁰ Devereux quotes Ann Ardis, who dismisses marriage and motherhood as belonging to the “conventional bourgeois woman’s career” (“Not One” 126). Therefore Devereux accuses both McClung and Montgomery of having an agenda of feminine essentialism and gender-role stereotyping.

As a counter to this argument, Warne notes that writers who identify McClung as a “maternalist” “tend to assume, if not always to articulate, a normative³¹ view of feminism which sees any affirmation of women’s traditional experience as necessarily confirming a patriarchal status quo” (*Literature* 187).³² According to Warne, they frequently quote as

A real Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he feels worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which passeth knowledge. (156)

³⁰ Devereux repeats the same argument in another article when she contends that Montgomery’s didacticism consists of her having Anne “choose home and domestic duty over education,” once again disparaging Anne’s generous action as evidence of “domestic duty” (“Writing” 15).

³¹ Heteronormativity is a term that suggests that people fall into distinct and complementary genders, i.e., male and female, that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation, and that sexual and marital relations are fitting only between a man and a woman. Consequently, a “heteronormative” view is one that aligns biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles to what is called “the gender binary.” Feminist critics argue that heteronormativity stigmatizes and marginalizes perceived deviant forms of sexuality and gender, and makes self-expression more difficult when that expression does not conform to the norm (Lovaas). Some feminists even argue that heterosexual sex is one way that men maintain power over women and that heterosexuality is therefore bad for women (see Julie Bindel’s “Marriage is a Form of Prostitution”).

³² Warne finds Dolores Hayden’s category of “material feminism” to be far more useful than that of “maternal feminism” in categorizing this dimension of McClung’s perspective (*Literature* 187). In *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, Hayden describes material feminism as reconceptualizing the relationship between the private household space and public space by presenting collective options to

proof McClung's statement in *In Times Like These*, "Deeply rooted in almost every woman's heart is the love of home and children" (86), misreading McClung as claiming that all women must be mothers, whereas "almost" qualifies her statement. As well, they ignore the rest of the passage, in which McClung claims that "independence is sweet, and when marriage means the loss of independence, there are women brave enough and strong enough to turn away from it"; also, "When women are free to marry or not as they will, and the financial burden of making a home is equally shared by husband and wife, the world will enter upon an era of happiness undreamed of now" (86). Hence, Warne argues that McClung's Pearl Watson is not "the sentimental 'do-gooder' the stereotype of maternalism would seem to require," but is rather one of those "strong, independent, courageous women who defy convention and fight for their beliefs" (*Literature* 187).³³

As well as bringing accusations of maternal feminism, Devereux charges both authors with imperialism,³⁴ claiming that "maternal feminists were imperialists," and that not only was their idea of motherhood "reductive and essentialist," but it was also

take the burden from women in regard to housework, cooking, and other traditional female domestic jobs.

³³ Anne Shirley similarly counters the stereotypes of maternal feminism, especially in *Anne of Green Gables*.

³⁴ The Britannica Concise Encyclopedia defines imperialism:

State policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas. Because imperialism always involves the use of power, often in the form of military force, it is widely considered morally objectionable, and the term accordingly has been used by states to denounce and discredit the foreign policies of their opponents.

British History states that *imperialism* referred initially to the aggression of Napoleon Bonaparte, but

[a]t its height, around 1900, imperialism also took on a domestic character. Britons forgot the old Napoleonic connotations, and took pride in their imperialism. At its crudest, this pride manifested itself in jingoism; but it also had a more responsible side. . . [with its] vision of a great multiracial empire, which would bring peace and civilization to the world. (<<http://www.answers.com/topic/imperialism>>)

“embedded in a politics of nation- and empire-building” (*Growing* 28). Devereux argues that McClung and Montgomery were promoting “imperial motherhood” by producing didactic fiction for children whose purpose was to be part of “imperial efforts to regulate reproduction through the didactic reinforcement, at an early age, of normative gender roles” (“Writing” 8). Her fundamental argument is that McClung and Montgomery’s narration of maternalism “in feminist and apparently non-feminist fiction” takes the form of political statements that configure “the womb of the Anglo-Saxon mother as the empire’s one inalienable asset and the last best site for the renewal of ‘the race,’ and [represent] mother-women working for social purity as the last hope for imperial regeneration” (“Writing” 8).³⁵ She argues that in spite of the fact that McClung was a well-known suffrage activist and Montgomery claimed to have no interest in the struggle for the vote for women, both were “practising fundamentally the same politics, . . . reproducing and promoting the culture of imperial motherhood that is the hallmark of feminism in the British Empire in the early twentieth century” (“Writing” 9). Devereux moves to the novels to hold up Pearl and Anne as examples of imperial “mothers of the race”; she identifies Pearl by her gender and Anglo-Celtic brogue, and stresses the emphasis in *Anne* placed on the fact that Anne is a girl, not a boy, and is “native born” (“Writing” 10). She then argues that the stories of both girls are “embedded in a ideology of race, gender, nation and empire” (“Writing” 12).

Ascribing such a political agenda to the two authors seems problematic: finding a political subtext in Montgomery is especially moot, and McClung’s purposes in *Danny* are more rooted in her Christian evangelism than in imperial politics. The use of “imperial” and

³⁵ Statements like this ignore McClung’s stated ideal that Canada was to be known as “the land of the Fair Deal, where every race, color and creed will be given exactly the same chance” (*In Times* 97). For an extended discussion of McClung’s anti-racist writings and actions, see Fiamengo’s “Recovering Our Foremothers Again” (2006).

“empire” as negative epithets has in fact been a consequence of post-colonial criticism’s moving beyond giving a voice to “subaltern” cultures to a concerted condemnation of Western culture and Christianity. Lesslie Newbigin, missionary, Anglican bishop, and theologian, argues against the post-colonial view that claims that imperialism is complicit with Christianity:

The Christian gospel has sometimes been made the tool of an imperialism, and of that we have to repent. But at its heart it is the denial of all imperialisms, for at its center there is the cross where all imperialisms are humbled and we are invited to find the center of human unity in the One who was made nothing so that all might be one. The very heart of the biblical vision for the unity of humankind is that its center is not an imperial power but the slain Lamb. (*Gospel* 159)

What post-colonial theorists call “imperial motherhood” in a literary context is an aspersion on the Christian faith, which teaches that a mother is saved through childbearing,³⁶ and, following the principles of self-sacrifice, that a mother gives of herself to raise her children.³⁷ Thus Devereux’s interpretation of the two novels as being imperialist denies the novels’ foundations in a Christianity that is at its heart anti-imperialist.³⁸

³⁶ 1 Timothy 2.14-15: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”

³⁷ Christian faith is fundamental to the connection McClung makes between motherhood and reform. In an address in Toronto on December 20, 1910 to the Women’s Canadian Club and the Women’s Press Club, McClung claimed that the best work any woman could do was “to bring up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” She noted that “unselfish mothers wanted not only the best for their own children but the best for every child” and therefore would take action to eliminate the wrongs that affected children (PABC, vol. 30).

³⁸ Holly Blackford identifies “a strong anti-imperial sentiment” in *Anne of Green Gables*. She suggests that Marilla’s not wanting a Barnardo street Arab and preferring a “native born” boy (11-

The charge of imperialism that Devereux levies against McClung and Montgomery becomes linked with charges of racism, stemming from their purported belief in the superiority of Anglo-Saxons over other races. According to Mariana Valverde, writing in “When the Mother of the Race is Free: Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism,” at the turn of the century “the paradigm of the human ‘race’ was the Anglo-Saxon Protestant ruling bloc,” while all other groups were regarded as “human only by analogy” in so far as they could use “reason and morality to master [sic] [their] base impulses” (5-6).³⁹ Devereux accepts this paradigm of Anglo-Saxon self-imputed superiority and claims that McClung and her friend Emily Murphy “were certainly what is now defined as racist”.⁴⁰

As they saw a need to preserve a society that was to be characterized by its “race,” social reform for them was also always “racial” reform; social progress in early twentieth-century English Canada was also always the advancement of the Anglo-Saxon empire of Great Britain. (*Growing* 10)

Thus, according to Devereux, McClung’s racism is a recognized aspect of her writing. She completely ignores the fact that that McClung makes the Watsons Irish, one of the most reviled groups in the late nineteenth century and frequently the butt of political cartoons that stereotyped them as hot-headed, unskilled and impoverished.⁴¹

12) invokes “a deliberate anti-imperial sentiment, which was growing amongst the Canadian public” (xxv).

³⁹ Note the reductivism and elements of caricature in Valverde’s description of Anglo-Saxon thought.

⁴⁰ Devereux frequently conflates Emily Murphy’s views with those of McClung, causing McClung to be categorized as racist and imperialist by association.

⁴¹ I credit this point to Dr. Gwendolyn Davies, my external examiner.

Countering charges such as Devereux's, Fiamengo has pointed out that "competing understanding of race within social Darwinism and evangelical Christianity made the term itself highly unstable" ("Rediscovering" 147). Fiamengo argues that McClung did not believe that British civilization was superior to others for racial reasons, but rather because it was "the cradle of liberty,' having developed a commitment to education, liberty, and the rule of law that was in theory open to all" (*Woman's* 207). Sharon Cook adds that the charge of racism "implicit within some late nineteenth-century concepts of mothering . . . disregards the critically important evangelical notion of what was involved in Christian nurture," because WCTU women "pinned their hopes for societal regeneration on the civilizing influence of mothers" ("Beyond" 409). Also, Devereux's accusation that McClung is racist ignores the differentiation Fiamengo defines between racism and racialism:⁴²

Put simply, racialism is the belief that particular races share certain inherited traits and characteristics (whether produced through culture or biology) that define "a sort of racial essence."⁴³ . . . Racism, in contrast, uses these traits to create a physical, intellectual, and moral hierarchy. ("Rediscovering" 147)

Devereux makes no such distinction, and every time that McClung uses the term *race*, Devereux construes her as having a racist perspective, whereas McClung more often than not uses the term *race* to mean humanity, *homo sapiens*. Devereux's branding of McClung as racist ignores the work McClung did to stop the internment and deportation of the Japanese during and after World War II and her support of Jewish refugees seeking asylum

⁴² In their introduction to *The Complete Autobiography*, Strong-Boag and Rosa commend Fiamengo's nuanced approach to distinguishing between racialism and racism (18).

⁴³ This phrase is used by Kwame Anthony Appiah in "Racisms," the first chapter in David Theo Goldberg's *Anatomy of Racism* (5).

in Canada from refugee ships like the St. Louis in 1939 (see Hallett and Davis 274-77).⁴⁴ Devereux herself employs racial labelling as part of her critique of McClung and Montgomery when she emphasizes that both their stories are of young “Canadian-born Anglo-Celtic” girls, thereby qualifying them as “white” woman, which brings them “into alignment within a discourse of imperial maternalism as a reproductive and social politics” (“Writing” 10).

Finally, Devereux brings charges of “eugenic feminism” against both authors and locates them in “a genre which reproduces the ideology of race regeneration that was being deployed in the first decade of the century in the wave of imperialist discourse burgeoning in the late-nineteenth-century expansionist years” (“Writing” 13). She calls this “new imperial genre” “a ‘*Mutterroman*,’ [which] works ideologically to inculcate young women readers into the culture of imperial motherhood” and promotes the idea of woman as “mother of the race” (“Writing” 6, 13).⁴⁵ She demonstrates how both McClung and Montgomery articulate the first responsibility of women as being to home and family and claims that their representation of motherhood as the “highest” aspiration for a woman can be located in the Imperial notion of progress that saw women, especially Anglo-Celtic women, as having a duty to halt the decline of the British race by giving birth to healthy offspring, an idea that was based on the science of Eugenics⁴⁶ (“Writing” 13). Therefore Devereux attacks the

⁴⁴ In a similar vein, Devereux labels McClung’s promotion of working with immigrants to teach the English language as assimilationist, ignoring the fact that English-language skills were eagerly sought by immigrants.

⁴⁵ Devereux contrasts her use of *Mutterroman* to critics such as Eve Kornfield and Susan Jackson who call *Anne of Green Gables* a “female *Bildungsroman*” (12-13).

⁴⁶ Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) founded the science of Eugenics and coined the word in 1883. Influenced by his cousin Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, he tried to determine the distinction between “nature” and “nurture.” He investigated the families of great men, thought genius was hereditary, and advocated encouraging eugenic marriages by supplying able couples with incentives

valuation of motherhood for being part of an Imperialist eugenical project.⁴⁷ She calls *Danny* ““feminism on the eugenic principle,”” characterizes Pearl as “the epitome of the feminist figure of the mother of the race in early twentieth-century English Canadian literature,” and adds, “Only L.M. Montgomery’s exactly contemporary heroine, Anne Shirley, vies with Pearl as a national literary model of superior maternalist qualities” (*Growing* 72, 64).⁴⁸ She does not see Pearl’s and Anne’s stories as love stories, but argues instead that embedded in their relationships with Horace Clay and Gilbert Blythe is “an ideology of race, gender, nation and empire that directs the young Anglo-Celtic girl towards motherhood”; likewise, all of Pearl and Anne’s actions to care for others or uplift their communities are evidence, for Devereux, of a sinister Anglo-Celtic project of “imperial regeneration through eugenical reproduction” (“Writing” 12).

There is no doubt that McClung, coming from a worldview that envisaged a utopian ideal based on Judeo-Christian values, was interested in eugenics, but for all the right reasons. She saw first-hand the social problems brought about by alcohol abuse and by bad intermarriage. It is not reasonable to expect that someone writing in 1908 would have anticipated the extremes to which eugenic theories would be taken in the horrors of Nazi-

to have children. His work had many parallels with the work of Gregor Johann Mendel (1822-1884), whose study of the laws that determine the inheritance of certain traits in pea plants formed the foundation of the modern science of genetics.

⁴⁷ In *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus*, Neil Sutherland explains that the eugenics movement was concerned with the mental health of children; he traces the evidence that supported the idea that feeble-mindedness and mental illness were hereditary rather than environmental (72). Wayne Roberts demonstrates how influential groups such as the National Council of Women of Canada “campaigns vigorously for institutionalization of the ‘feebleminded’ in order to protect society from disease and ‘degeneracy’” (“Rocking” 22).

⁴⁸ Devereux positions Pearl as “naturally a guardian of the race” because her actions effect “the moral uplifting of the community of empire-builders” and because of “the implications all her work will have for the filling of this protected and purifying imperial space with children” (*Growing* 64, 71). She sees Montgomery’s writing just as “embedded in first-wave feminism’s fundamental ideologies of race, gender and empire as McClung’s” (“Writing” 15).

German experimentation. Many influential Canadians believed in eugenics (see, for example, the writing of Tommy Douglas and J.S. Woodsworth) and have come under a similar, though less heated, censure.⁴⁹ McClung's granddaughter Marcia McClung addresses the eugenics issue in an article in the *Calgary Herald*, explaining that Nellie genuinely believed that it was not fair for women to be forced into having children for whom they were not capable of caring: "[Her] stance on it from her writings was that she felt that women who were intellectually and mentally challenged were being essentially used or taken advantage of" (Jeffery). Thus even though we now deplore the consequences of eugenic thinking, we can see the laudable motivation behind McClung's support.

In addition to the critical opposition that I have noted while expounding Devereux's views, I would like to discuss three areas in which I take issue with Devereux, related to history, language, and logic. First, Devereux's feminist and post-colonialist analysis of the novels can be construed as historical presentism, the fallacy of *nunc pro tunc* (now for then), which is the application of current ideals, morals, and standards to historical figures and events. Sometimes called Whig History, it is the rejection of any evidence that goes contrary to a critic's theoretical paradigm. Whereas historical determinists recognize why and how a text is embedded in historically determined situations and rooted in a specific time when opinions were historically determined, presentism identifies, judges, and then discredits literary works of the past.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In *Our Own Master Race*, Angus McLaren describes the "eugenic crusade" in Canada and outlines the belief of "hereditarians" that social problems had a biological basis and could be solved by "restriction of marriage to those holding certificates of health, segregation of the unfit on state farms where the sexes would be separated, limitation of some subnormal families by doctors' discreet provision of birth control information, and finally sterilization of the defective" (8).

⁵⁰ Journalist Stephen Howe explains that presentism "reaches back into the past to silence its message" (*Independent* 12 July 2003).

Devereux's presentism involves both the elision of important aspects of Canadian society of 1908 and the imposition of twenty-first century attitudes and issues onto two writers of that time. I have already mentioned her feminist rejection of the Christian faith; it falls into Ruth Compton Brouwer's category of the "unacknowledged quarantine" of the role of religion in English-Canadian women's history. Brouwer notes that feminist critics have overlooked "[p]ersonal spirituality and transcendent concerns" because in an increasingly secular age, they are "largely foreign to the contemporary world view" (48).⁵¹ Sharon Anne Cook holds that in order to contextualize past women's social activism, historians need to look at both the intellectual and spiritual basis for their actions "within the context of their own time, beliefs, ideas, and possibilities" ("Beyond" 405). Above all, she suggests, historians must avoid the error of Canadian historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s, which invented a "'Whig interpretation' of the past that blessed only those figures, events, and movements that showed steady progress towards the issues and agenda of their day, and which cursed or ignored those figures, events, and movements that seemed 'unprogressive' or 'old fashioned'" ("Beyond" 405).⁵²

Not only does Devereux ignore the importance of Christianity to McClung and Montgomery, but as we have seen, she imposes twenty-first-century feminist and post-colonial judgements onto *Danny* and *Anne*; rather than moving from the books to generalizations that take into account the complexities of each one, she ignores what does not fit within her parameters. When McClung states that "Every mother had two duties to

⁵¹ Brouwer concludes, "We can put religion into Canadian women's history in a way that does not simply 'add it on' but instead transforms our understanding of important events in our past" (57).

⁵² Cook's studies of the WCTU in Ontario between 1870 and 1930 give a balanced picture of women's activities and faith as "they strove to make theirs a living religion" ("Beyond" 406).

her home: one was to train her children to be good citizens of the world and the other was to try and make the world a fit place for her child to live,” there is no hint of a basis for the many charges that Devereux levies against her, but rather an idealist perspective with which most people would be hard-pressed to disagree (qtd. in Fiamengo *Woman's* 188). By arguing that McClung and Montgomery are didactic in their promotion of maternal and imperial feminism based on racist and eugenic principles, Devereux imputes to them an agenda that is foreign to their stated purposes. In assigning the two novels to the “definitely didactic genre” of the *Mutterroman*, Devereux is also ignoring the long line of domestic-fiction antecedents of the two novels.⁵³ The examples that Devereux chooses of the parallels between the two novels include the fact that Pearl and Anne both marry doctors, which she interprets as “a sign that the narratives are converging along the lines of race regeneration” (“Writing” 10). Making this leap is particularly dubious, because the happily-ever-after ending is rooted in the tradition of the romantic novel, which long precedes the rise of eugenical thinking. Likewise, Devereux argues that Anne and Pearl both become teachers because they

function as metonymic representatives of the instructing woman writer herself, and as models of the maternalist ideology which both novel series are so interested in promoting. Both Pearlie and Anne are not only providing instruction to their fictional students, but to their readers as well. (“Writing” 16)

I would argue instead that each is providing instructions in Christian living, wherein motherhood is valued, but not as part of an “imperial” scheme. These books are not feminist

⁵³ The typical plot of a domestic novel is comparable to the familiar Cinderella story and recounts the protagonist’s trials and eventual triumph.

valorizations of the “imperial mother,” as Devereux claims, but of a Christian view of family.⁵⁴

Finally, Devereux’s presentism includes the claim that both authors are reproducing the ideologies of first-wave feminism, a stage that third-wave feminists no longer find meaningful (“Writing” 18). She ignores critics like Strong-Boag, who argues that before the First World War the alliance between temperance and feminism was probably mutually helpful, and concludes that the failure of feminism “was not in McClung’s particular shortcomings, but in her successors’ failure to reappraise the situation and avoid the same pitfalls” (Introduction xix-xx). Instead, Devereux condemns McClung and Montgomery because her stated goal is “to analyze and assess morally” their work in light of later developments in Canadian history (*Growing* 12).

My second objection to Devereux’s criticism is her untrustworthy use of language. She frequently uses loaded words; for example, *empire* was a value of many Canadians at the turn of the century, because the majority of early immigrants came from Great Britain, but words like *imperialist* and *empire* later came to carry the heavy weight of censure. Yet when McClung uses the term in the epigraph to “The Land of the Fair Deal,” she writes: “Lord, take us up to the heights, and show us the glory, / Show us a vision of Empire!,” she contrasts Empire to “grubbing away in the valley” for money, giving an anti-materialistic context to the term (*Times* 95). Likewise, as discussed previously, Devereux’s use of *race* to imply only Anglo-Saxons does not conform to McClung’s usage, which can mean the human race, all people of a particular colour, or an ethnic group, all at the same time.

⁵⁴ In “The Ethos of Nurture: Revisiting Domesticity in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*,” Monika Hilder argues that Montgomery celebrates the “ethos of nurture or care as the genuinely heroic way to live,” which is rooted in the “Judeo-Christian meta-narrative, in which humility is the central virtue” (213, 214).

Because third-wave feminist critics assume that “the vast majority of English-speaking first-wave feminists were not only ethnocentric but often racist” (Valverde “When” 3), they move from that premise to excoriate as racist all activist women of the early twentieth century who used what was then a normative term.

Another misuse of language involves misinterpretation of scriptural references. For example, Devereux’s premise for *Danny* is that “sowing seeds” implies the national project of “growing a race,” or what eugenicists refer to as “race Culture” (*Growing* 63). In the novel, however, the phrase is spoken by Mrs. Francis, who wants “to speak to [Danny’s] young mind and endeavour to plant the seeds of virtue and honesty in that fertile soil” (20). Thus Devereux is deliberately misrepresenting a phrase that is much more closely allied to the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.1-23 (see Chapter 2 n.35) than it is to her evidence of the use of the term in Arthur W. Beall’s *Manual on Eugenics for Parents and Teachers*, published in 1933, a quarter of a century after McClung wrote her novel. Time and again McClung writes about “the transforming power of God’s grace” (Dedication II of *In Times*), expresses the belief that the “new movement among women is a spiritual movement” (*In Times* 64), and claims that her purpose was to be “obedient to the heavenly vision . . . for the creation of a better world” (*Stream* 314). To translate “sowing seeds” as a eugenic project is a deliberate misreading of the text for ideological purposes.

Finally, Devereux employs many arguments based on false assumptions or false logic. For example, she repeats the Modernist belittling of McClung and Montgomery when she argues that Montgomery and McClung were “engaged in producing a didactic fiction for children,” when in fact both texts were read by men, women, boys and girls (“Writing” 6). Ken Mitchell, writing in the *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, notes that *Sowing Seeds in*

Danny “created a huge readership in Saskatchewan” (“McClung”); Elizabeth Waterston observes that *Anne* was read “not only by children but by adult readers, both male and female” (*Magic 3*). Likewise, the Confederation Centre Art Gallery’s website’s analysis of the changing perception of Montgomery’s writing states:

It is clear from the cover and design of the first edition that the L.C. Page Company intended *Anne of Green Gables* for a general audience. The cover has a sophisticated illustration by M.A. Claus and W.A.J. Claus, showing a mature young woman in profile; the lettering and boards would appeal to an adult rather than a children’s audience.⁵⁵

(<<http://lmm.confederationcentre.com/english/covers/collecting-7-1.html>>)

This website also notes that the covers of Montgomery’s novels actually tell a story about changes in marketing and assumed audience during the twentieth century as they “were increasingly assumed by critics . . . to be for female juveniles primarily.” Devereux falls into this category as she isolates young girls as McClung’s and Montgomery’s purported audience so that she can assert that the authors create “a model mother-woman whose object is to teach young girl readers how, as McClung puts it, to ‘think’”⁵⁶ (“Writing” 18-19).

Frequently Devereux applies epithets out of context and assigns labels randomly. For example, she posits that McClung’s argument in “The Land of the Fair Deal” places her at

⁵⁵ The same article declares:

In 1908 many of the artificial distinctions now made between children’s and adult fiction did not exist. While there were children’s books--with large print or illustrations--books based on children were not assumed to be for children or for children only. Dickens’s novels, even those focusing part of their story on children (such as *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*) were read by young and old alike. Similarly, Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* were not assumed to be children’s books even though children delighted in them. Montgomery’s novel met with praise from young and old, from several countries, and from such astute readers as Mark Twain himself.

⁵⁶ Devereux does not provide the source for her quotation of McClung.

the “forefront of imperial race regeneration,” which ignores the fact that all references in that essay to improving the race are based on a prohibitionist anti-alcohol agenda that showed scientifically that a high percentage of the children of alcoholics were abnormal⁵⁷ (“New Woman” 183). Devereux also claims to prove that in their writing the two authors “reproduce and reinforce the early-twentieth-century notions of essential – and, increasingly, in the context of the psychoanalytic discourse of the period, normal – femininity as defined by the desire to have children, and the instinct to care for them” (11). She offers as proof McClung’s statement in *In Times Like These*: “Women are naturally the guardians of the race and every normal woman desires children” (22). What she fails to mention is that this phrase is in the context of mothers’ grief at losing their children in wartime.⁵⁸

Devereux also comes to illogical conclusions, or *non sequiturs*. When McClung suggests that “the social responsibilities of women” are “to lift high the standard of morality” and when Montgomery asserts that a woman writer must aim “to help her readers to higher planes of thought and endeavour,” Devereux claims these goals relate to “a normativizing of a desire to have children, and a valorizing of the maternal work of women at home and in the community”; clearly, these conclusions are not implied by the texts (“Writing” 15, 16). Rather it would seem that in each case, McClung and Montgomery are expressing an idealism that is more congruent with the progressive spirit of the early

⁵⁷ According to McClung, a comparison was made between the children of ten families whose parents were both drinkers and ten families whose parents were both abstainers. Of the former, only ten of the sixty-one children were “normal,” while of the latter, fifty-four were “normal.” McClung therefore argues that the sale of alcohol should be declared illegal, not that the Anglo-Saxon race should be regenerated (*In Times* 101).

⁵⁸ In “What Do Women Think of War?” McClung talks of the mother who has lost her son in World War I thinking “enviously of her neighbor across the way, who had no son to give, the childless woman for whom in the old days she felt so sorry, but whom now she envies” (*In Times* 26). McClung’s tone is decidedly sarcastic when she writes, “Women are intended for two things, to bring children into the world and to make men comfortable, and then they must keep quiet and if their hearts break with grief, let them break quietly” (*In Times* 25).

twentieth century than an implied political agenda “of imperial expansion and anxiety about the reproduction of ‘the race’” (“Writing” 16). Another example is Devereux’s conclusion in “New Woman” that “white women” wanted the vote so that they could “vote upon laws that affected the eugenical reproduction of the race,” which is another *non sequitur*; women wanted the vote so that they could have an influence on laws relating to temperance, child custody, property ownership, and many other issues that affected them.

Devereux’s credibility is also undermined by her careless reading of the novels. For example, she claims that Polly “had been taken to the hospital in Winnipeg in what are clearly the last stages of consumption” (*Growing* 69). The text clearly states that Polly has gone to a hospital in Brandon and dies of typhoid fever (167, 176). As Wendy Roy comments in a review of *Growing a Race*, “a more detailed reading of the texts would at times make her points more compelling” (327).⁵⁹

Why does it matter how Devereux has interpreted the two novels and their authors? I would argue that the single-minded criticism with which Devereux has attacked them has seriously hindered an appreciation of the positive elements of the two books,⁶⁰ distorted their worldview, and caused others to continue voicing her opinions without question, because Devereux’s is a representative and influential voice in her field. In a university anthology, *Canadian Literature in English: Texts and Contexts* (2008), editors Cynthia Sugars and Laura Moss cite Devereux extensively in the biographies of McClung and

⁵⁹ Although Roy’s review is generally positive, she notes that some of Devereux’s arguments contradict themselves (327).

⁶⁰ At a panel discussion at Congress 2008 at the University of British Columbia, which was held in conjunction with the *Anne of Green Gables* centennial celebrations, Devereux and Mavis Reimer declared that readers could no longer read *Anne* in the way they used to because there was a sinister white supremacist plot in Montgomery’s writing that needed to be exposed. Their views were not presented as one perspective among many possible ones, but rather as the way all readers ought to read *Anne*.

Montgomery. They describe McClung, in Devereux's words, as "subscribing to the social reification of the idea of women as inherently motherly, wanting not only to bear children for the good of the state but to turn the idealized domestic practices of the patriarchal mother upon the nation" (522).⁶¹ In the biography of Montgomery, they refer to Devereux's statement that Montgomery "negotiates in problematic ways early twentieth-century tensions between restrictive ideas of femininity and first-wave feminist politics" (538). As an undergraduate text, the anthology has and will have an incalculable influence on future generations of readers and teachers and how they will read McClung and Montgomery. Similarly, at the "Rediscovering Early Canadian Literature" Symposium at the University of Ottawa in 2010, more than one presenter quoted Devereux's critical opinions of McClung and Montgomery as received truth. I believe that Devereux has done a disservice to Canadian literature in her imputation of blatant political aims to writers such as McClung and Montgomery, whose writing is far more nuanced and fair-minded than she allows.

The challenge in our present day is to appreciate the artful rendering of life a hundred years ago by two authors who were popular in an era that we struggle to understand. As the authors of *Silenced Sextet* write, "We can never know how our predecessors decoded these stories, but their vast popularity suggests that some response deeper than casual time-passing was at work" (207). Jane Tompkins asserts that although modernist critics considered nineteenth-century women writers "to have traded in false stereotypes, dishing out weak-minded pap to nourish the prejudices of an ill-educated and underemployed female readership," these writers represent "a monumental effort to

⁶¹ The same biography argues that it was McClung's eugenic arguments that led to the passage of the Sexual Sterilization Act in 1928, even though McClung's parliamentary activity in this cause has been questioned (Fiamengo "Legacy" 163 n.58).

reorganize culture from the woman's point of view" and their body of work "is remarkable for its intellectual complexity, ambition, and resourcefulness" (82-3). Tompkins' critique of modernist critics could easily be applied to feminist post-colonial critics, who instead of condemning early-Canadian women writers for simplistic "pap," condemn them for not conforming to their own definition of feminist success. Hancock suggests, "Christian feminist women in this day and age who are also committed to persistent involvement in the church will find McClung relevant in a way that secular or nonfeminist critics cannot" (117).⁶² Thus the worldview bias, the education, and the experience of critics cannot help but colour their appreciation or denigration of a writer of an earlier generation.

Another caution comes from Fiamengo, who outlines the gamut of assessments of McClung, which now have been expanded to include Montgomery:

At one end of the spectrum, we find a McClung who stars in and directs a triumphant narrative of progress for women and oppressed peoples; at the other end, a McClung who is the product of bourgeois and racist discourses she does not control. On one side is a heroic feminist foremother passing on a valuable legacy; on the other is a well-meaning but often seriously misguided zealot blinkered by social privilege. ("Legacy" 154)

Fiamengo argues that these polarities should not be harmonized, but rather that we need to be aware of "the ideological complexity"⁶³ of McClung's work and see her texts as

⁶² Hancock gives her opinion about current attitudes to McClung:

Her own generation might well have preferred to focus on her work as a "good, Christian woman" and to downplay her feminism. Those in our present generation who are most interested in her might well be more attracted to her feminism than her faith. Such preferences reflect the observers, more than they do the real Nellie McClung. (116)

⁶³ In another version of the same paper, Fiamengo refers to these complexities as McClung's "ideological blindspots" (*Journal of Canadian Studies* 34.4 (Winter 1999/2000): 70-89).

“complex cultural documents” (“Legacy” 158). She also warns that we need to approach McClung through historical contextualizing, so that essentialist appeals to a feminine essence are not dismissed as limiting but understood “as productive, strategic, and historically powerful modes of address” (“Legacy” 160). She deplores the “entrenched polarities” that have structured accounts of McClung’s significance and legacy and that have revealed “a crisis of interpretation confronting feminist scholars at the end of the twentieth century” (“Legacy” 151). Strong-Boag et al. likewise argue that it is time “to move forward from the polarizations of the past” (Introduction “Legacy” 150). In spite of these warnings, Devereux seems to have become fixed in an unyielding narrative that ignores the multifaceted achievements of the two authors, assigns them to a single-visioned role, and consigns their novels to the category of political polemics.

More than thirty years ago, in *Women in the Canadian Mosaic* (1976), Gwen Matheson also wrote about the feminist attacks on McClung’s brand of feminism and argued against succumbing “to well-meaning but overly simplified philosophies”; she makes a plea to her readership:

By retaining a respect for the individual personality we must keep ourselves free from the sort of dehumanized categorizing to which those devoted to a cause are often inclined. Those people, both women and men, who are able to take a radical stand and yet maintain a comprehensive point of view are very much needed in our society. (x)

Her appeal is relevant in our present day as the ideological debate continues around what readers in 1908 considered to be entertaining stories of life in a prairie town and in a Maritime farming village. I now conclude that earlier in the century, the male-dominated

scholarly tradition that relegated both novels to the category of “children’s literature” was a reaction to their popular success and to their authors’ inferior status as female writers; in McClung’s case, they were also reacting against the tradition of evangelical piety and moral commitment in her novel. But, I would argue, feminist critics have committed an error similar to that of their male predecessors in condemning novels like *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables* that are based on conventions of fiction and on a Christian worldview that these critics ignore, misunderstand, or denigrate. They both miss the complexity of a novel like *Danny* and disparage a readership that was every bit as sophisticated as that of a century later but was operating from different assumptions about life and literature, and was familiar with the conventions of the Sunday-School literary heritage. Thus, although Montgomery’s novel and its more subtle presentation of Christianity has proved to be more palatable than McClung’s to most readers and critics a century after their contemporaneous publication, both novels have had to bear the brunt of a new wave of feminist criticism that is antagonistic to their underlying worldviews.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Literary criticism may focus on a single poem, play, or novel, on the total body of a writer's work, or on the unity made up of all the writings of an age. These contexts are like three concentric circles, each containing the next smaller and forming its milieu. The entire work of a poet is the atmosphere in which his poems live, just as all his writings are bathed in the ambient presence of a period of history. Though a critic may confine himself to one or another of the circles of criticism, the comprehension of literature takes place through a constant narrowing and expansion of the focus of attention, from the single work of an author, to the whole body of his works, to the spirit of the age, and back again in a contraction and dilation which is the living motion of interpretation.

J. Hillis Miller, Preface to *The Disappearance of God*

When I began this study comparing the fortunes of *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables*, I found myself exploring the relationship between faith and fiction related to the authors, their novels, and their audience over time. The two novels were popular in their day and give a perspective on the society that acclaimed them, a society that, in general, knew the Bible well and understood its stories and doctrine as central to Canadian life. That one novel continued to be read throughout the century after its publication while the other disappeared and was only resurrected for the purpose of denigrating its author tells us something about the degree to which society changed in the twentieth century in its understanding and acceptance of the Protestant faith. I uncovered authorial rhetorical strategies that either limited the popularity of the texts to a set period in history or enabled continued reception a century after publication. I also engaged with a shift in literary criticism based on a worldview that differed fundamentally from that of the two authors I studied.

As church attendance in Canada declined in the twentieth century, especially in the rebellious and disillusioned 1960s and 1970s, and as the worldview of the Canadian

population became more secularized, readers brought to novels such as *Sowing Seeds in Danny* and *Anne of Green Gables* a diminished understanding of Scripture and a markedly reduced familiarity with or acceptance of such genres as temperance melodrama or Sunday-School fiction. *Anne* survived because its presentation of a Romantic child with a vague spirituality remained agreeable to its audience, while *Danny*'s Christian moralizing, reliance on typology, and strong temperance message made it seem dated and unappealing, especially to secular critics trained to scorn religious messages and to be suspicious of traditional morality and didactic techniques. For a long time it has seemed that, both within and outside the Academy, McClung's *Sowing Seeds in Danny* has become essentially unreadable by all but a minority of readers sympathetic to its religious message and skilled in deciphering its rhetorical codes.

In general, religion in the West was in decline in the twentieth century, so the sociologists claimed, as a result of industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and scientific thinking that eliminated the supernatural from people's worldview (Bibby *Restless* 1-2). Proponents of the secularist theory claimed that religious organizations were becoming not just more like society but actually indistinguishable from society and therefore irrelevant. According to John Webster Grant, by the late 1960s, "the nation had come to carry on its business as if the church were not there" (*Church* 224).¹

¹ Although the mainline Protestant churches continued to hold political and social influence well into the 1960s, the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches in 1925 to form the United Church of Canada, which had been expected to advance the Social Gospel by concentrating resources, instead, because of the bitter wrangling involved in the formalization of union, "became an enervating struggle that absorbed much of the enthusiasm that had previously been poured into reform causes" (J. Thompson 61). By 1945, church attendance in all denominations averaged 65% of the population (Bibby *Unknown* 3-4), although a post-war resurgence in church attendance as people returned from the arenas of World War II led to an unprecedented number of new churches being built. John Webster Grant sums up the post-war church attendance and influence:

Recent studies suggest, however, that religious faith has not only survived but is experiencing a resurgence, both in North America and around the world, and that even within literary criticism, religion is once again taking its place as a key category of analysis. Much to the surprise of the sociologists who adhered to the secularist theory, several spiritually revitalizing movements occurred in Canada in the last decades of the century. Out of the hippy counter-culture came a new religious group called the Jesus People, an evangelical movement among street people and dropouts in the large cities that mystified religious analysts. After the 1966 “Death of God” pronouncement,² the revival that broke out among North American hippies saw Jesus People taking to the streets and embracing what they claimed to be “the most persistent symbol of purity, selflessness, and brotherly love in the history of Western man” (Di Sabatino 10).³ At the same time the Pentecostal movement, which had begun with the Welsh Revival in 1903-04, grew from the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, and rekindled with the Latter Rain Movement in

What happened in Canada, as in North America generally, was so different that it remains to this day a source of wonder. Men and women who had shown no more than a perfunctory interest in the church before going off to war demonstrated on their return an enthusiasm that confounded all prognosticators. From soon after 1945 until about 1960 there was a general boom in things religious. (*Church* 160)

Bibby notes that between 1945 and 1965, “the United Church alone built some 1,500 new churches and church halls” (*Restless* 11). Thus until the 1960s, the influence of the churches “was still paramount in many aspects of Canadian social life” (Franklin 86).

² *Time Magazine*’s famous “Is God Dead?” cover story of 8 April 1966 describes a world without God:

Princeton Theologian Paul Ramsey observes that “ours is the first attempt in recorded history to build a culture upon the premise that God is dead.” In the traditional citadels of Christendom, grey Gothic cathedrals stand empty, mute witnesses to a rejected faith. From the scrofulous hobos of Samuel Beckett to Antonioni’s tired-blooded aristocrats, the anti-heroes of modern art endlessly suggest that waiting for God is futile, since life is without meaning. (<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,835309,00.html>>)

³ David Di Sabatino writes: “Once again, Jesus was more popular than the Beatles. With fingers pointed to the sky and shouts that ‘Jesus is coming,’ the ensuing revival spread across Canada and left a continuing legacy within North American evangelicalism” (10).

Saskatchewan in 1948, erupted in the 60s and 70s in the Charismatic Movement that invaded the mainline churches in Canada. Harvey Cox, known for his prediction in 1965 in *The Secular City* that North America would be a completely secular society by the end of the century, admitted thirty years later that he had been wrong.⁴ He describes the outbreaks of tongues-speaking in mainline churches as “a kind of primal spirituality that had been all but suffocated by centuries of western Christian moralism and rationality[, which] re-emerged with explosive power” (*Fire* 101).⁵ Likewise Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby, who has been conducting polls on religion in Canada since the 1970s, concluded in 1993 that the churches were dying,⁶ but in 2004 found signs of “a religious and spiritual renaissance in Canada” in his surveys carried out in 1995 and 2000 (*Restless* 4).

In a similar change of opinion, American sociologist Peter Berger in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (1999) admits that he had supported the secularization theory in early works such as “A Bleak Outlook is Seen for Religion” (1968), but now believes “the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today, with some exceptions . . . is as furiously religious as it ever was, and

⁴ Cox writes in *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*: “I tried to work out a theology for the ‘postreligious’ age that many sociologists had confidently assured us was coming. Since then, religion seems to have gained a new lease on life. Today it is secularity, not spirituality, that may be headed for extinction” (xv-xvi). He sees this upsurge of primal spirituality as a “celebration of mysticism, ecstatic praise, and radical hope” that has spread around the planet in revivals with forms of worship that include songs and testimonies, spontaneous sermons and exhortations, healings, and frequent speaking in tongues (17, 57).

⁵ In tracing Pentecostalism in the twentieth century, the sociologist Margaret Poloma observes the uneasy tension between outbreaks of the Holy Spirit, which tend to be “messy,” and the countering drive for institutionalism. Thus a new Pentecostal outbreak at Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in the 1990s, which spread worldwide through all denominations as the “Toronto Blessing,” was ignored by the Pentecostal Church of Canada.

⁶ In *Unknown Gods* (1993), Bibby predicted “a full-scale crisis for most religious groups within the next 25 years. The United and Anglican Churches will be among those that may well be almost decimated” (1).

in some places more so than ever” (2). Berger sees counter-secularization as at least as important a phenomenon in the contemporary world as secularization, with two exceptions: Western Europe and a subculture of scholars working in the humanities and social sciences. Referring to this latter group, Berger writes:

While its members are relatively thin on the ground, they are very influential, as they control the institutions that provide the “official” definitions of reality – especially education, the media, and the legal system. What we have here is a globalized *elite* culture that makes the mistake of believing that their views about religion reflect the views of the general populace. (9)

Berger claims that it is the influence of this group that explains why the secularization thesis continued to be propounded in 1999, despite the evidence that contradicted it.

Ten years after Berger’s pronouncement, it is interesting to see influential books from the Academy such as *God Is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World* (2009) by *The Economist’s* John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, arguing that religion is once again a social force to be acknowledged, and Canadian author David Adams Richards’ *God Is. My Search for Faith in a Secular World* (2009), in which Richards claims that “faith is an inherently essential part of our existence, and it cannot be eradicated from our being” (1). At the same time, sociologists are noting “a tectonic shift” around the world as a religious revolution in Latin America, Asia and Africa has led to almost two-thirds of the world’s Christians now living in the global south.⁷ A 2004 Gallup poll found that monthly church attendance in Canada rose from thirty percent in 2000 to thirty-seven

⁷ A series in the *Ottawa Citizen* in March 2007 noted that “a rapidly growing number [of Christians] are Pentecostals, who embrace a supernatural view of life that the secular West has laughed off since the Enlightenment” (Green B1).

percent in 2004, the highest percentage since the early 1980s.⁸ Joe Woodard comments in the *Calgary Herald* that this poll shows Christian worship to be “the single most popular public activity in the country, even though it’s not enough to retake the public dialogue from elite secular institutions like the universities and media” (“Church”).⁹ A poll conducted by Canwest News Service and *Global National* in 2009 found that about 60% of Canadians still consider Canada to be a Christian nation (Harris). Most recently, *The Armageddon Factor* (2010) by Marci McDonald contends that the Canadian “Christian right” has been infiltrating positions of power in the Harper government. Thus it seems that revival is occurring in the evangelical Christian church, and religious issues are returning to the forefront of discussions in the Public Square.

Even within the Academy, a “religious turn” or “ethical turn” has been noted in literary criticism. In 2005, American literary theorist Stanley Fish announced that religion would “succeed high theory and the triumvirate of race, class and gender as the center of intellectual energy in the academy” (“One University” C4). This “turn” has been discussed by theorists and philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Jürgen Habermas and by sociologists such as Peter Berger and Steve Bruce.¹⁰ Professor Anton Kirchhoffer suggests that the secularisation thesis might be seen “as a last ‘grand narrative’ awaiting

⁸ Weekly church attendance went from twenty to twenty-five percent.

⁹ Woodard writes: “The tough nut in a Christian Revival is the two-fifths of Canadians who identify themselves as cultural Christians, but avoid church membership. Statistically, they accept the superiority of private spirituality (religion stripped of public duties), the corruption of ‘organized religion’ and the much trumpeted ‘danger’ of religion.”

¹⁰ See Derrida’s *Acts of Religion* (2002), Habermas’s *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (2010), Berger’s *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (1999), and Steve Bruce’s *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (2002). See also Slobodan Zizek arguing in *The Fragile Absolute* (2008) that, despite the impossibility of God, Christianity is necessary to Western society, and Terry Eagleton’s reflections in *After Theory* (2003) on the failure of theory to deal with the meaning of evil.

deconstruction” (3). He and others argue for the need to question the conventional opposition between the secular and the religious in order to develop a more complex understanding of both (6). As Stanley Fish quotes from the recent writings of Jürgen Habermas, ““Among the modern societies, only those that are able to introduce into the secular domain the essential contents of their religious traditions which point beyond the merely human realm will also be able to rescue the substance of the human”” (“Does Reason”).

In light of such developments, I see the recent publication by McGill-Queen’s University Press of Deborah Bowen’s *Stories of the Middle Space: Reading the Ethics of Postmodern Realisms* as significant, because Bowen approaches her studies of contemporary novels as ““a believer’ in the traditional Christian faith”:

However sobered I may be by a religious heritage which must at many key historical junctures be condemned as deeply dishonourable, and however humbled by my own culpable construction within it, I am honoured to confess that, striving to be aware of both my response and my responsibility, I read and write under the sign of Christian. (6, 19)

Bowen’s engagement with postmodern criticism, narrative, and ethics from a Christian perspective signals a new direction in Canadian literary criticism.

In “Religion in Canada: Its Development and Contemporary Situation,” Roger O’Toole calls for a renewed recognition of the role of religion in Canadian history:

If it is acknowledged that “Canada from the beginning has been a strongly religious nation,” it follows that no real understanding of the forms and values of Canadian society is possible without a knowledge of the diverse

religious convictions, organizations and experience that have substantially shaped this society. (8)

Similarly, in the Conclusion to *The Woman's Page*, Janice Fiamengo calls for a new body of criticism of early Canadian literature that goes beyond the ideologically conditioned questions of race, class, and empire to explore a more “multifaceted, historically grounded inquiry” (215). She cites the words of Sara Jeanette Duncan, who was herself quoting the prophet Micah:

The critic is learning to walk humbly and to deal justly, in so far as the qualities of humanity and justice can be assimilated by human nature in the shape of a reviewer. . . . He resists, creditably often, the temptation of the clever sneer, and exerts himself instead to say the best he can without misleading. (216)¹¹

Historian Margaret MacMillan echoes a comparable sentiment: “If the study of history does nothing more than teach us humility, scepticism and awareness of ourselves, then it has done something useful” (18).¹² These writers are calling scholars of literature and history to read from a new perspective with an unbiased attitude and a willingness to consider religious faith as an important aspect of the lives of writers, their creations, and their audience. I hope that my examination of the Protestant intertextuality and the recent tendentious criticism of McClung and Montgomery demonstrates the value of such an approach.

When I attended the University of Manitoba in the 1960s, Canadian literature was not considered to be worthy of study in either the Honours French or Honours English

¹¹ Micah 6.8: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

¹² MacMillan argues that we must continue “to examine our own assumptions and those of others and ask, where’s the evidence?” (18).

streams. With the burgeoning of Canadian Literature studies over the past forty years, a wealth of literature has been uncovered, studied, and critiqued. But much more remains to be done, especially from the perspective of religious worldview and fiction. Rather than bracketing off the question of how earlier writers presented religious belief, critics of nineteenth-century authors such as Susanna Moodie, Catherine Parr Traill, and Rosanna Leprohon need to read them on their own terms, not interpret them through presentist paradigms and judgements. Likewise, the writing of twentieth-century novelists such as Sinclair Ross, W.O. Mitchell, Margaret Laurence, Robertson Davies, Carol Shields, and Rudy Wiebe, all originally intended to be included in this study, has yet to be examined in depth from the perspective of “faith and fiction.”¹³ As an example of the need for critical recuperation of early texts, *Sowing Seeds in Danny* is still not available in an annotated version with a well-researched introduction.¹⁴

I believe that by considering two works of fiction from the perspective of religious worldview, I have added a necessary dimension to our twenty-first-century understanding of Canadian literature. My hope is that this study will not only augment the body of critical literature on Nellie McClung and L.M. Montgomery, but also help lead the way to a revival of religious faith as a category of analysis within the disciplines of the Humanities.

¹³ Barbara Pell singles out Wiebe’s “post-colonial ideology of social justice and his post-modern genre of historiographic metafiction that may be the contemporary narrative answer to the theological vocation of expressing faith in fiction” (*Faith* 130).

¹⁴ In my opinion, the on-line thesaurus version does not adequately meet classroom-study needs.

Appendix One

Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) is a national parachurch association of over 160 affiliated church denominations, ministry organizations, and educational institutions, plus 1,000 local church congregations that identify themselves as part of the evangelical movement in Canada. Their Statement of Faith asserts:

- The Holy Scriptures, as originally given by God, are divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy, and constitute the only supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- There is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh; we affirm his virgin birth, sinless humanity, divine miracles, vicarious and atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension, ongoing mediatorial work, and personal return in power and glory.
- The salvation of lost and sinful humanity is possible only through the merits of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, received by faith apart from works, and is characterized by regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit enables believers to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Church, the body of Christ, consists of all true believers.
- Ultimately God will judge the living and the dead, those who are saved unto the resurrection of life, those who are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Appendix Two

Sowing Seeds in Danny and the Book of James

Sowing Seeds in Danny can be read as a series of biblical interpretations, parables, and sermons, which bear many similarities to the New Testament Book of James. The author of James was probably the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). He at first did not believe in Jesus and challenged him (John 7. 2-5), but later became prominent in the Church.¹ James's letter to "the twelve tribes scattered among the nations" is one of the earliest extant New Testament writings. In the letter, James gives a multitude of practical outworkings of the Sermon on the Mount that are similar to the wisdom writings of Proverbs. Its emphasis on "vital Christianity" is characterized by good deeds and by a working faith that translates into a genuine life-style, along the lines of McClung's pronouncement:

I have never been much of a theologian. Doctrinal discussions have a mouldy taste and are dusty to the palate. I believe we all know enough to live by. It is not so much spiritual food we need as spiritual exercise. . . . [Jesus tells us], "Feed My Lambs." ("My Religion" 130)

Thus *Sowing Seeds in Danny* is permeated with practical outworkings of the Christian faith that recall the words of James.

James first tells his readers to profit from hardships and difficult situations, to "count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (1.2); here the emphasis is on external difficulties

¹ James was one of the select individuals Christ appeared to after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15.7); Paul called him a "pillar" of the church (Gal 2.9); Paul saw James on his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem and on his last visit (Gal. 1.19, Acts 21.18); when Peter was rescued from prison, he told his friends to tell James (Acts 12.17).

that early Christians were experiencing, especially the persecution after the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. In *Danny*, one of the trials that faces the Watson family is the Motherwells' recalling the ten-dollar debt on their caboose home, which necessitates Pearl's leaving to work for the Motherwells to pay it off. The reader observes Pearl's cheerful attitude as she leaves her beloved family and dramatically declares, "To die, to die for those we love is nobler far than wear a crown!"² and tells herself, "I'll stay out me time if it kills me" (125).

James next tells his readers that if any of them lacks wisdom, "let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (1.5). Pearl's prayer when she asks God what to do about the sealed window of her bedroom is one of the delightful passages in the novel:

Dear God, she said, there's gurms here as thick as hair on a dog's back, and You and me know it, even if she don't. I don't know what to do, dear Lord – the windy is nelt down. Keep the gurms from gittin' into me, dear Lord. Do ye mind how poor Jeremiah was let down into the mire and ye tuk care o' him, did n't ye? Take care o' me, dear Lord. Poor ma has enough to do widout me comin' home clutterin' up the house wid sickness. Keep yer eye on Danny if ye can at all, at all. He's awful stirrin'. I'll try to git the windy riz tomorrow by hook or crook, so mebbe it's only to' night ye'll have to watch the gurms. Amen. (154)

² Pearl is modelling herself on Queen Esther, who risked her life to plead for the Jewish people; Esther announces, "And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4.16).

Pearl asks God “in faith, with no doubting,” unlike someone who doubts who “is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind”; the latter will not receive anything from the Lord because “he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1.6-8). Pearl has the type of faith that “moveth mountains” (the title of the chapter),³ and she can sleep contentedly, knowing that “the Lord is attendin’ to all that” (155). Pearl’s faith is rewarded when God opens the window for her by sending a hailstorm.

James also addresses the question of status and tells the lowly person to “glory in his exaltation,” but the rich person to glory in his humiliation “because as a flower of the field he will pass away” (1.9-10). In *Danny*, McClung contrasts the joys of the eleven Watsons crowded into their boxcar home to the lovelessness of the wealthy Motherwells living in their “gray, lonely and bare” stone house (69). James writes that God has chosen “the poor of this world” who are “rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him”; the Watsons are not just poor but are also committed to their faith.⁴ James contrasts the poor to men rich in worldly goods; Sam Motherwell is interested only in making money, a worldliness that James interprets as “enmity with God” (4.4). James warns against the rich who “oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats” (2.5-6), just as Sam Motherwell has foreclosed on the Skinner family (73). James adds that the rich “have condemned” and “have murdered the just” (5.6): Sam knows everything about his neighbours and never forgets the evil, “the tragedies, the sins, the misdeeds of thirty years ago”; he extends “no mercy to the fallen; he suggests “no excuse for the erring” (73). He

³ Jesus tells his disciples, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt. 17.20).

⁴ One of the first details of the Watson home that the narrator describes is “the row of Sunday-school ‘big cards’” stuck around a picture frame (11). According to Nellie Hart, children received a small card for each verse they learned from the Bible, and a “big card” for every four verses they memorized (<<http://www.chenowethsite.com/chentale.htm#AB1874>>).

shows no clemency towards his tenant farmer, Skinner, and by evicting him, leads to the death of the Skinners' child, an indirect murder.

James also condemns the rich for their godlessness and for slandering the name of Jesus: "Do not they [the rich] blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called?" (2.7). Sam Motherwell maligns Christian churches as "greedy institutions" and Christian ministers as "parasites on society, living without honest labour, preying on the working man" (78). The Reverend Grantley therefore lambastes Motherwell, telling him, "You are a rich man in this world's goods, but your soul is lean and hungry and naked. Selfishness and greed have blinded your eyes. If you could see what a contemptible, good-for-nothing creature you are in God's sight, you would call on the hills to fall on you" (76); likewise, James tells the rich, "[W]eep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!" (5.1).

The mortality of the rich mentioned in James 1.10 is reinforced in James 4.14 when James asks, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." In a similar vein, Mrs. Motherwell observes the harvest moon and recalls verses from Psalm 103, "As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth – for it is soon cut off and we fly away" (233); she is aware of her mortality, of the ever-presence and unexpectedness of death, and of the futility of her family's way of life. This awareness is the beginning of her return to faith.

James also deals with sin and how it happens:

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when

desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown,
brings forth death. (1.13)

McClung illustrates this movement from temptation to sin and death with the story of Skinner, a man whose temptation to drink alcohol leads to drunkenness, violence against his wife, and the death of his child. She traces the same movement in Tom's story, because just as James warns in 4:7 - "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," Tom does not resist the devil and therefore falls. McClung describes the course of Tom's descent: first, "the demon of discontent laid hold on Tom" (225); next, "the very spirit of evil laid hold on Tom" (227); then "the bar-room [threw] out its evil welcome" (228); finally, Tom justified to himself stealing money from his parents to spend in the bar, and thus "the enemy sowed the tares" (229).⁵ The devil is given full credit for Tom's succumbing to temptation when he steals twenty-five dollars from his father's overcoat: his mother tells Tom, "It looks as if the devil himself put it there to tempt you, Tom"; Tom tells his parents: "It just seemed as if it was the devil himself . . . I had no intention of drinking when I took out that money"; Sam Motherwell admits, "I guess the devil had a hand in it, he was in me quite a bit when I put it there" (281).

James describes the antidote to Tom's sinful state: "Lament and mourn and weep!

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the

⁵ The reference is to Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13.24-30:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (4.9-10), which is paralleled in Tom’s tears of repentance when he learns that Arthur has not died because of his drunken negligence:

Tom put his head down upon the horse’s neck and cried like a child – no, like a man – for in the dark and terrible night that had just passed, sullied though it was by temptations and yieldings and neglect of duty, the soul of a man had been born in him, and he had put away childish things forever (276).⁶

Because Tom repents of his sin, the outcome of his story is life and goodness; his new birth illustrates James’s words in 1.18 that God “chose to give us birth through the word of truth.”

Another key point in James’ epistle is his injunction to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” because “faith without works is dead” (1.22, 2.26).⁷ Righteous action is evidence of genuine faith, “faith expressing itself through love” (Gal 5.6). In Paul’s letters, *works* refers to works of the Law, ritual acts such as circumcision; works for James are deeds of charity (Davids 341). Mrs. Francis is McClung’s object lesson of this truth, with her impractical theories and unrealistic intellectualism. John Moss writes of Mrs. Francis: “This well-meaning woman is determined to sow in Danny the seeds of an enlightened life, when what he really needs are food in his stomach and clothes to shield him from the Manitoba winter” (185); he is reflecting James’s words in 1.16-17: “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed

⁶ This reference is to the “love” chapter of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (13.11).

⁷ Here *faith* is not used in the sense of genuine saving faith but is a mere intellectual acceptance of certain truths without trust in Christ as Saviour. James is not claiming that a person is saved by works and not by genuine faith, “[r]ather he is saying, to use Martin Luther’s words, that a man is justified (declared righteous before God) by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Genuine faith will produce good deeds, but only faith in Christ saves” (Barker 1882).

and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" McClung tells us of Mrs. Francis,

Hers was a strangely inconsistent character, spiritually minded, but selfish; loving humanity when it is spelled with a capital, but knowing nothing of the individual. The flower of holiness in her heart was like the haughty orchid that blooms in the hot-house, untouched by wind of cold, beautiful to behold but comforting no one with its beauty. (39)

McClung therefore juxtaposes Mrs. Francis with the loving and practical Camilla to show faith in action. While Mrs. Francis is expiating to Pearl on the joys of doing service to others and the importance of taking care of her health, Camilla secretly puts stockings, handkerchiefs, ten ten-cent pieces and an orange in Pearl's bird-cage luggage, arranged so that Pearl will not notice what she has done. Camilla muses:

"Mrs. Francis speaks a strange language . . . but it can be translated into bread and butter and apple sauce, and even into shoes and stockings, when you know how to interpret it. But would n't it be dreadful if she had no one to express it in the tangible things of life for her. Think of her talking about proper diet and aids to digestion to that little hungry girl." (120-21)

Thus McClung aligns herself with James in her belief that faith is demonstrated by good deeds.

James also discusses healing prayer and tells his readers that if any among them is afflicted, they should pray, because "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" because "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (5.13-15). Pearl's prayers for Arthur and

Arthur's prayer asking God for forgiveness find precedents in the Book of James (263-66). Likewise, when Tom confesses to his parents the evils he has committed, he is following James' advice in 5.16: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed." The whole Motherwell family is healed spiritually as a result.

At the end of his letter, James writes, "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (5.20). Hence, after his talk with Tom and his joy at Tom's new birth, the Reverend Hugh Grantley drives home "with a glorified look on his face as one who had seen the heavens opened," and he sings, "despite his Cameronian blood," the Methodist Doxology of praise to "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (282).⁸ His joy was anticipated almost two millennia earlier in the Book of James.

⁸ With McClung's gentle humour, she is poking fun at the Scottish Presbyterian minister for singing a Doxology sung in the Methodist Church.

Appendix Three

Sullivan Entertainment's Secularization of *Anne of Green Gables*

A shorter version of this paper was presented at "Double-Takes: Intersections between Canadian Literature and Film," Canadian Literature Symposium, University of Ottawa, May 2009

In 1985, two events occurred that brought Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* to academic and popular attention. The publication of the first of a series of Montgomery's journals led to a plethora of critical works that moved from dismissing Montgomery as a sentimental romance writer of regional idylls to discussing her as a subversive writer satirising the institutions and people of Avonlea while writing from a conflicted perspective. In that same year, Sullivan Entertainment's two-part four-hour miniseries adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables* garnered a viewing audience of 5.6 million when it premiered in Canada, making it the highest-rated dramatic programme in the history of the CBC (Lefebvre "L.M." 54). Unlike the complex current of academic criticism that developed after 1985, the screen adaptation simplified the representation of the novel, focusing on the developing romance between Anne and Gilbert and thus reverting to a picture of Montgomery as a writer of sentimental romances and regional idylls.

My interest lies in the difference between the presentation of the Protestant-Christian worldview in the novel and in the mini-series, one of the many complexities that have been lost in the screen version. The novel devotes a great deal of space to depicting Anne's spiritual development and maturing prayer life, to exposing the deadness of the Avonlea Presbyterian Church, and to presenting an ideal clergy couple to illustrate the "primitive simplicity" (Montgomery's words) of an alive Church (*SJ1* 223) The Sullivan/Wiesenfeld version, however, deletes most of the incidents related to the Church and to Anne's spiritual

growth, and transfers many of the conversations between Anne and Mrs. Allan, the minister's wife, to Anne and Miss Stacey, the progressive schoolteacher. On the other hand, Sullivan adds a funeral scene for Matthew and creates a sceptical speech for Reverend Allan to pronounce at the graveside. I argue that Sullivan's choice to eliminate, change and add scenes related to the Church and to Anne's spiritual journey is because he perceived that he was producing a film for a 1985 audience that had a different worldview from that of the readership at the beginning of the twentieth century, necessitating a more secular presentation than that of the primarily Protestant "deep structure" of Montgomery's 1908 novel (Johnston 7). The result is a loss of historical, sociological, and psychological accuracy.

Several film versions of *Anne* had been produced before 1985, including a silent version in 1919 and George Nichols Jr's Hollywoodization of the novel in 1934, which starred Anne Shirley, the actress who in real life adopted the name of the book's main character. The Sullivan version, however, has had the greatest critical acclaim and widest distribution, receiving an Emmy, ten of a possible twelve Gemini Awards and a George Peabody Award for Outstanding Contribution to Broadcasting. It has been broadcast in over 145 countries and translated into over thirty languages; it has been a best-seller in the form of home videos and DVDs, and a five-disc DVD set was on Chapters' best-seller list for more than a year. Thus the influence of the Sullivan film on the public cannot be overestimated; most of the generations born after 1980 have come to know *Anne* through the film version rather than through the novel. As Benjamin LeFebvre observes, the film and television adaptations of *Anne* have "eclipsed the very source text from which they were derived" ("Stand" 150).

My purpose is not to evaluate the comparative aesthetic accomplishments of the two versions of *Anne of Green Gables*; obviously, as Louis Giannetti claims in *Understanding Movies*, different media require different forms and different means of solving problems, and as George Bluestone suggests in *Novels into Film*, “changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium” (150). When reading the novel, a reader participates more deeply in the co-creation of the novelist’s imaginary world of Avonlea and in understanding the complex revelation of Anne’s interior world than does the viewer of the film, where the visual medium provides a distancing effect. Rather, my purpose is to look at the changes that Kevin Sullivan has made related to the religious world of Montgomery’s early twentieth-century Canada. Sullivan seems to have deliberately eliminated most of the material related to this world for cultural, dramatic and financial reasons. When Montgomery wrote her novel in the early 1900s, most Canadians attended church on Sundays and were well versed in biblical language and the tenets of the Christian faith. Therefore in *Anne of Green Gables*, the Presbyterian Church was naturally central to Montgomery’s depiction of Avonlea society and Anne’s spiritual growth would have been of interest to her readers. By the 1980s, church attendance had plummeted to less than 25% of the Canadian population and most people were biblically illiterate. Sullivan has admitted that he deliberately “made the story palatable for the cynical 80s” and “in keeping with the marketplace,” thus assuming that his audience would not be interested in the religious aspects of Anne’s life and of Avonlea and therefore deleting an aspect of Montgomery’s world that would not be economically viable (Hall 11, 9).

Of all the Montgomery books that Kevin Sullivan made into films, *Anne of Green Gables* is the most faithful adaptation, with later films diverging more and more widely from

the original texts, but even in this first venture, he made many fundamental changes. As Sullivan said, “You study the books, you understand the characters, you learn the environment, and then you have to really put them aside and then say okay, I’m going to create a new story here” (Hersey 132). Sullivan and co-writer Joe Wiesenfeld shifted the original story’s timelines from the 1870s and 1880s to the 1900 period⁹ and concentrated on two main story triangles in the novel: Anne, Gilbert and Diana, and Anne, Matthew, and Marilla. Sullivan therefore has augmented and added scenes related to the Anne-Gilbert romance, and at the same time has eliminated most details related to Anne’s spiritual growth as well as the satire of Avonlea society and the Presbyterian Church.

In the novel, much emphasis is placed on Anne’s spiritual growth and her development of Christian character. Anne arrives at Green Gables able to recite the answers to the Presbyterian Shorter Catechism but having decided that she does not care for God because she has been told that God “made her hair red on purpose” (46). Anne stands transfixed before a chromolithograph in the Cuthbert sitting-room of a painting by Benjamin Roberts Haydon entitled “Christ Blessing Little Children,” and she imagines herself drawing close to Jesus with the children in the painting, a scene that has been interpreted as the beginning of Anne’s Christian growth (Hilder 45-7; Sorfleet 177). Anne’s prayer life becomes a central concern of the text, and Montgomery presents several different types of prayer as means of connecting with God. For example, after the lily-maid incident, Anne tells Mrs. Allan in the novel:

“I prayed, Mrs. Allan, most earnestly, but I didn’t shut my eyes to pray, for I knew the only way God could save me was to let the flat float close enough

⁹ Anne’s lifespan is shortened; instead of arriving at Green Gables as an eleven-year old, in the film she is thirteen, which Benjamin Lefebvre argues reduces the complexity of the novel (“Stand” 156).

to one of the bridge piles for me to climb up on it. . . . I just said, ‘Dear God, please take the flat close to a pile and I’ll do the rest,’ over and over again. Under such circumstances you don’t think much about making a flowery prayer. But mine was answered” (180)

This clear indication of Anne’s awareness of God and her dependence on Him is eliminated in the film.¹⁰

In the novel, Anne frequently discusses Christian themes such as goodness and wickedness, as well as her struggles to overcome her faults that include her temper, absent-mindedness, and vanity. Her decision to sacrifice her personal ambitions and give up her Avery scholarship to stay with Marilla after Matthew’s death demonstrates the outworking of her Christian faith and character and one that meets with such approval from the minister’s wife that it brings “tears of pleasure” to Anne’s eyes (241).

In the Sullivan production, however, Anne’s lack of familiarity with Christianity is emphasized by Marilla twice calling her a heathen, the second time in Anne’s hearing, which does not happen in the novel. Yet after Anne’s first prayer under Marilla’s tutelage, no more details are given to show development in Anne’s spiritual condition. K.L. Poe observes that in the film version, Anne’s internal development in her spiritual, moral and emotional life are lost: “[T]here is no ‘internal’: the development of the young heroine is all surface, no depth. . . ; the emphasis remains on the action, not the personal development” (149). Thus, many of the moral subtleties of Anne’s maturing are lost in the focus on her

¹⁰ The irony at this stage of her spiritual development is shown when Gilbert, her rescuer, asks Anne to be friends, and she refuses to forgive him for calling her hair “carrots” two years previously. She has not yet absorbed the petition from the Lord’s Prayer “to forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

relationship with Gilbert. Susan Drain concludes, “The film is an exquisite romance, but the novel is a *Bildungsroman*. That reduction, is, finally, a loss” (72).

The second erasure in the Sullivan version is that of Montgomery’s satire of the Presbyterian Church. In the novel, the Presbyterian Church is initially presented as lifeless and spiritually dead; it is likened to the early Christian church of Sardis that had the reputation of being alive and active and looked good on the outside, but was corrupt and dying on the inside.¹¹ Anne goes to church for the first time with her hat adorned with fresh flowers and no one talks to her; the Avonlea girls look at her and whisper to each other “behind their quarterlies” and nobody makes “any friendly advances, then or later on” (69). In the church service, prayers are long-winded and the sermon is boring. In Sunday-School, Anne’s teacher is a middle-aged spinster whose uninspired method of teaching is to ask the printed questions from the quarterly. None of this is reproduced in the film. Although in the novel Anne becomes involved in all of the Avonlea church activities such as singing in the Sunday-school choir, attending prayer meetings and participating in church social events such as the Sunday-school picnic and missionary concerts, in the Sullivan production, the only church event that is mentioned is the Sunday-school picnic, which is moved to the Barry farm so that Anne can meet Diana; the church is only pictured at the very end of the film for Matthew’s burial service, a scene created by Sullivan Entertainment.

¹¹ The first sermon Anne hears at the Avonlea Presbyterian Church is on “Revelations, third chapter, second and third verses” (73). In the Book of Revelation, John is told to write to the angel of the church in Sardis:

These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”

In the novel, Montgomery presents an ideal clergy couple, Mr. and Mrs. Allan, to show how a church can be revitalized when its leaders are spirit-filled modellers of the Christian faith. Their arrival in Avonlea is preceded by weeks of “religious dissipation” as various candidates’ theology, preaching ability, and character are discussed (138-9). Anne frequently comments on Mr. Allan’s “magnificent” sermons and how they inspire her to be and do her best, and even to want to be a minister herself. She discovers that Mrs. Allan is a kindred spirit and tells Marilla, “I’d like to be a Christian if I could be one like her” (140). Mrs. Allan becomes Anne’s mentor and confidante, and they are pictured spending long hours together having discussions about life and the Christian faith. In the Sullivan production, however, the Allans become shadowy background figures, and many of Mrs. Allan’s actions and words in the novel are transferred to Miss Stacey, the progressive school teacher. For example, the same words that Anne reports that Mrs. Allan uses to encourage her Sunday School pupils to ask questions (“She said right away she didn’t think it was fair for the teacher to ask all the question. . . and said we could ask her any questions we liked” (139)) are spoken by Miss Stacey to her pupils in the classroom. The mouse-in-the-custard incident happens on-screen to Miss Stacey, but in the book it is Mr. and Mrs. Chester Ross who are offered the custard from which Anne had removed a dead mouse, and it is Mrs. Allan who comforts a grieving Anne after discovering that Anne has flavoured the cake with liniment. In the Director’s comments on the video, Sullivan declares more than once that it is Miss Stacey who becomes Anne’s mentor and confidante, and consequently in his version, the school replaces the church as a primary site of influence.

Complicating an appraisal of Mrs. Allan’s role in the movie is the fact that the German version includes several extra scenes with Mrs. Allan. Michael Schwartz from

Sullivan Entertainment informed me that the additional scenes were made only for German TV because of the German star, Christiane Kruger, who played Mrs. Allan; her scenes were part of the financing with ZDF, the West German network that helped to fund the production.¹² These scenes were deleted in the North American version because the CBC and PBS did not require the extra scenes with Mrs. Allan in their cuts; it was their decision, not Sullivan Entertainment's, regarding run time and what was cut. In the German version, Mrs. Allan's character becomes a rather rebellious co-conspirator in Anne's escapades, rather than the godly friend, role model, and mentor of the novel.

Other Christian aspects missing in the film are the biblical language and references. In the novel, Anne speaks of biblical concepts such as repentance, Hell, the crucifixion, original sin, and blessing others by "heaping coals of fire" on their heads," and her vocabulary is replete with biblical references. Occasional biblical references in the movie are more by accident than by intention. For example, Sullivan has Miss Stacey tell Anne, "The truth will set you free," but claims his source was the inscription at the entrance to Victoria College at the University of Toronto, seemingly unaware of its biblical source, the eighth chapter of John's Gospel. Rosemary Johnston has done a careful study of the Christian symbolism in the novel, all of which is lost in the film. For example, she gives a detailed analysis of the symbolism and images of Anne's first drive to Green Gables along the Avenue, which evoke a church and God as the creator who is worshipped there. All of this religious imagery is inevitably lost in the film; Anne does not arrive at Green Gables under a star "shining like a lamp of guidance and promise" (24), but in the daytime because it is easier to film during the day.

¹² Information released in an email from Michael Schwartz of Sullivan Entertainment on 24 March 2009.

Finally, Sullivan inserts a scene showing Matthew's burial service, which is not depicted in the novel. A close analysis of this scene reveals the depressing hopelessness of Sullivan's religious world. A Presbyterian Church funeral normally includes thanksgiving for the life of the person who has died, celebration of the triumph of the resurrection of Christ and the promised bodily resurrection and life everlasting of believers, and intercession for the family and friends who remain. Sullivan's version speaks from the perspective of a doubting generation. Reverend Allan pronounces,

We have stood here in silent prayer at Matthew Cuthbert's grave, struggling, each of us, to see the meaning in his life. But the mystery of death prevails. All we know is that we are troubled in our hearts at this evidence that death comes to all of us. In the end, all we know is that we loved him, and we commend his soul to Jesus.

Sullivan's Mr. Allan gives no hope to the mourners and no thankfulness for Matthew's life, but rather talks of the meaninglessness of Matthew's life and the inevitability of death, and gives no hope of eternal life. Commending Matthew's soul to Jesus seems to be an empty platitude without any contextualization.

Thus, when in a review of the CBC series published in *MacLeans* in December, 1985, Gillian Mackay writes that the film acknowledges "the subtle Christian message of the story. Each adversity represents a lesson in overcoming vanity, anger or pride" and Anne's inability to forgive Gilbert Blythe "represents both an amusing romantic predicament and a spiritual obstacle" (78), I would suggest that this "subtle Christian message" is one that Mackay had already gleaned from the novel, and that when she concludes that Anne's radiant spirit illustrates the "faith in providence that animates the movie" – she writes

providence with a small *p* that is an ambiguous term that can mean the protective care of a deity or of nature - she is closer to revealing the secular spirit that Sullivan actually portrays.

Why does any of this matter? In *Filming Literature: the Art of Screen Adaptation* (1986), Neil Sinyard claims that the truly great screen adaptations are “the ones that go for the spirit rather than the letter of the text” (qtd. in Hersey 133), and I contend that Sullivan has distorted much of the “spirit” of the text. Film adaptation theorists also encourage viewers to investigate critically the artistic construction of a film and to probe the reasons for its popularity, rather than denouncing it for its infidelity to the novel. But I am not the only one to question Sullivan Entertainment’s changes to Montgomery’s novel. K.L. Poe argues that Sullivan has attempted “to attach modern ideas and sensibilities to a story that can in no way support them” (151). Poe suggests that Anne becomes a “historical anachronism just so modern audiences will ‘get’ her”; hence, Sullivan creates a world “in which no one is able to understand that others lived and believed differently than they do” (152). Philippa Gates and Stacey Gillis also comment:

The Sullivan films act *both* as a moment in Canadian history and as an escapist fantasy of that same history. Rather than presenting Montgomery’s critique of a patriarchal Presbyterian community, the Anne films (re)enact a history seemingly devoid of conflict, xenophobia or racism. . . [T]he Sullivan films are heritage films in that they allow a nostalgic gaze at a reconstruction of a conservative, pastoral Canadianness. (188)

I would argue that this reconstruction is a false one, based as it is on a 1980s attitude towards Christianity that is diametrically opposed to the actual role of the Christian faith and the Christian church at the beginning of the century. I believe that the film’s modernization

and secularization of the novel has led to the distortion and loss of Canadian cultural history, and continues to keep viewers ignorant about the central importance of the Church and the Christian faith in small-town Canada at the end of the Victorian era.

Montgomery is not the only author to have had her novels secularized by film adaptations. Jane Austen's world of middle-class gentry and clergymen has had the latter removed, with the exception of satirical portraits such as Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*. In the 1987 BBC production and the 2006 *Masterpiece Theatre* production of Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, for example, Henry Tilney becomes merely the younger son on the Northanger estate, rather than the clergyman he is in the novel. As Austen scholar Martha Musgrove comments, "Apparently, the director considered that audiences 'wouldn't relate' to someone occupying a religious position in the role of romantic hero."¹³ Not only is historical accuracy jeopardized by such manipulations of a novel, but also socio-cultural values of an earlier era are lost to modern viewers.

Montgomery wrote in the third volume of her journals, "I don't know why I keep on going to see my favourite books screened. The result is always a disappointment" (26). When she saw the 1934 film of *Anne*, Montgomery commented, "[T]he whole picture was so entirely different from *my* vision of the scenes and the people that it did not seem *my* book at all. It was just a pleasant, well-directed little play by someone else (SJ4 313). I suspect that Sullivan's version of her novel would have met with her approval for its beautiful cinematography and haunting score, but would have disappointed her for its shift of focus to the boy-girl romance that she herself tried to underplay. Whereas readers of her 1908 novel would have appreciated the spiritual aspects of *Anne of Green Gables* as Anne

¹³ Quotation from email correspondence on 29 July 2009.

grows to maturity and the Avonlea Presbyterian Church is revitalized, Sullivan Entertainment has deleted most of these facets of the novel for an audience that they believed no longer considered relevant. But in the end one has to ask, if the film version of *Anne of Green Gables* reflects Kevin Sullivan's worldview more than Lucy Maud Montgomery's, what has been lost?

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