



Romanticism on the Net

The Religious and Political Revisions of *The Prelude*

John S. Wiehl
Case Western Reserve University

Abstract

William Wordsworth's multi-decade revision of his poetic masterwork, *The Prelude* took many forms. In revising this massive work, Wordsworth reduced references to himself as performing a priestly role and to poetry as being ritualistic while increasing references to the vivid belief of the “ancient church” of early Christianity. These concerns mirror the central thrust of the Oxford Movement (or Tractarianism), a push for doctrinal reform within the Anglican church that was a reaction against the political successes of religious minorities and newly-minted, non-landowning voters. Current religiously-oriented criticism of the poem often attacks advancements in secularity, much like Wordsworth's revisions seem to sit uncomfortably alongside the development of a multi-confessional state.

Biographical Note

John Wiehl is a lecturer at Case Western Reserve University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Florida in English, and he has taught at Cornell College. Among his various research interests are religion and form; a companion to this article, also on epic poetry, religion, and political theory recently appeared at *Religion and Literature* 48.3.

1. Wordsworth completed a full-length draft of his masterwork, *The Prelude*, in 1805. This draft followed several earlier shorter drafts, and has been the text many contemporary scholars turn to as they teach and research Wordsworth and Romanticism since Ernest de Selincourt published a text based on the 1805 draft in the 1920s. Yet, the nineteenth-century readership knew *The Prelude* of 1850, one Wordsworth had revised successively over the decades between 1805 and 1850.¹ Wordsworth, with his daughter Dora serving as his primary scribe, produced a “final” copy of *The Prelude* in 1838 and '39 (which Wordsworth continued to annotate and which served as the basis for *1850*). The date of this final major revision comes in a unique historical moment: the passage of the great Reform Bill of 1832 was the culmination of decades of political pressure by the non-noble but wealthy business class in Britain. This successful power-grab responded to questions of who has the right to govern, who has political self-determination, and who should be allowed a say in the project of the nation. Attitudes to authority shifted across the political and religious spectrum. It was at the end of this decade of political strife (the failed Charter of 1838 insisted on a further re-imagination of political agency) that Wordsworth settled on a final version of *The Prelude*.² This article will seek to explain what shifts in attitudes to authority are present in Wordsworth's revisions of *The Prelude* and whether or not they mirror other shifting contemporary attitudes.
2. The Oxford Movement, or Tractarianism, exerted considerable influence among conservative Anglicans in the wake of the Reform Bill. As a push for doctrinal reform within the church its connections to the political life of the nation are infrequently discussed except in terms of its reactionary nature. Yet the interlocking attitudes to authority in politics and religion should be plainly obvious: at the end of the *ancien régime* the Established religion was a political force, and the government had legitimacy at least partly because of the official religion of the state. The political event most often linked to analyses of *The Prelude* is quite obviously the French Revolution, which Wordsworth comments on explicitly and at great length in the poem. This political commentary will receive some brief analysis in my discussion, but the specifically British context of the Reform Bill and the Oxford Movement will be my focus.³ Peter Nockles suggests that “[t]he reaction against the French Revolution and the patriotism engendered by the war against Napoleon inspired a High Church religious as well as merely political revival” (323).⁴ The influence of French politics on Wordsworth, the Anglican Church, and British society generally further indicates the intertwining aspect of social attitudes.⁵ This article traces one of

these changes in social attitudes: a parallel insistence on a greater sense of and respect for authority from the wider Oxford Movement to Wordsworth's final draft of *The Prelude*.

3. The claim that the Tractarians and Wordsworth reacted similarly to the changing political landscape suggests how poetry, religious thinking, and politics are mutually influential. There are no one-way streets of influence in the outline of how thinking about authority changed during the Romantic and early Victorian eras. Of later poets and church leaders, literary critic Robert Ryan says “[w]hat seems to me most significant about the [overwhelmingly positive] judgment of those two Church leaders [Keble and Kingsley] on Wordsworth was their perception of the poet's career as having had primarily a religious importance” (80).⁶ Also, Nockles suggests that “[a] unique combination of moral strength and religious dynamism, imbued with the spirit of Romanticism, proved to be the winning, almost secret power which enabled the Movement to capture the hearts as well as minds of the rising generation in the Oxford of the 1830s” (325). The success of one side of the movement, poetry, in changing social attitudes helped the success of another element of the same movement, theology.
4. Arguing that Wordsworth and the Oxford Movement reacted to the politics of the era similarly does not equate with claiming that Wordsworth was a conservative Anglican with Catholic Church-like tendencies.⁷ Stephen Gill, a leading Wordsworth scholar today, suggests that our contemporary British and American scholars want to claim Wordsworth for their own positions: as Anglican-leaning Catholic, Quaker, or pantheist (“Wordsworth and the ‘Catholic Truth’” 204).⁸ But Gill notes that several of Wordsworth's 1830s era works were influenced by the Anglican church. He says:

Ecclesiastical Sketches (1822), the essay presented as a 'Postscript' to the *Yarrow Revisited* collection (1835), and many of the memorials of the 1837 Italian tour published in *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842), were evidence of [Wordsworth's] interest in the evolution of the Anglican Church, of his reverence for its social function, and of his growing sense of its importance as a conduit for spiritual values in the decade following the triumph of Reform. (205)

Furthermore, Gill accepts that the influence of Wordsworth's brother Christopher along with Newman and Keble attempting to bring Wordsworth around to Oxford Movement-like views may have had some effect on his poetry; if these several factors did not, the young Frederick

Faber certainly did (207-210).⁹ Faber was a young scholar (b. 1814) when in the mid- '30s he became convinced of the truth behind Tractarianism. Faber was also a poet, resident clergy in the Lake District, and Wordsworth's friend; when he followed on Newman's heels as a convert to Rome he lost Wordsworth's respect.

5. Gill further claims that Wordsworth's poetry at times was directly influenced by Faber, who was present at Oxford during the circulation of the *Tracts*. Gill's work draws on B. W. Martin's analysis of the poetic influence of Wordsworth on Keble and Faber. Martin says, “[t]here is no doubt that Wordsworth was a major poetic influence on both Keble and Faber; conversely, as Wordsworth became more closely concerned with church affairs he fell under the influence of the Oxford Movement, and of Keble and Faber in particular” (438). Gill more explicitly outlines these trace influences on Wordsworth's poetry. He says, “Wordsworth revised existing poems into greater conformity with an Anglo-Catholic interpretation. In two cases there is documentary evidence that Faber was the specific cause and in the third it is most likely that his influence was at work” (214). Gill's analysis focuses on Wordsworth's shorter works and neglects extended analysis of *The Prelude*; yet, *The Prelude* bears many markers of change toward a greater respect for authority, civil and religious.¹⁰

6. The analysis that follows focuses on a few positions that Wordsworth adopts in his revisions of *The Prelude* that writers of the Oxford Movement also take.¹¹ First I address how Wordsworth chops away at the rampant egotism of the 1805 *Prelude* in order to make room for more than just himself in the retelling of his life; the new presentation of his life's details makes room for more true priests. For in the 1805 *Prelude* Wordsworth has assumed the role of priest for himself too often, and this false role contrasts with the rigid respect for clerical orders demanded by the Tractarians and Wordsworth in their response to the shifting political landscape. Similarly, an increased respect for the liturgy as having real effects and a heightened reticence to present himself as performing ceremonies mirrors the Oxford Movement's respect for the ritual forms of religion. Then I address the interlocking nature of politics and religion in Wordsworth's vision across eras (and in imaginations of early church and English history) to account for why an analysis of the church in Wordsworth is almost automatically also an analysis of the state. Finally, a consideration of contemporary scholarship on Wordsworth and religion will provide a commentary on the role of, or possibility of, secularization in a democratic world.¹²

7. A comparison between two portions of the 1805 and 1850 *Prelude* will highlight some of the changes that take place in the shift to a greater emphasis on the power of the creator and a related erasure of the self or, at least, one's will. 1805 reads:

The mind of man is framed even like the breath
And harmony of music. There is a dark
Invisible workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, and makes them move
In one society. (1.351-55)

Whereas by 1850, multiple changes add up to a very different total worldview. Compare:

Dust as we are, the immortal Spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. (1.340-44)

These parallel lines from Book First come directly before the much-discussed late-night boat stealing scene where Nature leads the young Wordsworth into a sublime (and probably sexualized) encounter with herself. That Wordsworth here reorients the opening of such a memorable moment in an attempt to blur the intense focus on himself suggests that he wants to emphasize the nonhuman power present in the scene. The opening salvo revises the “mind of man” to “the immortal spirit,” deemphasizing a quality that might be educated, trained, and controlled and transforms it into the ephemeral but immutable. “Invisible” becomes “Inscrutable” which initially emphasizes the human's ability to see but then again alters the notion to make sight unhelpful. “Inscrutable” also demands recognition; invisible things can be denied, but this revised power insists on engagement but not comprehension. The obfuscation also serves to remind readers that not all processes—religious here, but political as well—are easily understood by all. Wordsworth seems to be evoking a god of mysterious ways whose methods should not be questioned.

8. The meaning also splits when Nature “deigns” to operate versus the earlier as “she would frame/A favored being.” The early lines read:

Praise to the end!

Thanks likewise for the means! But I believe
That Nature, oftentimes, when she would frame
A favor'd being, from his earliest dawn
Of infancy doth open out the clouds
As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
With gentlest visitation: [...]
Does it delight her sometimes to employ
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, and so she dealt with me. (1.361-372)

Compare this to the later, more stridently religious lines:

Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ!
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds, or she may use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim. (1.350-356)

The theological connotation of a word like “deigns” underscores the connection Wordsworth is drawing between “Nature” and a Christian God, rather than allowing for any pantheistic or naturalistic meanings to color his singular intentions.^{13 14} Also in this passage, the change from describing himself as “A favored being” to a lack of self-description highlights several of the motives that Wordsworth kept in mind as he revised the poem. Wordsworth's egoism in this particular poem kept him from publishing it during his lifetime. He planned to publish it once he was able to finish *The Recluse*, of which *The Prelude* was to form a part. His own sensitivity to charges of egoism account for the lessening of his self-characterization as “favored;” indeed, the clouds no longer open for his infancy so centrally in the revision. But this self-erasure has somewhat broader consequences than simply lessening the reader's distaste for Wordsworth's vanity: the lack of any object/agent for Nature to smile upon refocuses the poetic heft onto Nature herself. The sense of a communion with Nature, or of Nature animating any works completed by Wordsworth, drops away as “and so she dealt with me” becomes “as best might suit her aim.” Distance from the divine, respect, and the inability of human self-determination become apparent in this moment.

9. Erasing the self, particularly the layman's self, from a central place in religious ritual practice is a major thrust of *The Tracts for the Times*. The early tract *No. 12: Richard Nelson I* checks any notion that religious services can be conducted without a priest. Yet, this tract celebrates the role of a well-read parishioner educating other parishioners outside of religious services but with some guidance from a preacher. Both this tract and Wordsworth's shifting position seem to react to the notion that laypeople might step outside their proper boundaries in over-zealous worship. Apparently, laypeople should recognize what they can contribute and stay out of where they do not belong. The respect demanded for the clergy in this formulation of religious organization does not appear quite so headily in 1805's *Prelude*.
10. Other early tracts address the possibility that a layperson would overstep boundaries. *No. 11: The Visible Church* extensively criticizes people who do not submit to their local clergy's authority. It reads, in part:

To proceed, consider the following passage: "Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves." [...] Consider the number of people, professing and doubtless in a manner really actuated by Christian principle, who yet wander about from church to church, or from church to meeting, as sheep without a shepherd, or who choose a preacher merely because he pleases their taste, and whose first movement towards any clergyman they meet, is to examine and criticize his doctrine: what conceivable meaning do they put upon these words of the Apostle? Does any one *rule over* them? do they in any way *submit themselves*? (*Tracts 7*)

This tract and others like it address an evil that the writers of the *Tracts* wanted to eradicate: the lack of hierarchies among some congregations in Britain. Some Dissenters' church organization allowed unordained elders a greater role in local ministries, with often as much influence as that of the priests. The *Tract* writers at least wanted to warn any English Anglican congregations from attempting to institute a less-stratified organization. And the advice applies broadly: parishioners need to learn to keep their heads down and not wander from congregation to congregation. The writer emphasizes submission and rule to advocate a clear form of church organization that demands respect for authority.

11. Submission in *The Prelude* often comes through re-characterizations of Wordsworth's role in nature and human society. Wordsworth's partial self-erasure, often in passages invoking religion, happens consistently in the revisions between 1805 and 1850. A typical example, "I worshipp'd then among the depths of things / As my soul bade me" (1805 11.233-34) becomes "[w]orshipping then among the depth of things / As piety ordained" (1850 12.184-85). Here the "worshipping" agent/I is replaced by passive obedience to what is "ordained." The process of subtracting the self coincides with the addition of religious piety and a spiritual agent. Wordsworth's approach to solving the problem of an unchecked egoism involves invoking holiness and doctrine. Alone, this casual switch might not indicate an alignment with the aims of the Oxford Movement, but Wordsworth carefully reduces his self-characterization as a "priest" or acting in "priestly" ways at the same time.
12. The Oxford Movement greatly exalted the role of the clergy in relationship to his flock; more than just a shepherd herding a flock, a clergyman could provide access to grace through ritual performance (liturgy, baptism, etc.) because of the sacrament. As such, Nockles's suggestion that "[t]he early Tracts struck a chord with the country clergy, to whom they were primarily directed. All who in the context of the challenge of Dissent and Whig ecclesiastical reform in the early 1830s felt conservatively disposed in religion and politics, rallied to the Tractarian standard" reveals this widespread response to the changing social landscape (274). Wordsworth's abnegation of his earlier self-characterization as a priest aligns him more squarely with the Tractarian's changing thought. Practically the opening of *The Prelude* (1805) invokes a priestly metaphor. It reads:

to the open fields I told
A prophecy: poetic numbers came
Spontaneously, and cloth'd in priestly robe
My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,
For holy services. (1.60-64)

The slight change by 1850 reflects a hesitancy to cast himself as "cloth'd in priestly robe." The later version reads:

to the open fields I told
A prophecy:—poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to cloth in priestly robe

A renovated Spirit singled out,
Such hope was mine, for holy services. (1.50-54)

No longer does Wordsworth directly claim *his* spirit wears a priestly robe, but he instead claims that the robe covers a spirit that he hopes was his. This small change reflects larger thinking about the role of the priesthood in society and the respect due to clergy. The anonymous Tract Five, written “by a layman,” warns against the assumption of priestly duties by the laity. The writer exhorts his peers to imagine that “with no other authority than his own good pleasure, [a layman might] proceed to baptize, or to administer the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper [this would] involve the highest degree of arrogance and impiety, and would be nothing short of a mockery of that great and awful Being, of whose gifts these sacred ordinances are alike the appointed means and pledges” (2). The stakes couldn’t be higher in this argument. The writer further details and separates the responsibilities of the several levels of clergymen and bishops. This anonymous layman also strongly advocates for the absence of politics in religious affairs by arguing that Parliament cannot make one a priest (2). *The Prelude* by 1850 practically bears out the exact concern of laymen assuming priestly roles, and the related concerns of *Tract Five*’s author cannot be entirely absent from Wordsworth’s thinking. Again, I’m not suggesting that Wordsworth has this Tract in mind when revising *The Prelude*, but Wordsworth is responding in similar ways to the threat of social change as the writers of the *Tracts* did.

13. Asserting the necessity of increased respect for priests registered a protest with the changing political landscape of Great Britain. For the first time men who did not own a literal stake in the nation had a say in their governance as the Great Reform Bill of 1832 allowed some non-landowners the vote in elections for the House of Commons. Rather than having Members of Parliament being, essentially, appointed to their positions by the wealthiest elite much like members of the Anglican clergy found themselves in possession of their offices and livings through the kindness of the elite, the new Members of Parliament were more subject to the approval of their constituents as Dissenting ministers were subject to the approval of their parishioners. Such an erosion in the power of the elite to govern the nation and to provide spiritual guidance for their renters provoked a massive rethinking of politics and religion.
14. In *The Prelude*, when there are revisions to words and phrases like “ministry” or “holy orders,” Wordsworth usually extends increased respect for those holy orders by 1850. Much less

frequently does Wordsworth make sweeping claims for a priestly role for Nature. For example, the 1805 version reads:

Ye lowly Cottages in which we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours,
A sanctity, a safeguard, and a love. (1.526-28)

The “ministration” remains in 1850, but he cuts the last line that indicates Nature provides “[a] sanctity.” Nature may take on a priestly role, but it cannot sanctify in the revision.¹⁵ Not incidentally, sanctification was a major question for Tractarians. Nockles says:

The doctrine of Justification represented the main source of theological dispute between Protestants and Roman Catholics at the Reformation. Protestants decisively repudiated what they regarded as the Roman Catholic doctrine of merit and notion of an inherent or infused righteousness in man attainable through obedience and good works. Following Luther, the Reformers held a forensic doctrine of Justification by Faith alone whereby righteousness was imputed to man. Faith, it was insisted, was not a work. (256)

Here, justification is the process by which humanity has the possibility of being saved, whereas sanctification is the process by which individuals are saved. Nockles says, “[i]n the Protestant formulation, Justification was grounded on ‘Christ’s blood’ and not rendered in any way dependent on either individual good works or the efficacy of the sacraments. Justification was regarded as distinct from and anterior to sanctification” (256). Wordsworth has kept to a more doctrinally-acceptable role for nature in the revision; the historical differences between Catholicism and Protestantism of achieving redemption through works or faith peeks through the pages of *The Prelude* in Wordsworth's revisions.

15. The liturgical emphasis on the ability of the priest to perform all-powerful holy rituals will be considered a bit later in this article, but Wordsworth invokes increased consideration for *ministrations* and this works on multiple levels. He drops a description of his mind as “noviciate” in favor of “inexperienced” (1805 10.682 / 1850 11.96). While Wordsworth does not revise all mentions of holy orders in *The Prelude*, for instance the 1850 lines “I made no vows, but vows / Were then made for me” have not changed much since 1805, the response to these lines does shift slightly (4.334-35). In 1805, the lines following these “vows” read “[o]n I walk'd / In blessedness which even yet remains” (4.344-45). By 1850 this blessedness is characterized as “thankful,”

which only serves to deepen his dependent position (4.338). For of course Wordsworth is not claiming to have taken “vows” equivalent to the vows a clergyman must take, but he insists that he takes his poetic vocation as seriously as any clergyman could take his position. Wordsworth still recognizes that the stakes for a clergyman are higher (a failed poet only ruins himself and maybe his family, not his entire community's eternal souls), but he wants to find a language to describe his own semi-anointed role.

16. Wordsworth's increased respect for holy orders comes because of their increased importance in his changing mind. In an 1805 description of a metaphorical shepherd as priest, Wordsworth says “[t]his pretty shepherd, pride of all the Plains, / Leads up and down his captivated flock” (7.565-66). The shepherd's role as leader morphs into a stricter role by 1850. The lines then read, “[t]his pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains, / To rule, and guide his captivated Flock” (7.571-72). Now the shepherd acts as a ruler in addition to a guide; the shepherd also now belongs to God or Christ. The representation of a stronger priest follows a description of the possibly damaging effects of a priest on his flock; this cautionary description is almost entirely newly formed as an appropriate lead out from a (also newly-minted) panegyric for Edmund Burke.¹⁶ In 1805 the description of the damaging priest reads:

These are grave follies: other public Shows
The Capital City teems with, of a kind
More light, and where but in the holy Church! (7.544-46)

The revision reads:

Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt
Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
Endowed with various power to search the soul;
Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place! (7.544-50)

The critique of showy priests typifies much Tractarian thinking,¹⁷ but Wordsworth stresses the danger to the flock and the priestly abuse of power in the revision because of the reverberations such corruptions might cause.¹⁸ A strong critique of the church follows this passage; a potentially corrupt priest also poses a great threat in Oxford Movement Anglican thinking. For unlike

Evangelicalism, which often valued justification and redemption through faith alone, this brand of Anglicanism placed much of the Church's redemptive power in the hands of the liturgical officiant. The liturgy and rituals passed grace on to the penitent; faith alone would not render the sinner sanctified.

17. Wordsworth also places increasing emphasis on liturgical power while revising *The Prelude*. Stephen Gill, the leading Wordsworth scholar, gives us this analysis per Wordsworth's shorter late poetry; when prodded Wordsworth:

responded with three sonnets, serving, he said, 'to qualify or mitigate the Condemnation which by conscience I am compelled to pass upon the abuses of the Roman See' and with a further six upon church services, which he thought desirable 'wanting to complete the notice of the English Liturgy'. Though Faber complained that they did not come up to his wish, the new sonnets colour the latter part of the sequence strongly, revealing how *far the poet had moved towards Faber's goal that he should become "more affectionately disposed towards authority & dogma."* (my italics 214)

Here Wordsworth has been encouraged to shape his poetry with "authority & dogma" in mind; that he has responded directly in the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* suggests an openness to revision elsewhere.

18. The use of liturgical reference and language is less striking in *The Prelude* than in references to other doctrinally-specific issues like the role of priests or the ancient church. In 1805 Book Third, after observing nature and her beauties, he says, "thereafter came/ Observance less devout" (206-207). These lines are cut by 1850, which suggests that Wordsworth reserves invoking words like "Observance," which connote church services directly, for moments of actual, priest-led worship. In addition to an increased respect for the liturgy, Wordsworth wants to hedge his bets in terms of the likelihood that he will be branded a pantheist or atheist, since no longer does he use "Observance" for experiences in nature.
19. Some of the opening lines in *The Prelude* receive revision per liturgical doctrine, but these revisions might work in a slightly different pattern than most of the other revisions relating to religious expression. Wordsworth retains a reference to the beginning of his "Liberty" era (1850), or time not devoted to material concerns, that has "consecrated" free time for his poetic work.

Wordsworth characterizes this work as a “holy life,” saying, “[p]ure passions, virtue, knowledge, and delight, / The holy life of music and of verse” (1805 1.53-54). This co-opting of the religious life to describe his own less-than-priestly vocation does not entirely survive. Yet, by 1850, Wordsworth has employed a more strictly religious vocabulary. He says his time was “nor wanting punctual service high, / Matins and vespers, of harmonious verse!” (1850 1.44-45). Here, the invocation of religious music as a descriptor for his poetry and the suggestion that this poetry comprises “service high” suggests a further co-opting of the liturgy by the non-clerical Wordsworth. Rather unlike the rest of the revisions that seem in lockstep with the Oxford Movement, this one presents Wordsworth as an active Priest of nature. A few telltale signals intimate otherwise, such as the 1850 “consecration” sentence ends with a question mark (rather than the earlier declaration) and so becomes more tentative. Furthermore, rather than calling his life a “holy” one, he suggests that his poetry could be used as lyrics for religious music and so assumes the role of hymn writer, which is not a strictly clerical position. The revisionary pattern here in terms of the liturgy is more fraught than other examples and reveals that Wordsworth did not respond to the changing social landscape in lockstep with the Tractarians.

20. The liturgical elements of *The Prelude* overlap at least once with a focus on an ancient, if not Christian, church: in a vision of an ancient rite, Druids perform a ritual sacrifice around one of England's mysterious, man-made stone formations. Wordsworth displaces his sense of the early church onto the non-Christian Druids rather than early Christianity in Britain probably because early Christianity in Britain would have to be rendered an unsavory Catholic, and if Wordsworth tried to represent early Christianity elsewhere in the world he would lose the connection to the particularized English geography that animates much of his early memories. *1850* includes one salient extra line compared to *1805*, “[o]ur dim Ancestral Past in Vision clear” which directly connects Wordsworth to the imagined Druidic event (13.320). As such, deep religious history matters more for Wordsworth by 1850. The Tractarian emphasis on one vision of the ancient Christian church, with its religious fervor and assumed episcopal lineage, was a significant part of their claim for authority. For a direct line from the current head of the church, traced back through the Reformation to the Roman Catholic church and then to the first Pope, and Christ himself, provided unadulterated authenticity. As such, the expanded references to Druids and the ancient church in *The Prelude (1850)* work as a displaced contemporary anxiety about the loss of Anglican Church authority in early nineteenth-century Britain.¹⁹

21. As references to Druidic rites makes clear, the displacement is across both history and faith. The mention of the stone circle at Swinside in Book Second, “[a] holy Scene” in both versions, also picks up a mention of Druids by 1850 (1805, 114; 1850, 107). Writing ancient priests into *The Prelude* produces several resonances with the Oxford Movement. History, widely construed, begins to take on meanings at both the personal level and for the nation as a whole (“[o]ur dim Ancestral Past”). Representing this condensed and displaced history takes on added meanings when considering the Tractarians use their version of ancient history as a guide both for restoring the “lost” spirit of the church and for finding a version of the liturgy closest to the ones performed in early Christian churches.²⁰
22. Bishop Bull's take on ancient liturgies in Tract 64 uses evidence that “[a]ll the ancient Liturgies agree in this Form of Prayer almost in the same words, but fully and exactly in the same sense, order, and method; which whosoever attentively considers, must be convinced that this order of prayer was delivered to the several churches in the first plantation and settlement of them” to discredit the doctrines of transubstantiation and purgatory in one fell swoop (2). This somewhat early tract already shows the reactionary turn the Movement took to discredit claims that it was too heavily-influenced by Roman Catholicism, but the emphasis by Bishop Bull on the absence of historical contingency for the liturgy suggests a unified, pure church that has survived intact from earlier eras.²¹ His desired continuity, of course, reveals the Tractarian nervousness about changes in the political and religious settlement of the era. And Tract 64 builds on the work in Tract 63 that attempts to prove the four structures of the liturgy at use throughout the Christian world derive from four writers working roughly contemporaneously in the very early years of Christianity as the liturgies have all the same basic elements just in different orders. This led Bull and others to posit the existence of one foundational liturgy. Their insistence on a universal form of liturgical worship that centers on a leading divine and survives fairly unchanged from deep history reflects the Tractarian assertion of one irenic version of history for a political and religious hegemony that appeared to be slipping away.
23. The focus on the ancient church as a guide for the contemporary one is plain in Wordsworth's appeal to schoolmasters who he fears profane religion in forcing it upon their charges. Here, the anxiety about political change seems less displaced and significantly more direct, as Wordsworth

calls on the populace for a different kind of worship. After a wistful description of his inability to excel at studying books as he excelled in the study of nature, Wordsworth says:

But spare the house of God. Was ever known
The witless Shepherd who would drive his flock
With serious repetition to a pool
Of which 'tis plain to sight they never taste?
A weight must surely hang on days, begun
And ended with worst mockery: be wise,
Ye Presidents and Deans, and to your Bells
Give seasonable rest; for 'tis a sound
Hollow as ever vex'd the tranquil air. (*1805* 3.415-423)

The revised version contains a significant appeal to the religious fervor of ancient times and emphasizes the temporally contingent world. In the revised version, Wordsworth describes the “recreant age *we* live” to signal dissatisfaction with the lack of religious feeling present, then continues with a parallel passage on the evils of enforced religious observance (original emphasis retained 3.403):

But spare the house of God. Was ever known
The witless Shepherd who persists to drive
A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked?
A weight must surely hang on days begun
And ended with such mockery. Be wise,
Ye Presidents, and Deans, and till the spirit
Of ancient Times revive, and Youth be trained
At home in pious service, to your bells
Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
And your officious doings bring disgrace
On the plain Steeples of our English Church,
Whose worship, 'mid remotest Village trees,
Suffers for this. (*1850* 3.408-421)²²

That “*we*” aggressively sticks out and points to the added suggestion that “ancient times” may “revive.” Together, these two changes invite the reader to live a revalued, active religious life that

centers in the home and that Wordsworth fears has been lost to apathy and the regulations of “Presidents and Deans” about attending chapel. The spirit must revive, Wordsworth argues, for the restoration of dignity to the “plain Steeples of our English Church.” The reference to the ancient church acts as a cure missing from the first description of an ailing church, and while Wordsworth does not invoke truly millennial rhetoric, the cure suggests a shared necessity of historical progress. As a conservative, nostalgic movement, Wordsworth's invocation of the ancient church aligns the poem more directly with anti-progressive political thinking. That this statement refers to politics just as broadly as it does to church reform will become even more apparent after an analysis of the potential for political change that Wordsworth discusses in relation to the French Revolution.

24. Wordsworth begins the description of his time in France with one of the most significant metaphors invoked throughout *The Prelude*—that of a river. Yet this description seems different, as several lines describe the river that bends back upon itself in both 1805 and 1850, but Wordsworth's nostalgia for the earlier era is more evident by 1850 because of added lines that describe a backward-looking traveler. These lines help distance the later anti-revolutionary Wordsworth from the earlier Wordsworth who identified with revolutionary feelings and values, if not means. The displacement of anxieties about the changing political landscape of early nineteenth-century Britain to invocations of early Christian church history takes on further meanings as Wordsworth's traveler looks back upon a just-traversed plain:

as a Traveller, who has gained the brow
Of some aerial Down, while there he halts
For breathing-time, is tempted to review
The region left behind him; and if aught
Deserving notice have escaped regard,
Or been regarded with too careless eye,
Strives, from that height, with one, and yet one more
Last look, to make the amends he may,
So have we lingered. (1850 9.9-17).

For with these words the poet will now move into a direct consideration of the political landscape of pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary France.

25. *The Prelude* can be read as a political poem detailing one nature-enthusiast's reaction to the French Revolution and its causes; this reading, while illuminating, suggests that religious doctrine would have little import in its interpretation. Yet, the politics advocated by Wordsworth throughout the poem is based on particular ideas of religious expression. The sense that religious particularity shapes much of the political statements made by Wordsworth does not change significantly from 1805 to 1850; if anything, the already religious/political poem of 1805 becomes simply more religious in its foundation for political thought. The insight that religion drives politics in *The Prelude* underscores my argument that the incorporation of religious doctrine similar to that of the Oxford Movement has political motivations. These political motivations are mostly reactionary; that this form of religious doctrine is being left behind by the formation of a new national voting body is part of the reason those in authority feel the need to assert the rights of authority even more strongly.
26. Wordsworth's vision of politics becomes clear in an analysis of the nation and its citizens. A passage from the 1850 version of the poem well-illustrates one of two semi-contradictory ideas that Wordsworth holds in play throughout *The Prelude* concerning the roles of equal citizens in the reformed nation. After discussing academic/Cambridge life, Wordsworth writes:

That we were brothers all
In honour, as in one community,
Scholars and Gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction lay open to all that came,
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
Add unto this, subservience from the first
To Presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the Soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,

As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. (1850 9.227-243)

Here, Wordsworth has added “worth” to line 233, which was not present in 1805, and this increased emphasis on the sometimes intangible but often defining quality particular to the gentleman-scholars who comprise his community suggests political exclusivity. It's the ideas of exclusivity versus universality that will often create a contradiction in the political vision of *The Prelude*. The subservience of this exclusive group to “God's mysterious power” is necessary for their hailing of a “government of equal rights.” The idea that Christianity proves foundational for this most-just government bears Wordsworth's repetition in *The Prelude*.²³

27. Indeed, as Wordsworth discusses the role of individual men in forming the new nation, he cannot help but attribute the qualities necessary for this nation-building to God. He says:

We added dearest themes,
Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power,
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth, the one to break
Bondage, the other to build liberty
On firm foundations, making social life,
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure,
As individual in the wise and good. (1850 9.354-363)

Here the class-bound exclusivity of some of his other statements seems less integral, and this move matches a slightly later call for an end to poverty and for greater self-governance (1850 9.520-532). Doctrine drives this push for universality in terms of self-governance; in another passage all souls have the same internal (God-given) guidance to discriminate between right and wrong, and this power demands greater equality. 1850 reads:

I felt,
That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
Of life and death, in majesty severe

Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
Of Truth and justice, either sacrifice,
From whatsoever region of our cares
Or our infirm affections nature pleads,
Earnest and blind, against the stern decree. (1850 10.181-90)

Here Wordsworth argues that even if human actors have been misled, an internal voice shall guide them to truth and justice. These lines new to the 1850 version of the poem further underscore how central belief is for Wordsworth's political imaginary.

28. Possibly as a model for how Wordsworth envisions breaking down some of the class barriers inherent in the exclusivity model of governance that I have been outlining, Wordsworth discusses his friend Michel Beaupuy in particularly religious and class-bound terms saying:

By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the Poor
Among mankind he was in service bound
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order. (1850 9.302-306)

That Wordsworth has imagined charity work in terms of the duties of a religious order suggests the slippery, probably dissoluble division between religion and governance. The vows he has imagined Beaupuy taking would lead to a lifetime devotion to the poor; as such, Beaupuy resembles one of the priests Wordsworth has accorded extra respect in 1850 (and rather interestingly Wordsworth allows Beaupuy to keep a priestly role while having eliminated basically all references to himself as such). The extra-governmental role Beaupuy assumes here accords with a vision of landed gentry caring for their dependents. This, of course, reduces the role of the state in favor of a church-supported hierarchy.

29. The valuation of the church over the state becomes apparent in the 1850 version of the poem as Wordsworth berates revolutionary forces for meddling in church affairs. Wordsworth uses all new lines for 1850 to issue a call for reason to equalize the relationship between monarch and peasant. Then, after defending the monks of Grande Chartreuse, who Wordsworth says have been unjustly expelled from their monastery, Wordsworth views the outdoors with refreshed eyes. In:

Vallombre's groves

Entering, we fed the Soul with darkness, thence
Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
In different quarters of the bending sky,
The Cross of Jesus stand erect, as if
Hands of angelic Powers had fixed it there,
Memorial revered by a thousand Storms;
Yet then, from the indiscriminating sweep
And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure. (1850 6.481-89)

Miraculously, as the government in a “whirlwind” interferes with God's orders, oversize crucifixes appear to Wordsworth in what had seemed to be an open, empty expanse. This seemingly fantastic visitation provides no better moment to criticize over-reaching, indiscriminate governmental forces that should not interfere in church affairs. Wordsworth also accounts for the loss of national pride as a falling away from God in another passage that appears similarly in 1805 and 1850 (1850 10.300-314).

30. I hope that by highlighting Wordsworth's dependence on religious thinking and particularized religious doctrine throughout the revisions of *The Prelude* that I have suggested how important it is to consider the political and religious vision of *The Prelude* as inextricably linked by the 1850 edit. That Wordsworth takes increasingly similar positions to the Oxford Movement as time progresses should further indicate how Wordsworth thinks of politics and the French Revolution in narrowly religious terms. The too great possibilities of monumental change, in the face of the Reform Bill of 1832, drove Wordsworth and the writers of Oxford Movement tracts to advocate a kind of respect for authority that would not again accurately characterize the interactions between citizens and their government.
31. Still, the political implications of scholarship on religion are ever apparent today; several of the theologically-minded critics cited in the endnotes to this article have obvious agendas regarding the role of Christianity in the contemporary world. These critics attack secular university goals and religiously-neutral policies that support diverse expressions of religious belief in our universities, and by extension, the world at large by advocating theological goals in readings of nineteenth-century literature and religion. That the people who take Christian revivalist religious positions are also the primary group who study nineteenth-century literature and religion is further

a matter for concern. If Christian revivalists are the only ones who take religion in public life seriously they exert great historical power that cannot be dealt with simply by denying the importance of religion today. That a significant number of these scholars are working against the idea that Western society ever secularized, along with a public that continues to profess high levels of belief and politicians who espouse Christian beliefs predominantly (either sincerely or ambitiously), suggests that secularization happened among a relatively small group of thinkers. And not all academics secularized. The secular group may have set the tone for much of the long twentieth-century's thought, scientific or humanistic, but it does not seem to have much dominance in the political realm and is almost certainly losing ground in the Habermasian public sphere. The lack of secularity in our form of government means dispiriting things if the state wants to promote a vibrant, religiously-diverse populace. Much like S. A. Skinner asks for renewed, non-theological but academic interest in Newman and the Oxford Movement in "History *versus* Hagiography: The Reception of Turner's *Newman*," I would appreciate seeing a greater body of scholarship on the intersection of religion and politics in the nineteenth century. About loud and basically univocal Catholic critics of Victor Turner's massive biography of Newman, Skinner says, "[w]hat is at stake is the legitimacy and remit of historical inquiry itself, when confronted with a vocal interest group whose principles and prejudices are seldom acknowledged. The difference [... is] between history itself and hagiography – a difference not of prejudice, but of methodology" (781). While the critics of Wordsworth and religion are far from united, their work often harkens back—probably unintentionally—to methods of conceiving the interaction of politics and religion in Wordsworth's own work. Seeking a greater understanding of the role of religion in the nineteenth century, during early struggles for democracy, shall only help critics today understand their own role in the continuing project of democracy.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism; Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1971.
- Adams, James Eli. *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995.
- Chandler, James K. *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics*. Chicago, Chicago UP, 1984.
- Deboo, James. "Wordsworth and the Stripping of the Altars." *Religion and the Arts* 8.3 (2004): 323-43.
- Easterlin, Nancy. *Wordsworth and the Question of 'Romantic Religion'*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1996.
- Froude, Richard Hurrell, et al. *Tracts for the Times*. London, Printed for J: G. F. & J. Rivington, & J. H. Parker, Oxford, 1840.
- Fry, Paul H. "Progresses of Poetry." *Wordsworth Circle* 37.1 (2006): 22-7.
- Gill, Stephen Charles. *William Wordsworth : A Life*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford UP, 1990.
- . *Wordsworth and the Victorians*. Oxford England; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford UP, 1998.
- . "Wordsworth and 'Catholic Truth': The Role of Frederick William Faber." *Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language* 45.178 (1994): 204-20.
- Hill, Alan G (ed). *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth III. The Later Years. Part I: 1821-1828*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978.
- . *Letters of William Wordsworth: A New Selection*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.
- Jager, Colin. *The Book of God: Secularization and Design in the Romantic Era*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2007.
- Martin, B. W. "Wordsworth, Faber, and Keble: Commentary on a Triangular Relationship." *Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language* 26.104 (1975): 436-42.
- McCracken, David. "Wordsworth, the Bible, and the Interesting." *Religion and Literature* 31.3 (1999): 19-42.
- Nockles, Peter B. *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857*. Cambridge; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Roberts, Jonathan. "Wordsworth's Apocalypse." *Literature & Theology: An International Journal of Religion, Theory, and Culture* 20.4 (2006): 361-78.
- Ryan, Robert M. *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789-1824*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Skinner, S. A. "History versus Hagiography: The Reception of Turner's *Newman*." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. 61.4: (October 2010): 764-781.

---. *Tractarians and The 'Condition of England': The Social and Political Thought of the Oxford Movement*. New York: Oxford UP, 2004.

Ulmer, William Andrew. *The Christian Wordsworth, 1798-1805*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2001.

Wordsworth, William, et al. *The Prelude, 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative Texts, Context and Reception, Recent Critical Essays*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1979.

Wordsworth, William, and Mark L. Reed. *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.

Wordsworth, William, and W. J. B. Owen. *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

¹ The earliest date of composition for any lines that found their way into *The Prelude* seems to be 1797.

² Textual scholars often reject much of the 1838/39 *Prelude* (MS E) because of inconsistencies by one of the scribes and a realization that William Wordsworth did not closely supervise this formalization of his notes on an earlier draft. So, many turn to MS D from 1832 or MS C for portions that MS E is missing. The dating of these manuscripts, while important, does not necessarily change the overall position I'm advocating: Wordsworth shared similar concerns to the writers of *The Tracts for the Times* and imagined similar responses to these problems. Wordsworth's changes over the course of the teens, twenties, and thirties add up to a final picture greatly different from his first draft.

³ Wordsworth interestingly bemoans the lack of influence clergy had in Parliament in a letter to Southey in mid-December 1828 (Hill *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth III Part I : 1821-1828* 687). Another letter from a few weeks earlier carries these same complaints and goes farther on the issue of easing Catholic disabilities, leading Wordsworth to wonder if some day "you are prepared to open the Throne itself to Catholics, and overturn the provision of the Revolution of 1688" (679). Wordsworth expresses disapproval for the Reform Bill later on, and draws on Burke as his inspiration for this position (Hill *Letters of William Wordsworth: A New Selection* 253). I address James K. Chandler regarding Burke's influence on Wordsworth below, but I present these interesting personal comments on the political situation less as biographical support for my position per the revisions of *The Prelude* than as representative of one Anglican's High Church thinking per the changing social and electoral world.

⁴ Nockles's *The Oxford Movement in Context* and S. A. Skinner's *Tractarians and the 'Condition of England'* are excellent starting points for information on the Oxford Movement/Tractarianism. Nockles focuses on the continuities of Oxford Movement thinking with earlier High Church thinkers (and places

the Tract writers in relationship to other Anglican movements) while Skinner argues that the Tractarians were not detached from social concerns but were actively engaged in thinking through the problems of the British nation.

⁵ Colin Jager notes that much important scholarship on Wordsworth by critics like Bloom, Abrams, and Hartman works from “the implicit premise [...] that Wordsworth faces a spiritual crisis that he tries to solve by means of poetry” (158). This may have been true for the Wordsworth who composed the 1805 *Prelude* but does not function as well in a reading of *The Prelude* as a historical artifact that bears the marks of many decades of revision. Jager's overarching argument is that because the Romantics employed “intelligent” design-like thought and metaphors in their work their contribution to secularization should be reconsidered.

⁶ Part of Ryan's central argument is that “[i]t is difficult to distinguish between the political and the religious aspects of the cultural transformation experienced by English society at the beginning of the nineteenth century [...] Perhaps because British history demonstrated that religion was not the antagonist of social change but rather its most potent stimulus [...] the Romantic poets accepted the role of religion as a dynamic ideology behind social and political activism” (3-4). My argument jibes with Ryan's, even though I depart from him methodologically (he is concerned with aesthetic value).

⁷ Wordsworth was actually quite anti-Catholic in terms of his personal opinions.

⁸ Recently James Deboo noted that Wordsworth's “memories of his mother's faith provided perhaps some of the material which allowed Wordsworth to reconcile himself with Christianity. But Wordsworth never reconciled himself with puritan emphases such as eternal punishment, an extreme extension of the doctrines of original sin and atonement. The French Revolution presented Wordsworth with the opportunity to fashion an Orthodox Christianity which nevertheless had disposed of atonement” (333). The biographical information about Wordsworth's apparent beliefs bolsters Deboo's claim for Wordsworth as a religious moderate who wanted to preserve a place for religion in secular eras (340). Deboo would like Anglicans today to pay attention to Wordsworth's religious thinking, practically treating Wordsworth as a guide. He says, “[i]t is only now, I hold, that the Anglican tradition is beginning to wake up to the kinds of theological possibilities Wordsworth may have already had in mind” (338). As such, it seems perfectly clear that Deboo's approving citation of an essay collection that calls for a contemporary return to medieval forms of Christianity has more than just faith in its target. In an era when religious diversity only seems to increase every day—in Britain, the States, and elsewhere—a call to return to an era of public burnings for apostasy and monastic control of much local governance seems

particularly xenophobic. Deboo is one of several critics wanting to reinvigorate our own era with religious forms from yesteryear; I comment on this position more thoroughly in the conclusion.

⁹ Gill analyzes several works by the Tractarians and says of this group, “all appropriate Wordsworth-the man and the work-for the Oxford Movement” (209). The influence here is completely mutual.

¹⁰ Nancy Easterlin's *Wordsworth and the Question of “Romantic Religion”* tries to address questions about Wordsworth's views in a decidedly anti-post-structuralist way. Her insights about *The Prelude* explore the workings of epistemology and religious experience in an incredibly subjective manner and dismiss political concerns explicitly and implicitly throughout the book. Yet, Easterlin does manage to consider Christianity a more advanced position than pantheism or monism (102) and thereby imports a particularly piquant pro-Christian bias in her attack on Freudian psychology as just too atheist (20-21). Overall, she'd like to suggest that Wordsworth provides a good guide for our own religious journeys.

¹¹ Gill's *Wordsworth and the Victorians* analyzes the composition of the pamphlet *Contributions of William Wordsworth to the Revival of Catholic Truths* which contains poetic excerpts and quotations from Newman's defense of the incendiary *Tract 90*. Wordsworth did not want to take sides publicly in the debate, but some of his friends felt that he had.

¹² Paul Fry's “Progresses of Poetry” provides a good starting point for thinking of the role of religion in criticism in a democratic society. He wants poetry to save us. Such a position is only possible if we believe the doctrine of original sin, that humanity is already damned (26).

¹³ David McCracken in “Wordsworth, the Bible, and the Interesting” argues that Wordsworth himself finds the Bible inherently interesting and, to a degree, allows characters in his poem to have the same perspective when they appreciate “nature” as God's handiwork. The idea that nature is God's handiwork is explored much more fully in Colin Jager's *The Book of God*. McCracken, drawing on Kierkegaard and Kant, argues “that the Bible's interest to Wordsworth resides in its stock of poetic imagination, its stock of dramatic imagination, and its power to engage the mind of the reader” (32). Apparently, for Wordsworth, contemplating the Bible as well as contemplating Nature led to an appreciation of God. Wordsworth's imagination of the natural world in *The Prelude* deserves consideration as an element of religious expression, yet I have focused on the expressly religious language in *The Prelude* and the role of the poet within nature in analyzing the religious positions taken throughout *The Prelude*.

¹⁴ A brief note on M. H. Abrams's central argument about *The Prelude* from his *Natural Supernaturalism* might prove instructive. For Abrams argued that much of the poetry of the Romantic era was a secularizing force; Christian conceptions of the world and the place of humanity in it were giving way to literary and non-Christian thinking. And elements of Christianity were being repurposed for secular use.

In *The Prelude* of 1805 much spiritual striving aims at “Nature,” and Abrams says that, “[a]t any rate, the high argument of *The Prelude* of 1805 had no need for an external Redeemer, because in that poem the function had been vested in a power of the unaided mind of man” (120).

¹⁵ On the question of sanctification regarding another passage in *The Prelude*, Nancy Easterlin says, “many of Wordsworth's uses of religious language seem primarily rhetorical and literary rather than traditionally religious [...] Wordsworth invokes typology in the process of expressing undiscoverable meaning. In this case, Wordsworth seems to have chosen religious language for its sanctifying properties rather than its meaning within a religious tradition” (104). Easterlin might provide some insight into the sanctifying language of 1805 but by 1850 sanctification is mostly sidelined.

¹⁶ Robert Ryan reminds us that “Burke worked very hard to forge just such an identification between Church and State in the national consciousness and to defend the ecclesiastical establishment as an indispensable barrier against revolution. The strategy was successful; religion became an increasingly important factor in the revolutionary debate, one that grew in significance as the prevailing revolutionary ideology in France became more militantly anti-Christian” (23). Considering the placement of these several episodes in *The Prelude*, Burke's argument for a religious state cannot be far from Wordsworth's mind. James K. Chandler, in *Wordsworth's Second Nature* makes the argument that Wordsworth's thinking was aligned with Burke's from the beginning of his poetic career, obvious in 1793's *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* and long before his great decade of poetic composition (1797-1807). This argument runs against the grain of much of Wordsworth studies which see a young radical, and possible revolutionary, who became conservative and fairly anti-democratic in old age. Yet, Chandler seems to be arguing that while Wordsworth may have disagreed with Burke's conclusions about the French Revolution in his youth, he did agree with many of Burke's tenets; furthermore, Wordsworth even adopted Burke's line of thinking about “Nature” that emphasizes learned affections and a “natural” that today's literary critics might go so far as to call “constructed.” Chandler's argument may rely a little too heavily on a theory of the individual that sees constancy in thinking across great periods of time rather than a theory that sees any political expression as a temporary assemblage of attitudes that are each subject to change, but Chandler's argument does work as a nice corrective to the reading of Wordsworth as a simple, uncomplicated “sell-out” in terms of revolutionary politics.

¹⁷ Nockles says that, “[i]n contrast to the Evangelical style of 'popular religion', the Tractarians emphasised awe, reverence and an avoidance of show. There was a consciously anti-Evangelical animus to the Tractarian presentation of the doctrine of Reserve” (199).

¹⁸ James Eli Adams points to how this piety could be read as a dandy's performance in *Dandies and Desert Saints*.

¹⁹ Compare William A. Ulmer's own take on the state of religiously-oriented contemporary scholarship on Romanticism. In criticizing new historicism, Ulmer says, “[n]ew historicist studies usually argue that ‘the poetry of Romanticism is everywhere marked by extreme forms of displacement and poetic conceptualization whereby the actual human issues with which the poetry is concerned are resituated in a variety of idealized localities.’ This opposition of history to idealization has encouraged the attitude that the spiritual proclamations of a Romantic text are precisely what we are *not* interested in—that those affirmations are not historically authentic in their own right but, rather, the form taken by Romantic political mystification and evasion” (6). Yet Ulmer abandons much specificity in doctrinal analysis for a thesis that essentially argues that Wordsworth is Christian (Anglican, even) throughout much of his earliest years composing poetry. He emphasizes “the inattentiveness to Christian doctrine throughout the poetry” of Wordsworth (19). Yet, in one way Ulmer tries to connect doctrinal analysis to Wordsworth. He says, “[e]ven his marginalizing of doctrinal questions reflects High Church institutional practice. Doctrinal accommodation had been an unofficial Anglican policy from the time of early Latitudinarian consolidations. In its conservatism, the Anglican Church resisted doctrinal reform, of course, cherishing its ideological differences from dissenting sects. But Anglican officials traditionally displayed considerable tolerance and flexibility regarding membership—including their own membership” (23-24). This consideration of doctrine includes the convenient dismissal of any particular analysis of doctrine. Of course, my argument suggests that this blindspot serves to normalize the doctrinally-specific positions leftover in our own imagination of democracy.

²⁰ Jonathan Roberts’s article “Wordsworth’s Apocalypse” contains a useful example of how a doctrinally-specific position can be read through the lens of displacement. He says, “I discuss the possibility that ‘displacement’ is a formal strategy of the text itself signalling Wordsworth's wider concerns about language and violence, rather than a furtive attempt to bury history. In the final part, I suggest that the Simplon Pass episode offers a hermeneutical alternative to the allegorical interpretation of apocalypse” (363). Displacement functions on many levels in his article and he references Alan Liu’s assertion that Wordsworth’s memory of crossing of the Alps displaces Napoleon’s crossing. After peeling away the layers on which apocalypse functions in Wordsworth’s text, he concludes “Wordsworth is reticent, singular, and endlessly provocative: his account of a highly personal revelation crossing the Alps offers a critique of the sort of allegorical readings of apocalypse which—both in Wordsworth's day

and our own—are too easily connected to the actuality of earthly violence” (376). This analysis connects the religious and the political in a rare and salient way among scholars of Wordsworth and religion.

²¹ This of course reveals tension inherent in Christian thought when compared to the more common use of linear, eschatological history.

²² The last four lines are essentially unchanged.

²³ The new lines “[t]o presences of God's mysterious power / Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,” were originally “[t]o God and Nature's single sovereignty / (Familiar presences of awful power),” in *1805* (238-39). That Wordsworth has broken apart God and Nature into separate and interacting entities suggests a revised notion of grace, a subject worth more extensive consideration.