

A Woman in Possession of the Theological Virtues Must Be in Want of Analysis:
A Christian Virtue Ethic Approach to Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries

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Abstract

Throughout the extensive criticism dedicated to Jane Austen and her contemporaries, one theme seems to be steadily misinterpreted: the theological virtues. For example, Cecilia Beverly from Frances Burney's *Cecilia*, Jane Bennet from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Fanny Price from Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Helen Burns from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Margaret Hale from Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* all demonstrate one or more of the theological virtues, but no scholar seems to acknowledge this. In particular, the character of Jane Bennet, the case study for this thesis, makes the intentional choices to have faith, hope, and love, which Christian literary theory and virtue ethics reveal. The importance of female characters who practice the theological virtues in long nineteenth century British novels becomes apparent through employing Thomistic definitions of the virtues, analyzing Jane's character, performing a stylistic investigation of her letters, and briefly examining Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret.

Dedication

To my grandparents,
Glenn and Janet Johnson,
who paid for my education even from beyond the grave.

I wish you were here,
and I miss you every day.

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Chapter 1

“The Very Beginning of Our Acquaintance”:¹

An Introduction

With the recent revival of virtue ethics and the development of Christian literary theory, the time is ripe for an application of these theories to works of literature. The Christian theological virtues of faith, hope, and love/charity present an opportunity for literary criticism to use these approaches simultaneously, particularly in character analysis. Much of scholarship largely ignores, or dismisses as dull, female characters who demonstrate the theological virtues.² The strength of these characters is not simply in their pluck or wittiness but rather in their reflection of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Critics often consider characters who display these virtues as passive and usually disregard them in favor of characters with more popular traits,³ despite the inherent difficulties in practicing the theological virtues. Jane Bennet from Austen’s most famous novel *Pride and Prejudice* is a prime example of this scholarly disregard and thus functions as a case study for characters who demonstrate the theological virtues. A combined approach of Christian literary theory and virtue ethics reveals that, notwithstanding their dismissal by academia, Jane Bennet and characters like her are not undeveloped or stagnant, but rather they display the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love in a way that critics often overlook.

Jane Bennet serves as a case study of characters who demonstrate the theological virtues, yet her character type is not a solitary occurrence in long nineteenth century British novels.⁴ For example, Cecilia Beverly from Frances Burney’s *Cecilia*, Fanny Price from Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, Helen Burns from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and Margaret Hale from Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* all demonstrate one or more of the theological virtues, but there is

limited scholarship acknowledging their practice of the virtues. In particular, Cecilia and Fanny practice all of the theological virtues, Helen practices faith and hope, and Margaret practices charity. Additionally, these characters practice some of the cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance), while the theological virtues remain primary. Although some characters are their novels' protagonists and others are minor characters, their roles in the novels are not as important to this study as are their character traits, which in this case are the theological virtues. Jane's, Cecilia's, Fanny's, Helen's, and Margaret's relationship with the theological virtues illustrates that Christian literary theory and virtue ethics provide insight into texts that might otherwise remain unseen. Therefore, using Christian literary theory and virtue ethics, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate the importance of female characters in long nineteenth century British novels who are representations of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as evidenced by Jane Bennet's, Cecilia Beverly's, Fanny Price's, Helen Burns's, and Margaret Hale's practice of these virtues and the stylistic structure of Jane's letters to her sister.

Christian Literary Theory

Before exploring the ways in which Jane Bennet and other female characters demonstrate the theological virtues, it is important to lay the theoretical foundations and provide necessary definitions. This chapter will look at Christian literary theory and virtue ethics, define the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, investigate eighteenth century ideas of the role of literature, virtue, and religion, and conclude with an exploration of Austen's religious context.⁵ Although Christian literary theory has only recently begun to be developed, scholars have dealt with Christian approaches (or, more broadly, religious approaches) to literature for centuries. In contemporary scholarship regarding the relationship between literature and religion in general,

G. B. Tennyson and Edward E. Ericson, Jr., state that “the relationship of literature to religion is at once one of the oldest and one of the newest concerns of criticism” (9). It is one of the oldest because literature “arose out of religion and only gradually detached itself into a separate field,” but it is also one of the newest because nineteenth century writers, such as Matthew Arnold, separate literature from religion, resulting in questions about whether or not there is any relationship between the two (9). However, literature often exists to reveal some truth, whether that truth concerns morality, the human experience, or beauty. Truth is also a deep concern of Christianity, which makes the two disciplines more connected than contemporary scholars may perhaps initially assume.

The concepts of truth and morality are important pursuits in literature, as in Christianity, as both literature and Christianity seek to explain issues common to all of humanity. Literature intends to portray the truths of the human experience, while Christianity similarly speaks to this human condition (Ryken, *Classics* 84). Because of this dual emphasis on the nature of truth and human experience, Christian principles can give insight into literary texts that might otherwise remain hidden. Marilyn Chandler McEntyre addresses this relationship between religion and literature in her book *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*. She argues that part of caring for truth is to learn the practice of reading well, and one way to do so is to “import questions from theology in an attempt to understand the rich and complex relations between literature and religion as repositories of insight, symbol, mythic structures, and ways of telling truth” (67). Literature also teaches truths about morality and ethics. Ronald Duska contends that literature “expresses or represents in a unique way the passionate sources of human action and consequently shows us what a meaningful human life is in a way that ethics does not” (555). Scholars often read the Bible itself as literature, and, like literature, the Bible expresses issues of

morality and truth in a way that strict philosophical treatises cannot. One moral truth that literature conveys in a manner that is more accessible than philosophical works is the importance of the theological virtues. Furthermore, because the theological virtues are implicitly rooted in biblical teachings, characters who practice them offer readers the opportunity to learn biblical truths through literature. The theological virtues offer yet another instance where the roles of Christianity and literature can coincide.

Other contemporary scholars such as Leland Ryken, Gene Edward Veith, Jr., and Alan Jacobs also provide valuable contributions to the field of Christian literary theory. Ryken contends in his book *Windows to the World* that Christians “are their own interpretive community” similar to any other interpretive community with which popular literary theories are concerned (11). Christians are thus able to approach literature in a unique way due to their system of belief. Ryken further states that works that challenge one’s faith or the Christian doctrine “clarify the human situation to which the Christian faith speaks” (149). Similarly, Veith claims in *Reading between the Lines* that Christians are “people of the book” in that language and reading are the basis of their theological tradition, and that if Christians remain true to this tradition, they will be able to impart their own valuable interpretation of literature (25). However, I aim to move beyond this by showing that one does not have to be part of the Christian interpretive community to see that Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret demonstrate the Christian theological virtues. In *A Theology of Reading*, Jacobs attempts an ethic of reading based on Christian principles rather than set a foundation for a Christian literary theory. Jacobs recommends that Christians reading literature should practice “intelligent charity” and “practical wisdom” in order to avoid seeing only what they wish to see (1, 119). While Jacobs argues for a charitable and reader-response-oriented reading of texts, his argument and

emphasis on charity also set the stage for a thematic Christian virtue ethic approach. Although these thinkers do not deal with issues of Christian literary theory per se, they do recognize truth as a pursuit of both Christianity and literature in addition to the importance of a Christian lens for literature.

Modern writers of literature in the early twentieth century and beyond, such as T. S. Eliot, Flannery O'Connor, J. R. R. Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis, also argue that Christianity has a place in studying literature. Eliot in his essay "Religion and Literature" makes the case for religious and theological readings of literature. He contends, "Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint" (21). Eliot laments the secularization of reading and criticism and argues against the New Critics by stating that, to properly criticize, one needs more than the work of literature itself (28). O'Connor rightly observes departments of theology in universities "vigorously courting departments of English" in an attempt to reconcile theology and modern literature (158). Tolkien contends in "On Fairy Stories" that true stories "can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth" (155). Even stories written by non-believers have the ability to point to truths that are ultimately found in God, for example, love, gentleness, and the right treatment of people. Tolkien also expresses the idea of humans as "sub-creators," meaning that, because humans were created by a God who tells beautiful and good stories, they too create beautiful stories (122). Lewis similarly asserts that authors of literature never brought "into existence beauty or wisdom which did not exist before," but rather authors embody "in terms of [their] own art some reflection of eternal Beauty and Wisdom" ("Literature" 51). Thus, all literature, including British novels of the long nineteenth century, has that element of Christian truth imbedded in it, making an investigation of Christianity in literature a necessary one indeed.

As a result of scholars and writers who assert the importance of a religious approach to literature, a formal Christian literary theory has begun to be developed. For example, Luke Ferretter takes an important step toward grounding Christian literary theory as a valid form of literary criticism in his 2003 book *Towards a Christian Literary Theory*. He argues, “Every positive system of thought at some point involves an act of faith, a decision simply to commit oneself to something that cannot be proved” (2). In this sense, a Christian literary theory has just as much basis as every other form of literary criticism. In addition, Ferretter defines Christian literary theory as “a theory of the nature and function of fictional texts found valuable, which is derived from those fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith shared by the major Protestant and the Orthodox confessions, or from principles consistent with them” (4). One such fundamental doctrine that is found valuable in literary texts is the theological virtues. Ferretter also argues that there is not only a place for Christian literary theory as a separate discipline, but also that it has a place in other forms of criticism such as Marxism and deconstruction (190). Nine years after Ferretter published his book, David Lyle Jeffrey and Gregory Maillet further argue for a formal Christian literary theory. Similar to many of the other theorists discussed, Jeffrey and Maillet argue for a Christian literary theory based on the idea of literature as truth, the Bible as literature, religious and cultural influences, and intertextual issues. Ferretter’s book along with Jeffrey and Maillet’s book have helped define Christian literary theory as its own school of criticism, rather than being on the outskirts of literary theory.

Despite the theorists, critics, and writers that come to a defense of a Christian interpretation of literature, some argue that a Christian literary theory is unnecessary. Caleb D. Spencer in his 2009 article “What Counts as Christian Criticism?” published in *Christianity and Literature* argues that much of Christian literary theory would not require the critic to be a

Christian and that such a theory would simply be another blind man groping at the elephant (278). He states, “Christianity by definition will always be marginal” and that Christian literary theory is “simply a mistake” (279). However, Spencer neglects to acknowledge the fact that Christianity and literature both deal with truth and morality, and that Christianity has been an immense influence on literature, particularly Western literature. Additionally, Kathryn Ludwig in “Post-Secularism and a Prophetic Sensibility” argues that our contemporary “post-secular” literature indicates a return of religious questioning and an emphasis on connectedness (226, 230). The result of these two trends in literature is that they open up a space where “sacred and secular perspectives may meet,” thus providing a site in which Christian literary theory can thrive (231). Despite the naysayers and the fact that there is of yet no consensus on a single definition, with the aid of scholars like Jeffrey, Maillet, Ferretter, and Ludwig, now is the time for an application of Christian literary theory.

Virtue Ethics

While Christian literary theory lays the groundwork for Christian approaches to literature, virtue ethics allows for character analyses focused on morality.⁶ This meta-ethical theory is a long-standing tradition that dates back to Plato and Aristotle in the third and fourth centuries BC. Virtue ethics is essentially a system of ethical thought that focuses on the building of one’s moral character in accordance with the virtues for the sake of goodness. Plato and Aristotle view the cardinal virtue of wisdom as the ultimate virtue (followed by justice, fortitude, and temperance), but medieval philosophers such as Saint Thomas Aquinas view the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as ultimate, as they enhance one’s relationship with God. Jean Porter defines virtue as a “stable disposition that inclines the person to act in one way rather than another” (94). Virtue ethicists center moral value on a standard of universal goodness outside oneself and doing

goodness for goodness' sake. Plato and Aristotle refer to this "goodness for goodness' sake" as "the Good." Regarding this idea, Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski states, "Virtue is an excellence of the person and so it is connected directly with the idea of good," and "[a] virtue is properly *called* good, not because good is a property of *it*, but because it makes its possessor good" (89, 90-1).

Medieval Christian philosophers such as Aquinas or Anselm take the concept of "the Good" and replace it with God (Porter 91). Austen, Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell illustrate this idea of "goodness for goodness's sake" through Jane's, Cecilia's, Fanny's, Helen's, and Margaret's demonstration of the theological virtues. When these characters do a good or kind thing, they do it simply because it is the right thing to do and not for any ulterior motive. While virtue ethics is not necessarily a Christian ethical theory, it *does* align itself well with Christianity, particularly in regards to the theological virtues. Although many medieval philosophers deal with the virtues at large, Aquinas is the first Christian philosopher to take an Aristotelian approach in which he lists and analyzes the virtues systematically, and I will thus use Aquinas in analyzing Jane's, Cecilia's, Fanny's, Helen's, and Margaret's practice of the theological virtues.

Although the primary virtue ethicist used for this analysis of long nineteenth century British novels is Aquinas, it is important to note that Aristotle heavily influenced Aquinas. Many of Aristotle's works were lost to the East for nearly a thousand years after the Roman Empire split in 284 AD until around the same time Aquinas was being educated by the Dominican monks circa 1240 AD (Baird 329). During his education, Aquinas saw the beauty of Aristotle's thought and attempted to reconcile Aristotle, Plato and his followers, and Christianity in his *Summa Theologica* (Stump 1-2). One particular way Aristotle influenced Aquinas is that the end goal (*telos*) of practicing the virtues is to achieve a flourishing life and happiness, or *eudemonia*.

Happiness according to Aristotle means living a morally good life and is different from contemporary definitions of happiness. Aristotle addresses this idea early on in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, stating that “one who is happy is said to live well and do well, since the end was just about said to be some way of living well and acting well” (13). The idea of having an end or *telos* is essential to virtue ethics. Aristotle also claims that a virtuous and contemplative life is the highest form of a flourishing life, as he says, “[A] wise person would be the most happy” (196). In addition, Aristotle claims that there are two kinds of virtues: the intellectual virtues and the moral virtues (21). The intellectual virtues are a result of thinking and teaching, whereas the moral virtues are a result of habit. Aquinas largely maintains the difference between intellectual virtues and moral virtues, but he adds the third category of the theological virtues, which are God-given.⁷

Perhaps the most important idea Aquinas inherits from Aristotle is the necessity of practice and habit in regards to the virtues. Aristotle states, “Therefore the virtues come to be present neither by nature nor contrary to nature, but in those of us who are of such a nature as to take them on, and to be brought to completion in them by means of habit” (22). Thus, one has to practice the virtues by actively applying them to one’s life (22). It is impossible to cultivate the virtues without constant exercise. Aristotle also influences Aquinas in the way in which the virtues operate. The virtues for Aristotle can be “destroyed by deficiency and by excess . . . but are preserved by an intermediate condition [the mean]” (23-4). In Aristotle’s example, the virtue of courage would be destroyed by the deficiency of cowardliness or by the excess of foolhardiness, but true courage thrives in the mean, or the middle (51). The mean is thus the balance between deficiency and excess in regards to the virtues that will ultimately lead to a flourishing life. Therefore, “excess and deficiency belong to vice and the mean condition belongs

to virtue” (29). For Aquinas, this idea of the mean applies to the cardinal virtues but not to the theological virtues. Austen, Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell portray both the ideas of habit and the mean in the characters of Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret through the characters’ consistent attempts to be temperate in all they do.

Aquinas, like Aristotle before him, is a virtue ethicist, and he takes many of Aristotle’s theories and combines them with Christianity’s principles. Aquinas divides the virtues into two categories: the cardinal virtues and the theological virtues. The cardinal virtues, which are also the classical/Aristotelian virtues, include wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance, wherein wisdom is the ultimate cardinal virtue. One can understand the first of Aquinas’s cardinal virtues, wisdom, as practical wisdom, prudence, or common sense. Prudence is both theoretical and practical in that it “can apply universal considerations to particular things” and is an intellectual virtue (*Cardinal 3*). Aquinas defines justice by asserting that it is a moral virtue and is “the habit whereby one with steadfast and enduring will renders to others what is due to them” (34). Thus, justice is a virtuous habit that is both willful and relational. Aquinas defines fortitude of spirit by stating that it is a moral virtue “that firmly keeps a person’s will in the good of reason against the greatest evils” (108). Through this definition, Aquinas does not limit fortitude to the battlefield but instead contends that anyone faced with pressure can act bravely toward the good. Regarding temperance, Aquinas asserts that it is a moral virtue that “signifies moderation” and “chiefly concerns emotions tending toward sensibly perceptible goods” (121). While the theological virtues will be the focus of this investigation, it is important to understand all the virtues, because a person must have a balance of all the virtues in order to be truly virtuous (Aristotle 29). Therefore, I will also add any applicable cardinal virtues to my analyses of Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret in order to show their balance of the virtues.

Definitions of the Theological Virtues

The theological virtues, which Aquinas draws from the Bible and includes in the canonical list of the virtues, are comprised of faith, hope, and love/charity, wherein love is the greatest of all virtues, both cardinal and theological. It is also important to understand the congruous relationship of all three theological virtues. Although each one has its individual value, they operate together as a single philosophical unit, thereby making it difficult to focus on one alone. The Apostle Paul, one of Aquinas's sources, in his most famous chapter on love (1 Corinthians 13) makes it a point to mention hope and faith's relationship with love. He states, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity" (*Authorized King James Version*, 1 Cor. 13.13). Unlike the intellectual or moral virtues, which one obtains through thinking or habit, the theological virtues are "infused" by God, and one cannot obtain them without him (Aquinas, *Summa* 1b.62.1).⁸ In addition, it is important to note that, unlike the cardinal virtues, the mean does not apply to the theological virtues. Aquinas states, "Wherever virtue observes the mean, it is possible to sin by excess as well as deficiency. But there is not sinning by excess against God, Who is the object of theological virtue . . . so that never can we love God as much as He ought to be loved" (1b.64.4). For Aquinas, moderating one's faith, hope, or love for God would be a vice, just as not having faith, hope, or love for God at all would be a vice. While scholars often accuse Jane and characters like her as being "too" charitable, nice, or naïve,⁹ it is important to note that there is no such thing as being excessive in regards to one's practice of the theological virtues. One must practice these virtues in overabundance or not at all.

In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas begins his discussion on the theological virtues with that of faith. Throughout Aquinas's discussion on faith, he frequently refers to Hebrews 11:1 as

the basis for his argument, which states that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Aquinas additionally purports that “faith [in God] requires an act of the will and an act of the intellect” (*Summa* 2b.4.5). Both the will and the intellect must be present in order for faith to exist. Regarding the aspect of the will in faith, Eleonore Stump in her book-length overview of Aquinas’s life and thought states that “the will moves the intellect to assent to the propositions of faith because the will is drawn by its hunger for what is in fact God’s goodness” (364). As is the case with all of the virtues, the virtue of faith is a choice that a person must desire in order to achieve it. Regarding the aspect of the intellect in the virtue of faith, Aquinas argues that faith perfects the intellect and is “a habit of mind, whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent” (*Summa* 2b.4.1-2). One cannot have faith in something without having good reason to believe, yet faith also requires an act of the will because the intellect alone cannot account for it. Stump states that “it would be a mistake to suppose that faith is acquired by an exercise of reason,” but “reason may nonetheless clear away some intellectual obstacles that bar the believer’s way to faith” (374). Through this epistemological justification for faith, it is important to note that faith is not simply a wish followed by fulfillment because of the intellect, which one can also understand as the virtue of wisdom. Therefore, faith is active and rational because it requires an act of both the will and the intellect.

An additional aspect of faith deals with the difference between the faith of believers and the faith of devils. According to Aquinas, both believe in God, but the former is a “formed” faith and the latter is an “unformed” faith (*Summa* 2b.4.1-5). Stump states in regards to formed faith that it “takes its form from the charity or love of goodness that animates the will” (364). Jane’s, Cecilia’s, Fanny’s, Helen’s, and Margaret’s love of goodness is often what animates their wills

to have faith in the goodness of others. It is only “faith informed by love of goodness” that is a virtue (Stump 366). Not only does faith involve trust in God, but it also applies to other pursuits in one’s life; formed faith must be present in one’s relationships and actions. Ultimately, it is through faith in God that a person is able to place his or her trust in others. Capturing the spirit of Aquinas, Lewis states in *Mere Christianity* that faith is “the change from being confident in our own efforts to the state in which we despair of doing anything for ourselves and leave it to God” (146). Inherent in the virtue of faith is the ability to trust—not just to trust in those around oneself but also that God will work things out for the good. As Benjamin Farley contends, “Faith in God is the virtue that promotes and directs all the God-given capacities for one’s highest development and renewal as an intelligent, moral, and caring being” (11). In addition, Thomistic thought inextricably connects hope and faith, in that while hope is awareness of an end, faith is the means to reach that end.

The characters of Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret understand the virtue of hope as an awareness of a good end, and they display positivity and true hopefulness that endear them to those around them, as well as to readers. Aquinas contends that “the proper and principal object of hope is eternal happiness,” resting on the infinite good that is God (*Summa* 2b.62.2). Essentially, according to Aquinas, one’s hope should rest in the assurance that God will work all things “together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8.28). This is a hope for good ends that does not originate in this world but rather with God in heaven. Lewis asserts in *Mere Christianity* regarding the virtue of hope that “if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world” (136-7). The virtue of hope is a recognition that God did not make humans to live in this sinful and deficient world but rather to spend

eternity with him. As Benjamin Farley argues, hope “does more than undergird the universal. It nurtures courage, bolsters determination, and invites involvement, commitment, fidelity, and caring” (171). If one acts in such a way that demonstrates one’s hope of heaven and focus on God, then the things of this world will no longer seem as wretched. Christians are to place their hope in God, trusting that He will make all things holy and good.

While Fanny, Helen, and Margaret practice the type of hope as above defined, Cecilia and Jane do not directly invoke God or religion. However, Cecilia’s and Jane’s hopes for good outcomes are rooted in something real: their faith in the ultimate goodness of humanity. One of the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definitions of hope is very broad and states that hope is an “expectation of something desired; desire combined with expectation” (“Hope, n1,” def. 1a). Cecilia’s and Jane’s hopes lie somewhere between this dictionary definition of hope and Aquinas’s theological definition. They are not hopes that are simply desired expectations but are grounded in something substantial, although they do not seem to be explicitly rooted in God. Despite this, these characters persist in their hope, although it is a difficult virtue to maintain. Regarding this, Aquinas asserts that “the object of hope is a future good, difficult but possible to obtain” and that hope perfects the will (*Summa* 2b.17.1). In addition, the vices and deficiencies of the theological virtues are more egregious than that of the cardinal virtues because of their higher status. Therefore, Aquinas argues that it is important to persist in hope in order to avoid the vice of despair (2b.20.3). Philippa Foot, one of the founders of contemporary virtue ethics, states, “Hope is a virtue because despair too is a temptation” (223). These female characters, like Aquinas, understand this virtue of hope as it relates to a future good and also understand that this virtue is a difficult one to maintain, which is something the characters struggle with throughout their respective novels.

Although faith and hope are extremely important virtues for one to have, love (or charity) is the virtue that should undergird them all. Throughout Aquinas's discussion of charity, 1 Corinthians 13 is the basis for much of his argument:

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth. (1 Cor. 13.4-8)

There are four types of love in the New Testament Greek: *phileō* which refers to brotherly love (friendship), *storgē* which refers to natural affection, *eros* which refers to romantic desire, and *agapē* which refers to the purest form of love (Lewis, *Loves* 1-9); it is this latter form of love that 1 Corinthians 13 references. *Agapē* love, which the original *King James Version* translates to “charity,” is based on the idea that all humans are created equally in the image of God and should be treated as such. It is an intentional action that depends on more than one's ever-changing feelings. Although Paul seems to describe love itself rather than prescribe certain actions for lovers, it should be noted that the Greek word for love (*agapē*) Paul uses in this passage implicitly references action. As Meghan Clark argues, “Charity is manifested in acts” and that “it is known through action” (421). Paul does not base his description of love on abstract ideas but rather on a prescription of action for those who practice the virtue. While scholars of Austen and her contemporaries seem to focus primarily on *phileō*, *storgē*, and occasionally *eros*, they often ignore the purest form of love—that of *agapē*.¹⁰

Aquinas not only believes that love is the foundation for all the other virtues, but he also asserts that it is the most perfect virtue (*Summa* 2b.23.6). As Clark states regarding Aquinas's

interpretation of the virtue of love, “Charity . . . is the mode by which all the other virtues are directed towards God” (416). Thus, charity is the conduit by which one can use all the other virtues for the glory of God. Aquinas also states that love is crucial to the other theological virtues, particularly hope: “[L]ove always precedes hope: for good is never hoped for unless it be desired and loved” (*Summa* 2b.62.4). Without a love for God and others, one would have no desire or reason to strive toward good or act virtuously at all. Lewis defines charity in *Mere Christianity* by stating, “Charity means ‘Love, in the Christian sense’. But love, in the Christian sense, does not mean an emotion . . . [it] is an affair of the will” (129, 132). As in 1 Corinthians 13, charity is an intentional action, not something that is based on a feeling. Aquinas states that “[I]ove is the first movement of the will and of every faculty of desire” (*Summa* 1.20.1).

According to Thomistic theology, a person’s intentional love and relationship with God should be apparent through one’s relationships and actions, a sentiment that is expressed throughout Austen’s portrayal of the eldest Bennet sister in addition to her depiction of Fanny, Burney’s portrayal of Cecilia, Brontë’s representation of Helen, and Gaskell’s depiction of Margaret.

Aquinas also differentiates between love of God, love of others, and love of self. According to Aquinas, the virtue of loving God is not a mean but is instead an excess because God is love (1b.64.4). The same concept applies to loving one’s neighbor. Aquinas states, “Hence it is clear that it is specifically the same act whereby we love God, and whereby we love our neighbor. Consequently the habit of charity extends not only to the love of God, but also to the love of our neighbor” (2b.25.1). Aquinas purports that because God created humans in his image, one should love a person as a bearer of that image of God. Although Aquinas states that there is no excess in either loving God or one’s neighbor, a person’s love for God must be first and foremost as God is the source of love. The love of self, contrary to both the love of God and

others, stems from the vice of pride. Regarding this vice, Aquinas states, “Pride is always contrary to the love of God, inasmuch as the proud man does not subject himself to the Divine rule as he ought. Sometimes it is also contrary to the love of our neighbor” (2b.162.5). For Aquinas, pride is a corruption of the virtue of charity, and the self-righteous love of self is opposite the love of God and others because love is an inherently humble virtue. Austen expresses this throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, where the characters’ pride consistently inhibits their practice of the virtue of charity. While Aquinas’s definitions of the theological virtues may have affected Austen’s, Burney’s, Brontë’s, and Gaskell’s portrayals of Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret, there are other thinkers that also may have influenced the writing of these characters.

Eighteenth Century Understandings of Religion, Virtue, and Role of Literature

Before and during the British long nineteenth century, thinkers and scholars deeply considered the purpose of literature, virtue, and religion in their society. Scholars at the time hotly debated the role that literature should play in regards to truth, just as contemporary Christian literary theorists debate it now.¹¹ Published in 1595, Philip Sidney’s “An Apology for Poetry” is one of the most influential pieces of literary theory written during the Renaissance. In it, he argues that literature is the best agent for teaching people moral truths. Sidney states, “I affirm, that no learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as Poetry, then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose employed” (122). Additionally, while philosophy teaches virtue through abstract examples and history instructs through concrete examples, literature teaches virtue through a combination of abstract and concrete (121). Literature has the unique ability to make a life of virtue look attractive to readers because the writer “not only

show[s] the way [to virtue], but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it" (114-5). Although Sidney published "An Apology for Poetry" centuries before Austen, Burney, Brontë, or Gaskell were even born, this piece has had a lasting impact that may have influenced these novelists.

Centuries after Sidney, the Romantics began to rebel against ideas found in the Age of Enlightenment, privileging emotion, passion, and individuality over logic, reason, and rationality. Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the most famous Romantics, both affirms and challenges Sidney's assertions in his "A Defence of Poetry." In this text, Shelley not only vindicates poetry on moral grounds but also argues that a person's imagination does the teaching rather than the poetry itself. Thus, Shelley seems to anticipate reader-response theory by emphasizing the reader's imagination and awareness of the beautiful rather than the teachings of the text itself. Like all Romantics, Shelley emphasizes the pleasurable aspect of reading literature rather than the reasonableness of it, stating, "Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits on which it falls open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with delight" (293). Thus, any truth one gains from literature is not through analysis of the text but through one's own creative instincts. Although Austen was publishing during the beginning of the Romantic period and has a few Romantic characteristics in her novels, she largely maintains a conservative worldview where sense is valued over sensibility. However, her successors the Brontë sisters certainly conform to many Romantic tenets, while Gaskell certainly adheres to Victorian standards. Despite Austen's, Brontë's, and Gaskell's varying attitudes toward Romantic ideals, they would have been readily aware of the Romantics' statements regarding the purpose of literature, which may have in turn influenced their writing.

In addition to the role of literature, Burney, Austen, Brontë, and Gaskell may have understood virtue through late seventeenth and eighteenth century thinkers such as David Hume, Benjamin Franklin, Anthony Cooper, the Earl of Shaftsbury, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Felicia Bonaparte argues that Hume's empiricist epistemological philosophy influenced Austen (143-5), and his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* published in 1751 may also have informed Austen's ethical understanding. Hume anticipates the meta-ethical utilitarianism system of thought in his emphasis on the usefulness of virtue, particularly female virtue. He states that "[t]he greatest regard, which can be acquired by that sex, is derived from their fidelity" (41). Hume's statements about female virtue are inherently sexist in his emphasis on the practical value of female virtue (i.e. fidelity) rather than its inherent worth, which these authors seem to combat through their use of almost entirely female ensembles who practice virtue for its own sake. Additionally, Franklin, albeit an American, was a contemporary of Austen, as he published his *Autobiography* in 1793. Franklin represents the common attitude toward virtue both at that time and in our own: that virtues are authoritative rules and codes that can be obtained systematically, rather than guidelines on how to practice goodness throughout one's life (47). In this way, Burney, Austen, Brontë, and Gaskell differ from Franklin in that their characters consistently work on being virtuous rather than obtaining perfection in one fell swoop. While these authors may or may not have read Hume and Franklin, it seems as though their visions of virtue diverge from both of these thinkers.

While Burney, Austen, Brontë, and Gaskell may have disagreed with Hume's and Franklin's interpretation of the virtues, they may have been positively informed by Cooper and Wollstonecraft. Gilbert Ryle argues that Austen gained some "Aristotelian oxygen" through Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury, an English politician, philanthropist, social

reformer, and philosopher (184).¹² Cooper's *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* published in 1699 and his *Characteristics of Men, Manner, Opinions, Times* published in 1698 seem to be remarkably similar to Burney's, Austen's, Brontë's, and Gaskell's understandings of virtue. In particular, Cooper recognizes that one's belief in God markedly influences one's morality; he asserts that when God is represented as having "a Concern for the good of All, and an Affection of Benevolence and Love towards the Whole; such an Example must undoubtedly serve . . . to raise and increase the Affection towards Virtue" (184). Like Aquinas, Cooper claims that virtue is good in and of itself and that one's faith, hope, and love for God influence one's faith, hope, and love for others. Austen, Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell depict exactly this throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, *Cecilia*, *Mansfield Park*, *Jane Eyre*, and *North and South*, as the characters pursue virtue for its own sake based on their belief in God.

Additionally, Wollstonecraft's 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* may have also contributed to these female novelists' understandings of virtue. In this now famous text, Wollstonecraft contends that a woman's education in virtue is essential to the workings of society and argues against Hume's assertions of the worldly utility of female virtue. As she states, "Without knowledge there can be no morality!" (58). For Burney's, Austen's, Brontë's, and Gaskell's female characters, moral education and knowledge are of the utmost importance, which perhaps indicates Wollstonecraft's influence on them. While Burney would not have read Wollstonecraft's text before publishing *Cecilia* in 1782, Austen more than probably read *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as it was prominent during her lifetime; however, scholars are not absolutely certain if Austen read Wollstonecraft's work. When Brontë and Gaskell were publishing in the 1850s, Wollstonecraft's work, as Patsy Stoneman puts it, "had fallen into silent neglect," although there was still much debate as to women's position in society (40). Therefore,

while Burney, Austen, Brontë, and Gaskell may not have been directly aware of Wollstonecraft, they seem to reach similar conclusions as to the nature of female virtue.

The religious context of the long nineteenth century is also enormously important to Burney's, Austen's, Brontë's, and Gaskell's developments. Their culture was largely Christianized, with the Anglican Church at the center of many of these authors' lives. The 1662 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* would have been highly influential in Burney's, Austen's, and Brontë's lives, as they would have read it daily. Additionally, *The Book of Common Prayer* makes statements about and quotes from the Bible regarding the theological virtues, which influenced Burney's, Austen's, and Brontë's understandings of them. For example, the text states that one must have "a lively faith" that should be "evidently known" (76). *The Book of Common Prayer* also quotes Romans 15:13 regarding hope in a prayer for the second Sunday of Advent: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (17). Regarding charity, the text also quotes 1 Peter 4:8 to be read the Sunday after Ascension Day: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover a multitude of sins" (25). These statements and quotes reinforce the Bible's teachings of the theological virtues, while also being strikingly similar to Aquinas's assertions about the active nature and importance of these virtues. However, unlike Burney, Austen, or Brontë, Gaskell was not a member of the Church of England and was instead a Unitarian. While Gaskell's religion may have been unorthodox, she would have been aware of the same Bible verses *The Book of Common Prayer* mentions, and the theological virtues are one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith across a wide spectrum of denominations, which makes an investigation of these virtues in Gaskell's work just as appropriate as in the other authors' works. The religious context of these authors' lives, as

well as philosophical arguments made about virtue and the role of literature, deeply influenced the writing of their novels.¹³

Austen's Religious Context

Because Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* serves as the case study for female characters who demonstrate the theological virtues, it is important to investigate if Austen was directly aware of the Thomistic theological virtues. Austen and her sister Cassandra were tutored both at home and at Oxford, wherein they had many opportunities to read great, classic works (Grey 279).

Although she was a woman during a time when women were not as educated as were men, "the Austen household was an ideal environment for her development as a novelist of manners," thus giving young Austen the perfect opportunity to develop as a thinker and a writer (279). Being a well-connected clergyman's daughter, Austen received an education that most young ladies of that period would not have had. Mary DeForest speculates that Austen probably knew Greek and Latin as her father tutored young men in these subjects, and, because of this, she may have had a semblance of a classical education (99). While it is unknown whether Austen had the opportunity to read the great classical philosophers directly, many scholars assume that she did "inherit" them through classic works of literature, such as Shakespeare and Chaucer, and through her contemporaries, such as Samuel Richardson (Emsley, *Philosophy* 18). Although scholars do not know the exact extent of Austen's education, she did have access to the great works of literature by which she could have obtained an understanding of philosophical issues.

While Austen's philosophical education remains vastly unknown, Austen was very educated in matters of Christianity. Austen was the seventh child of the rector of Steventon, Hampshire, born on December 16, 1775 (Grey 279). Being a child of a clergyman, Austen would have no doubt been educated in the Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer*. Irene Collins in her

book *Jane Austen: The Parson's Daughter* contends that it was under her father's guidance that Austen "learnt to regard Christianity as a reasonable and practical doctrine which made sense in this world as well as offering hope for the next" (xviii). Not only did Austen learn to appreciate the tenets of Christianity in general, but she was also well educated in the Bible itself. As Song Cho suggests, Austen's knowledge of "the Scriptures would have come in large part from her upbringing as the daughter of an Anglican clergyman" (213). Additionally, Austen would have been brought up with the teachings of the Anglican Catechism, which "represented moral behaviour as the visible part of a human being's duty to God" (Collins, *Parson's* 237). Although Austen's novels are largely silent in regards to direct depictions of religious devotion, she understands that one's outward moral behavior is indicative of one's inward relationship with God. As a result of her father's profession, her upbringing, and the Christianized culture, Austen would have been readily aware of what the Bible teaches about the theological virtues, even if she was not aware of specific philosophers' teachings.

In addition to her teachings from her father, Austen extensively read collections of sermons, her favorite of which was Bishop Thomas Sherlock's 1772 *Several Discourses Preached at the Temple Church* (Koppel 17). As well as being popular preacher, Sherlock was educated at Cambridge and later became a master at the same university, resulting in sermons that built on the teachings of past theologians and philosophers ("Sherlock, Thomas"). Sherlock was very unlike other preachers of Austen's day, such as Hugh Blair, who were considered "society preachers" and whose morality was detached and abstract rather than concrete and certain (Walls 53). Andrew Walls contends that Sherlock's "published sermons have a solidity, earnestness and concern for fundamentals which doubtless accounts for their continued appeal in the very different world of Jane Austen" (58). Part of Sherlock's solidity and earnestness that

Austen so loved was due to his account of the theological virtues. Sherlock states, “Faith has ever been the principle of religion, and must ever continue so to be; for, when all other gifts shall cease, faith, hope, and charity will be the only gospel graces which time shall not destroy” (255). Austen’s characters certainly come to realize this enduring quality of the gifts of faith, hope, and love. Thus, in addition to Austen’s education in great books and her father’s teachings, she learned about the theological virtues by reading some of her favorite preachers, which further indicates that her novels are more fundamentally rooted in Christian thought than current scholarship admits.

Furthermore, Austen’s three surviving prayers indicate her deep concern for issues of Christianity, particularly the theological virtues. Irene Collins in *Jane Austen and the Clergy* speculates that Austen wrote the prayers in order to be read for the whole family on the evenings when Austen served as the head of the household, due to her father’s death and Cassandra’s occasional absence (193). These prayers are of a communal nature in that Austen wrote them for her family, and her siblings copied them out afterward. In every prayer, Austen mimics *The Book of Common Prayer* as evidenced by the fact that she ends each one with the Lord’s Prayer (Stovel 188). Austen directly addresses the theological virtue of charity in her third prayer, asking God to incline them “to think humbly of ourselves, to be only severe in the examination of our own conduct, to consider our fellow-creatures with kindness, and judge of all they say and do with that charity which we would desire from them ourselves” (*Prayers* 5). It seems to be exactly this moral lesson that Austen’s heroines have to learn throughout the course of her novels; for example, both Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennet have to learn to be more charitable in their estimations of others. Although it is well established that Austen herself was no saint and was often uncharitable in her depictions of certain characters (Emsley, “Charity”

par. 1-7), she was also a deeply religious person who was concerned with issues of morality and ethics as evidenced by her prayers.

Regardless of whether or not Austen had a direct knowledge of what Aquinas himself purports regarding the theological virtues, she no doubt had an excellent understanding of the biblical notions concerning the theological virtues and an indirect knowledge of Aristotelian themes through great, classic works of literature and contemporary philosophers. In Austen's combining of the Christian and the Aristotelian, she mimics what Aquinas did centuries before her, although she does so in her social commentaries and Aquinas does so in a decidedly philosophical way. Alasdair MacIntyre states in his work *After Virtue* that it is Austen's "uniting the Christian and Aristotelian themes in a determinate social context that makes Jane Austen the last great effective imaginative voice in the tradition of thought about, and the practice of, the virtues" (223). Although it is doubtful that Austen is the last writer to give voice to the tradition of virtue ethics, she does give new light to the heavy philosophical discussion of the theological virtues in Aquinas. As Emsley states, "Jane Austen participates in a tradition of philosophical thought that runs from Plato and Aristotle through to Augustine, Aquinas, and the works of such writers as Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton" ("Charity" par. 10). Throughout her novels, Austen applies the Christian and Aristotelian virtues in her humorous and often satirical social commentaries. As a result of her combination of the Christian and Aristotelian, Austen's work is the perfect conduit for an application of virtue ethics and Christian literary theory.

Conclusion

In Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the combination of Christian and virtue ethic approaches is in the loving and kind character of Jane, the eldest of the Bennet sisters. In addition, several other female characters in long nineteenth century British novels poignantly

practice the theological virtues in their trust and generosity toward others, particularly Cecilia from Burney's *Cecilia*, Fanny from Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Helen from Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Margaret from Gaskell's *North and South*. In order to develop this, I will first provide a review of existing scholarship about religious and virtue ethic approaches to Austen, statements made about Jane, stylistic approaches to *Pride and Prejudice*, and character analyses of Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret. Next, I will begin the case study of Jane Bennet by analyzing her general practice of the theological virtues as well as providing a defense against scholars' claims that she is weak-minded or naïve by showing her active portrayal of the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Subsequently, I will continue the Jane Bennet case study by performing a stylistic analysis of Jane's own syntax, focusing on the adversative conjunction "but" in her letters to Elizabeth that demonstrates the theological virtues.

Afterwards, I will compare and contrast Jane to Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret in order to show that Jane's characterization is not a singular occurrence in Austen's works or in her contemporaries' works. Lastly, I will summarize my findings and offer final comments on the importance of virtuous characters who reveal Christian principles.

In this study, I seek to close the gap in scholarship associated with Jane Bennet and characters like her, yet I also aim to demonstrate one technique that can make Christian literary theory and virtue ethics valuable to literary criticism at large through an analysis of the theological virtues. Furthermore, I intend to illustrate the importance of these two theories and characters who personify Christian ideals through my examinations of Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret. Stylistics aids this goal by offering an objective method of viewing Jane's faith, hope, and love through the very structure her own words. Although *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *North and South* are their respective authors' most famous novels, I have

included the less famous *Cecilia* and *Mansfield Park* in order to reveal the recurrence of characters who practice the Christian theological virtues in long nineteenth century British novels. While some characters are protagonists and others are minor characters, their positions in the novels are not as important as the truths they convey. Christian literary theory and virtue ethics coincide with the valuable truth of the theological virtues, which Austen, Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell depict throughout their portrayals of Jane, Fanny, Cecilia, Helen, and Margaret.

Chapter 2

“You Will Not Laugh Me out of My Opinion”:¹

A Literature Review

In the near two-hundred years since Francis Burney’s, Jane Austen’s, Charlotte Brontë’s, and Elizabeth Gaskell’s works were published, they have garnered the attention of both young and old readers in addition to both pop-culture and academia, particularly Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, which serves as the case study for this thesis. This novel has captured such wide-ranging attention perhaps because it has something for everyone: a little satiric humor mixed right alongside deep and meaningful meditations on what it means to be a good person. Because of this wide array of themes, it should come as no surprise that literary scholars are enamored with *Pride and Prejudice*. It often seems as though critics evaluate and analyze anything even remotely related to Austen’s novel. For example, scholars and fans incorporate or investigate pedestrianism, masturbation, zombies, and all manner of other things in *Pride and Prejudice*.² However, such nuanced and specific issues seem secondary to the religious and ethical matters in the novel. Recent and seminal scholars analyze both these matters (religious and ethical) via Christianity and virtue in Austen’s novel, but none appears to analyze the minor character of Jane Bennet as a representation of the theological virtues, which the combined approach of Christian literary theory and virtue ethics reveals. This chapter will review and analyze existing criticism regarding virtue ethic and religious approaches to Austen’s novels, the character of Jane Bennet, the letters and style of *Pride and Prejudice*, and the characters of Burney’s Cecilia Beverly, Austen’s Fanny Price, Brontë’s Helen Burns, and Gaskell’s Margaret Hale.

Current State of Scholarship

Before reviewing the scholarship that analyzes the above listed topics, it is important to acknowledge the current state of scholarship that allows for a female-focused study. In particular, feminist scholars pave the way for a close look at female characters in literature. Regarding Austen scholarship specifically, many critics note that Austen's portrayal of female characters is similar to ideas found in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.³ Lloyd Brown's 1973 "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition" is a seminal piece that has influenced Austenian feminist scholarship throughout the past several decades. In this work, Brown is wary of scholars who attempt to apply twentieth century feminism to authors writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (322). Rather, Brown argues that Austen's "themes are comparable with the eighteenth-century feminism of . . . Wollstonecraft insofar as such feminism questioned certain masculine assumptions in society" (324). More recently, Miriam Ascarelli in "A Feminist Connection: Jane Austen and Mary Wollstonecraft" further explores Austen's similarity to Wollstonecraft. Ascarelli argues that, though Austen's voice is "gentler" than Wollstonecraft's, Austen nevertheless questions women's role in society (par. 3). Both Brown and Ascarelli acknowledge the importance of Austen's revolutionary portrayal of female characters by comparing her to one of the most famous proto-feminists. While I will not use a feminist approach in this study, it is vital to recognize that this critical approach yields a friendly environment for a case study of a minor female character.

Additionally, while there are many biographies about Austen, Irene Collins's 1998 *Jane Austen: The Parson's Daughter* is a biography that paves the way for a Christian virtue ethic approach to Austen's novels. Published within the last thirty years, Collins's work investigates the ways in which Austen's familial connections to the clergy affected her novels both directly

and indirectly.⁴ In this study, Collins traces Austen's life while focusing on how her religious upbringing influenced both her life and her work. This is a mighty task, as Collins states, "In her [Austen's] writing, as in her life, she was to be typically reticent with regard to religious devotion and to concentrate instead on providing examples of good and evil in people's conduct toward each other and in their attitude to society at large" (xviii). Although Austen is discrete in her references to religion in her novels, she was nonetheless a devout follower of Christ (xviii). While Collins does not directly reference any of the other scholars mentioned in this literature review, she does reach a similar conclusion from a different critical perspective. She also does a thorough job of exploring Austen's often subtle faith and thus paves the way for other scholars to further investigate elements of religion in Austen's novels. Without feminist scholars such as Brown and Ascarelli and biographers such as Collins, a project such as this, which analyzes female characters through a Christian virtue ethic approach, would not be feasible.

Virtue Ethic Approaches to Austen's Works

Although one does not necessarily have to apply virtue ethics and Christian literary theory congruously, many Austen scholars who look at issues of morality also look at issues of religion, specifically Christianity. C. S. Lewis, an influential theologian, philosopher, and literary critic, analyzes Austen's six novels in his 1954 article "A Note on Jane Austen." This article is a proven touchstone piece for any scholar looking at connections between morality and Christianity in Austen's novels. Lewis argues that in *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Northanger Abbey*, Austen uses words and phrases such as "good sense," "fortitude," "impropriety, and "generous candour" to emphasize "the religious background of the author's ethical position" (361-3). He then states that *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* differ from the other four novels because their heroines are often solitary (364). However, Lewis states that

Mansfield Park fails due to “insipidity,” whereas *Persuasion* succeeds because of its lack thereof (366-7), which corresponds to the many later critics who consider *Mansfield Park* to be the dullest of Austen’s novels.⁵ Toward the end of the essay, Lewis implies that Austen’s moral code is a strict set of rules moderated by charity; he states, “If charity is the poetry of conduct and honour the rhetoric of conduct, Jane Austen’s ‘principles’ might be described the grammar of conduct” (370). Lewis additionally claims, “The hard core of morality and even of religion seems to me to be just what makes good comedy possible” (370). Thus, the satiric and humorous elements of Austen’s novels would not be possible without the elements of ethics and religion. In addition, Lewis asserts that Austen’s work relies on her heroines learning the “grammar of conduct” often through a variety of comic incidents (370). Although Lewis only briefly mentions Jane Bennet in regards to her relationship with Elizabeth (364), Lewis is one of the first modern critics to look at issues of morality and ethics in conjunction with religion in Austen’s novels.

Originally published in 1966, Gilbert Ryle’s “Jane Austen and the Moralists” is also a proven, seminal, and significant piece for anyone looking at issues of morality in Austen’s novels. In this article, Ryle argues that Austen inherits “Aristotelian oxygen” through Anthony Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury, an English politician, philanthropist, and social reformer who was well versed in matters of philosophy (184), rather than inheriting morals from Calvinists (176). Ryle argues that Austen is deeply concerned with moral issues, stating that “she [writes] partly from a deep interest in some perfectly general, even theoretical questions about human nature and human conduct,” but Ryle also claims that she is not a moralizer or philosopher (168). Unlike any of the other scholars mentioned in this chapter, Ryle resolutely asserts that Austen is a secular moralist (180). While his arguments are clear, Ryle does not offer any concrete evidence that Cooper’s Aristotelianism influenced Austen other than the fact that they seem to be

saying the same thing. In addition, Ryle never responds to Lewis's argument that Austen is a Christian moralist, even though Lewis published his assessment a decade earlier. Although Ryle does not talk about virtue in Austen's works specifically, his assertions about Aristotelian ethical ideas in Austen's novels certainly lay the foundation for an investigation of virtue in her novels.

Alasdair MacIntyre, a renowned virtue ethicist, in his book *After Virtue* also argues that Austen combines biblical and ethical themes in *Pride and Prejudice*. This work is highly celebrated and respected, and it has been influential in a recent revival of virtue ethics through its defense of this ancient ethical theory and attack on modern ethical theories. Although this book is a justification of virtue ethics rather than a work of literary criticism, MacIntyre precisely and convincingly establishes Austen in the longstanding virtue ethic tradition. He uses Austen several times as an example of virtue ethics in classic works of literature, stating that it is in Austen's "uniting of the Christian and Aristotelian themes in a determinate social context" that makes her "the last great representative of the classical tradition of the virtues" (223, 226). MacIntyre primarily analyzes the virtue of constancy in Austen's novels, particularly looking at the character of Fanny Price from *Mansfield Park* (225). He also combines the perspectives of Ryle, who believes Austen to be Aristotelian, and Lewis, who believes her to be an essentially Christian writer (172). *After Virtue* is a highly influential piece in both virtue ethics at large and in virtue ethic approaches to Austen.

More recently, Sarah Emsley analyzes all of Austen's works in light of traditional virtue ethics in her 2005 book *Jane Austen's Philosophy of the Virtues*. Although many scholars briefly note themes of virtue in Austen's novels, Emsley thoroughly investigates different virtues or aspects of virtue ethics in each of Austen's works, including her juvenilia, in the order in which they were written. Emsley first looks at prudence in *Lady Susan* and *Northanger Abbey*, secondly

at happiness in *Sense and Sensibility*, thirdly at justice in *Pride and Prejudice*, fourthly at the contemplative life in *Mansfield Park*, fifthly at charity in *Emma*, and finally at the balance of the virtues in *Persuasion*. Emsley primarily uses Aristotle's and Aquinas's claims about the virtues to argue that Austen follows in that tradition; however, Emsley states that Austen "can do things that philosophers writing treatises cannot: she can take an ethical concept and turn it into a 'living argument' " (41). Emsley's book is thoughtful, well organized, and comprehensive in her analysis of the virtues in Austen's novels. When analyzing how Austen may have acquired an understanding of the virtues, Emsley cites Ryle and his assertion that Austen may have inherited the virtues through Cooper as part of her argument (19-20). In addition, Emsley agrees with Gene Koppel⁶ in his assessment of Austen as a Christian author (170-1). However, Emsley disagrees with MacIntyre's argument that Austen's heroines find their teleological end in marriage; Emsley argues instead that the heroines' *telos* is simply an education in virtue (21). Emsley in *Jane Austen's Philosophy of the Virtues* does a wonderful job at continuing the conversation of Christianity and virtue in Austen's novels.

Religious Approaches to Austen's Works

Although Christian literary theory is still being developed, many critics investigate the extent to which principles of religion, and more particularly principles of Christianity, influenced Austen and her writing. Marilyn Butler in her highly esteemed work *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* delineates several cultural, ideological, and literary influences that may have impacted Austen's writing, including religion, sentimentalism, the Jacobean novel, the anti-Jacobean, and other novelists. The second half of Butler's work convincingly and thoroughly analyzes each of Austen's novels and unfinished works, according to the order they were written, in light of the influences as outlined in the first half. Regarding the influence of religion in Austen's novels,

Butler does not investigate the nuances of Austen's religious opinions but rather seeks to prove that her novels indicate she is a "conservative Christian moralist" (164). Butler particularly combats the notion that *Pride and Prejudice* is a progressive novel, arguing instead that the novel indicates a conservative understanding of moral enlightenment (195, 213). Although Butler does not cite Lewis's "A Note on Jane Austen," many of her arguments seem very similar to Lewis's assertion that Austen was a Christian "grammarist" when it comes to issues of morality. While Butler's work is not completely dedicated to issues of religion in Austen's novels, she does briefly explore this issue in her chapter on *Pride and Prejudice*. In addition, Butler lays the groundwork for more focused investigations of religion and Christianity in Austen's work by providing the broader contextual issues.

Over a decade after Butler published her assessment, Gene Koppel in his 1988 book *The Religious Dimension of Jane Austen's Novels* writes an in-depth study of religious elements in Austen's novels. In this book, Koppel explores two possible approaches for the religious themes in Austen's novels: that of a traditional Christian perspective or that of a modern religious perspective, "which anticipates in important ways insights of modern religious writers" (1). Koppel uses Austen's first three novels, her non-fiction work, and works by authors Austen enjoyed to argue for the first approach to the religious themes. Regarding the second approach, Koppel primarily uses Austen's last three novels to show how her combination of the secular and religious anticipates the modern paradigm of a contingent and non-providential universe. Despite the fact that Koppel admits he favors the second approach (1), his argument is balanced, thoughtful, and includes a response to many critical perspectives, including those of Stanley Fish, Marilyn Butler, C. S. Lewis, and Susan Morgan. Particularly, Koppel disagrees with Ryle, who argues that Austen is a secular moralist drawing from the Aristotelian tradition. Koppel

contends that Ryle's argument is "not really an accurate one" and instead opines that it is through Aquinas that Austen inherits Aristotelian ideas (3). As seems to be often the case, Koppel, like many other scholars, studies themes of Christianity and morality/virtue in Austen's novels in conjunction with each other rather than separately. Although Koppel does not cite MacIntyre in his book, his argument against Ryle is reminiscent of MacIntyre's assertion that Austen combines the Christian and Aristotelian. In addition, Koppel largely agrees with Butler's assessment that the Evangelical reform movement influenced Austen, but he differs from Butler by arguing that an "inward religious intensity" influenced Austen rather than any outside influence (5). Koppel's work investigates issues of morality in her novels and provides a balanced review of both approaches one might take when looking at issues of religion in Austen's novels.

Like Koppel, Alison Searle in "The Moral Imagination: Biblical Imperatives, Narrative and Hermeneutics in *Pride and Prejudice*" also investigates themes of religion in Austen's most famous novel; however, Searle connects issues of religion with issues of virtue more explicitly than does Koppel. This article has a wide scope in that she compares Austen's third-person omniscient narrator to that of the Bible's narrator, investigates Austen's moral vision in light of biblical theology, Aristotelian ethics, and modern relativism, and analyzes Austen's portrayal of prejudice in light of hermeneutics (17). Searle concludes that all three of these points allow readers to better understand the moral perspective of both Austen and her characters (30). She refers to the combination of religion and virtue by stating that it is Austen's "commitment to Christian metaphysics or ontology as well as an Aristotelian practical morality that defines the notions of 'love' and 'justice' against which her characters measure themselves, undergirding also the standards that regulate their relationships to others" (20). In her thoughtful and

convincing examination of morality in relation to biblical theology and narrative in *Pride and Prejudice*, Searle concurs with Lewis, MacIntyre, and Koppel in their assessments of Austen's portrayal of Christian virtue (20, 28). Searle's article provides a helpful bridge between issues of Christianity and issues of morality/virtue; however, she does not apply either of these things to the loving and kind character of Jane Bennet.

Scholarship Associated with Jane Bennet

Although many works investigate themes of Christianity and virtue in Austen's novels, it appears as though none acknowledge Jane Bennet as a vehicle for portraying these themes. Many of the aforementioned critics dismiss Jane in some form or another. For example, Butler states that Jane is "an ineffective guide" and that readers do not know if she "thinks at all" (216), despite her earlier statement that Jane "alone resists taking a prejudiced, hasty or ill-natured view" (211). Koppel briefly gives credit to Jane's character by arguing that she is "very bright" but also says that she is "very simple" without ever truly explaining what he means by the latter (73). In addition, Koppel credits this combination of intelligence and simplicity either to genes inherited by her intelligent father and simple mother or to Jane's desire to do the opposite of her father's contemptuous and occasionally cruel actions, thereby refusing Jane any credit for her own self-education and cultivation of the virtues (73). Contrary to many of her predecessors, Searle does acknowledge Jane for being virtuous and growing in virtue, stating, "Though quite simple in her goodness, Jane does achieve a degree of moral growth throughout the novel, by refusing to again become the dupe of Miss Bingley's regard" ("Imagination" 20). However, Searle only addresses Jane's character in order to contrast it with Elizabeth's, rather than giving Jane her due diligence (20). Similar to Koppel, Searle also denies Jane much intelligence in her goodness, instead positing her as simple rather than thoughtful (20). Although Searle addresses

biblical and religious themes in *Pride and Prejudice*, she denies Jane the ability to further demonstrate such themes. Scholars interested in the religious elements of Austen's novels do not seem to acknowledge that Jane has any such element.

In addition, scholars who analyze themes of virtue and morality do not seem to explicitly state that Jane Bennet could represent virtue. Lewis only mentions Jane in reference to Elizabeth never being alone ("Note" 364), and MacIntyre does not once mention Jane, even though she is perhaps the most consistent character in *Pride and Prejudice*. Ryle argues that Jane is a weak character, stating that she is "quite uncocksure," "too diffident," and that "she does not resent being put upon or even realize that she is being put upon. There is no proper pride, and so no fight in her" (171). Ryle contrasts Jane with all the other characters in *Pride and Prejudice* who either have "too much or too little pride, pride of a bad or silly sort or pride of a good sort, sham pride or genuine pride and so forth" (171). Contrary to her sister and Mr. Collins, Jane does not have enough pride and therefore fails to teach any adequate lesson about morality in the text, according to Ryle. Emsley also dismisses Jane by stating that she is a "virtuous figure" but does not think "beyond . . . practicalities to a greater good" (*Philosophy* 24). Unlike Ryle, Emsley contrasts Jane to other characters in Austen's repertoire, contending that Jane is like Charlotte Lucas, Lady Russell, and Catherine Morland in that they do not reach any plane of higher philosophical thought because they do not grow as characters (24). Scholars like Emsley who are concerned with Christianity and virtue in Austen's novels do not appear to acknowledge Jane's virtuousness or her Christ-like character.

Scholars interested in topics other than Christianity or ethics seem to similarly deny Jane Bennet's importance as a character. For instance, Allan Bloom in his highly acclaimed 1993 book *Love and Friendship* focuses on *eros*, or erotic love, as portrayed throughout literature and

includes a chapter on *Pride and Prejudice*. He argues that Austen combines the thoughts of Rousseau, a modern Romantic, and Aristotle, a classical thinker, because of her grouping romantic/sexual love with friendship, as evidenced by the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy (196). While much of Bloom's argument is thoughtful and persuasive, he dismisses Jane and Mr. Bingley's relationship as having such potential. He states, "The nice Jane Bennet could not be the heroine of one of Jane Austen's novels precisely because she is too nice. . . . Austen punishes this genial vice in Jane by providing her with a husband who is a bit too weak and accommodating [when compared to Darcy]" (204). To state that Bingley is a punishment for Jane's "vice" of being too nice denies her the reputation of being a virtuous character. In addition, this statement seems to contradict Bloom's earlier assertions that Jane and Elizabeth are the only decent members of the Bennet family (199) and that Jane and Elizabeth are "self-made" in the sense that they had to teach themselves how to be good people (203). A character as weak as the one Bloom paints Jane to be would not be strong enough to self-educate as he suggests. In addition, Bloom seems to have no concept of friendship between two females, as he primarily focuses on how erotic love between a man and a woman influences romantic love. Despite the fact that Bloom dedicates a book to investigating themes of love and friendship, he denies the fact that Jane is one of the best of friends and most loving of characters in Austen's collected works.

Denise Blue in her short article entitled "Saint Jane" similarly dismisses the character of Jane Bennet. In her article, Blue briefly addresses why Austen would allow Jane to have the same forename as herself, particularly because Blue contends that Elizabeth is the character to which Austen bestows much of her own personality (32). Perhaps because of the article's brevity (it totals at two pages), Blue spends little time with the text of *Pride and Prejudice* itself and

instead equivocates seemingly faulty assertions. Blue includes only four quotes about Jane from Austen's novel, all of which assert Jane's "saintliness" (32). Rather than take Elizabeth's and the narrator's statements about Jane at their word, Blue argues that Jane is "harmless to the extreme" and is "personified Virtue . . . to a comically exaggerated extent" (33). Not only does Blue appear to impart her own opinions while neglecting what the text actually states, but also much of her article seems to be based on pure speculation. After Blue briefly quotes *Pride and Prejudice*, she states, "It is pleasant to imagine the Austens laughing together over author Jane's creation of a Jane who is purely charitable in her thoughts towards others—a Jane who is never satirical, and certainly never inclined to make a joke about her neighbor" (32). While it is a generally well-established fact that Austen read her stories aloud to her family for entertainment, there is no indication that Austen creates Jane for that express purpose; Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Lydia Bennet, and Mr. Collins seem like the more probable candidates for satiric entertainment. Although this is one of the precious few articles solely dedicated to Jane, Blue spends most of it demolishing Jane's character, while speculating on things no one can know for certain.

Felicia Bonaparte in "Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*" also denies Jane any intelligence. In her article, Bonaparte investigates the extent to which the empiricist epistemological tradition is evident in Austen's novel. To do so, Bonaparte looks at instances in *Pride and Prejudice* wherein the characters read or misread texts and people and acknowledges Austen's lexicon of words that emphasize the unknowableness of truth and reality (148-9). In her argument of Austen's epistemological philosophy, Bonaparte disagrees with Ryle's assessment that Austen is not a philosopher, arguing instead that Austen was well aware of the philosophical debates at the time (142). Despite this very persuasive argument, Bonaparte denies Jane's intelligence, stating that Jane is

“the sweetest of the sisters” but is also “epistemologically the worst” and is “not a very useful guide through the complexities of life” (144-5). Later, Bonaparte contends that Jane’s and Elizabeth’s contrasting personalities “have a beneficial effect as they correct each other’s excesses” (153). Jane’s excess, then, is that she is “too flexible, too gullible, far too trusting for her own good” and is the victim “of accidental circumstances or truths selected by others” (153). Unlike any of the aforementioned scholars, Bonaparte acknowledges neither the religious nor the moral themes in the text, while simultaneously denying Jane any intelligence at all. It seems as though scholars from all different types of approaches opine that Jane Bennet is simply a shallow, naïve woman who is ignorant as to the true nature of the world around her.

Letters and Style of *Pride and Prejudice*

Although a great many scholars analyze themes of religion or virtue in Austen’s novels, and even more appear to have something (usually negative) to say about Jane Bennet, it also seems as though none examine the importance of Jane’s letters in the narrative of *Pride and Prejudice*. Considering the prominence of the epistolary novel in the late eighteenth century, it should come as no surprise that many scholars investigate Austen’s own letters and her characters’ letters. Mary Basson in “Mr. Darcy’s Letter—A Figure in the Dance” argues that Darcy’s letter is the most important one in *Pride and Prejudice* because it reinforces the dichotomy between reason and feeling as a theme in the novel (152). In addition, Basson contends that Austen favors the letter over the narrator because Darcy is a shy, introverted man and needs to gather his thoughts before committing to them, thus making the letter an essential aspect in developing Darcy’s character (159-60). Jodi Devine in “Letters and Their Role in Revealing Class and Personal Identity in *Pride and Prejudice*” argues that the letters the characters write, as well as their opinions about letter writing, are an essential aspect of their

characterization (99). For example, Caroline's focus on the appearance of a letter rather than the content reveals her shallow personality, Collins's letters indicate his attempts at gentility, and Darcy's letter expresses his high social and moral status (100-6). Although many critics write articles about other characters' letters in *Pride and Prejudice*, no scholar mentions Jane's letters to her sister as having any sort of significance.

In addition, several stylisticians examine the letters in *Pride and Prejudice*. For example, Shixing Wen in his article "A Syntactical Approach to Mr. Collins' Letter" does a grammar-focused and syntactical analysis of Collins's first letter to the Bennet family, announcing his intention to come visit them after a long estrangement between them. There are only five sentences in this long letter, which indicate even from a brief glance that Collins is prone to loquaciousness (68). In the first sentence, Wen notes a shift in subject matter that denotes Collins is experiencing conflicted emotions in that he both wants to honor his deceased father and respect his distant relatives (64). The subsequent sentences begin to reveal Collins's true nature. Wen finds that the "marvelously organized hierarchy of clauses suggests that Mr. Collins has a keen and strong sense of social status—the hierarchy in society" (66). This article is an excellent analysis that shows how the very structure of the five sentences in this particular letter expresses Collins's pompousness, arrogance, and inclination toward empty talk. While Collins's and other characters' letters are undoubtedly important, it is vital to note that Jane writes the most letters out of any character in the novel; out of the twenty-one letters mentioned, she writes five, and four of these are quoted in full. Thus, it is far past time for a stylistic analysis of Jane's letters to be done given their prominence in the narrative.

While stylisticians do not appear to directly dismiss Jane's character as many do of their literary critic counterparts, they seem to likewise largely ignore a character whose words are ripe

for stylistic analysis. With the onset of new technology, stylisticians have access to new ways to analyze a text, most notably being the branch of stylistics known as corpus stylistics, which uses computer tools to analyze repetitions in large swathes of text. Given *Pride and Prejudice's* immense and continuing popularity, many stylisticians have taken this corpus approach to Austen's most famous novel. In Michaela Mahlberg and Catherine Smith's article "Corpus Approaches to Prose Fiction: Civility and Body Language in *Pride and Prejudice*," the authors use the corpus technique in order to investigate how the word "civility" is understood and how it connects to issues of body language in *Pride and Prejudice*. They conclude that issues of civility and body language are evident through lexical repetitions of things relating to sight, suspended quotations, and the narrator's interpretation of a character's speech (457-66). Mahlberg and Smith state that these things directly lend themselves to the way in which characters are developed (464). While issues of civility and body language are central to Austen's novel, it is surprising that Mahlberg and Smith do not take the character of Jane Bennet into account, considering the fact that she is, in all likelihood, the most civil character in the novel. Despite the increasing number of methods stylisticians have available to them, none appear to use any of the methods to focus on the character of Jane Bennet.

Other stylisticians focus on one word or one punctuation mark in Austen's novels. Of the former, Victorina González-Díaz in " 'I *Quite* Detest the Man': Degree Adverbs, Female Language and Jane Austen" uses a corpus approach to investigate the use of the word "quite" in Austen's novels. She finds that some female characters, including the protagonists and Jane Bennet, are far less likely to use "quite" in their speech and, on the rare occasion they do so, they use the older sense of the adverb, whereas more frivolous characters like Mrs. Bennet and Lydia use the word in more creative ways (319). Through this, González-Díaz seems to concur with

other scholars that Jane represents traditionalism in regards to both her language and morality. González-Díaz also writes another article entitled “Round Brackets in Jane Austen” in which she discovers that Austen’s use of round brackets (or parentheses) grows and changes from her juvenilia, to her letters, and to her mature novels, finding that this change often depends on the type of narration (197). However, González-Díaz offers little theoretical application as to why these findings may be important, only stating that her findings indicate that Austen was aware of the stylistic value of round brackets (198). Although González-Díaz focuses on one word or one punctuation mark in Austen’s novels, she does not indicate that Austen may use them for the specific purpose of characterization, as in Austen’s application of the adversative conjunction “but” in Jane Bennet’s letters. Despite the prominence of Jane’s letters in the narrative and the wide range of tools stylisticians have available to them, none analyze Jane’s particular style of writing in her letters.

Analyses of Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret

No scholars seem to fully recognize Jane Bennet’s merit generally or through her letters, and there are other characters in fictional novels written in the decades around *Pride and Prejudice*’s publication that have some of Jane’s characteristics and appear to be similarly overlooked by scholars. For example, Cecilia from Burney’s *Cecilia*, Fanny from Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, Helen from Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and Margaret from Gaskell’s *North and South* often have their “softer” character traits overlooked in favor of the stronger ones or are altogether dismissed as dull. Many critics take the latter approach with Burney’s *Cecilia*, wherein the main character is often quickly dismissed as being too naïve and gullible. Rose Marie Cutting in “Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney’s Novels” argues that Burney’s female characters indicate that their author is a feminist in her “growing rebellion against the

restrictions imposed upon women” (519-20). In her analysis of Burney’s feminist characters, Cutting, like Austen scholars Brown and Ascarelli, connects Burney’s feminist awareness to Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which was published a decade after *Cecilia* (519). However, Cutting argues that Cecilia is no such feminist character and that she lacks the defiance of the minor female characters in the novel. Rather, Cutting argues that Mrs. Delvile and Lady Hornia are the independent and headstrong women in *Cecilia* (522-4). Additionally, Cutting does not consider the fact that the text often says that Cecilia herself is rational and reasonable in addition to frequently comparing her to Mrs. Delvile, which certainly implies similar independence.

Additionally, Megan Woodworth in “‘If a Man Dared Act for Himself’: Family Romance and Independence in Frances Burney’s *Cecilia*” disregards Cecilia in favor of other characters in Burney’s novel. In this article, Woodworth argues that the male characters of Burney’s novel also struggle with private and public independence (355), despite the novel’s focus on feminine agency. While Cecilia’s hope for independence depends on the men in her life, her suitor, Mortimer Delvile, who his family similarly controls, mirrors her own dependence on others (356). Although Woodworth’s focus is implicitly different from Cutting’s in her analysis of the male characters of *Cecilia*, she also dismisses Cecilia’s importance in the narrative. Despite Woodworth’s excellent points about the similarities between Cecilia’s and Mortimer’s lack of independence, she neglects to account for Cecilia’s method of gaining control over her life through acts of kindness or charity. Both Cutting and Woodworth dismiss Cecilia on the basis that she is not as interesting as other characters, even though she is not only the protagonist but also the titular character.

Similar to Cecilia, critics often consider Fanny from Austen's *Mansfield Park* as the most boring and uninteresting of Austen's heroines. Marie A. Sprayberry in "Fanny Price as Fordyce's Ideal Woman? And Why?" argues that the protagonist of *Mansfield Park* mirrors Dr. James Fordyce's mandates for women, whose *Sermons to Young Women* is read by Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* to the Bennet sisters and Austen seemingly mocks. Sprayberry contends that Fanny's intellectual accomplishments, domestic and elegant accomplishments, modesty of apparel, piety, reserve/bashfulness, softness/delicacy/meekness, and inner moral standards/adherence to principles parallel Fordyce's directives to women (par. 7-8). Although Sprayberry does acknowledge that Austen's religious background is evident in the text of *Mansfield Park* (par. 38-9), she assumes that Fordyce influenced Austen rather than the New Testament's emphasis on the theological virtues. Additionally, Sprayberry neglects to note Wollstonecraft's influence on Austen's portrayal of even her most traditional female characters, particularly given the fact that Wollstonecraft directly condemns Fordyce's assertions about female virtue unsupported by reason (Wollstonecraft 94).

As with Sprayberry, Joyce L. Jenkins in "The Puzzle of Fanny Price" also misinterprets Fanny's timidity as passivity. However, in contrast to Sprayberry, Jenkins contends that Fanny is neither an exemplar of feminine agency nor a parody of traditional and conservative values. Rather, Jenkins argues, "Fanny's character constitutes a criticism of passivity, and of rigid adherence to moral rules" (347). Additionally, Jenkins notes that "Austen condemns the idea that women should be passive dolls who do not think for themselves, but she does not parody the traditional idea that women should be sweet, gentle, and caring" (347). This statement again reinforces the idea that Austen is both traditional and innovative in her approach to portraying female characters. Additionally, Jenkins references Ryle's assertion of *Mansfield Park* as

“didactic” (Jenkins 346; Ryle 174) and uses MacIntyre’s assertions for the starting point of her own centrist argument (347). However, Jenkins mistakes Fanny’s shyness and temperance for passivity, which sounds all too similar to the claims made about Jane Bennet. It seems as though scholars like Sprayberry and Jenkins continue to posit Fanny as dull and passive despite her representation of faith, hope, and love, which I will argue in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

Like Jane Bennet, critics often overlook Helen of Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* in favor of the brash and brazen protagonist. For example, Maria Lamonaca in “Jane’s Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in *Jane Eyre*” contends that, as in most Victorian novels, the themes of religion and gender identity in Brontë’s novel are inseparable (246). She argues that Brontë was undoubtedly familiar with pamphlets and books on conduct and marriage, such as Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women*, and may have written *Jane Eyre* in response such marital and feminine ideals (248, 261). Additionally, Lamonaca endeavors to resolve the feminist *bildungsroman* and Jane Eyre’s spiritual autonomy with the end of the novel, but she concludes that the heroine “may not have entirely freed herself from the dangers of human idolatry” (257). However, in her attempt to reconcile the ending of the novel, Lamonaca largely posits St. John Rivers and Mr. Rochester as the opposing forces in Jane’s life (250), rather than acknowledging Helen’s representation of both the feminine and theological by which Jane can model her life.

Similarly, Emily Griesinger in “Charlotte Brontë’s Religion: Faith, Feminism, and *Jane Eyre*” also disregards Helen’s importance in the narrative. In her article, Griesinger attempts to merge the themes of faith and feminism in *Jane Eyre* by positing it as a religious *bildungsroman* through exploring Brontë’s own religion and tracing Jane Eyre’s spiritual growth throughout the novel (48). Additionally, Griesinger agrees with Lamonaca’s assertions that Brontë’s novel is both feminist and Christian in that the protagonist does not need to rely on masculine examples

of how to live out one's faith but rather that Jane's spiritual growth relies upon her direct experiences with the spiritual realm (53). However, Griesinger largely overlooks Helen's influence on Jane Eyre's religious journey, arguing that Helen's ability to be loving and kind toward others is a kind of "stoicism" instead of a depiction of the theological virtues (47). Although most scholars acknowledge that Helen partially represents the Christian faith in the novel to the main character, critics do not seem to recognize that she also demonstrates the theological virtues and is important in her own right, rather than just being beneficial to the protagonist.

Margaret, the protagonist of Gaskell's *North and South*, is certainly the strongest and most willful of the characters in this comparison to Jane Bennet, but it seems critics often ignore Margaret's "softer" character traits. In "Women, Mobility and Modernity in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*," Wendy Parkins contends that Margaret's mobility throughout the novel paves the way for more modern depictions of women (507). Parkins argues that Margaret's importance as a character stems from her independence and her ability to move freely throughout the novel and that she is an active participant of women's increasing agency during the early Victorian era (508). She contends, "*North and South* represents modernity as a process in which women participate and considers how women's location within modernity may offer new possibilities for agency" (518). While Margaret's mobility is certainly impressive for women at that time, Parkins neglects to account for the fact that Margaret's charity is often what spurs her to visit others.

Likewise, Sarah Dredge in "Negotiating 'A Woman's Work': Philanthropy to Social Science in Gaskell's *North and South*" does not regard Margaret's charity as a virtue. Dredge argues that in the 1850s, the decade in which *North and South* was published, female

philanthropy was changing from “amateur charity” to “professional activity” and that Margaret represents this shift (83). While Dredge acknowledges Margaret’s benevolence and charity, she argues that this quality is passive in that she acts for others rather than herself (87). In addition, Dredge argues that the Victorians viewed philanthropy simply as a sentiment and not a principle (83), even though Margaret seems to act charitably toward others in her community based on principle rather than sentiment. Both Parkins and Dredge pass over Margaret’s representation of the theological virtues in favor of her independent nature or dismiss these virtues as passive. Such accusations of passivity are similar to assertions made about Jane and Fanny. It seems as though scholars dismiss Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret just as much as they do Jane.⁷

Summary and Conclusion

Given the wide array of scholarship about Austen’s work and *Pride and Prejudice* in particular, it is surprising to find that criticism does not seem to appreciate the protagonist’s closest friend and confidante, Jane Bennet. Although feminist critics such as Brown and Ascarelli and biographers such as Collins lay the groundwork for a Christian virtue ethic approach to female characters, recent and seminal scholars who focus on issues of religion or virtue in Austen’s work do not note Jane as anything other than her sister’s weak-minded foil. Scholars such as Lewis, Ryle, MacIntyre, and Emsley focus on the importance of morality and virtue in Austen’s novels, while denying Jane the ability to be truly moral or virtuous. Other critics, like Butler, Koppel, and Searle, recognize the importance of Christian and religious themes in Austen’s work but give little credit to the character who embodies Christian principles like forgiveness and charity. These aforementioned scholars also do not acknowledge Jane for being intelligent, independent, strong, or concerned with a greater good. Critics who focus on topics other than religion or virtue also dismiss Jane as a character worth investigating. Bloom,

Blue, and Bonaparte give Jane credit for one thing while denying her credit for another. These scholars all acknowledge Jane for being sweet and unprejudiced but do not give her recognition for being purposeful in her sweetness and unprejudicedness. Not only is there no lengthy study dedicated to Jane, but even when scholars do briefly address her, they dismiss her as unintelligent.

In addition to a lack of literary analyses of Jane Bennet herself, the field of stylistics likewise ignores this character. Stylisticians like Mahlberg, Smith, and González-Díaz focus on issues of civility or a specific grammatical entity without ever looking at Jane's speech patterns and what they may indicate about textual themes. Despite the prominence of Jane's letters in the text of *Pride and Prejudice*, scholars such as Basson, Devine, and Wen focus on other characters' letters rather than acknowledging Jane's (who has the most letters in the novel) as having substance or meaning. Literary critics appear to similarly dismiss female characters from other novels who demonstrate the theological virtues. Cutting and Woodworth dismiss the titular character of Burney's *Cecilia* as dull and passive. Similarly, Sprayberry and Jenkins contend that Austen's Fanny from *Mansfield Park* is also tedious and too reflective rather than active. Lamonaca and Griesinger ignore Helen from Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as a representation of the theological virtues. Dredge and Parkins respectively focus on the autonomy and passivity of Margaret from Gaskell's *North and South* rather than acknowledge Margaret's charitable actions toward those in her community. The conversation associated with Jane Bennet and characters like her needs to be expanded and corrected.

The original title of *Pride and Prejudice* was "First Impressions," and much of the text is a critique on mistaken first impressions, yet critics continually judge Jane Bennet and characters like her based on their first notions of them rather than delving deeper into their characterization.

Although Elizabeth Bennet without a doubt leaves a strong and favorable impression on readers, Jane has her own kind of strength that should leave readers with a more favorable idea of her upon closer inspection. The significance of Jane's, Cecilia's, Fanny's, Helen's, and Margaret's characters is not in Elizabeth's pluck or wittiness; rather, their strength comes from their intentional choices to have faith in people's goodness, hope for the best outcomes, and love for all people, without exception. Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret may not be the strong and witty female characters that Elizabeth Bennet is, but they have a different kind of strength: the strength of the theological virtues. However, this strength would not be apparent were it not for the united lens of religion (through Christian literary theory) and morality (through virtue ethics), with the added assistance of stylistics. The character of Jane Bennet from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* serves as a case study to reveal the importance of female characters who demonstrate the theological virtues in long nineteenth century British novels.

Chapter 3

“Truth[s] Universally Acknowledged”:¹

Jane Bennet’s Practice of the Theological Virtues

Although there are a great many British novels in the long nineteenth century that deal with issues of manners, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* is widely regarded to be the most famous novel of manners ever written. *Encyclopædia Britannica* states that a novel of manners is “a work of fiction that re-creates a social world, conveying with finely detailed observation the customs, values, and mores of a highly developed and complex society” and ranges from Frances Burney in the late eighteenth century to Evelyn Waugh in the early twentieth century (“Novel of Manners”). While some late nineteenth and early twentieth century novelists of manners, such as Edith Wharton and Henry James, do not seem to be concerned with depicting virtue, writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, like Jane Austen and Frances Burney, certainly are. Although such novelists often satirized a society’s mores during the long nineteenth century, Elsie B. Michie claims that Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* replaces the more philosophical understandings of virtue with depictions of the successes and failings of manners (375). Thus, in Austen’s time, manners were often synonymous with virtues. Despite this general acknowledgment of manners as morals² in Austen’s novels,³ there seems to be little to no scholarship associated with perhaps the most moral and mannerly of Austen’s characters: the character of Jane Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*, who is a prototypical exemplar of both virtue and manners. When seen through the Christian virtue ethic perspective, Jane’s representation of the theological virtues, her manners, her practice of the cardinal virtues, and her cultivation of the virtues reveal Austen’s portrayal of her as a rounded and virtuous character.

Theological Virtues

Jane demonstrates the Christian theological virtues throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, particularly the virtue of faith. Austen readily portrays this virtue by way of Jane's inherent faith in the goodness of humanity. Early in the novel, the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet makes the comment to her sister, "Oh you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life. . . . —to take the good of anybody's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad—belongs to you alone" (Austen, *Pride* 11). Jane is not stupid, as most critics seem to argue;⁴ she knows that there is evil in the world, yet she deliberately chooses to see the good in people instead. As stated in the first chapter, faith involves an act of both the will and the intellect. Thus, for Jane to have faith in humanity, she had to at some point make the intellectual decision to do so. In addition, faith requires a strong act of the will and is not a virtue that one exercises passively. Susan Morgan states, "Jane's optimism has to do with her faith that there is much in life that is beyond what she knows and that certainty as to the minds and hearts of others is rare indeed" (65). Although many scholars tend to think that Jane is a weak-minded and naïve girl,⁵ when seen through the Christian virtue ethic perspective, her ability to have faith in others informs readers otherwise.

Jane's practice of the virtue of faith is particularly poignant after she becomes engaged to Mr. Bingley. When discussing the issue of Bingley's sisters with Elizabeth, Jane states, "But when they see, as I trust they will, that their brother is happy with me, they will learn to be contented and we shall be on good terms again; though we can never be what we once were to each other" (*Pride* 238). Jane has faith in the Bingley sisters' goodness and love for their brother, although her rationality tempers her expectations. Elizabeth exclaims that it is "the most

unforgiving speech . . . that I ever heard you utter. Good girl!” (239). Jane trusts that the sisters will be friends with her once more, but she does not practice a blind faith where she is ignorant as to the true nature of people around her, thereby demonstrating both the general pattern of her character and her maturation. Although she is wrong in her initial evaluations of Mr. Wickham and Caroline Bingley, Jane’s faith in humanity causes her to be “right in two important instances, in detecting goodness where it really was—in Bingley and in Darcy” (Butler 211). Jane is also correct in her faith that Charlotte will be moderately happy with Mr. Collins and in her faith for Lydia’s eventual marriage to Wickham. Matthew 10:16 calls Christians to be “wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves” (*Authorized King James Version*), and while Jane is certainly as harmless as a dove, she also has the ability to be discerning through her practice of faith, which requires an act of the intellect in addition to an act of the will. Jane alone stands by people when everyone around her has branded them as unforgiveable, and, although she is wrong twice, her faith in others is a deliberate and difficult choice to see the good in people, even after they have wronged her or her family.

Similar to Jane’s faith in the ultimate goodness of mankind is her hope for favorable outcomes. Throughout the novel, Austen portrays Jane’s deliberate choice to hope for positive results to the situations at hand. Jane’s ability to hope is evident even when her distress is at its greatest and circumstances are at their most dire. For example, Jane refuses to believe the worst about Bingley even after he has left Netherfield and left her heartbroken, and she instead suggests that there must have been some extraordinary circumstance (*Pride* 84-6). When Bingley leaves Netherfield for London, the narrator tells readers that “Jane’s temper was not desponding, and she was gradually led to hope” through her sister’s encouragement (86). Elizabeth refers to Jane’s trust in others and her insistence on extenuating circumstances as “universal good will”

(95). Even after Caroline tells Jane of the conjectured romance between Miss Darcy and Mr. Bingley, Jane asks Elizabeth to “[l]et me take it in the best light” (97). Whereas Elizabeth seems to want her to rant and rave about the Bingley sisters’ deception, Jane refuses to do so and instead makes the decision to try to give the sisters the benefit of doubt. Although Denise Blue contends that Jane is too nice, she is correct in saying, “Jane thinks ill of no one, forgives all, and attributes only noble motives to her fellows” (33). While Jane’s hope for Bingley’s return to Netherfield ebbs and flows as the circumstances around her change, her hope is ultimately fulfilled at the end of the novel when Bingley does return and asks her to marry him.

Jane’s resolute decision to hope for the best in regards to Bingley pales in comparison to the intensity of her hope after her sister Lydia runs off with Wickham. The narrator again describes Jane’s hope, stating, “The sanguine hope of good, however, which the benevolence of her heart suggested, had not yet deserted her; she still expected that it would end well, and that every morning would bring some letter, either from Lydia or her father, to explain their proceedings, and perhaps announce the marriage” (*Pride* 195). At this point in the novel, both Jane and readers know that Wickham is an unsavory character, and despite everyone around her again succumbing to negativity, Jane remains strong in her hope that everything will work out for the best. Although it takes much prodding for Wickham to finally consent to marrying Lydia, Jane’s hope is again realized. While St. Thomas Aquinas and the Bible would have one’s faith rooted in God, Jane’s hope for good outcomes is not unsubstantiated. Take, for example, the character of Mrs. Bennet, who continually hopes for unreasonable things (i.e., her hope that Elizabeth will marry Collins) with no evidence that such would likely happen throughout the novel, and, as a result, her hopes never come to fruition; Jane’s hopes, however, are realized because they are grounded in faith in the goodness of humanity. Christopher Blum states in an

introduction to *Pride and Prejudice*, “To read—and to reread—her [Austen’s] stories is to nourish the virtue of hope” (xxi), and, while he argues that Austen’s novels generally accomplish this, characters like Jane make it possible. To maintain such a hope under what seems like impossible conditions is not a symptom of naiveté or ignorance but is rather a display of Jane’s strength of character.

Although Jane’s ability to have the virtues of hope and faith is commendable, these virtues would amount to nothing if they were not based on love. Throughout Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen gives example after example of Jane’s deep, enduring love for others. Even when she finds out that Bingley is not returning to Netherfield and she is forced to relinquish any hope of his return, she gives it up easily stating, “He may live in my memory as the most amiable man of my acquaintance” (*Pride* 95). Jane truly loves this man and, rather than hold him in contempt and give in to bitterness, makes the choice to love him still, even though she cannot love him in the way that she desires. Although Jane tends to hope for the best and have faith in the goodness of people, her love is the virtue that takes precedence over all others. When Elizabeth confesses to her that she truly loves Mr. Darcy and intends to marry him, Jane, for the first time in the novel, needs some convincing. Her love for her sister is so strong that she is able to put aside her hope and faith for a moment in concern for Elizabeth’s well-being. Once she is convinced that Elizabeth genuinely loves Darcy, she gives way to rapture, exclaiming, “I always had value for him. Were it nothing but his love of you, I must have always esteemed him; but now, as Bingley’s friend and your husband, there can only be Bingley and yourself more dear to me” (256). In the span of a few pages, Jane goes from unsure to loving Darcy in such a way that only her love for her future husband and her sister exceeds. Jane’s capacity to love so deeply

without reservation is exactly the kind of love that Aquinas had in mind when he states, “Love . . . regards good universally, whether possessed or not” (*Summa* 1.20.1).⁶

Jane’s ability to bestow such charity to others even extends so far as to include one of the most unlikeable characters in literature. After Elizabeth informs Jane of what Darcy told her about Wickham, Jane still feels badly for him, stating, “Poor Wickham; there is such an expression of goodness in his countenance! [S]uch an openness and gentleness in his manner” (*Pride* 155). Although Wickham uses this openness and gentleness to con people, Jane still feels as though there must be some good in him. Even after he runs off with Lydia, Jane “cannot think so ill of him,” and Elizabeth thinks, “No one but Jane . . . could flatter herself with such an expectation” (187, 190). While Jane is wrong in her estimation of Wickham’s character, her hope for his and Lydia’s eventual marriage does come to fruition. Jane makes the intentional, deliberate decision to care about and love those who have wronged her and her family, long after the rest of the characters have given into hatred. Giving into bitterness would have been the easy choice when faced with multiple hardships, but Jane does not take that road. Jane makes the decision to love Wickham based on the knowledge that God creates all humans, including Wickham, as equal, and she loves them accordingly. As Anthony Esolen states, “Jane . . . find[s] it easy to be affectionate, as she is never willing to believe anything bad about anybody” (391). Additionally, when discussing the issue of Lydia’s running off with Wickham, Elizabeth perfectly synthesizes the charity of her sister, asking her aunt, “Of whom does Jane ever think ill? And who is there, whatever might be their former conduct, that she would believe capable of such an attempt, till it were proved against them?” (*Pride* 193). This statement of Jane’s ability to think the best of others is exactly the theological virtue of charity. Jane’s charity allows her to have faith in others and hope for good outcomes.

Some scholars note problems regarding the virtue of charity in *Pride and Prejudice* in regards to Jane and the social nature of the virtue. Regarding the latter, Gene Koppel states, “Austen clearly does not believe that spontaneous, deeply emotional love can go beyond the small circle of immediate family, long-term friends, and, of course, lovers” (39). Contrarily, Sarah Emsley asserts, “The full practice of the theological virtue of charity demands engagement with the social world” (“Charity” par. 22). Jane Bennet’s ability to extend charity toward others seems to lie somewhere in between Koppel’s and Emsley’s assertions. Although Jane is not a philanthropist to those in her community as are Burney’s earlier Cecilia Beverly and Gaskell’s later Margaret Hale, it is important to note that she has neither the wealth nor opportunity to do so in the space of the novel. However, after she becomes Mrs. Bingley, she will have the means to be more generous. As Mr. Bennet says to Mr. Bingley, “You are each of you so complying, that nothing will ever be resolve on; so easy, that every servant will cheat you; and so generous, that you will always exceed your income” (*Pride* 238). Although readers have no way of knowing if Mr. Bennet’s prediction will come to fruition, Austen does portray Jane as practicing charity wherever she is able through her ability to love even in the most trying of circumstances throughout *Pride and Prejudice*. Similar to Mr. Bennet’s concern, Marilyn Butler in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* states that Jane Bennet is “over-charitable” in regards to Bingley’s sisters and Wickham (211), although one must wonder if there really is such a thing as being too charitable. According to Aquinas, one must practice the theological virtues in excess and overabundance or not at all (*Summa* 1b.64.4), a sentiment that is reflected in Austen’s depiction of Jane. The virtue of charity does not concern itself with whether or not people will take advantage of them; its only concern, as is Jane’s, is to love people, whether they deserve it or not. Her goodwill truly is universal.

Manners

Jane's representation of the theological virtues seems to directly connect to what Austen might call good manners. Yu Xiaoping in her analysis of the characters in *Pride and Prejudice* contends that Jane is "gentle, unselfish, and very mannerly" (680). In particular, Jane consistently practices the good mannerisms of propriety, civility, amiability, and candor. The mannerisms of propriety and civility closely relate both in Austen's time and in her novels. James Sherry argues that "propriety suggests a kind of behaviour that is particularly careful not to violate the privacy, the integrity, and the right to respectability of each individual" (618). Similar to Sherry's definition of propriety, Emsley contends, "Civility has a lot to do with decorum, with maintaining social niceties even when one does not feel like being polite, but its practice is also closely related to morality" ("Practising" 194). Thus, practicing both propriety and civility directly ties to one's ethical code and to respecting another person. An example of both of these is when Lydia and Wickham arrive at the Bennet household after being forced to marry, and even Jane is "shocked" and "distressed" by Lydia's unchanged behavior (*Pride* 214-5). However, unlike Elizabeth, she does not get up and leave the room but instead remains quiet and civil despite her distress. During this same scene, Jane urges Lydia not to disclose the secret of Darcy's involvement in her and Wickham's marriage because of "Jane's delicate sense of honor" (218). Jane understands the importance of keeping secrets private and thus cautions Lydia to remain true to her word. Jane's civility allows her to remain calm during Lydia's continued foolishness, while her propriety does not allow her to violate the privacy of a secret. Richard Harp accurately claims that Jane has "personal dignity and grace, no matter what the circumstances" (399). Jane remains proper and civil throughout this trying encounter because her sweetness of temper and moral code would not allow her to do otherwise.

Although scholars often contend Jane's sweetness of temper is best described as "niceness,"⁷ Austen critiques the overuse of this word in *Northanger Abbey*, saying, through Henry Tilney, that "every commendation on every subject is comprised in that one word [nice]" (87). Therefore, one might better describe Jane's character in Austen's milieu as "amiable." While amiability is loosely defined as being friendly and generally pleasant, in Austen's day, it would also have been related to the theological virtue of charity. Blum contends that "reserve and frankness, while good in their places, both need to be moderated by the higher good of charity, or, in Austen's parlance, amiability" (xiii). Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Bennet displays such amiability through her sweetness of temper that all characters readily acknowledge. When Bingley, his sisters, and Darcy first meet Jane, she is established in their collective opinion "as a sweet girl" (*Pride* 13), Mrs. Bennet claims that "she has, without exception, the sweetest temper I ever met with" (31), and Elizabeth exclaims that Jane is all "loveliness and goodness" (130). It seems as though prejudiced, unprejudiced, silly, and sensible people easily recognize Jane's amiability.

Even her creator acknowledges Jane's sweetness; Austen once went to a painting exhibition, where she recognized one portrait as being Mrs. Jane Bingley (formerly Bennet): "Mrs. Bingley's [portrait] is exactly herself, size, shaped face, features & sweetness; there was never a greater likeness. She was dressed in a white gown, with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favourite colour with her" ("Letters" 290).⁸ Although readers never receive a physical description of Jane in the text of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's description of this portrait along with characters' statements about Jane confirm that she is sweetness and amiability incarnate. However, without the theological

virtues, Jane would not be as mannerly as she is; faith, hope, and love are her reasons for being kind and sweet toward others.

Austen also depicts Jane's amicability as it relates to her charity in other moments in *Pride and Prejudice*. The narrator tells readers near the beginning of the novel that "Jane was united with great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner, which would guard her from the suspicions of the impertinent" (*Pride* 16). This strength of feeling, composure, and agreeableness allow Jane to be mannerly through her amicability. Austen famously said that *Pride and Prejudice* "is rather too light & bright & sparkling" ("Letters" 290), but one could also easily apply this phrase to Jane. As Elizabeth exclaims at one point in the novel, "My dear Jane! . . . [Y]ou are too good. Your sweetness and disinterestedness are really angelic; I do not know what to say to you. I feel as if I had never done you justice, or loved you as you deserve" (*Pride* 95). This angelic amiability allows Jane to be light, bright, and sparkling to all whom she encounters, causing those around her to deeply love and care for her. Jane is in fact, as Blue states, "[A] saintly woman, all virtue and obligingness" (33). Although Blue claims that this saintliness is a character fault,⁹ Jane's virtuousness is more than comic relief as this scholar suggests. Perhaps Blue and Austen herself, through Elizabeth, make such claims about Jane's goodness being otherworldly (saintly and angelic) because the theological virtues are truly rooted in something not of this world; according to Thomistic theology, they must be infused by God (Aquinas, *Summa* 1b.62.1). Jane's practice of the otherworldly theological virtues through her manners and amiability also allows her to be candid with others.

Several times throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen informs readers of Jane's candor in response to the issues at hand (11, 98, 144). In fact, the only occasions in which Austen uses the word "candour" in the narrative is in reference to Jane; this word is not used in connection to

any other character. While a contemporary reader might understand candor as being forthright with one's opinions, the *Oxford English Dictionary* has five definitions of "candour," some of which are now obsolete. These five definitions are as follows: "Brilliant whiteness; brilliancy" ("Candour, n," def. 1), "Stainlessness of character; purity, integrity, innocence" (def. 2), "Freedom from mental bias, openness of mind; fairness, impartiality, justice" (def. 3), "Freedom from malice, favourable disposition, kindness; 'sweetness of temper, kindness'" (def. 4), and "Freedom from reserve in one's statements; openness, frankness, ingenuousness, outspokenness" (def. 5). The root of all these definitions is from the Latin *candor*, which means to be "white and shiny" and is certainly an apt description of Jane. The first and second definitions were obsolete even in Austen's day, although she may have been aware of them through her extensive reading. Austen would have also been readily aware of the third, fourth (now obsolete), and fifth definitions as they were in use during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries ("Candour, n").

Additionally, Laura Mooneyham White argues that candor's meaning has shifted since the early nineteenth century (148). She argues that, in Austen's day, candor "had almost an opposite meaning" to the contemporary definition and rather meant "[T]o be generous and sympathetic, to allow for all possibilities of extenuations when it seemed another was doing wrong" (148). Another scholar, Bruce Stovel, claims that one can understand candor as "Christ-like forbearance and charity" in Austen's works (187). Therefore, while Austen may have been aware of multiple meanings of candor, it seems she favors the fourth definition given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, especially in regards to Jane. Jane's candor implies something very different than it does now—it is often more similar to Christian charity and benevolence as well as relating strongly to amiability.

Throughout the novel, Austen gives readers direct statements about Jane's candid nature. Early in the novel, Elizabeth states, "Affectation of candour is common enough;—one meets it everywhere. But to be candid without ostentation or design . . . belongs to you alone" (*Pride* 11). Elizabeth accurately notes that Jane is not pretending to be candid and kindhearted, as do the Bingley sisters who are candid only as far as it benefits them. Elizabeth again observes Jane's candor after she receives Darcy's letter. Elizabeth scolds herself for being "wretchedly blind," especially given that she has always "prided myself on my discernment" and has "often disdained the generous candour of my sister" (144). In this scene, Elizabeth recognizes the value of her sister's candor and wishes she had applied it to her estimation of Darcy. Austen also writes of Jane's candor after Elizabeth discloses to her what Wickham told her (and what readers later learn are lies) about Darcy. The narrator informs readers that "Miss Bennet was the only creature who could suppose there might be any extenuating circumstances in the case[.] . . . [H]er mild and steady candour always pleaded for allowances, and urged the possibility of mistakes" (98). Jane's sincere practice of candor allows her to advise her sister to be fair and impartial in this complicated matter. As Missy Dehn Kubitschek contends, "Jane exemplifies the ideal, virtuous woman always considerate of others" (238-9). Jane's considerateness is deliberate and sincere because her candor is rooted in the theological virtues. Although Jane generally reserves her feelings from most people, she practices candor according to the fifth and most common definition of the word with her sister Elizabeth. Throughout the novel, Jane is "tenacious" in her debates with her sister (Pikoulis, "Figure" 45), which relates to her practice of the cardinal virtue of fortitude.¹⁰ While Jane's candor allows her to be considerate of others, her candor also relates to propriety, civility, amiability, and to her practice of the theological virtues. She would have no reason to be mannerly were it not for her faith, hope, and love in others.

Cardinal Virtues

Although it is generally well acknowledged that Jane is a sweet and mannerly girl, most critics seem to fault her for being overly nice and too trusting,¹¹ perhaps because of her evaluation of Wickham; however, Jane's moral code is more complex than first meets the eye. While Jane is no doubt ruled by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, she does practice a balance of all the virtues (both cardinal and theological) as evidenced by her wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Beginning with the first of these, simply because wisdom (or prudence) is not the virtue by which Jane is ruled, it is not accurate to say that she does not possess the virtue at all. Throughout the novel, Austen gives readers hints, primarily by Elizabeth, that Jane is not ignorant as to the true nature of the situations and people around her. When Elizabeth and her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner, are discussing Lydia and Wickham's elopement, Elizabeth tells her aunt that "Jane knows, as well as I do, what Wickham really is" (*Pride* 193). Jane intelligently knows that Wickham is a conman but, rather than give into hating him like the rest of her family, deliberately chooses to have faith that he will do the right thing, hope for the best in him, and love him as her future brother-in-law.¹² Jane again shows her knowledge of people's true natures at the end of the novel. The narrator tells readers, "So near a vicinity to her mother and Meryton relations were not desirable even to *his* [Bingley's] easy temper, or *her* [Jane's] affectionate heart" (263). Jane, although she loves her mother, knows the extent of Mrs. Bennet's pettiness and wisely moves away from such an influence. Jane also shows her wisdom, as Alison Searle states and as argued earlier in this chapter, when she "refuse[s] to again become the dupe of Miss Bingley's regard" ("Imagination" 20). The depiction of Jane Bennet in scholarship as naïve and ignorant is not only a degradation of her representation of the theological virtues but is also inaccurate as Jane does in fact possess wisdom; her wisdom simply

takes a backseat to her faith, hope, and love, which are traits that virtue ethics and Christian literary theory reveal.

The virtue of wisdom also often relates to the field of philosophy known as epistemology, or the study of knowledge. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Felicia Bonaparte argues that Austen's epistemological system is inherently empiricist.¹³ However, Bonaparte denies the symbiotic relationship between epistemology and ethics in both Austen's novels and virtue ethics. As is often the case with Austen's characters, the most virtuous of them is also often the wisest and thus the most epistemologically sound (Fanny Price is the perfect example of this). It is important to note that Jane Bennet's kindness is not unthinking because one cannot have the virtue of faith without wisdom; wisdom, or intellect, substantiates the virtue of faith.¹⁴ John Pikoulis makes the important point that "[e]very crisis in the novel [*Pride and Prejudice*] seems designed to test the sisters' [Elizabeth's and Jane's] opposing views and to eventually justify Jane's" ("Figure" 49). As mentioned earlier, all of Jane's seemingly excessive and naïve expectations come to fruition by the end of the novel, with the exception of her estimation of Wickham's and Caroline's characters. When Elizabeth confesses to Jane that she wishes she had told her family about Wickham's true character and that she blames herself for Lydia's shame, Jane tells Elizabeth that "to expose the former faults of any person, without knowing what their present feelings were, seemed unjustifiable. We acted with the best of intentions" (*Pride* 198). Harp states regarding this scene that "the complexity of her [Jane's] character is shown here, as her remarks are both wise in themselves and justified by future events" (403). Not only does Wickham ultimately marry Lydia, but Darcy is also a good man, he and Elizabeth do love each other, there were extenuating circumstances for Bingley's departure from Netherfield, and

Charlotte is moderately happy with Collins. Jane's opinions are not inane or unjustified because they are rooted in the virtue of prudence.

While Austen portrays wisdom through Jane's opinions coming to fruition at the end of the novel, Austen depicts her practice of the cardinal virtue of justice through her consistent attempts to defend everyone's character. After Elizabeth informs Jane of the story Wickham told her about Darcy, Jane's reaction is "to think well of them both, to defend the conduct of each, and throw into the account of accident or mistake, whatever could not be otherwise explained" (*Pride* 61). Although Wickham accuses Darcy of some heinous actions, Jane refuses to believe that one of Bingley's friends could be capable of such behavior. Jane remains steadfast in her belief that there was some sort of misunderstanding between the two men rather than give into an immediate prejudice against Darcy, as does Elizabeth. Regarding the virtue of justice, Emsley states, "Good judgment always relies to some extent on prejudices in favor of the good" (*Philosophy* 95). Jane is prejudiced in favor of people's virtues, while Elizabeth is prejudiced in favor of people's vices. Shortly after the announcement of Charlotte and Collins's engagement, Elizabeth tells Jane that she finds the match to be "unaccountable" and that "every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed on . . . either merit or sense" (*Pride* 95). Jane, however, urges her sister to recall "Mr. Collins's respectability and Charlotte's prudent, steady character" and says that the marriage is "a most respectable match" because of their unique virtues (95). Elizabeth focuses only on how the couple's vices will result in an unhappy marriage, while Jane does justice to the match by emphasizing their virtues. Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane actively defends and is fair to the characters of others.

Other critics seem to fault Jane for being a passive character, without any of the gumption her sister so ardently possesses.¹⁵ While Austen's depiction of Jane's fortitude in the novel may be subtle, this cardinal virtue becomes apparent upon closer examination. Throughout the novel, readers see Jane stand up to and argue against Elizabeth despite the fact that Elizabeth is a formidable person with whom to debate. On one particular occasion, Jane tells Elizabeth, "Laugh as much as you chuse, but you will not laugh me out of my opinion" (62). This does not sound like the flexible and gullible character who lets others select truths for her that scholars seem to describe. The narrator says that Jane is "firm where she [feels] herself to be right" (43), and she refuses to let anything get in the way of extending charity to others, despite the firm opinions of her sister and the supposed evidence against the person. Pikoulis states that readers "are not to forget the quite counterpoint which Jane provides as the novel progresses" that contrasts with the other leading characters, particularly Elizabeth, who speak with "great certainty" ("Figure" 39). Jane's counterpoint plays an extremely important role in Elizabeth's development; Deborah Knuth contends that, were it not for Jane, Elizabeth would have perhaps never learned to moderate her pride and prejudice (108). Jane's fortitude is apparent through her quiet tenacity in defending the characters of others, despite what popular opinion may say about them.

In addition to Jane's subtle practice of the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, and fortitude, Jane also consistently demonstrates the virtue of temperance. Despite Jane's deep concern for others, she does not often display her feelings, as would her sisters Lydia and Kitty. Even when circumstances are at their most trying, Jane does her best to spare those she loves any undo pain, no matter the cost to herself. While Jane is in London with her aunt and uncle, she writes letters to Elizabeth that "contained no actual complaint, nor was there any revival of past occurrences, or any communication of present suffering," despite her recent heartbreak over

Bingley (*Pride* 130). Even when Lydia runs away with Wickham, Jane does not communicate her own feelings to Elizabeth in the letters that report this distressing news. Instead, she gives an account of how this has affected each individual family member (except Mary), and says that, despite her longings for Elizabeth's return, she is "not so selfish, however, as to press for it, if inconvenient" (187). In addition, Jane represses her own curiosity about what Lydia discloses to Elizabeth concerning Darcy's role in Lydia and Wickham's marriage in order to maintain the sanctity of a promised secret (217). Throughout the novel, Jane repeatedly tempers her feelings without any regard to the cost to herself in order to uphold her delicate sense of honor or to spare those she loves any undo distress.

However, this moderation of emotion also leads Darcy to tell Bingley that pursuing Jane is a waste of time because her "indifference" would not allow "her heart . . . to be easily touched," which results in Bingley's abandoning Netherfield without warning (138, 137). Even Elizabeth admits that "Jane's feelings, though fervent, were little displayed, and . . . there was a constant complacency in her air and manner, not often united with great sensibility" (144). Only Elizabeth can interpret Jane's blushes, smiles, and glows for the truth of her feelings. Mary Ann O'Farrell states, "Jane's blush offers Elizabeth the reassuring promise of feeling beneath the self-denials of good manners" (128). Darcy, however, does not know Jane well enough to interpret such subtle expressions, which causes him to misread Jane and misguide Bingley. Jane's hesitation to display her feelings is not to be deceitful or coy, but rather, as Allan Bloom states, "Jane's reticence is due to good taste and modesty" (199). Unlike Elinor and Marianne Dashwood of *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Bennet maintains a balance between her reason and emotion. Although Jane may feel deeply, she does not allow these feelings to overpower her sense of propriety or her concern for others. Like Jane's wisdom, justice, and fortitude, her

temperance in moderating her feelings is based on her love and concern for others, further showing that Jane practices a balance of all the virtues while faith, hope, and love remain primary.

Cultivation of the Virtues

In addition to having a balance of all the virtues, another essential part of being a virtuous person is being consistent with one's practice of each of the virtues. As stated in the introduction chapter, constant exercise of the virtues is crucial in both Aristotelian and Thomistic understandings of virtue; one does not simply stop practicing a virtue once one has achieved it—it must be a habit.¹⁶ Additionally, Emsley states in *Jane Austen's Philosophy of the Virtues* that the habit of practicing virtue is “the kind of habit that is *chosen*” (27; emphasis mine). It is not a habit that one stumbles into but must be chosen each and every day. This habitual practice is in itself a virtue, called constancy, and without it “all the other virtues to some degree lose their point” (MacIntyre 225). Although Anne Eliot, the heroine of Austen's *Persuasion*, asserts that women are the more consistent and faithful sex (200-1), any person attempting to be virtuous must practice constancy. Regarding this principle of habit in Austen's novels, John Ely asserts, “The Aristotelian ethical principle of habit becomes, in Austen, the cultivation of feeling; and the heart itself is for Austen a morally educated organ. The heart is the source of ‘active kindness’ ” (95). While Elizabeth has to learn the habit of active kindness, Jane has already learned it and serves as an example to her sister. An example of Jane's constancy takes place when Elizabeth leaves with her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, for a tour of northern England and the Gardiner children are left with Jane, “who was a general favourite, and whose steady sense and sweetness of temper exactly adapted her for attending to them in every way” (*Pride* 164-5). While Jane's amiability certainly makes her a likely candidate to be loved by her young cousins,

her stable disposition and consistency also allow the Gardiners to trust her with their children. While the theological virtues allow Jane to trust others, her constancy allows others to trust her.

It is also important to note that Jane's moral education in the virtues, including her constancy, is presumably self-attained. In both virtue ethics and Austen's novels, one's education in regards to the cultivation of the virtues is vastly important. Hermione Lee states that in Austen's novels "virtues and vices are the result of innate disposition as well as of acquired understanding" (86-7). Although Jane seems to have an innate inclination toward goodness, Lady Catherine appears to be rightly concerned with the Bennet girls' education. After she quizzes Elizabeth on her education, Elizabeth states that "such of us as wished to learn, never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle, certainly might" (*Pride* 115). It seems as though Jane, Elizabeth, and Mary wish to learn while Lydia and Kitty choose to be idle, although Jane and Elizabeth have a great deal more innate common sense than does Mary. As Bloom states, "Although Austen criticizes the lack of proper education in the Bennet family, Jane and Elizabeth, like so many of Austen's good characters, are self-made" (203). With only their mother and a small circle of friends to serve as examples of virtue, it is only through their own self-education that the two sisters turned out as well as they did. When both Elizabeth and Jane are absent due to the latter's sickness, the narrator states that the Bennet family circle "had lost much of its animation, and almost all its sense, by the absence of Jane and Elizabeth" (*Pride* 44). Jane and Elizabeth are integral to their small family circle because of their sense that they acquired through their own hard work.

As well as Jane's self-education in the virtues, it also appears that she demonstrates a consistent growth in her practice of the virtues, particularly wisdom. While Jane does not mature as radically as does her sister Elizabeth, she nonetheless experiences maturation throughout the

novel. In the first volume of *Pride and Prejudice*, while Jane has the ability to be discerning, she is not in regards to her initial estimations of Wickham's and Caroline's characters, and it is not until after she and her family have been hurt does she practice wisdom more regularly. For example, when Caroline writes to Jane at the end of the novel expressing her happiness at Jane's upcoming nuptials to her brother, the narrator states, "Jane was not deceived, but she was affected; and though her feeling no reliance on her, could not help writing her a much kinder answer than she *knew* was deserved" (262; emphasis mine). Unsurprisingly, Jane's love takes precedence in this instance, which causes her to be more gracious to her future sister-in-law than is merited, but Caroline's ingratiations do not fool Jane. Jane has learned her lesson on how to balance wisdom and charity; she will not be deceived or hurt by Caroline again but will still love her. Thus, critics do not acknowledge Jane's growth later in the novel, which indicates that she is far more than the naïve girl they make her out to be. It seems as though Jane not only demonstrates the theological virtues, but she also represents what it truly means to be virtuous: mannerly, a balance of both the cardinal and theological virtues, and a consistent education and growth in the virtues.

Conclusion

Although scholars do not seem to recognize Jane as being anything other than her sister's weak-minded foil,¹⁷ her demonstration of the theological virtues and manners become "truth[s] universally acknowledged" when seen through the lens of Christian literary theory and virtue ethics (*Pride* 3). Emsley asserts that the novel of manners allows Austen's heroines to become "‘living arguments’ for the virtues" and "dramatic examples of the process by which a life may be moved by the virtues and a will may be used to practice prudence and faith" (*Philosophy* 31). While this is certainly true, the same can also apply to the minor character of Jane Bennet, who

serves as an example of virtue and moderation to her sister and a living argument for the theological virtues to Austen's readers. Jane Bennet is not simply a shallow, naïve woman who is ignorant as to the true nature of the world around her, as most critics opine. It is rather in her implicit faith and trust in others that Austen portrays her as a character who properly displays and utilizes the theological virtues. Although some readers may roll their eyes at Jane's seemingly ignorant trust in the world around her, those who are closest to her know that she is not simpleminded; she simply has such a deep understanding of faith, hope, and love that these virtues overpower all else for her.

Chapter 4

“A Person Who Can Write a Long Letter with Ease”:¹

A Stylistic Approach to Jane Bennet’s Letters

Jane Austen’s second and most famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, has been a favorite of both scholars and the general public for centuries. In particular, one group of scholars known as stylisticians, who study the interplay between language and literature, take interest in *Pride and Prejudice*. It is no wonder that such scholars take notice of Austen’s novel; *Pride and Prejudice* is simply rife with creative uses of language, grammar, narrative styles, and the (then) new form of narrative discourse now known as free indirect speech. Despite the novel’s popularity, literary critics and stylisticians alike ignore one of its minor characters: the lovely and likeable eldest Bennet sister, Miss Jane Bennet. Critics generally think Jane is a naïve and ignorant foil to the sharp-witted Elizabeth,² but Jane’s persistent faith in the goodness of those around her, her hope for the best in any situation, and her love for even the most unlovable takes a certain kind of strength and goodness that scholars appear to dismiss: the strength and goodness of the theological virtues. While a character analysis of Jane reveals her practice of these virtues, a stylistic analysis indicates that they are also evident through her own words, particularly in her intimate letters to her sister. Although Austen also occasionally demonstrates this in Jane’s speech, the best examples are found in Jane’s letters, as writing requires intention and effort. Therefore, this chapter will provide the necessary stylistic definitions, explicate Austen’s eighteenth century style, demonstrate the uniqueness of Jane’s style, and perform a close reading of three of her letters in chronological order. Throughout these letters, Austen employs the stylistic concepts of cohesion, linkage, parataxis, and polysyndeton through her repeated application of adversative conjunctions.

Stylistic Definitions

Before performing a close reading of each of Jane's letters, it is important to first define the stylistic concepts Austen applies to these letters. Of particular prominence in Jane's letters is the frequency with which she employs contrasting transition words such as *but*, *however*, *yet*, and *though*, typically in defense of others. This leads to the realm of what stylisticians refer to as cohesion. Cohesion is a necessary part of any piece of writing that ties parts of sentences together and is, essentially, the framework of the text upon which the author builds sentences and meaning (Jeffries and McIntyre 84). Katie Wales defines cohesion as "the means (phonological, grammatical, lexical, semantic) of linking sentences into larger units (paragraphs, chapters, etc), i.e. of making them 'stick together' " (66). In particular, the linkage of a text often relies on conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs to connect parts of the text to one another (Jeffries and McIntyre 85). With only a few exceptions (*but* is occasionally used at the beginning of a sentence), a good many of the aforementioned conjunctions included in Jane's letters take place in the middle of either a compound or complex sentence and link the first part of the sentence to the second part in opposition, making them what is known as adversative conjunctions.

Unlike the often vague additive conjunction *and* that connects two parts of a sentence in some indistinct relation to one another, the conjunctions *but*, *however*, *yet*, and *though* are adversative conjunctions in that they impart a contrast between the conjuncts (Simpson 115). Although Jane relies on adversative conjunctions in general throughout her letters, she most often prefers the conjunction *but*. Regarding that particular adversative conjunction, M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan contend that *but* "expresses a relation which is . . . adversative" and "contains within itself also the logical meaning of 'and'; it is a sort of portmanteau, or shorthand form, of *and however*. The evidence for this is the fact that *but* is also retrospective" (237). Thus,

this adversative conjunction does not simply impart some vague contrast, but rather typically conveys dissimilarity in expectation (Halliday and Hasan 250). Additionally, adversative conjunctions indicate “cognitive acts that make discriminations—the processes of distinguishing, making exceptions, conceding or contrasting by which thinking, and the prose which represents thinking, is carried on” (Fahnestock 415). Although David Andrew Graves argues that commonly used conjunctions are “poor choices for vocabulary profile words, because their frequency is so similar for most writers” (par. 13), he neglects to note that in some cases, such as Jane’s, the frequent use of adversative conjunction *but* is not similar to the other characters’ or the narrator’s;³ instead, Jane regularly employs it to contrast her own virtuous opinion with negative ones. Not only is *but* an adversative conjunction, but it is also a coordinating conjunction that joins two parts of a sentence that are syntactically equal (Simpson 115).

Stylisticians refer to a privileging of coordination over subordination as parataxis and an excessive application of conjunctions as polysyndeton. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the latter as “[t]he use of several conjunctions or, more usually, the same conjunction several times, in swift succession” (“Polysyndeton, n.”). Clarence Hugh Holman and William Harmon define the former as “[a]n arrangement of sentences, clauses, phrases, or words in coordinate rather than subordinate constructions, often . . . with coordinate conjunctions. . . . As a rule, *parataxis* is found more in speech than in writing and more in juvenile or uncultivated utterance than in the mature and sophisticated” (343). Many scholars seem to agree with Holman and Harmon’s assertion of parataxis as juvenile or uncultivated. For example, Timothy Michael asserts, “Hypotaxis [privileging subordination over coordination] is the structure of sober refinement and discrimination; parataxis [is] the structure of intoxication and divinely inspired utterance” (74). Additionally, Mark Forsyth contends that parataxis is “good, simple, plain,

clean-living, hard-working, up-bright-and-early English,” but that “[a]lmost no English writer between 1650 and 1850 liked it” (61). Contrary to parataxis, hypotaxis “tells the reader that you have been thinking for a long time. An angry drunk might shout paratactically; only a just and gentle mind can be hypotactic” (Forsyth 64). Contrary to these scholars’ assertions, Austen, a writer between 1650 and 1850, applies parataxis and polysyndeton to a just and gentle character. Moreover, Jane’s lack of formal education accounts for her privileging a simpler adversative coordinating conjunction (*but*) over a more sophisticated adversative subordinating conjunction (*though*) or conjunctive adverb (*however*). Thus, Austen’s particular inclusion of cohesion, linkage, parataxis, and polysyndeton through adversative conjunctions establishes an essential foregrounding throughout Jane’s letters.

Austen’s Eighteenth Century Style

While the terms contemporary critics use to talk about style are necessary to a stylistic analysis, a variety of eighteenth century sources would have informed Austen’s style, including Samuel Johnson, the *King James Bible*, and epistolary novels. Samuel Johnson, a novelist, literary critic, lexicographer, and essayist who was prolific in the mid-eighteenth century, has had a lasting effect for his assertions on style. Rather than simply being an explication of the definitions and etymology of words, Johnson’s 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language* was highly influential in its exploration of the style of the English language. In this dictionary, Johnson includes a section on English grammar. Regarding conjunctions, Johnson in *Johnson and Walker’s Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* asserts,

Conjunctions are not equally necessary in all sorts of writing. . . . In passionate language, too, it may be proper to omit them: because it is the nature of violent passion to speak rather in disjointed sentences, than in the way of inference and argument. . . . And

narrative will sometimes appear very graceful, when the circumstances are plainly told, with scarcely any other conjunctions than the simple copulative *and*: which is frequently the case in the historical parts of the Bible. . . . But when facts are to be traced down through their consequences, or upward to their causes; when the complicated designs of mankind are to be laid open, or conjectures offered concerning them . . . there will be occasion for every species of connective, as much as in philosophy itself. (29)

Not only does Johnson recognize the importance of conjunctions in certain types of writing, but he also employs them in his own analysis. As seen above, he applies both *and* and *but* in order to explore conjunctions' purpose in writing. Austen was directly aware of and admired Johnson's writings; as Henry Austen notes about his sister, "Her favourite moral writers were Johnson in prose, and Cowper in verse" (339). Gloria Gross suggests that, in addition to Johnson's work on syntax and grammar, he may have influenced Austen through his speculations on "problems of personal identity and human relationship[s]" (59), a concern paramount to all novelists of manners. While Austen's style is certainly innovative and unique, the novelists and lexicographers she enjoyed also affected her writing, particularly Samuel Johnson.

In addition to Johnson's influence on Austen's style, she would have also extensively read the 1611 *King James Bible*,⁴ which was prevalent during Austen's time and has a style all its own. Many critics, both literary and theological, take note of the Bible's unique style and its possible connections to Austen's novels.⁵ Isobel Grundy notes, "The almost prehistorical authors of the Old Testament have bequeathed her [Austen] their rapidity and spareness of narrative, the New Testament writers their remarkable ability to enter the common mind and to conjure an illusion of verisimilitude by means of a single detail" (177). One instance of the Bible's unique style that may have influenced Austen is in the *King James Version*'s frequent application of the

adversative conjunction *but* in both the middle and beginning of sentences. For instance, Genesis 3:3 states, “*But* of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die,” and Romans 4:20 asserts, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; *but* was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (*Authorized King James Version*; emphases mine). Although many scholars claim that parataxis denotes immaturity,⁶ Michael’s assertion that it is the language of “divinely inspired utterance” is certainly true in the Bible’s application of the adversative conjunction *but* (74). Thus, Austen’s frequent inclusion of the word *but* in Jane’s letters may have resulted from Austen’s knowledge of the Bible, imply that Austen is attempting to associate the Bible and Jane in readers’ minds, and further indicate that Jane is consciously trying to think biblically about the situations at hand that she goes so far as to mimic the Bible’s style.⁷

Another important aspect of Austen’s eighteenth century style is the prominence of letters and epistolary style. Scholars generally agree that Austen wrote the first draft of *Pride and Prejudice*, entitled “First Impressions,” in epistolary form in 1797, sixteen years prior to the revised novel’s publication in 1813 (Basson 152). Even after Austen substantially revised the novel, letters still retain a prominent place in the text of *Pride and Prejudice*. The narrative contains a total of twenty-one letters, some of which are given in full and some are not. These letters are often the means by which characters learn of conflicts, which indicate the strong influence of the epistolary novel in eighteenth century fiction. However, as Elisabeth Lenckos notes, Austen’s “novels mark the end of the era of epistolary fiction and ring in the age of the new novel, distinguished by a more controlled, centered, and authorial perspective, coupled with the recreation on the page of a natural-seeming, realistic depiction of human communication” (par. 2). Indeed, as Nancy Armstrong notes in *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History*

of the Novel, “Austen was able to develop finely nuanced differences [in her characters] within a stable framework” (142). As a result of Austen’s move away from epistolary fiction, readers gain more insight into characters’ thoughts and emotions via the omniscient narrator. In addition, the infrequency of letters in the narrative makes them rarified, causing readers to pay more attention to them than they would otherwise. Thus, a variety of eighteenth century sources, including Johnson, the Bible, and epistolary novels, would have influenced Austen’s writing of Jane Bennet’s letters.

Jane Bennet’s Unique Style

In order to see if Jane’s inclusion of adversative conjunctions is foregrounding that is specific to her character, it is important to look at fourteen of the other letters not written by Jane. Of Caroline Bingley’s two letters in the novel, she only uses the adversative conjunction *but* once. Of Mr. Collins’s three long letters, he employs the conjunction *but* five times, *however* twice, and *though* once; he seems to overwhelmingly favor the conjunction *and*, which, as Shixing Wen notes, is unsurprising given his tendency toward loquaciousness (68). In Lydia’s one letter in the novel, she only uses the conjunction *but* once and simply in regards to a tear in one of her gowns. Jodi Devine states, “As Lydia’s letter-writing reveals her character traits [and lack of social graces], Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner’s letters provide evidence of their etiquette and social graces” (105). In Mrs. Gardiner’s lengthy letter, she applies *but* twenty-one times, *though* four times, and *however* three times. Mrs. Gardiner’s style comes the closest to Jane’s application of adversative conjunctions, but this is unsurprising considering that Jane seems to share many of her aunt’s qualities. Of the three letters from Mr. Gardiner, he includes *but* only twice, and his letters convey an appropriateness and true gentility that Mr. Collins’s and Lydia’s

letters lack. Of the three short letters written by Elizabeth to her aunt, she uses *but* four times and *though* and *yet* once each.

In the most famous letter in the entire novel, Mr. Darcy employs *but* twenty-four times, *though* five times, *however* three times, and *yet* twice. While these numbers may seem to refute the claim that Austen chooses adversative conjunctions to foreground only Jane's character, it is important to note that Darcy's is the longest letter in the novel, taking up a total of six pages. In the ninety-one sentences in Darcy's letter, he uses adversative conjunctions thirty-seven percent of the time and approximately once per eighty-four words. In the third letter analyzed in this chapter,⁸ Jane favors adversative conjunctions in sixty-two percent of her sentences and once per every forty words, which is double the amount of times Darcy includes such conjunctions. Darcy's letter seems much more concerned with repetitions of words like "feeling" and "justice," as he attempts to reconcile the dichotomy between reason and emotion (Basson 152). None of the other letters presented in the novel have nearly as many adversative conjunctions as do Jane's letters; thus, her application of these conjunctions is unique and contrasts with the other characters' letters. This implies that Austen is doing something different in Jane's letters—that she uses adversative conjunctions as an essential part of her foregrounding technique for Jane's character.

In addition to an examination of Austen's inclusion of adversative conjunctions in other characters' letters, I must also examine her application of these conjunctions in the narration of *Pride and Prejudice* to see if Jane's style is unique. Throughout Austen's novel, she applies the third person omniscient narrator to summarize events and give insight into characters. However, Austen does not rely solely on this narrator to tell the events of the novel; rather, she utilizes a mix of omniscient narration and free indirect and direct discourse to "frame [a] moral

perspective,” while also allowing readers to “engage with the characters as individual people” (Searle, “Imagination” 30). Although this narrator frames the moral perspective of the novel, Austen often gives the characters’ own discourse prominence over the narrator’s comments (Morini 45). In addition, the narrator does not use adversative conjunctions nearly as often as do the characters themselves. In her article entitled “Stylistic Categories of Narrative in Jane Austen,” June M. Frazer notes that adversative conjunctions, which she refers to as contrastive, occur in only thirty-three percent of the narration of *Pride and Prejudice*, while they occur in the characters’ speech patterns fifty-seven percent of the time (20). However, as I will note in my close readings of Jane’s letters, she tends to prefer adversative conjunctions approximately twice as much as do the other characters, which makes the gap between the narrator’s application of adversative conjunctions and Jane’s even more drastic than Frazer’s study notes. Mikhail Bakhtin indicates the importance of the author using different voices for different characters (439), and Austen uses Jane’s letters to communicate her unique voice in the narrative. Indeed, as John Burrows notes, Austen’s capacity to “change style from character to character” makes her one of the greatest writers to have ever lived (99). Not only does Jane’s writing differ from other characters’ writing and speech, but it also differs from the narrator’s voice in the novel.

Throughout the novel, Jane writes a total of five letters to her sister; however, only four are given in full, and one of those four is extremely short. As such, I will analyze three of the letters that are given in full. Although Jane occasionally employs the conjunctions *however*, *yet*, and *though*, she more regularly uses the word *but*, which will thus be the focus of this stylistic analysis. However, I will note the other adversative conjunctions in order to show Jane’s dependence on that particular kind of conjunction. Throughout all three letters, Jane includes adversative conjunctions in an average of fifty-one percent of sentences and approximately once

per every forty-three words. The eldest Bennet sister communicates her seemingly intrinsic theological virtues—faith, hope, and love/charity—through her preference of the adversative conjunction *but* in three letters to her sister throughout *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane favors adversative conjunctions in the first of the three letters in an attempt to understand and perhaps even defend Miss Bingley's treatment of herself. The second letter is slightly different from the other two in that Jane hastily writes it and does not include the long sentences typical of her, but she still applies adversative conjunctions to communicate the theological virtues. In the last letter, Jane often expresses others' opinions in the first part of the sentence and then employs the adversative conjunction *but* to contrast others' opinion with her own hopeful, faithful, and loving one. Thus, Austen's application of cohesion, linkage, parataxis, and polysyndeton through adversative conjunctions establishes an essential foregrounding for Jane's character.

Close Reading of Jane's First Letter

The first example of Jane's frequent implementation of adversative conjunctions in her writing becomes apparent in the first third of the novel. During her stay in London, Jane finds that Caroline seems to be deliberately ignoring her and writes to Elizabeth the details of this frustration.⁹ It is in this first long letter by Jane where her frequency in applying adversative conjunctions becomes evident. Of the twenty sentences in this letter, Jane employs adversative conjunctions a total of twelve times; she applies the coordinating conjunction *but* six times, the subordinating conjunction *though* three times, another coordinating conjunction *yet* twice, and the conjunctive adverb *however* once. Thus, Jane includes adversative conjunctions in sixty percent of sentences and approximately once per every forty-one words in this letter. It should first be noted that, in a few sentences throughout the three letters, Jane employs the word *but* at the beginning of sentences rather than in the middle. The only way this will affect this stylistic

analysis is that I will analyze the semantics of two separate sentences rather than the semantics of two parts of the same sentence.

The first time Austen applies *but* in this letter is at the beginning of sentence two. In this case, the adversative conjunction contrasts sentence one, which communicates Jane's shame at having been the dupe of Miss Bingley's regard, with sentence two, which indicates her practice of the virtue of faith. Despite her admission that she has been deceived by Caroline's friendship, in sentence two, Jane tells her sister that "my confidence was as natural as your suspicion" (Austen, *Pride* 104). Thus, while Jane readily admits to the deception, she remains steadfast in the assertion that her faith in Caroline's goodness is not as misplaced as Elizabeth might believe. In the first part of sentence three, Jane states her confusion regarding Caroline's desire to be friends with her at all, particularly given their differences in social class, Jane's often-embarrassing family, and their no longer having the commonality of Mr. Bingley (104). However, in the second part of sentence three, Jane tells Elizabeth that despite this confusion, she would in all likelihood be deceived by Caroline's kindness once more, "if circumstances were to happen again" (104). It is through the adversative conjunction *but* that Jane communicates that, despite Caroline taking advantage of her kindness, she would still allow the same thing to happen again because Jane genuinely desires the friendship to work. However, Jane is not stupid; as Elizabeth states, she refuses to "again [become] the dupe of Miss Bingley's pretended regard" later in the novel (239). Thus, sentence three demonstrates that Jane will continue to be charitable to Caroline, despite having been hurt. Jane takes the high road and does not allow this to dampen her faith, hope, and love.

Jane includes the adversative conjunction *but* again as the first word of sentence eight and contrasts sentence seven with sentence eight. In sentence seven, Jane tells her sister that Caroline

was wrong to single her out for friendship and admits that Caroline initiated every advance of friendship and not Jane herself (104). In sentence eight, Jane tells Elizabeth that she pities Caroline because she had been acting out of concern for her brother, and because Jane assumes Caroline must know she has acted wrongly (104). Despite Caroline's inconsiderate treatment of Jane, she still searches for reasons to excuse Caroline of her poor behavior. Jane shows her practice of the virtue of love in this instance where she forgives and even pities a woman who takes advantage of her kindness. Jane also employs the word *but* in sentence ten, although she seems to use it as an adverb rather than as a conjunction, and I will therefore not analyze it. It is not until sentence fourteen where Jane again applies the word *but* as a conjunction. In sentence thirteen, Jane tells her sister that, were she to judge Caroline harshly, she would think there is "a strong appearance of duplicity in all this" (104). However, Jane contrasts this in sentence fourteen telling her sister that she will banish all unpleasant thoughts and focus only on happier ones (104). It is here that Austen depicts Jane's deliberate choice to focus on hopeful situations rather than hopeless ones, thereby indicating her practice of the virtue of hope.

The last time Austen utilizes the word *but* is in sentence sixteen. In the first half of sentence sixteen, Jane tells Elizabeth that Miss Bingley mentioned that her brother would never return to Netherfield (105). However, immediately following the word *but*, Jane subtly communicates her hope that Mr. Bingley will return to Netherfield by saying that Caroline did not say "with any certainty" that this may be true (105). In addition to the adversative conjunction *but* contrasting harsh reality with Jane's practice of the virtue of hope, sentence seventeen expresses her love. In this sentence, Jane tells Elizabeth that they had "better not mention" the situation out of concern for sparing her family some heartache (105). Throughout this particular letter, Jane is attempting to think biblically about Caroline's deception, even

beginning to mimic the Bible's style. Jane uses *but* at the beginning of sentences in this letter more than in any other, which is something the Bible does frequently as well. For example, Matthew 5:44 says, "*But* I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you," and Galatians 5:22-23 states, "*But* the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (emphases mine). In sentences two, eight, and fourteen, Jane employs *but* in the same manner as the Bible to indicate that she pities Caroline and forgives her. Throughout this first letter, Austen seems to apply a biblical style to Jane's letters to communicate her extremely deliberate practice of forgiveness, the fruits of the spirit, and the theological virtues.

Close Reading of Jane's Second Letter

Elizabeth simultaneously receives the next two letters by Jane during the former's tour of northern England with their aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. One of the letters was written five days prior and had been misdirected due to Jane's hastily written directions. The first part of this letter is a regular account of the Bennet household, but the latter half is dated a day later, written in "evident agitation," and informs Elizabeth that their youngest sister, Lydia, has run off to elope with Mr. Wickham—a soldier whom Jane and Elizabeth know to be a most unsavory character in that he has run off with Darcy's younger sister prior to the events in the novel (*Pride* 185-7, 140). The contents of the second letter express the concern that Lydia and Wickham will not, in fact, get married, which would bring irreparable shame to the entire family.¹⁰ In the first of these letters, Austen consistently employs adversative conjunctions. Of the twenty sentences in this letter, Jane applies adversative conjunctions a total of six times; she uses the coordinating conjunction *but* five times and the conjunctive adverb *however* once. Thus,

Jane utilizes adversative conjunctions in only thirty percent of sentences, which is the lowest percentage of all of her letters. However, Jane writes this letter in unusual haste and does not incorporate her typical long sentences, which accounts for this difference. In addition, Jane includes approximately one adversative conjunction per every forty-seven words, which is similar to the previous letter where she implements such conjunctions once per every forty-one words. Through this ratio, it becomes apparent that Jane continues to prefer adversative conjunctions, and it is simply because this particular letter includes shorter sentences than is typical of Jane that the percentage is lower than the other two letters.

Austen applies the adversative conjunction *but* in the very first sentence. In the first part of sentence one, Jane tells Elizabeth that since writing the first part of the letter, something serious has happened that she needs to communicate to her sister (185). However, in the next part of the sentence, Jane says that she is afraid of “alarming” Elizabeth and reassures her that everyone is well before moving on to the stunning news that Lydia has eloped with the despicable Wickham (185). By doing so, Jane shows that her first concern is always others’ emotions rather than her own, which is exactly the virtue of charity. Jane is distraught by Lydia’s elopement, but she ignores her own feelings out of concern for Elizabeth, making sure that her sister’s emotional well-being is sound before writing anything else. The next time Jane employs the word *but* is not until the beginning of sentence eight, thereby contrasting sentence seven with sentence eight. Sentence seven communicates that a marriage between Wickham and Lydia is “[s]o imprudent” (185). However, in sentence eight, Jane writes the unthinkable: “*But* I am willing to hope for the best, and that his character has been misunderstood” (185; emphasis mine). In sentence seven, Jane asserts that the marriage is vastly unwise for a variety of reasons, but contrasts that idea in sentence eight with her own hopeful opinion. Although Jane

understands Wickham's poor character, her hope that they will be married comes to fruition, in spite of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles, which again indicates her practice of the virtue of hope. Despite all evidence to the contrary, Jane remains steadfast in her hope that this situation will work out for the best and in her faith in Wickham's goodness, although she is ultimately wrong in her wish for him to change his ways.

Similar to the previous example, sentence nine again demonstrates Jane's faith in others and her hope for positive resolutions. In the first part of sentence nine, Jane tells Elizabeth that she could easily believe Wickham to be "thoughtless and indiscreet," which is a more negative statement than is typical of Jane (186). However, in the second part of this sentence, Jane says, "*but* this step (and let us rejoice over it) marks nothing bad at heart" (186; emphasis mine). Jane is here thinking of Wickham's attempted elopement with Miss Darcy in order to siphon off some of the Darcy family's money, and, because the Bennet family is poor, Wickham's motives must be more pure as there is little money to be gained from such an act with Lydia. Also, at this point, Jane is unaware that Lydia and Wickham are not married or that Darcy would have to offer Wickham a significant sum to remedy this. The necessity of Darcy's monetary bribe later proves that Wickham's motives are sinister indeed, but Jane does not now have proof of this. Therefore, Jane makes it a point to remain optimistic and encourages others to do the same by acknowledging this lack of evidence against Wickham, thus displaying her practice of the theological virtues of hope for good outcomes and faith in others' goodness.

The next use of the adversative conjunction *but* in sentence fourteen simply tells Elizabeth that the couple departed Saturday night but was not missed until the following morning (186). The last time the conjunction *but* appears in this letter is simply Jane's apology for her sloppy writing; in sentence twenty, Jane says that she fears Elizabeth will not be able to read her

writing, for she hardly knows what she has written herself (186). Although Jane's apprehension that Elizabeth will not be able to make out her letter is a minor fear given the circumstances, Jane ending the letter with this concern again communicates her predisposition to put others first. Despite the gravity of the situation, Jane's love for her sister supersedes her own powerful feelings, which again shows her charitableness. Although this letter certainly further portrays Jane's practice of the theological virtues, Johnson states that conjunctions can be applied to understand "the complicated designs of mankind" and to offer "conjectures . . . concerning them" (29). Jane uses conjunctions to do just that; however, her conjunctures concerning Wickham's complicated design are based on her faith in his goodness, her hope for favorable conclusions, and her love for all mankind. While the last two instances of the conjunction *but* in this letter are not as telling of Jane's character as the first three, they all work together to establish Austen's foregrounding technique of adversative conjunctions to communicate Jane's faith, hope, and love for others.

Close Reading of Jane's Third Letter

The last letter Jane writes to her sister contains the highest percentage and ratio of adversative conjunctions when compared to her other letters.¹¹ Out of the twenty-seven sentences in this letter, Austen uses adversative conjunctions a total of seventeen times; she employs the coordinating conjunction *but* twelve times, the subordinating conjunction *though* three times, and the conjunctive adverb *however* twice. Thus, adversative conjunctions are included in sixty-two percent of the sentences and approximately once per every forty words. Austen's first application of this adversative coordinating conjunction takes place in sentence one. In the first part of this sentence, Jane references the same concern she had in her previous letter about the intelligibility of her writing. Although Jane is not rushed for time as she was in the preceding letter, she tells

her sister in the second part of sentence one that she is still “bewildered” over this turn of events, which may affect the coherency of her writing (*Pride* 186). As with the last sentence in the earlier letter, this sentence indicates Jane’s tendency to think of others before herself, which reiterates her practice of the virtue of charity. In the first part of sentence two, Jane expresses her agitated and frantic mental state and then applies the conjunction *but* to contrast it to her duty to write her sister the bad news (186). In this display of the virtue of charity, Jane disregards her own fragile mental state out of her love and duty to her sister and family, something that Mrs. Bennet certainly would have no concept of doing.

In sentences six and nine, Jane’s application of *but* simply recounts Colonel Forster’s unsuccessful attempts at finding Lydia and Wickham, and it is not until sentence eleven where Jane resumes employing *but* with notable motives. In the first part of sentence eleven, Jane states that she feels badly for Colonel Forster and his wife, with whom Lydia had been staying, and implies that people/society may partially blame the Forsters for what occurred (186). In the second part of this sentence, Jane expresses her own opinion on the matter, asserting that no one would be able to throw any blame on them considering how diligently Colonel Forster searched the surrounding area (and perhaps also with Wickham’s poor reputation and Lydia’s rashness in mind), thereby extending grace and the virtue of love to the Forsters (186-7). Perhaps the most telling instance of Jane’s strength of character is sentence thirteen. She states, “My father and mother believe the worst, *but* I cannot think so ill of him” (187; emphasis mine). In this sentence, Jane expresses what her parents believe about the situation, and then immediately conveys her opinion that she still cannot believe the worst about Wickham. Despite the fact that Wickham has taken away a young woman from her family and has brought shame to the entire household, Jane

still cannot bring herself to hate the man as do her family members. She extends to him the same faith, hope, and love she does to everyone else.

After having related the exact nature of the situation and her own hopes on the matter, Jane then recounts how this has affected each member of the Bennet household.¹² Jane begins by detailing to Elizabeth how this event has impacted their mother in particular (187). Although Mrs. Bennet is, as John Wiltshire suggests, the “worst exemplar of the mother, a woman who cannot separate herself from her offspring because she is in many respects herself still an envious and fractious child” (183-4), Jane nevertheless deeply loves her mother and wishes to spare her any undo concern. Mrs. Bennet also seems to be over-exaggerating her “nerves” to gain attention, but Jane allows her to wallow because of the incredible shock that has been placed on their family. In the first part of sentence eighteen, Jane expresses her opinion that it would be better if Mrs. Bennet could stop being melodramatic and leave her room but, in the second part of the sentence, tells her sister that their mother exerting herself is “not to be expected” (*Pride* 187). Mrs. Bennet’s wallowing is defensible to Jane because of the severity of the situation, thereby reiterating her practice of love and graciousness even regarding the most trying and melodramatic of people.

In sentence nineteen, Jane relates to Elizabeth how this has affected their sister Kitty, who is closest to Lydia. In the first part of the sentence, Jane expresses sympathy for Kitty because Kitty is bitter that Lydia did not divulge her plan (187). The adversative conjunction *but* contrasts this sympathy with a statement that it was to be expected given the secrecy needed to accomplish such a feat (187). Nonetheless, sentence nineteen again compares a more “practical” viewpoint to Jane’s own kind, loving, and hopeful one. Similarly, sentence twenty-six conveys concern for Mr. Bennet as he embarks on a journey to London with Colonel Forster in an attempt

to find Lydia and Wickham. In the first part of this sentence, Jane expresses her doubt and apprehension over what their father can or will do in London, and the second part of the sentence tells her sister that his grief over the situation may not allow him to act in the best possible manner (187). Once again, Jane's concern and love for others is set at a contrast to the harsh reality of the situation, demonstrating her practice of the virtue of charity.

Austen's application of the adversative coordinating conjunction *but* in sentences twenty and twenty-three articulate Jane's own distress about the situation. In the former, Jane makes the statement in the first part of the sentence that she is glad her beloved sister has been "spared something of these distressing scenes" (187), again showing her deep love for her sister. However, the second part of the sentence communicates Jane's own distress. Jane tells her sister that she longs for her return, not only for comfort but also to presumably help her with their melodramatic mother (187). In spite of this, in sentence twenty-one, she tells Elizabeth that she is "not so selfish" as to continue the request for her return "if inconvenient" (187), thereby adding to the contrast that began with *but* in sentence twenty. Despite Jane's deep distress, she still places Elizabeth's comfort and convenience over her own, and it is not until circumstances require her to beg Elizabeth and Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner to return that she does so in sentence twenty-three (187). In this sentence, the first part expresses her sincere sadness over ruining her sister's trip, and the second part reveals the reality of the situation that requires Elizabeth's presence. As with many of the sentences throughout Jane's three letters, sentence twenty-three communicates Jane's practice of the virtue of charity and her desire to spare others' feelings.

This last letter, with the highest percentage and ratio of adversative conjunctions, again establishes a foregrounding of Jane's character that displays her innate goodness and selflessness. As in the first letter, Jane imitates the Bible's use of adversative conjunctions. In

particular, Jane applies *but* to the middle of sentences in this letter, something that is also done throughout the Bible. For instance, Matthew 18:21-22 states regarding forgiveness, “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: *but*, Until seventy times seven,” and 1 John 3:18 says regarding love to “not love in word, neither in tongue, *but* in deed and in truth” (emphases mine). Throughout this letter, Jane forgives the Forsters for any role they may have played in the elopement, but most importantly, she forgives Lydia and Wickham seventy times seven, despite the shame they have brought to the family. Jane also loves in deeds and actions through her taking care of her mother. The adversative conjunction *but* is used by Austen to set Jane’s application of the theological virtues at contrast with harsher opinions of the world and situations around her, and to demonstrate Jane’s biblical and virtuous thinking.

Conclusion

The importance of Jane’s usage of the coordinating conjunction *but* instead of its subordinating counterpart *although* is just as important as the fact that she employs adversative conjunctions in the first place. By preferring a coordinating conjunction, Austen implies that Jane views the two opinions on the matter, others’ and her own, as equal in both syntactical structure and in truth value. Through this important distinction, Austen communicates that Jane practices the virtue of prudence or wisdom in addition to the theological virtues. As Marilyn Butler states, “The syntax Jane Austen gives to those characters she favours is decided and clear, revealing that, for her, personal merit is bound up with perspicuity—the power to discern general truths” (1). Jane is not ignorant as to the potential gravity of the situation, and she considers others’ more negative opinions on the matter, or the “reality” of the situation, just as much as she regards her own positive opinion. Indeed, Halliday and Hasan note that *but* is retrospective

(237), and Jane's application this coordinating conjunction indicates that she is also introspective. Rather than practicing a willful ignorance in which she refuses to note the gravity of the situation and places her own opinion as better than the others, Jane wisely sees the value in being cautious as well as hopeful, thereby making the deliberate and difficult choice to continue in faith, hope, and love despite the circumstances.

Stylistics further reveals Jane's practice of the theological virtues through Austen's application of cohesion, linkage, parataxis, and polysyndeton. In particular, Austen's inclusion of adversative conjunctions allows Jane to communicate in the first part of a sentence or in the preceding sentence the harsher view of a situation and what others (and perhaps even society) think on the matter and then contrast it in the second part of the sentence or in the succeeding sentence to her own strong, hopeful opinion; these conjunctions are also often used to express truth, meekness, and love. In a subtle yet profound way, Austen uses defamiliarization by employing adversative conjunctions, which their very name implies combativeness, to communicate the theological virtues, which are often (wrongly) considered to be passive virtues in the twenty-first century. According to Thomistic theology, these virtues are implicitly active,¹³ and Austen's portrayal of the theological virtues through Jane reveals this active quality. In particular, Jane mimics a biblical style through her repeated use of adversative conjunctions. This indicates that she is thinking so intentionally about the circumstances around her that not only does she think and act biblically, but she also writes biblically, further indicating her active and intentional practice of the theological virtues. Throughout Jane's letters, she continuously and deliberately attempts to have faith in others' goodness, hope for the best outcomes, and love for all people. Thus, adversative conjunctions further reveal Jane's active practice of the theological virtues. Although these two things would seemingly be at odds with one another,

Austen communicates Jane's worldview and the strength it takes to embody the theological virtues in such a sinful world by using adversative conjunctions.

Chapter 5

“Universal Good Will”:¹

Other Characters’ Practice of the Theological Virtues

Francis Burney, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell are some of the most famous, recognized, and beloved female writers from the British long nineteenth century. It is easy to see why; Burney, Austen, Brontë, and Gaskell have the unique abilities to make an average life fascinating and to offer insight into society through their well-rounded characters. While some characters are protagonists and others are minor characters, a Christian virtue ethic approach reveals that the characters’ roles in the novels are secondary to their abilities to demonstrate the theological virtues. Although there seems to be no character quite like Jane Bennet, Austen’s contemporaries write several characters who share some of her qualities. For example, Cecilia Beverley from Burney’s *Cecilia* similarly practices the theological virtues, but she is far more gullible than is Jane. Fanny Price from Austen’s *Mansfield Park* also applies the theological virtues, although she is much more reserved and reflective than is Jane. Helen Burns from Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* readily practices the virtues of faith and hope, yet she is not as warm or expressively loving to others as is Jane. Margaret Hale from Gaskell’s *North and South* consistently demonstrates the virtue of charity, although she is much more strong-willed than is Jane. Despite their differences from Jane, Austen’s female contemporaries portray characters who similarly demonstrate the theological virtues and a “universal good will” (Austen, *Pride* 95). This chapter will provide the religious contexts of Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell,² analyze Cecilia’s, Fanny’s, Helen’s, and Margaret’s practice of one or more of the theological virtues, and will also examine their practice of any applicable cardinal virtues in order to show their balance of the virtues.

Cecilia Beverly

Robert Irvine contends that Burney pioneered the novel of manners and that she is Austen's "most important" predecessor (17). Despite her rise to fame and revolutionary work, Burney, like Austen, was self-educated. While her sisters were sent to schools in Paris, she stayed at home, reading Plutarch, Shakespeare, histories, sermons, poetry, plays, and novels through which she may have inherited philosophical and religious principles ("Fanny Burney"). Although critics debate the specifics of Burney's religious influences, they generally agree that Anglicanism was the driving force of her religious thought. For instance, Mary Dengler asserts that Burney had faith "in the Redeemer of Anglicanism and the Providence of Calvinism" (1). Additionally, Margaret Anne Doody investigates the extent to which Burney's husband Alexandre d'Arblay, a French Catholic who she married in 1793, influenced her. Doody states that d'Arblay's "religious turn of mind may have made his wife think more about religion than she had done, although she had always been a believing Christian of the Anglican persuasion—and d'Arblay seems never to have tried to convert her" (*Burney* 203). Regardless of her professing creed, Burney's letters and novels indicate that she is deeply concerned with religious issues. Several times throughout these letters, Burney expresses gratitude toward God for getting her through trying circumstances; on one particular occasion, she says that "as for myself, I thank God, my hopes never wholly fail" (*Letters* 65). While a variety of religious contexts influenced Burney, she nonetheless applies the universal religious principle of the theological virtues to her novels.

Although Burney's novels of manners deeply inspired Austen, Burney's most famous novel, *Evelina*, does not seem to have influenced Austen's writing of *Pride and Prejudice* as much as Burney's less famous *Cecilia*. Elaine Bander points to numerous connections between

Cecilia and *Pride and Prejudice*, including the history of the latter's title (par. 1). Austen takes the title of *Pride and Prejudice* from the final chapter of Burney's *Cecilia*, when Dr. Lyster says, "The whole of this unfortunate business . . . has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE" (930; sic). However, in *Cecilia*, "[t]he virtuous heroine and her beloved have had to overcome the pride and prejudice of others. In Austen's version, in contrast, the pride and the prejudice are distributed between the heroine and the man who is her match" (Mullan 379). In Burney's novel, the heroine, Cecilia, is an underage heiress who can only inherit her fortune if her husband takes her surname. She encounters many patriarchal figures who attempt to manipulate her for her fortune, including Mr. Harrel, Mr. Delvile, Mr. Briggs, Mr. Monckton, and Mr. Albany. Despite their manipulation of her, Cecilia remains consistent in her virtuous actions toward them. Although Cecilia does not struggle with an education in virtue as do many of Austen's heroines, she does practice the theological virtues in a way similar to Jane as evidenced by Cecilia's faith in others, hope for favorable outcomes, and charitable actions toward others in addition to her practice of the cardinal virtue of temperance.

Similar to that of Jane, Cecilia's hope for good outcomes directly relates to her faith in others' goodness. Regarding the latter of these virtues, the protagonist of Burney's novel consistently sees the good in people. In one very telling passage, the narrator states that Cecilia magnifies her friends' "virtues till she [thinks] them of a higher race of human beings" (Burney, *Cecilia* 461). Like Jane, Cecilia is prejudiced in favor of people's virtues rather than their vices. Additionally, Cecilia continues to have faith in Mr. Harrel's, one of her guardians, goodness until his actions decidedly prove her wrong. In the beginning of the novel, Cecilia "frame[s] a thousand excuses for the part he had hitherto acted" (78) and even later "cannot think quite so ill of him" (296), a pregnant phrase that Jane also uses in relation to Wickham when she says that

she “cannot think so ill of him” (Austen, *Pride* 187). Cecilia sees the best in people, even the Harrels, Delviles, and Albany, whom she has been warned against and who repeatedly wrong her, thereby demonstrating the virtue of faith.

Related to the virtue of faith is the virtue of hope, which allows a person to have a certain optimism for some future good. Regarding the virtue of hope, the narrator states that Cecilia has an “unsuspicious mind” (*Cecilia* 124) that allows her to consistently revive “her spirits with plans of future happiness” (7). Later in the novel, she discovers “the true power of virtue she had scarce experienced before, for she found it a resource against the cruellest dejection, and a supporter in the bitterest disappointment” (585). Although Burney does not specifically mention hope in these passages, it is strongly implied that this is virtue to which Cecilia refers. Another phrase Cecilia shares with Jane is their “good will” toward others (Burney, *Cecilia* 170, 195, 208; Austen, *Pride* 95). This good will allows Cecilia to hope for the best in those around her and have faith in their goodness. As Bander contends in her comparison of *Cecilia* to *Pride and Prejudice*, “Cecilia, in short, is an exemplary woman who strives to make her immediate world a better place” (par. 12). This desire to make the world a better place is contingent upon her ability to have faith in others’ goodness and hope for favorable conclusions.

Although Cecilia certainly practices the virtues of faith and hope, her charity is also a very prominent theme throughout the novel. As stated in my first chapter, the virtue of charity is reliant upon seeing another person as created in the image of God, and Dengler asserts that Burney “believed that only a Christian, or virtuous, gentle man/woman respects another’s intrinsic worth as divine image-bearer and thus adheres to obligation and duty over desire, based on accountability to the Redeemer” (3), and this belief is certainly reflected in *Cecilia*. In the very beginning of the novel, the narrator states that Cecilia “regarded herself as an agent of

Charity” (*Cecilia* 56) and later that “she was the hand-maid of charity, and pity dwelt in her bosom!” (917). Not only does Cecilia feel personally related to Charity itself, but she also understands charity in the traditional sense of the word that “reflect[s] an older model of social responsibility” (Keohane 396). Additionally, there seems to be a sense of duty associated with Cecilia’s practice of charity. The narrator affirms that “her affluence she therefore considered as a debt contracted with the poor, and her independence, as a tie upon her liberality to pay it with interest” (*Cecilia* 55). Doody claims that the heroine “believes that her fortune places upon her the duty of Christian stewardship” (Introduction xxxv). Cynthia Klekar similarly contends that Cecilia’s benevolence is based on a sense of duty and obligation (108); however, readers do not see Cecilia hesitating or questioning her generosity, which suggests that she is doing so willingly. The text states that Cecilia’s heart glows with “the warmest affections and most generous virtue” and that she has an “active humanity” (*Cecilia* 33, 227). These statements suggest that while Cecilia may view it her duty to be charitable, she also seems to have a natural inclination toward it and furthermore appears to enjoy being charitable.

Yet another similarity between Jane and Cecilia is their ability to be temperate and contain their emotions out of a sense of propriety. Regarding Cecilia’s temperance, after Albany admonishes Cecilia for not being more charitable, she decides on a benevolent scheme but resolves “to soften her plan, and by mingling amusement with benevolence, to try, at least, to approach the golden mean” (131), a phrase that directly descends from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. As Doody correctly argues, “The heroine is ardent but self-controlled, emotionally generous and candid” (Introduction xxxiii). Later in the novel, on one of the first occasions Mr. Harrel asks Cecilia for a loan, the narrator states that Cecilia’s “generosity, however extensive, was neither thoughtless nor indiscriminate” (*Cecilia* 191). Thus, while her charity often takes

precedence for her, she is not without the aptitude to use her charity wisely and temperately. Despite her ability to temper her feelings, like Jane, Cecilia is “firm when she believed herself to be right” (590), yet another phrase she shares with the eldest Bennet sister; in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen states that Jane is “firm where she felt herself to be right” (43). Additionally, while Cecilia is generally able to control her emotions, her blushing often gives her away in a manner similar to Jane. Readers are told upon introduction to Cecilia that “her complexion varied with every emotion of her soul” (*Cecilia* 6), and other characters are often able to read the truth of her emotions through these blushes. While some may say Cecilia is far more gullible and immoderate than Jane is as evidenced by Cecilia’s willingness to be controlled by various guardians and her temporary mental breakdown toward the end of the novel due to the strenuous events, she learns temperance at the end of the narrative after having recovered from her mental lapse. The narrator states, “She had learnt the error of profusion, even in charity and beneficence” (939). Although Cecilia has the beginnings of the virtue of temperance in the beginning of the novel, she obtains it in full at the end. Not only does Cecilia practice the theological virtues in a manner similar to Jane, but she also practices temperance.

While Cecilia is certainly the most Jane-like character I analyze in this chapter, they also have a few differences. In particular, Jane is more self-controlled than Cecilia is throughout the bulk of Burney’s novel, particularly given the latter’s mental breakdown. In addition, Jane is not as gullible as Cecilia, which indicates that Jane has a level of discernment and wisdom that Cecilia lacks until the very end of the novel. However, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane does not have the access to wealth that Cecilia does. Perhaps if Jane were as wealthy as is Cecilia, she too would be reckless in her charity. Despite their differences, one can read Jane as a progression from Cecilia through the former’s balance of all the virtues.³ Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*,

Austen uses almost the exact same phrases to describe Jane that Burney employs to describe Cecilia, as I have noted above. As Burney's novels generally serve as inspiration to Austen's own novels of manners, so too may have Burney's depiction of Cecilia inspired Austen's portrayal of Jane.

Fanny Price

Like Cecilia and Jane, the protagonist of Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Fanny, also practices the theological virtues. Claudia L. Johnson states that many scholars credit this novel as Austen's most profound work, yet also as her dullest (xiii). While it may not be as "bright" and "sparkling" as some of her other novels (Austen, "Letters" 290), *Mansfield Park* offers just as much, if not more, insight into morality and virtue as her other works.⁴ Johnson states that *Mansfield Park* is Austen's "most central work insofar as it posits stability, authority, custom, sobriety, and staunch morality" and that it is "rigorously moral" (xii). The novel's morality is a direct result of the protagonist, Fanny, who consistently and genuinely practices the theological virtues; without this virtuous character, *Mansfield Park* would lack many of its moral meditations. Like Jane, as Alasdair MacIntyre states, "Fanny . . . has the virtues, the genuine virtues, to protect her. . . . She pursues virtue for the sake of a certain kind of happiness and not for its utility" (225). Written immediately after *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* is very different from its predecessor, particularly in regards to its heroine. Fanny offers a stark contrast to Elizabeth's wittiness and gumption; however, Fanny is remarkably similar to Elizabeth's elder sister Jane. The similarities between the two characters become evident through Fanny's practice of theological virtues of faith, hope, and love in addition to her temperance and wisdom.

Fanny's practice of faith seems to relate more to religion than does Jane's, in that Fanny's faith directly relates to her belief in God. A few times in the novel, she directly calls out to this

higher power. For example, when Fanny becomes gloomy after hearing that she is once again second best to the coy Miss Crawford, her rival for Edmund's affections, Fanny's "dejection which followed could only be relieved by the influence of fervent prayers for his happiness" (Austen, *Mansfield* 181). Later, the narrator describes Fanny as "principled and religious," which would make her a good candidate for a wife (201). Additionally, Fanny shows her faith through her desire to be a clergyman's wife as evidenced by her love for Edmund, a future clergyman, and her dislike of Miss Crawford, who considers a clergyman to be undesirable husband. As Sara Bowen argues, "Austen shaped Fanny Price admirably for the role she did fit—the country clergy wife of 1814" (114), particularly because of Fanny's faith. This faith also allows Fanny to settle comfortably and easily into the parsonage life at the end of the novel (*Mansfield* 321).

In addition to her religious principles, Fanny's view of aesthetics and nature seems to tie directly with her faith. When walking out of doors with Miss Crawford, Fanny falls into "rhapsodizing" about the wonders of nature; she states, "One cannot fix one's eyes on the commonest natural production without finding food for a rambling fancy" (144). Inherent in Fanny's practice of the virtue of faith is her ability to see the Great Chain of Being,⁵ where she sees God in His created world. Notably, the only time Fanny feels comfortable sharing her feelings is when she is admiring nature. While looking out a window with Edmund, Fanny says,

Here's harmony! . . . Here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what only poetry can attempt to describe. Here's what may tranquilize every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both of the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene. (80)

As Laura Mooneyham White, author of *Jane Austen's Anglicanism*, contends, “Edmund and Fanny implicitly share the belief that God is the source of the harmony, repose, and beauty of the skies” (124). The above passage also reflects Fanny’s ability to see the sublime, which is a term for a quality of greatness that eighteenth century Romantics often applied to nature. Fanny has the unique ability to see God and the sublime in nature, which is a capability Edmund prizes and the materialistic Miss Crawford does not possess. Austen makes Fanny’s faith evident throughout *Mansfield Park* through her religious beliefs and her love of nature.

While one can readily see Fanny’s faith by way of her religious understanding, her practice of hope is also evident through her growth in the novel. Earlier in the novel, Austen refers to Fanny as “doubting” (*Mansfield* 107, 179). Later, Fanny or the narrator says things like, “I am inclined to hope,” “she was willing to hope,” and “she was more inclined to hope than fear” (22, 220, 291). Although there are many times throughout the novel that Fanny has doubts, she learns to practice the virtue of hope. As Edmund states at the end of the novel, “Timid, anxious, doubting as she was, it was still impossible that such tenderness as hers should not, at times, hold out the strongest hope of success” (319). While Fanny does have doubting thoughts (111), even Josephine Singer, an Austen scholar and self-proclaimed atheist, sees Fanny as practicing the Beatitudes throughout *Mansfield Park* (par. 6-7), to which the theological virtues are certainly related. Not only can Fanny rise above her doubt and despair through the virtue of hope, but her hope also is very different from simply a desire for a positive outcome. Regarding this, Dawn Potter observes, “That Jane Austen can so quietly distinguish between desire and hope is a hallmark of her surgical delicacy as a writer” (618). While Fanny deeply hopes to win Edmund’s heart, she does not merely desire his love. Rather, her hope is substantiated by her faith in Edmund’s ability to eventually see through the Crawfords’ charades and her own value

as a wife. While Fanny's hopes occasionally waver, she always comes back to what she knows to be true and right—that things will ultimately work together for good (*Authorized King James Version*, Rom. 8.28).

In addition to her faith and hope, one can see Fanny's practice of the highest virtue of charity by way of her sweetness and benevolence. Throughout *Mansfield Park*, Austen informs readers numerous times that Fanny is naturally sweet and affectionate. Edmund says about Fanny, "You have . . . a sweet temper, and I am sure you have a grateful heart, that could never receive kindness without wishing to return it. I do not know any better qualifications for a friend and companion" (*Mansfield* 21). The narrator seems to agree with Edmund's assessment of Fanny, stating that she has "a spontaneous, untaught felicity" and a "tender nature" (24-5). Not only is she inherently sweet, but she also understands charity in regards to benevolence. When Mr. Crawford speaks of the needy near his home, she thinks, "To be the friend of the poor and oppressed! Nothing could be more grateful to her" (275). Earlier, Austen tells readers that Fanny has "works of charity or ingenuity" (106), which presumably means Fanny is inclined to acts of philanthropy in her community. While charity is apparent through Fanny's sweetness and benevolence, it is also evident in her actions toward others throughout the novel. For instance, when Fanny's cousins and friends are beginning rehearsals for a play, Fanny helps Mr. Rushworth, Maria Bertram's dense yet kind fiancé, with memorizing his lines: "Fanny, in her pity and kind-heartedness, was at great pains to teach him how to learn, giving him all the helps and directions in her power, trying to make an artificial memory for him, and learning every word of his part herself, but without his being much the forwarder" (116). In this scene, Fanny charitably notices that the others are unfairly ignoring and mistreating Mr. Rushworth, and she is

the only one who seeks to remedy this wrong by helping him memorize his lines. As with Jane's charity, Fanny's charity stems from her tender nature and concern for others.

Despite Fanny's practice of the theological virtues, she is much more passive than Jane is. When she first arrives at Mansfield, the narrator states that Fanny is "[a]fraid of every body, [and] ashamed of herself" (11-2). One scholar refers to Fanny's inability to act in certain situations as relative "impotence" (Urda 298), particularly in regards to Edmund and Mary's scene rehearsal in Fanny's presence. Although Fanny is certainly more reserved and shy than is Jane, this may be a result of the Bertrams' neglect and is, therefore, the product of nurture rather than nature. In the very beginning of the novel, readers are told that "[h]er feelings were very acute, and too little understood to be properly attended to" (*Mansfield* 12). Fanny feels deeply and has strong convictions, but her careless family forces her into seclusion. While one can read her solitude as a passive response, it is in her isolation that Fanny is able to assert her agency as she "facilitates her own domestic comfort" (Messina 205). Additionally, Austen occasionally depicts her passivity as the virtue of temperance. For example, after yet another disappointment on the Edmund front, Fanny feels "it to be her duty, to try to overcome all that was excessive" (*Mansfield* 181). Austen also portrays Fanny's ability to temper her feelings through her constant blushes, which indicate another attempt at concealing excessive feelings. As with Jane's blushes, few can interpret Fanny's numerous blushes correctly, and she is too mannerly to speak her feelings aloud. Miss Crawford and Sir Thomas interpret Fanny's blushes as meaning she cares for Mr. Crawford, when in reality Fanny is embarrassed that such a duplicitous man is pursuing her (190, 215). As Edwin M. Yoder, Jr., contends, "good manners must flow from good motives" (609), and Fanny's manners stem from both shyness and her desire to be morally right. While

some may say that Fanny's passivity makes her an uninteresting heroine, she has agency by being mannerly and practicing the virtue of temperance.

While Fanny undoubtedly prioritizes the theological virtues, she is also perhaps the wisest character in *Mansfield Park*. Austen informs readers numerous times throughout the novel of Fanny's good sense. In the beginning of the narrative, Edmund states that he "knew her to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense" (*Mansfield* 18). Later in the tale, the narrator says that Fanny gives advice "too sound to be resisted by a good understanding, and given so mildly and considerately as not to irritate an imperfect temper" (270). Edmund consistently refers to Fanny's wise advice throughout the novel, making her a "moral authority" (Irvine 68). Not only does Fanny wisely advise, but she also, like Jane, is the only person in the text whose views and judgments come to fruition at the end of the novel; she is the only one who sees the evil in the Crawfords. Fanny's practice of the theological virtues in addition to her wisdom and temperance allow others to trust in her implicitly. Through Jane's and Fanny's prioritizing of the theological virtues in addition to their balance of all the virtues, one can see that such characterization is a recurring pattern in Austen's works. In addition, as Jane is a progression from Cecilia, so too is Fanny a progression from Jane. By making such a character the protagonist and focal point of *Mansfield Park*, Austen further reveals the significance of virtuous characters who prioritize faith, hope, and love. Despite scholars' assertions that Fanny is the dullest of Austen's heroines,⁶ Fanny's practice of the theological virtues demonstrates the importance of being virtuous more poignantly than other of Austen's protagonists.

Helen Burns

As with Burney and Austen, religious contexts also influenced their successor, Charlotte Brontë. Brontë was born to an Irish Anglican clergyman father and a Methodist mother and, at a

young age, was sent to Cowan Bridge School, a strict religious institution for poor children, which later inspired her depiction of Lowood in *Jane Eyre* (Weisser, Introduction xv-xvi). Brontë's "Preface" to the second edition of *Jane Eyre* also implies a strong religious influence in defense of her critics: "Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the last. To pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee, is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of Thorns" (xlvi). While Brontë certainly deals with issues of religion in *Jane Eyre*, she "is also a moralist, a sincere and devout Christian moralist" (Weisser, "Meaning" 98). Although Brontë shares with Austen a clergyman father and a religious upbringing, the resemblance between the two ends there (Beer 85). Not only were they of different social classes, but Brontë also did not care for Austen's works, stating that "what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death—this is what Miss Austen ignores" (*Letters* 161-2). Brontë thought that Austen's works lacked the heart of emotion that Brontë so readily portrays in her protagonist Jane Eyre. Additionally, while Brontë was a professing Anglican like Burney and Austen, the evangelical movement deeply influenced Brontë's religious understanding (Griesinger 36). Despite their different religious influences, these authors' works are ones that portray the theological virtues, which transcend the different denominations.

The representation of Christian virtue ethics and the point of comparison between *Jane Eyre* and *Pride and Prejudice* for this study is the minor character of Helen Burns. Unlike the protagonists in this chapter who are similar to Jane Bennet, Helen only briefly appears in the first one hundred pages of the novel. However, the lessons Helen teaches the protagonist, Jane Eyre, about the theological virtues sustain the heroine throughout her journey, which makes Helen more appropriate for this comparison than Jane Eyre herself. Jane meets Helen upon her relative

incarceration at Lowood and soon becomes dear friends with her. Helen, like Jane, suffers at the harsh religious institution but is also friends with the kind Miss Temple, the superintendant of the school. While the two friends share similarities in circumstance, Helen often accepts situations around her with a passive dignity that allows her to maintain the virtues, which is similar to Fanny and quite unlike Jane Eyre. Helen eventually dies of consumption after a long battle with the illness. While the minor character of Helen lacks the passion that the titular character seeks, she is far more likable than the other representations of Christianity in the novel, such as St. John Rivers and Rev. Brocklehurst. This is perhaps because of Helen's similarity to Jane Bennet, particularly in regards to her genuine practice of the theological virtues of faith and hope in addition to the cardinal virtue of temperance.

Although Helen practices the virtue of charity as evidenced by her admonition to Jane Eyre to love her enemies as herself (Brontë, *Jane* 61), Helen most poignantly demonstrates faith and hope, and, as such, I will only analyze these two virtues here. Regarding the former of these, like Fanny, Helen is more outwardly religious than Jane or Cecilia. Indeed, Helen's faith is the driving force of her character. Brontë bases Helen on her older sister, Maria Brontë, who had a "deeply religious nature" and died at Cowan Bridge School (Weisser, Introduction xvii). Presumably, Helen shares with Maria a "saintly Christian spirit" and a "Christian vision based . . . on love and forgiveness as well as on submission and self-denial" (xxvi). Throughout Helen's brief time in the novel, she relies on her faith to get her through difficult situations. When Helen is being punished by a teacher, Jane notes, "She looks as if she were thinking of something beyond her punishment—beyond her situation; of something not round her nor before her" (*Jane* 54). Helen is able to look past her current suffering and punishment because she has faith that the things of this world are not everlasting. As Catherine Brown Tkacz argues while referencing an

inscription of Matthew 5:16 on a wall of Lowood, “Immediately upon her [Jane’s] first recorded encounter of the Sermon on the Mount, Jane meets its model, Helen Burns” (8). Helen truly allows her “light so [to] shine before men” that Jane “may see [her] good works, and glorify [her] Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5.16). Regarding this very thing, when Jane asks Helen where she will go upon her death, Helen tells her, “I believe; I have faith; I am going to God” and that “I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good; I can resign my immortal part to him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend; I love him; I believe he loves me” (*Jane* 90). In spite of her undoubtedly very painful terminal illness and being on her deathbed, Helen trusts that her heavenly Father will get her through this mortal life and also manages to encourage Jane to do the same. Thus, Helen’s belief in a higher power inherently relates to her practice of faith.

Helen’s faith in God directly connects to her hope; without the former, she would not have the latter. Specifically, Helen’s hope relies on her ability to look forward to an eternal and pain-free life in heaven. Her hope in heaven is an awareness of an end that her faith in God will bring to fruition. Jane Eyre describes Helen as having a “doctrine of endurance” (59), which allows her to look beyond her current life into the next. When discussing how Christians will have their faults removed upon entrance into heaven, Helen tells Jane, “I hold another creed, which no one ever taught me, and which I seldom mention, but in which I delight, and to which I cling; for it extends hope to all” (62). Through this particular passage, Helen communicates her dislike of what Brontë refers to in a letter as the “[g]hastly Calvinist” doctrine of predestination (*Letters* 8). Helen believes everyone can gain access to heaven should they only have faith in God, thus indicating Brontë’s Arminian and universalist stance on predestination (Griesinger 46). Shortly after the above statement, Helen tells Jane that she “live[s] in calm, looking to the

end” (*Jane* 63) and later asks Jane, “Why, then, should we ever sink overwhelmed with distress, when life is so soon over, and death is so certain an entrance to happiness—to glory?” (75).

While Helen certainly practices asceticism, her hope is also teleological in the purest sense of the word; the end goal of being virtuous for Helen is an eternal life with God. Although some scholars argue that Helen is a bit too committed to the next life, she serves as “a generally positive Christian model whom Jane attempts to follow, while yet remaining committed to the importance of mortal existence” (Peters 59). Given Helen’s terminal illness, she has no choice but to look beyond this life to the next one, which is a circumstance Jane does not face in the space of the novel. Helen’s practice and example of the theological virtues of faith and hope allow the protagonist to grow in virtue herself.

In addition to Helen’s poignant presentation of faith and hope, she teaches Jane Eyre the important lesson of temperance. Unlike Jane Bennet, Cecilia, and Fanny, Helen’s ability to temper her feelings is so profound that she does not blush even under the most embarrassing of circumstances (*Jane* 54). She has a nonviolent passivity that allows her to be “composed, though grave” while being punished by one of the teachers at Lowood (54). As well as practicing temperance through her actions, Helen teaches Jane about this cardinal virtue through her words. When Jane and Helen are discussing the latter’s earlier punishment, Helen tells Jane,

It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty actions whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you—and, besides, the Bible bids us to return good for evil. . . . [I]t would be your duty to bear it [punishment], if you could not avoid it. It is weak and silly to say you *cannot bear* what it is your fate to be required to bear. (59)

While Helen's actions serve as an example of behavior to Jane, Helen also takes the time to explain why temperance is an important virtue for one to have. Jane later notes that Helen has "the aspect of an angel" and observes that she herself is "no Helen Burns" (73, 71). However, as Alison Searle notes, "[T]he more mature Jane recognizes the need to restrain and discipline her affections, by having God first in her heart, as all creatures inevitably fail" ("Idoltrous" 41). Adrienne Rich argues that Helen responds to Jane with "a humane and sisterly concern" and burns with "an other-worldly intensity" (94), which cause Jane Eyre to better take Helen's lessons of virtue to heart and apply them uniquely to her own life. Helen, like her predecessors Cecilia, Jane, and Fanny, practices the theological virtues and serves as an exemplar of Christian virtue ethics to other characters and readers alike.

Helen offers a slight departure from Cecilia, Jane, and Fanny because of Brontë's different understanding of religion. Helen practices an evangelical form of the theological virtues in that she focuses on her inward religious life. While Helen may practice faith and hope in a manner that is different from the other characters in this study, it is nonetheless consistent with the theological virtues themselves. As Sarah Emsley states in *Jane Austen's Philosophy of the Virtues* regarding diversity in people's practice of the virtues, "In moral virtue, the right choice is the one that is appropriate to the person and the circumstances; this does not mean that morality is subjectivity, but that it must be practiced with reference to individual lives, not just abstractions" (39). Helen thus practices a type of faith and hope that is appropriate to her life, particularly in reference to her terminal illness. Additionally, while one can read Helen as more stoic than temperate, her moderation relates more to the cardinal virtue of temperance because it is the appropriate reaction to the circumstances at Lowood. Although Burney's and Austen's

approach to virtue are closely related, Brontë offers a different perspective on the theological virtues through Helen that is more evangelical in nature.

Margaret Hale

While similarities in the plot structures of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Gaskell's *North and South* are readily apparent, both of these novels also have the recurring themes of virtue and religion. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer notes, Gaskell's *North and South* "reaches back to Jane Austen both for its depiction of strong-minded domestic virtue and for the social optimism of its *Pride and Prejudice* plot structure" (53). Also like Burney, Austen, and Brontë, Gaskell was "sincerely religious" and presents her heroines "as believers who conduct themselves according to Christian principles" (Beer 127). Additionally, Austen, Brontë, and Gaskell had clergymen in their lives; Gaskell's husband was a Unitarian clergyman and she had been brought up in this tradition (Beer 10). While Gaskell considered herself a Christian, Unitarianism is not an orthodox form of Christianity, and many thought they "were heretics plain and simple" (Lansbury 4). Patsy Stoneman sates that Unitarians are "theologically radical" (67), and Coral Lansbury argues that "the constant in Unitarian practice [is] the liberty of the individual" (3). Part of this individual liberty consists of Unitarians participating in social reform and philanthropy; as Michael Wheeler states, for Unitarians, "charitable conduct is the outward mask of a true Christian" (27). Although Gaskell is certainly unorthodox in her theology, she nonetheless understands charity as an active quality based on seeing another person as created in the image of God.

As with Austen's, Burney's, and Brontë's depictions of virtue, Gaskell does not simply portray virtue or religion; rather, these authors instill their characters with virtue and construct plots that test their faith and application of the virtues. In a letter to one of her friends, Gaskell

discusses the importance of writing as she does: “I do believe we all have some appointed work to do, which no one else can do so well; Wh[at] is *our* work; what *we* have to do in advancing the Kingdom of God; and that first we must find out what we are sent into the world to do . . . and then . . . work in the End we ought to strive to bring about” (*Letters* 107). Although Austen and Gaskell differed in their understandings of religion, Janie Barchas notes similarities between their virtuous (or not) characters, such as Elizabeth Bennet and Margaret Hale, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Thornton, and Lady Catherine and Mrs. Thornton (57). While these characters may have many similarities, they do not have a one-to-one correlation. In particular, Elizabeth lacks the virtue of charity that Margaret possesses as evidenced by Margaret’s benevolence, which is more similar to that of Jane. Although Margaret from Gaskell’s *North and South* practices the virtues of faith and hope, her practice of charity is especially poignant as evidenced by her sacrificial love for her family, friends, and those in her community.

Margaret may not have the overwhelmingly sweet temper that Jane, Cecilia, and Fanny have, but those who are closest to her recognize her angelic or sweet qualities. Although Margaret does not allow such sweetness of character to show outwardly as do some of her predecessors, she does have “an indescribable childlike sweetness of heart” (Gaskell, *North* 377), which allows her, despite her pride, to be charitable toward others. Bessy Higgins recognizes Margaret’s angelic nature before she even meets her. During one of Margaret’s visits to Bessy, Bessy confesses that she had dreamt of Margaret as an angel long before Margaret had even moved to Milton (136-7). These dream visits from the angel Margaret and the real-life visits from Margaret herself comfort Bessy “just as a fire comforts one on a dree day” (137). This sweetness and angelic nature also allows Margaret, like Jane and Fanny, to be charitable by resolutely defending people and positions she feels to be right. Throughout the novel, Margaret

defends the workers' strike to Mr. Thornton. In one debate, Margaret argues that the workers should be treated fairly, based on the religious notion that all men are "mutually dependent" and created in the image of God (112). As Sarah Dredge contends, "Her language again is that of Christian charity while his [Mr. Thornton's] is of logic" (92). While unstated in Gaskell's text, this idea of God creating all men equally in His image is *exactly* the virtue of charity. Although Margaret is more prejudiced toward others' vices than are Jane, Cecilia, or Helen (as evidenced by Margaret's almost immediate dislike of Mr. Thornton), her "sweetness of heart" allows her to do justice and be charitable to those she feels are being treated unfairly.

Margaret also shows her charity throughout the novel by sacrificing her own needs and comforts in order to take care of those dearest to her. Within the first few pages of the novel, Gaskell tells readers that Margaret is just ten years old when she leaves her mother and father to live with her aunt in London; the narrator states that she hides her tears "for fear of making her father unhappy by her grief" (*North* 10). Margaret shows her willingness to take others' grief upon herself even at that young age. Perhaps the most poignant example of this willingness to take on others' burdens is when Margaret risks her own life to save Mr. Thornton's. During the riot, she notices men in the background looking for missiles to throw at Mr. Thornton, and her immediate reaction is to rush down and throw herself in front of him. The narrator states, "She only thought how she could save him. She threw her arms about him; she made her body into a shield from the fierce people beyond" (163). The instant Mr. Thornton's life is threatened, any concerns her own safety vanish, despite her earlier fear that she would not be brave enough (159). Service toward others by often sacrificing her own personal happiness or safety characterizes Margaret's practice of charity.

Although Margaret's charity takes a few similar forms to that of the other characters in this study (as seen by her sweetness and defense of others), Gaskell most clearly portrays Margaret's charity and tenderness toward others through her care for her family and those in her community. Regarding the former, when Mrs. Hale first becomes ill, Margaret suspects there may be something serious going on and begins to feel jealous that her mother allows her servant Dixon to be privy to her secrets and not her own daughter. The narrator states, "Margaret was not a ready lover, but where she loved she loved passionately, and with no small degree of jealousy" (114). This jealousy indicates that Margaret's love is not something that is passive but is instead active and strong. It is difficult for Margaret to admit to her feelings (as evidenced by her refusal to see that she loves Mr. Thornton), but when she does allow herself to feel, she feels very deeply. John Pikoulis states that love is the first value Margaret discovers, "despite its flawed expression in her parents, relations, and suitor. And for her it is synonymous with service" ("Varieties" 180). Not only does Margaret perform such acts of service toward her mother during her terminal illness, but she also takes care of her father and attempts to spare him pain by taking it on herself. Only when Mr. Hale goes to Oxford to visit Mr. Bell does Margaret realize that "[f]or months past, all her own personal cares and troubles had had to be stuffed away into a dark cupboard; but now she had leisure to take them out, and mourn over them" (*North* 313). Margaret is more than willing to put her own cares aside in order to spare her father any pain, no matter how bleak or dreary she herself feels. The generosity and benevolence that Margaret extends to her family clearly demonstrate the virtue of charity in Gaskell's novel.

Margaret's sense of charity also derives from her deep sense of duty to serve those in her community, similar to that of Cecilia and Fanny. For example, Margaret makes "hearty friends"

with the people who live in the forest during her short time at Helstone in the beginning of the novel (18). The narrator states,

She took a pride in her forest. Its people were her people. She . . . learned and delighted in using their particular words; took up freedom amongst them; nursed their babies; talked or read with slow distinctness to their old people; carried dainty messes to their sick; resolved before long to teach at the school . . . but she was continually tempted off to go and see some individual friend—man, woman, or child—in some cottage in the green shade of the forest. (18)

Margaret is not afraid to cross class boundaries in order to serve those in her community. Not long after arriving at Milton, Margaret finds a “human interest” in Mr. Higgins, a factory worker, and Bessy, his sick daughter (69). Margaret soon becomes dear friends with these people, even though the Higgins family is of a lower class. Unlike Jane, Margaret has the ability to extend her charity toward those outside her immediate circle, although this is perhaps due to the different genres of Austen’s and Gaskell’s novels; as Amy Robinson notes, “Gaskell blends the Austenian novel of manners with her industrial or social problem novel” (70). Despite the class and culture difference, the “North and South both [meet] and [make] kind o’ friends in this big smoky place” (*North* 67). When Margaret goes to visit Bessy for the first time, Bessy asks Margaret if such a life as hers is worth caring for (83). Margaret first subtly corrects her faulty theology and then cares for Bessy with “the quickness of love” when she lapses into a weakened state (84-5). While Margaret rarely expresses her love for others verbally or through her countenance, Margaret does show her tenderness toward others through her actions.

Despite Margaret’s display of tenderness and benevolence in her actions toward others, unlike Jane, Cecilia, and Fanny, she does not display these feelings outwardly, which relates to

the virtue of temperance. Repeatedly in the novel, Margaret is described in regal terms, such as “queenly,” “stately,” and “empress” (13, 23, 58). This stately and statuesque manner Margaret possess gives “the impression of haughtiness” to those who do not know her well (58). Despite the appearance of contemptuousness, Margaret feels for others deeply; she simply does not allow her emotions to control her reason and intellect, which is similar to Helen who also does not blush. There are few exceptions to this rule throughout the course of the novel; the one time she allows her emotions to take control is when she throws herself in front of Mr. Thornton in attempt to save his life, but she almost immediately begins to temper her feelings following the event by attempting to justify why she did so (161-74). In addition, the only times Margaret allows herself to cry or have an emotional breakdown are when she finds herself alone, particularly at night (Wright 574). When the policeman questions Margaret about her brother, she remains calm throughout the interview despite the danger both she and her brother are in. It is not until after the policeman leaves and Margaret finds herself alone that she allows herself to fall into a swoon (*North* 251). Although the other characters in this study do not give the same impression of haughtiness that Margaret does, these characters moderate their feelings by practicing the cardinal virtue of temperance in addition to the theological virtues.

While Margaret is certainly charitable to many people throughout the novel, there are times at which she is very uncharitable to certain characters. For instance, Margaret is not charitable to Dixon, who also loves Margaret’s mother with a strong and active love. Additionally, Margaret is almost immediately prejudiced against the Thorntons and continues to adopt a very uncharitable attitude toward them throughout most of the novel. Although Margaret is benevolent to most people in a manner similar to Cecilia, Jane, and Fanny, Margaret must learn, like Elizabeth Bennet, to be more consistent in her practice of charity throughout the

novel. At the end of the narrative, Margaret realizes how wrong she had been, particular in regards to Mr. Thornton, and the narrator states that she gains a “profound humility” after having learned the error of her ways (386). Although Gaskell’s Christian vision is markedly different from that of the other Anglican authors in this chapter, her Unitarianism and its emphasis on philanthropy allow her to portray Margret as an embodiment of Christ’s sacrificial love.

Conclusion

The theological virtues are traits that readers often take for granted in a character. Many readers tend to enjoy the quick wit and stubbornness of heroines, but often a person needs to temper these qualities with the theological virtues. As seen throughout *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, one must not rely too heavily on justice or prudence without the theological virtues; many of the characters in such novels have to learn the importance of being more charitable to others. However, Burney’s Cecilia, Austen’s Fanny, Brontë’s Helen, and Gaskell’s Margaret have largely already learned the significance of the theological virtues and practice them throughout their novels. Cecilia, perhaps the most Jane-like character presented in this chapter, does not give into prejudice against others, but instead chooses to have faith in and hope for their goodness. Fanny is remarkably different from her predecessor Elizabeth Bennet, but her differences allow her to be virtuous in a way Elizabeth never could as a result of Fanny’s practice of the theological virtues. Helen serves as an example to such a heroine, teaching Jane Eyre to put her faith and hope in something everlasting. Although Margaret, with her pride and haughty demeanor, has the same quick wit and stubbornness as many beloved heroines, she tempers these traits by showing love for those in her family and community.

Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret allow their actions to speak louder than their words; they choose to be virtuous out of a genuine love for others, rather than out of a desire for

any attention or praise that such actions might bring them. Although these characters may often apply the theological virtues in different ways, they practice a “universal good will” toward others. Austen, Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell portray this universal good will through the characters’ faith in others’ goodness, hope for the best outcomes, and love for all people. Like these characters’ universal good will, their authors portray the universally held principles of faith, hope, and love in their novels, despite the authors’ different religious viewpoints. The theological virtues are a commonly maintained belief among the Christian denominations, and Austen’s, Burney’s, Brontë’s, and Gaskell’s portrayal of them reveals this universal quality. Through an examination of the universal theological virtues, it becomes apparent that there is more to the protagonists and minor characters of Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret than first meet the eye; they are vehicles through which their authors communicate the theological virtues.

Chapter 6

“The Adieu Is Charity Itself”:¹

Conclusion

Jane Austen’s second and most famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, has retained and even increased its popularity since its publication in 1813, as seen by the various adaptations throughout the years. Despite the novel’s ever-increasing notoriety, one type of character remains in the shadows of literary criticism—one who portrays the Christian theological virtues. Scholars likewise disregard characters who portray the theological virtues in other works by Austen, such as *Mansfield Park*, and by her contemporaries, such as Francis Burney’s *Cecilia*, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*. Throughout the history of scholarship, critics largely ignore Jane Bennet, Cecilia Beverly, Fanny Price, Helen Burns, and Margaret Hale,² despite their importance in their respective novels. While some are major characters and others are minor characters, I focus on the character trait of the theological virtues rather than the characters’ roles in the novels, as contemporary literary scholarship ignores these virtues. The plot structures of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Cecilia*, *Mansfield Park*, *Jane Eyre*, and *North and South* allow these characters to have their faith, hope, and love rewarded. While one could argue that it is only because of the novels’ happy endings that readers can see these characters as virtuous, these characters’ presentations of the virtues are more than purely circumstantial. Rather, Austen, Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell reward their characters at the end of the novels in order to portray the importance of a teleological end to being virtuous. This will be a short chapter summarizing my findings, addressing counterarguments, and offering final comments on the importance of characters who demonstrate Christian virtue.

Summary

Chapter one argues how the conjoined implementation of Christian literary theory and virtue ethics supplements the exploration of Jane's, Cecilia's, Fanny's, Helen's, and Margaret's demonstration of the theological virtues. Christian literary theory aids this study through its emphasis on analyzing fictional texts based on valuable and fundamental doctrines that the major Christian denominations share. I define Christian literary theory through theorists such as G. B. Tennyson, Edward E. Ericson, Jr., Leland Ryken, Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, Gene Edward Veith, Jr., Alan Jacobs, Luke Ferretter, David Lyle Jeffrey, Gregory Maillet, Caleb D. Spencer, and Kathryn Ludwig. Virtue ethics reveals such a valuable and fundamental doctrine in the theological virtues, which are part of a larger system of ethics that focuses on the building of moral character in accordance with the virtues for the sake of a universal standard of goodness. While I primarily use the virtue ethicist Saint Thomas Aquinas, I also incorporate Aristotle and C. S. Lewis in order to supplement Aquinas's definitions. The theological virtues implicitly combine the above theories, wherein faith is the result of a combination of the intellect and the will that are both engaged in order to trust in God and others (Aquinas, *Summa* 2b.4.1-7), hope is the assurance of some future good that will be fulfilled by God or through the goodness of humanity (2b.62.1-5), and love/charity is an intentional action informed by the belief that all humans are created equally in the image of God (1.20.1-3). In this chapter, I also investigate eighteenth century ideas of the purpose of literature, virtue, and religion. Additionally, I explore Austen's religious context, as her character Jane Bennet serves as the case study for this thesis.

Building off of the Christian and ethical perspectives of the first chapter, chapter two delineates various contemporary scholars who do not recognize the importance of female characters in long nineteenth century British novels who practice the theological virtues.

Scholars such as C. S. Lewis, Gilbert Ryle, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Sarah Emsley note issues of morality and virtue in Austen's novels, but do not recognize Jane Bennet's demonstration of both those things. Similarly, researchers including Marilyn Butler, Gene Koppel, and Alison Searle, who are interested in the Christian aspects of Austen's novels, ignore Jane as a possible vehicle for their interpretation. Although *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the most heavily analyzed works of literature, there is a wide gap in the existing scholarship associated with Jane Bennet. Other critics such as Allan Bloom, Denise Blue, and Felicia Bonaparte completely dismiss Jane as having any importance in the narrative, saying that she is too nice, too gullible, and too saintly. Stylisticians and literary critics like Michaela Mahlberg, Catherine Smith, Victoria González-Díaz, Mary Basson, Jodi Devine, and Shixing Wen ignore Jane's speech patterns and letters in favor of other characters whom the scholars find to be more meaningful. Not only have scholars ignored Jane's illustration of the theological virtues, but also critics have dismissed her counterparts' expressions of the theological virtues. Critics Rose Marie Cutting and Megan Woodworth disregard Cecilia's practice of the theological virtues, Marie A. Sprayberry and Joyce L. Jenkins discount Fanny's demonstration of the virtues, Maria Lamonaca and Emily Griesinger neglect to note Helen's expression of faith and hope, and Sarah Dredge and Wendy Parkins ignore Margaret's display of charity.

After an explanation of the theoretical foundations and a review of scholarship, in chapters three and four Jane Bennet serves as the case study to reveal the importance of characters who exemplify Christian virtue. Chapter three uses the Christian virtue ethic approach, as elucidated in chapter one, to explicate Jane's practice of the theological virtues, her manners, and her cultivation of the virtues. This chapter also responds to critics' assessments of Jane as weak-minded or gullible, as seen in chapter two, through my investigation of her

expression of the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance. By means of an investigation of both the classical and Christian virtues as well as a discussion of manners, this chapter demonstrates that Jane is more than the underdeveloped and naïve character critics make her out to be. Chapter four continues the Jane Bennet case study by analyzing her use of the adversative conjunction *but* in three of her letters in the text of *Pride and Prejudice*. In this chapter, I provide the necessary stylistic definitions, explore influences on Austen's style, and indicate the uniqueness of Jane's letters before analyzing three of her letters in chronological order. Using stylistics and focusing on Austen's application of cohesion, linkage, parataxis, and polysyndeton, this chapter illustrates the ways in which the grammatical structure of Jane's sentences further indicates her practice of the theological virtues.

Lastly, in chapter five, I analyze the characters of Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret in order to reveal that Jane's characterization is not a solitary occurrence in Austen's novels or her contemporaries'. They are characters who, as Robert Irvine contends, have not only "mastered . . . the codes of propriety" but have also mastered the theological virtues (57). Before analyzing the characters, I also provide a short explanation of Burney's, Brontë's, and Gaskell's religious contexts, similar to the one provided for Austen in the first chapter. Burney's Cecilia is perhaps the most Jane Bennet-like character in this study, sharing with Jane not only a practice of the theological virtues and temperance but also certain phrases that the authors use to describe both characters. Austen's Fanny also displays, in a way similar to Jane, the virtues of faith, hope, and love in addition to temperance and wisdom. Brontë's Helen also provocatively demonstrates the virtues of faith and hope, as they directly relate to God and heaven, as well as the virtue of temperance. Last but not least, Gaskell's Margaret intensely applies the theological virtue of charity and the cardinal virtue of temperance to many aspects of her life, particularly her family

and community. The above characters, as well as Jane Bennet, serve as examples of the necessity of a Christian virtue ethic approach to literature, without which the theological virtues might remain unobserved.

Counterarguments

While I have sought to show the importance of female characters who practice the theological virtues in long nineteenth century British novels, I must also address a few counterarguments, including the arguments that moral and ethical criticism should only be applied carefully in Christian literary theory, that the theological virtues could be used to perpetuate sexist ideas of a passive woman, and that there are few direct indications of religion in some of the novels in this study. Beginning with the first of these, Christian and non-Christian scholars alike have taken notice of some Christians' tendency to over-censor film and literature that do not meet their moral qualifications. Clarence Walhout in "The Problem of Moral Criticism in Christian Literary Theory" is wary of Christian scholarship that attempts to apply so-called universal principles to works of literature that each individual person, culture, and time can interpret differently; he asserts, "Moral criticism of literature demands reflection on moral principles as well as reflection on literary texts. It is not simply a matter of applying unchanging moral propositions to the changing world of literature" (40). However, Walhout also states that "historical contextualization is necessary for a proper understanding of the nature and practice of moral criticism" (27). With this in mind, Harold K. Bush, Jr., in "The Outrageous Idea of a Christian Literary Studies: Prospects for the Future and a Meditation on Hope" speculates that Christian scholars "must be overly mindful of the need for a sustained humility" in applying this theory (88), but he also argues that "the important influence of religion and in particular Christianity in the production of literature has been strangely ignored in recent years" (90). In

line with Bush's statements, I have attempted to provide a historical and biographical basis for my application of Christian virtue ethics in order to avoid the problems that Walhout astutely observes. In novels written by Austen and her contemporaries, it is important to lay the groundwork for an interpretation that is based on religion.

Additionally, one could argue that an overemphasis on faith, hope, and love without the added assistance of the cardinal virtues could further place sexist stereotypes onto women. At first glance, James Fordyce's 1766 *Sermons to Young Women*, which Mr. Collins reads aloud and Lydia interrupts in the text of *Pride and Prejudice*, does just that. He cautions women to have a "bashful beauty," "meek and quiet spirit," and, most notably, to "enjoy your faith in modest silence" (48, 118, 80). However, such conduct books do not teach true virtue but rather instruct the imitation of it for shallow purposes. A true practice of the theological virtues involves agency, and that is something which Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret all possess. While such conduct books as Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* undoubtedly have some good intentions, the result of such works is sexism through their misuse of the theological virtues. As Laura Vorachek contends, "*Pride and Prejudice* presents instances of Austen's playful resistance to the ideology represented in Fordyce's *Sermons*" (129-30), and one can apply the same inference to Burney's *Cecilia*, Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Gaskell's *North and South*. At first glance, some of the characters in this study may seem to be the epitome of passive, but, upon closer inspection, their practice of the theological virtues indicates their agency in living out virtues that they cannot obtain passively.³

Despite the "playful resistance" of these authors to ideas of a passive woman, some feminist scholars overlook such characters who demonstrate the theological virtues, saying that these characters only serve to further perpetuate sexist notions of women. Hui-Chun Chang in

“The Impact of the Feminist Heroine: Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*” seems to represent the vein of scholarship that sees Jane Bennet as nothing more than a stereotypical woman at the time: “Representing a typical Regency-era woman . . . Jane is the quintessential ideal woman, beautiful, well mannered, and agreeable . . . [who] passively displays her interest, leaving the rest of romance to the man” (79). Chang also contrasts Jane with her sister, Elizabeth, stating that “Jane’s lack of character makes Elizabeth’s liberal attitude more salient” (80). Contrary to Chang’s assertions as to Jane’s passive nature, the Greek definition of character, or *êthos*, refers to “active conditions determined by deliberate choices to form oneself in particular ways, and never to a mere temperament or natural disposition” (Sachs 202; emphasis mine). Thus, it is important to note that throughout Burney’s, Austen’s, Brontë’s, and Gaskell’s novels there is a stark difference between personality and character. For example, in the text of *Pride and Prejudice*, Wickham has personality with no character, whereas Collins has character with no personality.⁴ Simply because Jane does not have the fiery personality of her sister does not mean she is without character. While some may view the theological virtues as contrary to the feminist themes in these novels, it is vital to realize that the two are not mutually exclusive. As Vivien Jones states, “The coexistence of a ‘feminist’ awareness with an essential conservatism, of an impulse for reform together with a readiness to work within traditional structures, is fundamental to Austen’s fiction—uncomfortable though that has been for feminist commentators” (360). The characters of Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret are far more than sexist stereotypes of a passive woman (particularly not Margaret); instead, they represent the active condition and deliberate practice of the theological virtues and a type of agency that is perhaps not recognized through the lens of twenty-first century values.

Another counterargument that one could make against this study is the appropriateness of applying a religious or Christian ethical system to novels where the religion is implicit at best. This argument could be particularly made against Burney's and Austen's novels as religion is fairly explicit in Brontë's and Gaskell's respective novels. In Burney's *Cecilia*, the only scene in which churches or clergymen appear is during Mortimer and Cecilia's failed wedding ceremony. Even Albany, who preaches care of the poor, seems more focused on admonitions than missions. Like her predecessor's novels, direct depictions of religion in Austen's works are few and far between. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, there is no indication of a local vicar or clergyman near the Bennet household. Although Collins is a clergyman, readers are never privy to one of his sermons. In *Mansfield Park*, discussions about the profession of and marriage to a clergyman are prolific in the narrative, yet conversations about the religion that the clergy is based on are absent. However, it is important to note that English culture at the time was nominally Christian and these values were an inherent part of much of their society. Regarding this, Emsley contends that the Church of England at the time was customarily reserved about spirituality and that "because the Christian faith is fundamental to her [Austen's] outlook . . . it does not need to be debated in her novels" (*Philosophy* 32). One can say the same of the religious elements in Burney's work. Laura Mooneyham White offers a helpful analogy for indentifying religious elements in such novels: "[L]ooking for religious ground in Austen's novels is somewhat like looking through the novels for mentions of the physical ground, the actual dirt of her Georgian landscapes"; like dirt, "religious beliefs and its presumptions about human identity remain underfoot at every moment" (40). While religion may be fairly implicit in Burney's and Austen's works, both of these authors nonetheless depict Christian virtue, which makes a Christian virtue ethic approach to their novels suitable indeed.

Final Comments

It seems appropriate to end this study with comments of the *telos*, or end goal, of the theological virtues and the characters who practice them. As stated in the first chapter, the end goal of being a virtuous person for Aristotle is happiness;⁵ however, Aristotle was a pagan, and his end goal and highest happiness is very different from a Christian's end goal. The highest joy in living the Christian virtuous life, according to Benjamin Farley, is "in reciprocity and fellowship with God and with one another" (178). In classical virtue ethics, one obtains the highest joy through a practice of the cardinal virtues for the betterment of the community; however, much of Greek thought was very pessimistic about the nature of life and death, as particularly evidenced by their myths, of which, as Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner note, "not many contain happy endings" (24). Contrarily, Christian virtue ethics adds the theological virtues to the classical system, elevating it from pessimistic to inherently optimistic. As virtue ethicist and Christian thinker Philip L. Quinn states, "Christianity must, even in the face of the worst tragedies, remain optimistic about the prospects for life in accord with its commands and its ideals[.] . . . [H]ope seems to me to be what most decisively marks off Christianity from pessimistic views" (180-1). While both classical and Christian virtue ethics emphasize the importance of community, their teleologies are based on different visions of life and death. The classical vision of virtue ethics focuses on the end goal and happiness in this life without the hope of an enjoyable future after death, while the Christian vision of virtue ethics focuses on the next blissful life in heaven while being kind to others in this life.

The Christian *telos* seems to be the basis of the characters' *telos* in this study, rather than the related but different classical *telos*. Jane's *telos* is in serving others, as she wishes to maintain a healthy fellowship with all of God's human creations. When Wickham's true nature is revealed

to her, the narrator states that Jane “would willingly have gone through the world without believing that so much wickedness existed in the whole race of mankind, as was here collected in one individual” (Austen, *Pride* 154). It is difficult for Jane to see anything but good in another person because she sees them as made in the image of an inherently good Creator. Like Jane, Cecilia finds her teleological end in being kind to others as created beings in the image of God. Cecilia sees the best in people because she is “guided by common humanity” (Burney, *Cecilia* 808), which allows her to pursue good ends for others. While Fanny longs for a just end to the events at hand, she is more sensitive to the way these events affect the people she loves than she is to justice. Thus, Fanny’s *telos* is in making a “thoroughly perfect” and “tolerabl[y] comfort[able]” little heaven on earth for herself and others at Mansfield’s parsonage at the end of the novel (Austen, *Mansfield* 321, 312), where she can be, as Joyce Kerr Tarpley suggests, “continuously questioning and occasionally suffering while pursuing right ends” (257).

Helen’s teleological end is life in heaven, which she states is “a region of happiness” for which she longs (Brontë, *Jane* 90). Although Helen yearns for the afterlife, she makes an effort to help and love those in her present life. While Jane Eyre seems to annoy Helen when they first meet, they obtain “a quiet and faithful friendship, which ill-humor never soured nor irritation ever troubled” (85-6). Similarly, Margaret’s *telos* is based on her hope of heaven. After she returns to Helstone after a long absence and finds it just as changed as she is, she mourns the alterations in life, saying, “I begin to understand now what heaven must be—and, oh! the grandeur and response of the words—‘The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever’ . . . I seek heavenly steadfastness in earthly monotony” (Gaskell, *North* 363). Even though Gaskell depicts Margaret as yearning for heaven as a release from her current suffering, she also does not abandon her earthly life or those she loves, which reflects Gaskell’s Unitarian beliefs. Margaret

realizes that “the progress all around me is necessary” and that she must “not think so much of how circumstances affect me myself, but how they affect others” (364). It seems all of the above characters find their *telos* in loving others because of their hope of heaven and faith in God. In other words, the characters find their end in the theological virtues themselves.

Whereas MacIntyre argues that the *telos* of Austen’s heroines is in marriage (222), and Emsley contends that an education in virtue is the end goal of these heroines (22), both these scholars do not focus on the Christian teleological vision of heaven and fellowship with others. Although marriage is the culmination of Jane’s, Cecilia’s, Fanny’s, and Margaret’s stories, it is important to note that Helen never reaches this milestone. Rather, she dies as a young child at approximately twelve years of age, before ever reaching young womanhood or experiencing romantic love. Yet she does not see her life as incomplete, and readers do not see her love as anything less than pure. This is because the teleological end in practicing the virtues is not in earthly marriage. It is simply in letting one’s “light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father who art in heaven” (*Authorized King James Version*, Matt. 5.16). One can see marriage as a reward for practicing the virtues consistently, yes, but the true reward for these characters is an eternal life in heaven. Part of this eternal life in heaven is the marriage between the church (or Christians) and Christ himself. Throughout the Bible, the spiritual marriage between Christ and the church serves as a model for earthly marriage. In particular, Paul details the roles of husbands and wives in the fifth chapter of Ephesians and concludes by stating, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5.32). Thus, Jane’s, Cecilia’s, Fanny’s, and Margaret’s respective marriages at the end of the novels is simply a symbolic reflection of the church’s marriage to Christ, and Helen’s death is a reflection of that same union.⁶

Beyond the characters' *telos*, it is also important to explore the teleological end of reading such depictions of the theological virtues. Much of ethical and religious thought, with virtue ethics and Christianity in particular, revolves around the question of how one ought to live. This is a difficult question, since, as Quinn contends, "We are only in a position to understand our own lives when they draw to a close, and so this self-understanding inevitably comes too late to help us construct lives for ourselves prosperously. Fortunately, there are other resources at our disposal. Among them are the lives narrated in history and literature" and also argues that a reflection on literature can serve "the ends of ethical thought" (152). While the characters may find their teleological end in heaven and healthy relationships because of their prioritizing the theological virtues, readers can find their teleological end by emulating such depictions of virtue. Portrayals of the theological virtues in literature are, as Bush states, in "concert with the hope-against-hope kind of *telos* that the prophets have been proclaiming since the days of Isaiah" (100), and this is something that a Christian virtue ethic approach reveals. Readers have the unique opportunity to learn from the characters' victories and failures, and a consistent practice of the theological virtues is a valuable lesson to all people.

The depictions of the theological virtues in Austen's, Burney's, Brontë's, and Gaskell's novels can cause readers to be inspired to live a life similar to the characters their authors portray. As Jane and Elizabeth Bennet learn the proper practice of the virtues through their own reading (presumably fiction),⁷ so too can readers of Austen, Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell educate themselves through reading their depictions of virtuous characters. Jane, Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret are characters who offer readers the unique opportunity to learn from their practice of the theological virtues. However, without employing the united lenses of Christian literary theory and virtue ethics, scholars often overlook and undervalue the virtues of faith, hope, and

love as portrayed through such characters. With Jane as a case study and Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret as further evidence, I have intended to demonstrate the importance of a Christian virtue ethic approach to literature, wherein characters who practice the theological virtues can spur readers to find their teleological end in something everlasting.

Appendix A

Figure A1. Portrait of Mrs. Harriet Quentin by Jean François-Marie Huet-Villiers, which Austen thought to be similar to Jane Bennet. Scholars debate over whether or not this portrait is exactly the one Austen mentions in her letter, but Jean François-Marie Huet-Villiers's portrait seems to be the most likely candidate (Bertelsen 37).

Appendix B

“1. My dearest Lizzy will, I am sure, be incapable of triumphing in her better judgment, at my expence, when I confess myself to have been entirely deceived in Miss Bingley’s regard for me. 2. **But**, my dear sister, **though** the event has proved you right, do not think me obstinate if I still assert, that, considering what her behaviour was, my confidence was as natural as your suspicion. 3. I do not at all comprehend her reason for wishing to be intimate with me, **but** if the same circumstances were to happen again, I am sure I should be deceived again. 4. Caroline did not return my visit till yesterday; and not a note, not a line, did I receive in the mean time. 5. When she did come, it was very evident that she had no pleasure in it; she made a slight, formal, apology, for not calling before, said not a word of wishing to see me again, and was in every respect so altered a creature, that when she went away, I was perfectly resolved to continue the acquaintance no longer. 6. I pity, **though** I cannot help blaming her. 7. She was very wrong in singling me out as she did; I can safely say, that every advance to intimacy began on her side. 8. **But** I pity her, because she must feel that she has been acting wrong, and because I am very sure that anxiety for her brother is the cause of it. 9. I need not explain myself farther; and **though** we know this anxiety to be quite needless, **yet** if she feels it, it will easily account for her behaviour to me; and so deservedly dear as he is to his sister, whatever anxiety she must feel on his behalf, is natural and amiable. 10. I cannot **but** wonder, **however**, at her having any such fears now, because, if he had at all cared about me, we must have met long, long ago. 11. He knows of my being in town, I am certain, from something she said herself; and **yet** it would seem by her manner of talking, as if she wanted to persuade herself that he is really partial to Miss Darcy. 12. I cannot understand it. 13. If I were not afraid of judging harshly, I should be almost tempted to say, that there is a strong appearance of duplicity in all this. 14. **But** I will endeavour to banish every painful thought, and think only of what will make me happy, your affection, and the invariable kindness of my dear uncle and aunt. 15. Let me hear from you very soon. 16. Miss Bingley said something of his never returning to Netherfield again, of giving up the house, **but** not with any certainty. 17. We had better not mention it. 18. I am extremely glad that you have such pleasant accounts from our friends at Hunsford. 19. Pray go to see them, with Sir William and Maria. 20. I am sure you will be very comfortable there.

Yours, &c.”
(Austen, *Pride* 104-5)

Figure B1. The full text of Jane’s letter to Elizabeth written while the former is in London in the first half of the novel. Sentences are numbered and the adversative conjunctions *but*, *though*, *yet*, and *however* are underlined and bolded for convenience. I have not counted the valediction as a sentence.

Appendix C

“**1.** Since writing the above, dearest Lizzy, something has occurred of a most unexpected and serious nature; **but** I am afraid of alarming you—be assured that we are all well. **2.** What I have to say relates to poor Lydia. **3.** An express came at twelve last night, just as we were all gone to bed, from Colonel Forster, to inform us that she was gone off to Scotland with one of his officers; to own the truth, with Wickham!— **4.** Imagine our surprise. **5.** To Kitty, **however**, it does not seem so wholly unexpected. **6.** I am very, very sorry. **7.** So imprudent a match on both sides!— **8. But** I am willing to hope the best, and that his character has been misunderstood. **9.** Thoughtless and indiscreet I can easily believe him, **but** this step (and let us rejoice over it) marks nothing bad at heart. **10.** His choice is disinterested at least, for he must know my father can give her nothing. **11.** Our poor mother is sadly grieved. **12.** My father bears it better. **13.** How thankful am I, that we never let them know what has been said against him; we must forget it ourselves. **14.** They were off Saturday night about twelve, as is conjectured, **but** were not missed till yesterday morning at eight. **15.** The express was sent off directly. **16.** My dear Lizzy, they must have passed within ten miles of us. **17.** Colonel Forster gives us reason to expect him here soon. **18.** Lydia left a few lines for his wife, informing her of their intention. **19.** I must conclude, for I cannot be long from my poor mother. **20.** I am afraid you will not be able to make it out, **but** I hardly know what I have written.” (Austen, *Pride* 185-6)

Figure C1. The full text of Jane’s first of two letters to Elizabeth that detail Lydia’s elopement.

Sentences are numbered and the adversative conjunctions *but* and *however* are underlined and bolded for convenience.

Appendix D

“1. By this time, my dearest sister, you have received my hurried letter; I wish this may be more intelligible, **but though** not confined for time, my head is so bewildered that I cannot answer for being coherent. 2. Dearest Lizzy, I hardly know what I would write, **but** I have bad news for you, and it cannot be delayed. 3. Imprudent as the marriage between Mr. Wickham and our poor Lydia would be, we are now anxious to be assured it has taken place, for there is **but** too much reason to fear they are not gone to Scotland. 4. Colonel Forster came yesterday, having left Brighton the day before, not many hours after the express. 5. **Though** Lydia’s short letter to Mrs. F. gave them to understand that they were going to Gretna Green, something was dropped by Denny expressing his belief that W. never intended to go there, or to marry Lydia at all, which was repeated to Colonel F. who instantly taking the alarm, set off from B. intending to trace their route. 6. He did trace them easily to Clapham, **but** no farther; for on entering that place they removed into a hackney-coach and dismissed the chaise that brought them from Epsom. 7. All that is known after this is, that they were seen to continue the London road. 8. I know not what to think. 9. After making every possible inquiry on that side London, Colonel F. came on into Hertfordshire, anxiously renewing them at all the turnpikes, and at the inns in Barnet and Hatfield, **but** without any success, no such people had been seen to pass through. 10. With the kindest concern he came on to Longbourn, and broke his apprehensions to us in a manner most creditable to his heart. 11. I am sincerely grieved for him and Mrs. F. **but** no one can throw any blame on them. 12. Our distress, my dear Lizzy, is very great. 13. My father and mother believe the worst, **but** I cannot think so ill of him. 14. Many circumstances might make it more eligible for them to be married privately in town than to pursue their first plan; and even if *he* could form such a design against a young woman of Lydia’s connections, which is not likely, can I suppose her so lost to everything?— 15. Impossible. 16. I grieve to find, **however**, that Colonel F. is not disposed to depend upon their marriage; he shook his head when I expressed my hopes, and said he feared W. was not a man to be trusted. 17. My poor mother is really ill and keeps her room. 18. Could she exert herself, it would be better, **but** this is not to be expected; and as to my father, I never in my life saw him so affected. 19. Poor Kitty has anger for having concealed their attachment; **but** as it was a matter of confidence one cannot wonder. 20. I am truly glad, dearest Lizzy, that you have been spared something of these distressing scenes; **but** now as the first shock is over, shall I own that I long for your return? 21. I am not so selfish, **however**, as to press for it, if inconvenient. 22. Adieu. 23. I take up my pen again to do, what I have just told you I would not, **but** circumstances are such, that I cannot help earnestly begging you all to come here, as soon as possible. 24. I know my dear uncle and aunt so well, that I am not afraid of requesting it, **though** I have still something more to ask of the former. 25. My father is going to London with Colonel Forster instantly, to try to discover her. 26. What he means to do, I am sure I know not; **but** his excessive distress will not allow him to pursue any measure in the best and safest way, and Colonel Forster is obliged to be at Brighton again to-morrow evening. 27. In such an exigence my uncle’s advice and assistance would be every thing in the world; he will immediately comprehend what I must feel, and I rely upon his goodness.” (Austen, *Pride* 186-7)

Figure D1: The full text of Jane’s second letter to Elizabeth that details Lydia’s elopement.

Sentences are numbered and the conjunctions *but*, *however*, and *though* are underlined and bolded for convenience.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. The quotation in my chapter title is from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 144.
2. See particularly Denise Blue's "Saint Jane," Felicia Bonaparte's "Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*," Rose Marie Cutting's "Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney's Novels," and Sarah Dredge's "Negotiating 'A Woman's Work': Philanthropy to Social Science in Gaskell's *North and South*." See also Rither, Chapter 2 for more criticism that ignores or dismisses female characters who display the theological virtues in favor of characters with more popular traits.
3. See Rither, Chapter 1, note 2. In particular, Cutting argues that Burney's Cecilia is passive and instead focuses her article on minor female characters in *Cecilia* who are more defiant.
4. The long nineteenth century, coined by British Marxist historian and author Eric Hobsbawm, roughly dates between the years 1789 and 1914, although some scholars note it may have started as early as 1750 (Stearns et al. 628).
5. Although stylistics is the third approach/theory I will use in this study, I only apply stylistics to Jane Bennet and not to the other characters, so I will therefore not define it in this chapter. See Rither, Chapter 4 for a definition and exploration of stylistics as applied to Jane Bennet's letters.
6. The differences between morals, ethics, and virtues should be noted here. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines moral as "[o]f or relating to human character or behaviour considered as good or bad; of or relating to the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions, desires, or character of responsible human beings; ethical" ("Moral, adj,")

def. 1a). Ethics is a particular system of moral principles (“Ethics, n,” def. I), while virtue is “a moral quality regarded (esp. in religious contexts) as good or desirable in a person, such as patience, kindness, etc.; a particular form of moral excellence” (“Virtue, n,” def. I.1a). Therefore, a virtue is a moral quality that dictates human behavior according to a particular ethical system. While one can use moral and virtue to mean about the same thing, virtue is much more specific in meaning.

7. See Rither, Chapter 1, section “Definitions of Theological Virtues” for a detailed explanation of the theological virtues.

8. This citation is cited according to the classical form of citation of Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* and reads as follows: Second part of Part 1, question 62, article 1. All following citations for Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* will be cited in this way.

9. See particularly Marilyn Butler’s *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* p. 211 and Bonaparte’s “Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*” p. 153.

10. For instance, Deborah J. Knuth in “Sisterhood and Friendship in *Pride and Prejudice*: Need Happiness Be ‘Entirely a Matter of Chance’?” investigates *phileō*, Allan Bloom in *Love and Friendship* explores *storgē* and *eros*, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in “Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl” considers *eros*.

11. See Rither, Chapter 1, section “Christian Literary Theory” for contemporary Christian literary theorists who see literature as a method for teaching truths about human existence.

12. See Rither, Chapter 2, pp. 31-2 for more on Ryle’s argument of Cooper’s influence on Austen.

13. See Rither, Chapter 5 for more on the religious contexts of Burney, Brontë, and Gaskell.

Chapter 2

1. The quotation in my chapter title is from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 62.

2. See Olivia Murphy's "Jane Austen's 'Excellent Walker': Pride, Prejudice, and Pedestrianism," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," and Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

3. See Rither, Chapter 1, pp. 20-1 for a further connection between Wollstonecraft and Austen through their understandings of virtue.

4. See Rither, Chapter 1, section "Austen's Religious Context" for an exploration of Austen's religion as it influenced her work.

5. See Rither, Chapter 2, pp. 45-6 and Rither, Chapter 5, section "Fanny Price" for more on accusations of Fanny's passivity.

6. See Rither, Chapter 2, pp. 34-5 for a review of Koppel's work.

7. This literature review only attempts to cover how critics have neglected to note Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret as paragons of the theological virtues. However, it should be noted that scholars have explored religion and virtue generally in *Cecilia*, *Mansfield Park*, *Jane Eyre*, and *North and South* as well as the many of the characters' religious principles. See Rither, Chapter 5 for an integration of many such sources into the analyses of Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret.

Chapter 3

1. The quotation in my chapter title is from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 3.

2. See Rither, Chapter 1, note 6 for a distinction between morals and virtues.

3. See Rither, Chapter 2: Literature Review for a review scholarship, some of which recognizes manners as morals in Austen's works.

4. See Felicia Bonaparte's "Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*," Gilbert Ryle's "Jane Austen and the Moralists," and Denise Blue's "Saint Jane." Also, see Rither, Chapter 2 for more literary critics who dismiss Jane as naïve, ignorant, and weak-minded.

5. See Rither, Chapter 3, note 4.

6. See Rither, Chapter 1, pp. 15-7 for more on love/charity as Aquinas understands it.

7. See Denise Blue's "Saint Jane" in particular.

8. See Appendix A for the probable portrait of Mrs. Bingley.

9. See Rither, Chapter 2, pp. 38-9 for an analysis of how Blue argues that Jane's saintliness is a character fault.

10. See Rither, Chapter 3, section "Cardinal Virtues" for an investigation of Jane's fortitude.

11. See Rither, Chapter 3, note 4.

12. It should be noted here that Jane's hope in Wickham is only partially fulfilled, as he has to be bribed in order to do the right thing. While Jane is wrong in her estimation of his character, she is the only one who remains hopeful that Lydia and Wickham will be married, and this hope is justified at the end of the novel.

13. See Rither, Chapter 2, pp. 39-40 for an analysis of Bonaparte's investigation of Austen's empiricist epistemology.

14. See Rither, Chapter 1, pp. 11-3 for more on the intellect's/wisdom's role in the virtue of faith.

15. See Rither, Chapter 3, note 4.

16. See Rither, Chapter 1, pp. 9-10 for the virtue ethic understanding of habit.

17. See Rither, Chapter 2, section “Scholarship Associated with Jane Bennet” for scholars who argue that Jane is weak-minded and only serves as her sister’s foil.

Chapter 4

1. The quotation in my chapter title is from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 35.

2. For example, see Felicia Bonaparte’s “Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*” and Denise Blue’s “Saint Jane.” Also, see Rither, Chapter 2 for more literary critics and stylisticians who think Jane is naïve, ignorant, and simply a contrast to Elizabeth.

3. See Rither, Chapter 4, section “Jane Bennet’s Unique Style” for an exploration of how Jane is distinct in her application of the conjunction *but*.

4. See Rither, Chapter 1, section “Austen’s Religious Context” for more on Austen’s knowledge of the Bible.

5. For example, Alan Jon Hauser in “Judges 5: Parataxis in Hebrew Poetry” argues that this particular chapter demonstrates the poet’s use of parataxis, despite the fact that this book of the Bible is often said to be choppy and non-poetic (25-6). Additionally, Song Cho in “The Book of Proverbs in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*” argues that some of Austen’s narrative appears to be rooted stylistically in the book of Proverbs (212), and Alison Searle in “The Moral Imagination: Biblical Imperatives, Narrative and Hermeneutics in *Pride and Prejudice*” makes connections between Austen’s narrator and the Bible’s narrator (30).

6. See Rither, Chapter 4, section “Stylistic Definitions.”

7. I am indebted to Dr. Jennifer Newton at California Baptist University for the connection between Jane Bennet's style and the Bible's style.

8. See Rither, Chapter 4, section "Close Reading of Jane's Third Letter" for more on this letter.

9. See Appendix B for the full text of this letter.

10. See Appendix C for the full text of the first of these two letters and Appendix D for the full text of the other.

11. See Appendix D for the full text of this letter.

12. It is interesting to note that Mary is the only person Jane does not mention in this letter. Perhaps this is because Mary is not as invested in the social lives of her family as are the rest of the Bennet household.

13. See Rither, Chapter 1, section "Definitions of the Theological Virtues" for an exploration of faith, hope, and love as active and deliberate conditions.

Chapter 5

1. The quotation in my chapter title is from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 95.

2. See Rither, Chapter 1, section "Austen's Religious Context" for an exploration of Austen's understanding of Christianity.

3. See Rither, Chapter 3 for an in-depth exploration of Jane's prioritizing of the theological virtues and her balancing of both the cardinal and theological virtues.

4. See Rither, Chapter 1, note 6 for a clarification of morality and virtue.

5. Encyclopædia Britannica states that the Great Chain of Being is a hierarchical structure of all elements and beings. At its lowest point, the chain consists of the most basic elements but then travels upwards to the highest level of perfection, which is God. The order is as follows:

God, angelic beings, humans, animals, plants, and minerals. Also implicit in this philosophy is the idea of continuity, which “asserts that the universe is composed of an infinite series of forms, each of which shares with its neighbour at least one attribute.” Thus, one can see attributes of God in even the most basic elements. The Great Chain of Being originates with Plato and Aristotle but culminates with early modern Neoplatonism (“Great Chain of Being”). Additionally, Arthur O. Lovejoy contends that the Great Chain of Being attained its “widest diffusion and acceptance” in the eighteenth century, perhaps because of the time’s infatuation with nature (183). This may have influenced Austen’s portrayal of Fanny’s fascination with nature and its elements.

6. See Rither, Chapter 2, section “Analyses of Cecilia, Fanny, Helen, and Margaret.”

Chapter 6

1. The quotation in my chapter title is from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 252.
2. See Rither, Chapter 2 for critics who dismiss such characters.
3. See Rither, Chapter 1, section “Definitions of the Theological Virtues” for an exploration of the theological virtues as active conditions.
4. Many thanks to Dr. Toni Kirk at California Baptist University for pointing this out to me during the earliest stages of this project’s development.
5. See Rither, Chapter 1, p. 8-9 for more on Aristotle’s vision of happiness.
6. Thank you to Dr. Jennifer Newton at California Baptist University for this suggestion.
7. See Rither, Chapter 3, p. 69 for an exploration of the Bennet sisters’ self-education in virtue through reading.

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