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Faith of a novelist : religion in John Galsworthy's work

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FAITH OF A NOVELIST

RELIGION IN JOHN GALSWORTHY'S WORK

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To Marijke, Marjolein and Wouter

“Sufficient unto this Earth is the beauty and the meaning thereof.”
(John Galsworthy)¹

¹ John Galsworthy, “The Great Tree”, in *Forsytes, Pendyces and Others*, New York, Scribners, 1936, p. 332.

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List of short titles used in the parenthetical references:**Primary sources - Galsworthy**

Addresses	-	<i>Addresses in America</i>
Another Sheaf	-	<i>Another Sheaf</i>
Beyond	-	<i>Beyond</i>
Candelabra	-	<i>Candelabra</i>
Caravan	-	<i>Caravan</i>
Castles	-	<i>Castles in Spain</i>
Chancery	-	<i>In Chancery</i>
Country House	-	<i>The Country House</i>
Dark Flower	-	<i>The Dark Flower</i>
Flowering Wilderness	-	<i>Flowering Wilderness</i>
Forsyte 'Change	-	<i>On Forsyte 'Change</i>
Four Winds	-	<i>From the Four Winds</i>
Fraternity	-	<i>Fraternity</i>
Freelands	-	<i>The Freelands</i>
Glimpses	-	<i>Glimpses and Reflections</i>
Inn of Tranquillity	-	<i>The Inn of Tranquillity</i>
Jocelyn	-	<i>Jocelyn</i>
Maid in Waiting	-	<i>Maid in Waiting</i>
Man of Property	-	<i>The Man of Property</i>
Modern Comedy	-	<i>A Modern Comedy</i>
White Monkey	-	<i>The White Monkey</i>
Moods	-	<i>Moods, Songs and Doggerels</i>
Motley	-	<i>A Motley</i>
Patrician	-	<i>The Patrician</i>
Pendyces	-	<i>Forsytes, Pendyces and Others</i>
Island Pharisees	-	<i>The Island Pharisees</i>
Plays	-	<i>The Plays of John Galsworthy</i>
Poems	-	<i>Collected Poems</i>
Over the River	-	<i>Over the River</i>
Saint's Progress	-	<i>Saint's Progress</i>
Satires	-	<i>Satires and a Commentary</i>
Sheaf	-	<i>A Sheaf</i>
Silver Spoon	-	<i>The Silver Spoon</i>
Swan Song	-	<i>Swan Song</i>

Tatterdemalion	-	<i>Tatterdemalion</i>
To Let	-	<i>To Let</i>
Villa Rubein	-	<i>Villa Rubein</i>

Primary sources - other novelists, dramatists and thinkers

African Farm	-	<i>The Story of an African Farm</i> (Schreiner)
Almayer's Folly	-	<i>Almayer's Folly</i> (Conrad)
Bel-Ami	-	<i>Bel-Ami</i> (Maupassant)
Bleak House	-	<i>Bleak House</i> (Dickens)
Bovary	-	<i>Madame Bovary</i> (Flaubert)
Carmen	-	<i>Carmen</i> (Mérimée; tr. John and Ada Galsworthy)
Chuzzlewit	-	<i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i> (Dickens)
Copperfield	-	<i>David Copperfield</i> (Dickens)
Cranford	-	<i>Cranford</i> (Gaskell)
Culture	-	<i>Culture and Anarchy</i> (Arnold)
Digby	-	<i>Digby Grand</i> (Whyte-Melville)
Doll's House	-	<i>A Doll's House</i> (Ibsen)
Don Quixote	-	<i>Don Quixote</i> (Cervantes)
Elm-Tree	-	<i>Elm-Tree on the Mall</i> (France)
Elsmere	-	<i>Robert Elsmere</i> (Ward)
Emerson	-	<i>Emerson's Prose and Poetry</i> (Emerson)
Erewhon	-	<i>Erewhon</i> (Butler)
Erewhon Rev.	-	<i>Erewhon Revisited</i> (Butler)
Far Away	-	<i>Far Away and Long Ago</i> (Hudson)
Fathers and Sons	-	<i>Fathers and Sons</i> (Turgenev)
Five Plays	-	<i>Five Plays</i> (Strindberg)
God and Bible	-	<i>God and the Bible</i> (Arnold)
Gods Athirst	-	<i>The Gods are Athirst</i> (France)
Goriot	-	<i>Père Goriot</i> (Balzac)
Green Mansions	-	<i>The Green Mansions</i> (Hudson)
Hampshire	-	<i>Hampshire Days</i> (Hudson)
Hankin	-	<i>The Dramatic Works of St. John Hankin</i> (Hankin)
Heart of Darkness	-	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> (Conrad)
Henry Esmond	-	<i>The History of Henry Esmond</i> (Thackeray)
Huck Finn	-	<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn</i> (Twain)
Introduction	-	<i>Introduction à la Métaphysique</i> (Bergson)

Karamazov	-	<i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> (Dostoyevsky)
Karenina	-	<i>Anna Karenina</i> (Tolstoy)
Kingdom of God	-	<i>The Kingdom of God is Within You</i> (Tolstoy)
Land's End	-	<i>The Land's End</i> (Hudson)
Lectures	-	<i>Lectures and Essays</i> (Huxley)
Life and Consciousness	-	"Life and Consciousness" (Bergson)
Literature	-	<i>Literature and Dogma</i> (Arnold)
Lord Jim	-	<i>Lord Jim</i> (Conrad)
Major Barbara	-	<i>Major Barbara</i> (Shaw)
Market Harborough	-	<i>Market Harborough</i> (Whyte-Melville)
Mutual Friend	-	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> (Dickens)
Outcast	-	<i>An Outcast of the Islands</i> (Conrad)
Over the Hills	-	<i>Over the Hills and Far Away</i> (Ada Galsworthy)
Peer Gynt	-	<i>Peer Gynt</i> (Ibsen)
Pickwick	-	<i>The Pickwick Papers</i> (Dickens)
Pierre & Jean	-	<i>Pierre et Jean</i> (Maupassant)
Plays Pleasant	-	<i>Plays Pleasant</i> (Shaw)
Plays Unpleasant	-	<i>Plays Unpleasant</i> (Shaw)
Puritans	-	<i>Three Plays for Puritans</i> (Shaw)
Red Lily	-	<i>The Red Lily</i> (France)
Reine Pédauque	-	<i>At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque</i> (France)
Revolt	-	<i>The Revolt of the Angels</i> (France)
Scarlet Letter	-	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i> (Hawthorne)
Secret Agent	-	<i>The Secret Agent</i> (Conrad)
Selected Writings	-	<i>Selected Writings</i> (Cunninghame Graham)
Shepherd's Life	-	<i>A Shepherd's Life</i> (Hudson)
Short Stories	-	<i>Collected Short Stories</i> (Maupassant)
Silas Lapham	-	<i>The Rise of Silas Lapham</i> (Howells)
Slavery	-	<i>Modern Slavery</i> (Nevinson)
Suffering of the World	-	<i>On the Suffering of the World</i> (Schopenhauer)
Superman	-	<i>Man and Superman</i> (Shaw)
Thaïs	-	<i>Thaïs</i> (France)
Une Vie	-	<i>Une Vie</i> (Maupassant)
Vanity Fair	-	<i>Vanity Fair</i> (Thackeray)
Virgin Soil	-	<i>Virgin Soil</i> (Turgenev)
War and Peace	-	<i>War and Peace</i> (Tolstoy)
Way of All Flesh	-	<i>The Way of All Flesh</i> (Butler)
Wicker-work	-	<i>The Wicker-work Woman</i> (France)

Widow	-	<i>The Widow in the Bye Street</i> (Masefield)
World as Will	-	<i>The World as Will and Idea</i> (Schopenhauer)
Yvette	-	<i>Yvette</i> (Maupassant)
Zarathustra	-	<i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i> (Nietzsche)

Unpublished primary sources

Abbreviations used:

GP	-	“Galsworthy Papers”, Birmingham University Library
GD	-	Galsworthy’s Diaries (1910-1918), Forbes private collection

Introduction

In the year 2004 it was exactly one hundred years ago that John Galsworthy published his first novel under his own name and no longer as “John Sinjohn”, the pseudonym which he had adopted for the first three works which he had published after 1897.

John Galsworthy (1867-1933), novelist, dramatist, essayist and poet, gained international repute through *The Man of Property* (1906), the first novel of the trilogy known as *The Forsyte Saga*. The *Saga* was widely read when it was first published and created a revival of interest in his work when it was televised by the BBC in Britain in 1967 and 2002. Although the nine Forsyte novels that make up *The Forsyte Chronicles* are part of a much larger collection of novels, short stories, plays, essays and poems, these are the novels for which Galsworthy is remembered most. Galsworthy was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1932 for his literary output and his contribution to culture. He also made his mark through his eleven-year presidency of the International PEN Club from 1921 until his death in January 1933. Over the years literary criticism has lauded him for the achievements that duly deserved merit, and criticised him particularly for the novels and plays that lacked the creative genius which he had shown in his major works. It is this very ambivalence that has prevailed throughout literary criticism of Galsworthy’s work from 1900 until today. However, the picture that remains is that of a striking personality of a gifted and visionary author and of a literary figure of international standing with deep-seated and true humanitarian feelings.

Galsworthy’s major themes were those of social injustice and abuse, the hypocrisy of the middle classes, the changing times (*fin de siècle*), morality, the Great War, unhappy marriage and adultery, marriage laws, the beauty of nature, land reform and his love of animals. Most of these themes have been extensively discussed over the years, both in literary criticism and in scholarly publications. The theme of religion and philosophy has not been dealt with to an equal degree, however. This is all the more striking as Galsworthy explores it repeatedly throughout his work, from the very first to the last. Moreover, it is a theme that Galsworthy seems to have been preoccupied with all his life and come to terms with only towards the end of his life.

Fréchet (1982) is one of the few biographers who briefly discusses Galsworthy’s philosophical outlook. He states that there “are very few philosophical works, or works with a philosophical bent, that [Galsworthy] is known to have read.”¹ He goes on to say that “like many Edwardian writers Galsworthy was an agnostic . . . he did not deny the possibility of a divine force or essence – he was not an atheist – but could not believe in the God of existing religions” (Fréchet 1982, 192). This statement of Fréchet’s is in fact the basis for the present

¹ Alec Fréchet, *John Galsworthy: A Reassessment*, London, Macmillan, 1982, p. 185, first published as *John Galsworthy: l’Homme, le Romancier, le Critique Social*, Paris 1979.

study. Is it true that Galsworthy had little first-hand knowledge of philosophy? Was Galsworthy an “agnostic” and, if so, what was it that made him reject the orthodox Christian faith in which he had been raised at home and at school?

Over the past seventy years there has been very little in-depth research into the theme of religion in all of Galsworthy’s writings, from his early to his later works, including his novels and plays, but also his essays, poems and letters. Neither has there been any coherent research into the religious and philosophical aspects in the novels which he had read during his adolescence or as a budding author, which may have influenced his thinking. Likewise, the question to what extent contemporary cultural, religious, philosophical and historical developments have affected Galsworthy’s ideas on religion, remains unanswered in most of Galsworthy’s biographies.

These are the three main dimensions of the present study, of which the underlying and most significant question is: what was it that Galsworthy believed in, and how did he express this? If, in order to answer this question, one turns to the biographies and memoirs written by the three people that were closest to him throughout his life, one obtains a first glimpse of the complexity of the question. For example, there is John Galsworthy’s nephew, Rudolf Sauter, whom Galsworthy almost treated as a son, who sums up Galsworthy’s philosophy as follows: “Humanist—certainly; Orthodox—hardly; Atheist—never; too warm for unqualified Agnosticism; too human, perhaps, for Deism, too personal for Pantheism; with possibly here and there a touch of Eastern thought.”² Sauter also wonders whether Galsworthy’s general outlook was “in keeping with contemporary thought” (Sauter 1967, 133).

Galsworthy’s sister Mabel Edith Reynolds warns future researchers looking for some definite expression of Galsworthy’s religious outlook that they are bound to be disappointed, and argues that “his religion [is], rather, a thing to be sensed from his own personality—deduced from his whole attitude towards life and his fellowmen.”³

If, finally, we turn to Galsworthy’s wife, Ada, we find that she puts her husband’s writings, and the conclusions that biographers tended to attach to those writings, in perspective by saying that her husband cannot be held accountable for the orthodox and unorthodox views of his characters; “nor is their author primarily a theologian, philosopher, or politician: he is but—an imaginative writer!”⁴ Indeed, this is a warning to the researcher that Galsworthy is primarily a writer of fiction and a dramatist, and that one should be careful to attach conclusions to his novels and plays for which there is no justification in his essays or letters.

These statements, subjective as they may be, do at least confirm that religion was a major theme in Galsworthy’s life and work, but also that he was not outspoken about this to such an

² Rudolf Sauter, *Galsworthy the Man*, London, Peter Owen, 1967, p.132.

³ M.E. Reynolds, *Memories of John Galsworthy*, London, Robert Hale, 1936, p. 41.

⁴ Ada Galsworthy, “Foreword” to the *Works of John Galsworthy, Manaton Edition*, Volume xxx, New York, Scribners’, 1936, p. ix.

extent that he could easily be pigeonholed, either by his relatives or by his biographers and researchers. I therefore aim to analyse Galsworthy's work with a view to obtaining a better insight into who John Galsworthy was, and what he believed in. In other words, what was it that triggered Galsworthy to be so sceptical about religion now and then, and how is this reflected in his work? What development, if any, in these religious views is noticeable over the years? What was the literary context within which he began writing? Who were the writers and philosophers that influenced him and to what extent and within which social and cultural context did this take place? In the end we will find out to what degree all this confirms Fréchet's statements and what new light has been shed on Galsworthy's religious feelings, as reflected in his work.

My first chapter briefly analyses what previous researchers and biographers have stated in relation to religion and philosophy. These findings serve as a basis for the present study. What follows are some biographical details that give a general overview of Galsworthy's life, and which may be helpful to grasp the sheer size of his literary output and the social and historical context within which he wrote. More biographical and contextual details are discussed in the later chapters within the broader context of the religious themes that I address. The final introductory section aims to analyse who the writers and philosophers were that influenced Galsworthy's thinking as an adolescent and as a young author.

The second chapter analyses what Galsworthy says about church buildings and churchgoers and to what extent the imagery he uses for his descriptions was original, whether it was borrowed from other writers, or if it was due to literary convention. The same goes for the third chapter about clergymen. In a considerable number of novels and plays clergymen are presented as caricatures of the impoverished curate, vicar or village rector. No research has been done, however, on these and other clergymen in Galsworthy's work and the social and religious struggles they go through in Galsworthy's fiction and went through in reality. There is more than a little criticism on Galsworthy's side here, but a good deal of sympathy too. What follows are two chapters on institutionalised religion and humanitarianism. Related issues are the Church and the Great War and the debate about true Christianity. The subsequent chapter elaborates on a central theme in Galsworthy's work, namely the relation between marriage and religion, contemporary marriage and divorce laws, and his own and his wife's personal struggle with these issues. Then follow a number of chapters that focus on such religious and philosophical themes as man's place in the cosmic order, the dialectic of fate, determinism and free will; creation and existence; prayer; the mystery of death; the Bible; the Fall of Man; and belief in the deity.

Finally, I discuss Galsworthy's own faith, a creed, the ingredients of which were already visible in 1897, but which he was able to articulate for himself only many years later in his "Faith of a Novelist" from 1926. It was a creed with which, on the one hand, he was ahead of his times, but on the other, merely part of a movement among the liberal intelligentsia that

commenced in the mid-nineteenth century and reached its peak at the *fin de siècle* and in the period of great social and cultural upheaval after the Great War.

1. John Galsworthy in close-up

1.1 Galsworthy's biographers

Galsworthy's life and letters have been described in great detail in a number of biographies and works of literary criticism, the earliest of which dates back to 1929, still during Galsworthy's lifetime. The more recent ones were published in the 1980s. Most biographies pay no significant attention to the religious aspects in Galsworthy's work, and only rarely is religion considered a separate theme. In this chapter I present the main biographies on Galsworthy in so far as they have contributed to research into Galsworthy's religious ideas and philosophy.

Leon Schalit's study of Galsworthy's work, entitled *John Galsworthy: a Survey* (1929), simply relates the stories of Galsworthy's novels without adding any real literary criticism or novel insights. On only one occasion does Schalit mention Galsworthy's philosophy: "Deeply religious as an artist, in his faith in Nature and Beauty, he is irreligious in so far as the definite dogmas of any orthodox Church are concerned."¹

Hermon Ould, the secretary of the PEN organisation of which Galsworthy was the President, wrote a biography in 1934, shortly after Galsworthy's death, containing interesting details about Galsworthy's role in the PEN club. Unlike other biographies, Ould's biography devotes an entire chapter to religion and "mortality". According to Ould, Galsworthy, "as a young man, and in his early middle years . . . was so absorbed in the phenomena of social injustices, that religion occupied a subordinate place in his mind."² Now this is exactly what characterises most early biographers. No real significance is attached to Galsworthy's religious views as expressed in his early works or letters. This must be considered a misinterpretation of Galsworthy's work. Ould also feels that "religion plays little or no part in the scheme of *The Man of Property*; in so far as it does, it is shown as a tacit acceptance of mechanical forces beyond the ken of man" (Ould 1934, 209). This, too, largely ignores the subtle discussion in *The Man of Property* about religion in a social context and, for example, Soames' struggle with death. Ould repeats this statement when he says: "It is not perhaps surprising that in neither *The Forsyte Saga* nor in *A Modern Comedy*, does the author venture into other than terrestrial realms" (Ould 1934, 216). Ould even goes on to say that "in keeping religion almost entirely out of this half-dozen novels Galsworthy, either instinctively, or, what is more probable, deliberately, demonstrated how non-religious fundamentally, the Victorian era was and how sedulously the post-war generation shunned, as from fear, matters which

¹ Leon Schalit, *John Galsworthy: A Survey*, London, Heinemann, 1929, p. 59.

² Hermon Ould, *John Galsworthy*, London, Chapman and Hall, 1934, p. 208.

affected its spiritual development” (Ould 1934, 217). Again, this must be looked upon as a misinterpretation of Ould’s, as *The Forsythe Chronicles* contain numerous statements on religion, testifying to Galsworthy’s own religious development and the general movement away from the Church and religion. This is not, as Ould suggests, by Galsworthy’s ignoring the theme, but by his carefully planned writing. One need only think of the subtitles that Galsworthy intended to give to *The Man of Property*, “Christian Ethics I”, or “Tales of a Christian People I”³, to realise how preoccupied he was with this theme.

H.V. Marrot’s *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy* (1935) may be considered the standard biography, “despite such serious limitations as its being the ‘official life’ done under Ada Galsworthy’s supervision and its failure to provide critical comments of a literary nature about JG’s work.”⁴ It does provide interesting biographical details, however, that no other biographer has been able to give to the same degree. Marrot includes sources that are no longer publicly accessible nowadays, entries from Galsworthy’s diaries and many letters to and from other writers, statesmen and friends, and a wide range of other correspondents. A number of these letters, dealing with religious and philosophical aspects, prove to be of great significance. As these letters cover the period from the early 1890s to the early 1930s, they offer an excellent insight into Galsworthy’s thoughts at the time and the development of his ideas through his life. An early example from Marrot’s biography concerns a letter from 1894 to Monica Sanderson, with whom Galsworthy frequently discussed poetry and philosophical matters, in which he states: “It seems to me that Faith is a very little thing compared to Courage . . . and unless one conscientiously believes, it is childish to make oneself do so.”⁵

This passage goes to show how early in his career Galsworthy was preoccupied with religion, although this went largely unrecognised by his biographers. A later example from Marrot’s biography concerns a letter from 1931, two years before Galsworthy’s death, in which Galsworthy writes to an unrecorded correspondent: “You probably know the saying: God is the helping of man by man. That I think is the only religion that has any chance now of making real headway; and, being essentially practical, the only faith which will steady, comfort and uplift us all again.” In both instances Marrot refrains from drawing any conclusions himself, because, as he says, “in Galsworthy’s own writing lie all the clues to his character that he has left us” (Marrot 1936, 802 and 3).

Another important biographer with first-hand knowledge of Galsworthy himself is R.H. Mottram. In his 1956 biography, *For Some We Loved*, Mottram makes a number of relevant observations. He too tries to pigeonhole Galsworthy’s philosophy, saying that “probably any classification of his philosophy would bring it under the heading agnostic.” He adds: “Atheist

³ Edward Garnett, *Letters from John Galsworthy 1900-1932*, London, Heinemann, 1934, p. 85.

⁴ Earl E. Stevens (ed), *John Galsworthy: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings about Him*, Illinois, Northern Illinois University Press, 1980, p. 304.

⁵ H.V. Marrot, *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy*, London, Heinemann, 1936, p. 96.

it certainly is not.”⁶ Mottram is the first general biographer to place Galsworthy’s religious development within a larger sociological framework, saying: “It seems to me to reflect exactly what was happening about 1910 to thoughtful men of our race.” Mottram points to the situation that Galsworthy also describes, namely that “conventional forms of religion . . . could not be stretched to contain the over-mastering humanitarian determination to give every living thing within reach a more adequate share of earthly life” (Mottram 1956, 59).

Dudley Barker in his *The Man of Principle* (1963) accentuates the theme of ‘unhappy marriage’, which found its origin in Ada’s previous marriage to John’s cousin Arthur Galsworthy. In addition to that he elaborates on the humanitarian theme of prison reform and further social issues that Galsworthy raises in his plays. Barker almost completely ignores the religious quest Galsworthy was on all his life. He briefly mentions the satire on Hussell Barter in *The Country House*, as most biographers do. He also points to the ‘slum parson’, Hilary Charwell, in *A Modern Comedy*, and refers to Galsworthy’s remark about the “death of Christianity” due to the Great War, in addition to Galsworthy’s “pitying scorn for organised religion”⁷ in *Saint’s Progress*.

Unlike other biographies, Catherine Dupré’s *John Galsworthy: a Biography* (1976) mentions the close spiritual relationship during his adolescence between Galsworthy and his sister Lillian. Dupré, with evidence from Lillian Galsworthy’s diary, claims that “Lillian and John were both preoccupied with religious ideas, and Lillian had already decided that she could no longer accept the Church of England faith of her parents.”⁸ Dupré claims that Lillian “had long discussions on religion with her brother. Together they had read Matthew Arnold’s *Literature and Dogma* and had studied Emerson, and in the end both were to discard conventional Christian teaching” (Dupré 1976, 33). Dupré not only signals the significance of this relationship between brother and sister, but she is also one of the few biographers who at least hints at its social implications when she remarks that, “Whether alone, without the constant spur and stimulation of Lillian’s active mind, John would have arrived at what was then unconventional and generally unacceptable, is doubtful” (Dupré 1976, 34). Dupré is one of the first of the more recent biographers to give an overview, brief as it may be, of Galsworthy’s philosophical development.

Nor do we know at what point he finally discarded Christianity in favour of the humanistic view of life. It is futile to attempt to pinpoint the time or place of a man’s conversion, for that in fact is what it was. The barometer of Galsworthy’s philosophy swung dramatically away from any orthodox religion or creed: good was here and

⁶ R.H. Mottram, *For Some We Loved, an Intimate Portrait of Ada and John Galsworthy*, London, Hutchinson, 1956, p. 59.

⁷ Dudley Barker, *The Man of Principle*, New York, Stein and Day, 1970, p. 182.

⁸ Catherine Dupré, *John Galsworthy: A Biography*, London, Collins, 1979, p. 33.

now, suffering was here and now, and a man's work, and most particularly his, was to crusade against suffering (Dupré 1976, 34).

Dupré also points to the telling fact that Ada Galsworthy left out Galsworthy's poem "The Dream" from his *Collected Poems*, "as it dealt with a side of life Ada did not care for," as Dupré had been told by Rudolf Sauter, Galsworthy's nephew. Dupré looks upon "The Dream" as a "deep, philosophically questioning poem; . . . it discloses the side of Galsworthy that was to have less and less voice in his novels and plays" (Dupré 1976, 130). I intend to show, however, that Dupré has overlooked the religious theme and its development in Galsworthy's later works. Her statement that "his novels and plays say little about his religious thinking" and that it is only in his poetry, his essays and his letters that "we are able to glean an idea of his philosophical searchings" (Dupré 1976, 131), does not do John Galsworthy full justice. Dupré rightly claims, however, that if you compare Galsworthy in 1923, as he appears from his preface to the Manaton Edition of *The Inn of Tranquillity*, to the man who wrote "The Dream" in 1912, "there is a resignation and an acceptance that is not in the poem: the young man is asking questions, he is rebellious against his fate; the older man has accepted that there are no answers, only courage to live one's life, kindness to help others live theirs" (Dupré 1976, 132). Although this statement may be an over-generalisation, Dupré is right in saying that Galsworthy's fighting spirit of the pre-war days had given way to "resignation and acceptance," although, as many of his later writings have shown, his inner debate continued until his death.

Sanford Sternlicht, in his 1987 study entitled *John Galsworthy*, does not recognise religion as a dominant theme and only mentions in passing that Galsworthy "was not a religious observant."⁹ Like Dupré he refers to Galsworthy's poem "The Dream", but draws no conclusions and merely states that Galsworthy's essays inform us about "his thoughts about deity." What Sternlicht signals is that "the line of humanist social novelists from Fielding to Dickens and Thackeray to Hardy passes through Galsworthy on to C.P. Snow and the future" (Sternlicht 123, 128).

James Gindin, in *John Galsworthy's Life and Art* (1987), points to the significance of *The Inn of Tranquillity* (1912) and Galsworthy's first collection of poems, *Moods, Songs, and Doggerels* (1912), as landmarks in Galsworthy's philosophical development. Gindin remarks: "The elevation of 'Beauty' to a cosmic principle was frequent in Galsworthy's work from about 1910 through 1913, and was then not at all unusual even in one who, like Galsworthy, kept insisting that he had no belief in God."¹⁰ According to Gindin, Galsworthy was not exceptional in this as a writer. Quoting Richard Ellmann, he says that, "For the Edwardian writers, Life, not God, was the capitalized word, and they attempted to transform the self into

⁹ Sanford Sternlicht, *John Galsworthy*, Boston, Twain Publishers, 1987, p. 27.

¹⁰ James Gindin, *John Galsworthy's Life and Art*, London, Macmillan, 1987, pp. 284-285.

a metaphorical unity by a kind of secular miracle.”¹¹ Gindin adds to this that “the religion Galsworthy specifically rejected was less a metaphysical entity or transcendence than the texture of conventional Christian belief and doctrine” (Gindin 1987, 285).

I conclude this chapter on Galsworthy’s biographers and their ideas on his philosophical or religious development with Alec Fréchet’s *John Galsworthy: A Reassessment* (1982), first published in French as *John Galsworthy: L’Homme, le Romancier, le Critique Social* (1979). Fréchet devotes one chapter to “Galsworthy’s Philosophical Outlook” and is the first of Galsworthy’s biographers to approach the question in a coherent, methodological fashion, beginning with possible philosophical influences, followed by a general description of Galsworthy’s religious development. As far as Galsworthy’s philosophy is concerned Fréchet seems to have agreed with Dupré when he claims that Galsworthy’s novels “do not provide sufficient evidence of his philosophical outlook,” and argues that his essays, his prefaces, correspondence and poems give us a less haphazard picture of his philosophy. It is Fréchet who says that “the subject has never previously been investigated properly” (Fréchet 1982, 185), which I take as the primary justification for the present study. As to the religious aspects in Galsworthy’s work Fréchet too recognises Galsworthy’s harsh treatment of the various clergymen, ranging from the one in *The Island Pharisees* at the beginning of his career, to Hilary Charwell in *The End of the Chapter* at the very end. Fréchet also notes that nothing is known what may have occasioned this aversion, apart from, perhaps, the Church’s condemnation of divorce. Fréchet concludes that Galsworthy was primarily “self-taught” as far as philosophy was concerned; that he “never went through a religious phase,” unlike Shaw or Wells; that Anatole France’s influence is likely, “but unproved,” and states that “Galsworthy was a determinist and agnostic, or at least a free-thinker.” He labels him as “a pantheist . . . with something of Eastern mysticism in his attitude,” and “metaphysically, and through his poetic vision, in sympathy with spiritualism, even vitalism” (Fréchet 1982, 195).

Fréchet too was, in fact, doing an injustice to Galsworthy where the latter’s knowledge of philosophers is concerned. I intend to show from Galsworthy’s work that he was directly influenced by nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century philosophers. As Fréchet considers Anatole France’s influence on Galsworthy “likely”, but “unproved”, I will provide an analysis of what Galsworthy says of France, and what clear parallels there are between their works within the theme of religion. Fréchet’s statements about determinism, agnosticism, pantheism, mysticism and spiritualism will be the subject of the following chapters. However, the very range of terms with which Fréchet tries to categorise Galsworthy, in a way Sauter tried before him, begs the question whether it is at all justified, or indeed possible, to classify Galsworthy in one category or another.

¹¹ Richard Ellmann, “Two Faces of Edward”, *Edwardians and Late Victorians*, English Institute Essays of 1959 (1960), reprinted in *Golden Codgers*, OUP, 1973, pp. 116,125-126, as quoted in James Gindin, *John Galsworthy’s Life and Art*, London, Macmillan, 1987, pp. 284-285.

All of Galsworthy's biographers after Marrot have overlooked two unpublished dissertations dealing with the philosophical and ethical aspects in Galsworthy's work. Thus, Connolly (1937) investigates the philosophic ideas and values implicit in Galsworthy's oeuvre, and focuses on such concepts as truth, the good life, God and religion, marriage, liberty and justice. On the one hand, Connolly understands that Galsworthy, born, as he was, in a world of uncertainty, change and the conflict between science and faith, "could scarcely be expected to escape the doubts and difficulties which present themselves to a student of human character as well as the professional philosophers and historians of human ideas." He points to Galsworthy's agnosticism, his pantheism, his anti-religious and anti-Christian feelings. Unfortunately, this is where Connolly loses his own objectiveness as a researcher and blames Galsworthy for expressing "inadequate" and "misleading"¹² ideas on the nature of the Christian religion. The same goes for his treatment of the concept of marriage, in which he blames Galsworthy for confusing "passion and love, carnal pleasure and happiness," and "justifying on purely emotional grounds what bawdier writers called free love" (Connolly 1937, 80-81).

The second unpublished dissertation, *The Ethics of Galsworthy*, was presented by Sister Maria Sylvia Reimondo, a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph, from Buffalo, New York. She too submitted her dissertation in 1937. The fact that she was a sister of a Roman Catholic congregation is clearly noticeable in her analysis. She proposes to look at the moral principles involved in Galsworthy's work to find out how far they are in accord with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and more in particular with such Encyclicals as *Arcanum Divinae* (1880), *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) and *Casta Connubii* (1931). Although she admits that Galsworthy was not a Catholic, she finds justification for her interest in Galsworthy in the fact that he was so much read by the American public. The outcome is praise for his literary talents, "the way he pondered over life with deep intellectual honesty." At the same time she warns his readers for his "distorted" ethical vision. She blames Galsworthy for substituting his humanism, which she refers to as his "refinement", for religion, and actually tells the reader to "be wary of exalting refinement at the expense of religion and Christian ethics." In a number of moral issues she blames him for "ethically . . . going off the beaten track." Thus, Galsworthy's description of characters that try to commit suicide, is based, she feels, on "lack of Faith" and an "invincible ignorance of the doctrine of life after death." Her main objection resembles that of Connolly, however. She feels that Galsworthy's views on divorce conflict with Pope Pius XI's Encyclical *Casti Cannubii* (1931), which states that "matrimony was not instituted or restored by man, but by

¹² Francis X. Connolly, *Some Philosophical Problems in the Work of John Galsworthy*, Dissertation, New York, Fordham University, 1937, p. 55.

God,” and that marriage is a “perpetual and indissoluble bond which cannot therefore be dissolved by any civic law.”¹³

These two American scholars wrote their analyses from deeply religious perspectives. Subjective as their findings may be from a modern point of view, they also show us how delicate the themes were that Galsworthy was addressing. In the final chapter I offer a brief survey of contemporary reception of Galsworthy’s work in the United States and in Europe during and after Galsworthy’s lifetime, especially with regard to the theme of religion, to show how divided public opinion was on this issue, and also proving how nonconformist a writer Galsworthy was in his own time.

¹³ Maria Sylvia Reimondo, *The Ethics of Galsworthy*, Dissertation, New York, Niagara University, 1937, pp. 181, 175, 74, 163.

1.2 Biography

When describing Galsworthy's life one cannot but be indebted to Marrot's *John Galsworthy, Life and Letters* (1935) and such biographers as Ould and Mottram, who knew Galsworthy personally, or had direct access to his close relatives and personal documents after his death.

John Galsworthy was born in 1867 and died in 1933. He was the son of John Galsworthy, a London solicitor, and Blanche Bartleet. Galsworthy had one elder sister, Blanche Lillian (1864), a younger brother, Hubert (1869) and a younger sister, Mabel Edith (1871). John Galsworthy Sr. was in his late forties when he married Blanche, who was his junior by some twenty years. John Galsworthy Sr. is generally regarded as having served as a model for Old Jolyon in *The Forsyte Saga*. John's mother Blanche was less colourful and was satirised in several female characters throughout Galsworthy's work. It did not prove to be a happy marriage though, and the reason for Galsworthy describing so many unhappy marriages in his work, which were usually arranged marriages, may therefore well be found in Galsworthy's own childhood. In spite of contemporary conventions his parents separated in 1903, after some forty years of marriage, because, according to Gindin, Blanche suspected her husband of being too interested in her grandchildren's governesses (Gindin 1987, 25).

John Galsworthy Jr. went to Saugeen preparatory school when he was nine years old, and in 1881 he went to Harrow. Subsequently he became a law student at Oxford from which he graduated in 1889, after which his father encouraged him to read for the Bar. The late eighties and early nineties was a period in which John's elder sister Lillian frequently discussed religious and philosophical issues with him, and, as Dupré signals, Lillian seems to have exerted a major influence on his intellectual development at the time. Indeed, close examination of her diaries reveals how Lillian, at the end of the 1880s, was interested in geology and philosophy, reading Sidgwick, Carlyle, Hegel and Tolstoy. In 1887, at the age of 23, she had grown into an intelligent young woman with independent views, challenging orthodox religion. This is evident, for instance, in the following poem:

When I have dared the question 'are things so'?
And look a dogma in the face and say
Art thou, who all men deem the truth, a lie?
Thus have I struck the first defiant blow
for mental freedom, a little way
around me clear. But by that
blow am I [distanced] from this faith I held so dear.¹⁴

¹⁴ Lillian Sauter's (née Galsworthy) miscellaneous notebooks, Birmingham, University of Birmingham Library, "The Galsworthy Papers" (JG 10/3/1-3; 1891).

On the other hand, we should not overrate Lillian's rejection of the Church of England faith, as Dupré claims in her biography. Lillian's diaries clearly show that until her own marriage in 1894 she was an active churchgoer, absenting from church only rarely, frequently going to church in the company of her sister Mabel, and commenting in her diaries on the "good" or "very good" quality of the sermons. The diaries also show that she even attended Baptist services without a word of criticism.

Galsworthy did not apply himself fully to his studies, to his father's disappointment, and had a short-lived relationship with a young woman called Sybil Carlisle, of whom Galsworthy Sr. disapproved. Meanwhile John's sister Lillian had fallen in love with and married the German painter Géorg Sauter in 1894. The latter's unorthodox views and philosophy may very well have stimulated Galsworthy in choosing a career outside the legal profession. His father sent him on so-called business missions to Canada and Australia, hoping that on his return he would have sown his wild oats and would be ready to finish his studies after all. The trip to Australia was meant to give Galsworthy an insight into maritime law, as he had meanwhile shifted his focus to the Admiralty Bar. It was in Adelaide Harbour in 1893 that Galsworthy met the first mate of the "Torrens", Joseph Conrad, and sailed in his company for fifty-six days. This marked the start of a lifelong friendship both personal and literary. Galsworthy's letter to his sister Lillian in April 1893 refers to this important event in literary history: "The first mate is a Pole called Conrad and is a capital chap though queer to look at, he is a man of travel experiences in many parts of the world and has a fund of yarns upon which I draw freely" (GP, JG 10/8).

In 1895 Galsworthy fell in love with Ada Cooper, who at the time was married to Major Arthur Galsworthy, John's first cousin. Ada's marriage proved an unhappy one, and it was this theme that features prominently in Galsworthy's work before the Great War. It was his sympathy for women chained by marital bonds to men they did not love, which generated the creative force that made Galsworthy so successful. Ada served as a model for Irene in *The Forsyte Sage*. Only after ten years (1904) did Ada free herself from Arthur Galsworthy through divorce. This was shortly after Galsworthy Sr. had died. A number of biographers argue, therefore, that John and Ada had not wanted to cause John's father any grief over a divorce from a relative. Other biographers hold that Arthur, Ada and John Galsworthy were all three fully financially dependent on their parents or guardians, which may have caused their reticence in obtaining a divorce. John and Ada married in a registry office. As was to be expected, Ada's divorce caused them to be ostracised by London society until, in 1906, when Galsworthy's success as an author gradually turned him into a celebrity, they were reinstated as respectable members of society.

Most critics argue that it was Ada who, in 1895, was the first to say to Galsworthy: "why don't you write; you're just the person." From Lillian Galsworthy's diaries it appears,

however, that as early as 14 December 1891 it was Lillian who had suggested to her brother: “why not write a book”? (GP, JG 10/1/1-26; 1891). Galsworthy pondered the question of becoming a writer in November 1894 and wrote to Monica Sanderson: “I do wish I had the gift of writing, I really think that is the nicest way of making money going, only it isn’t really the writing so much as the thoughts that one wants; and when you feel like a very shallow pond, with no nice cool deep pools with queer and pleasant things at the bottom, what’s the good?” (Marrot, 1936, 97). Galsworthy actually started his writing career in 1897 with *From the Four Winds*, a collection of short stories, published under the pseudonym of John Sinjohn. Later, as a widely-acclaimed author, Galsworthy practically disowned the work, and he never allowed any reprints. Indeed, at a given moment he bought up the remaining copies from his publisher and destroyed them. It is for this reason that this volume of short stories is not part of the *Collected Works* of the Manaton Edition (1927-1932) that comprise the entire Galsworthy canon, and has thus become a collector’s item. Looked at from the perspective of this study, *From the Four Winds* contains interesting material, giving us an insight into the religious and philosophical views of the author at the age of thirty. *Jocelyn*, Galsworthy’s debut novel from 1898, is his first novel to address the theme of unhappy marriage and adultery. In 1900 it was followed by *Villa Rubein*, still published under the pseudonym of John Sinjohn. This novel is generally regarded as depicting elements of the life of his sister Lillian and her husband Géorg Sauter. Galsworthy characterises his early works as more “emotional than critical.”¹⁵

Villa Rubein was followed by a collection of longer short stories: *A Man of Devon* (1901), which marked the beginning of a period in which Galsworthy felt that “the critical was, in the main, holding sway”¹⁶ (*Villa Rubein*, xii). In 1904 he published *The Island Pharisees*, providing a critique of British middle-class society. This was the first novel he published under his own name. Under the supervision of Edward Garnett he had rewritten the text a number of times, and even after publication in 1904 it underwent major changes before it reached its final form in 1908. It had not been easy to find a publishing house willing to publish this novel in 1904, as a result of the poor sales of his previous literary products. In the end it was William Heinemann who accepted the novel, marking the start of a lifelong business relationship with John Galsworthy. This is also the first novel in which the philosophical and religious elements clearly stand out, and, judging from the sceptical and embittered tone pervading this work, it is also clear that the nine years that elapsed after he had fallen in love with Ada Cooper and until her divorce in 1904, had not left him unscathed.

John married Ada Cooper on 9 September 1905 and spent the following winter reading the proofs of *The Man of Property*, which was published on 23 March 1906. The 1906 edition,

¹⁵ John Galsworthy, “Preface” to *Villa Rubein and Other Stories*, in *The Works of John Galsworthy*, Manaton Edition, London, Heinemann, 1927, p. xii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

selling only 5,000 copies in England (Barker 1970, 117), could not be considered a great commercial success initially. Still, the literary reviewers were predominantly positive, with the exception of the reviewer of *The Spectator* (14 April 1906), who qualified the novel as “unacceptable for general reading,” because some of the details were “too repellent.”¹⁷

Before publication of *The Man of Property* Edward Garnett had pointed out to Galsworthy that the Vedrenne-Barker management of the Court Theatre were looking for plays expressing contemporary life and conveying ideas like those of Ibsen and Hauptmann on the Continent (Gindin 1987, 188). After having revised the proofs of *The Man of Property*, Galsworthy decided to try his luck at playwriting. His first play *The Silver Box* (1906) completely ignored contemporary dramatic conventions, but met with an enthusiastic reception. Thus, Galsworthy became part of a group of ‘new dramatists’, consisting of George Bernard Shaw, Harley Granville-Barker, James Barrie, St John Hankin and John Masefield.

In 1907 Galsworthy’s second play, *Joy*, did not meet with the same appreciation from critics and audiences as *The Silver Box* had done a year earlier. However, *Strife* (1907), depicting a strike at a Cornish tin mine, *The Eldest Son* (1909), exposing middle-class hypocrisy, and *Justice* (1910), an outcry against the penal system, firmly established Galsworthy’s reputation as a playwright. All in all, Galsworthy wrote twenty-seven plays.

While working on his career as a dramatist, Galsworthy continued to write novels and short stories, and actively campaigned for a wide variety of movements, from prison reform to the prevention of cruelty to animals, writing pamphlets and making speeches. Thus, he gradually grew into a national figure. Galsworthy’s first novel to appear after *The Man of Property* was *The Country House* (1907), receiving extensive and generally favourable reviews, although it was not a large commercial success (Gindin 1987, 229-230). Like *The Man of Property*, *The Country House* expresses social criticism, and the same goes for the two subsequent novels, *Fraternity* (1909) and *The Patrician* (1911). Meanwhile Galsworthy also wrote two volumes of short stories that proved successful: *A Commentary* (1908) and *A Motley* (1910). In 1910 Galsworthy writes in his diary that from *The Island Pharisees* to *The Patrician* “there has been a steady decrescendo in satire through the whole series, and I think a steady increase in the desire for beauty” (GD, 12 August 1910). Three weeks later he writes: “Planning a volume called *The Inn of Tranquillity*. It consists of nature and life sketches, which should bring out the side of one which acquiesces and is serene” (GD, 3 September 1910). The book inaugurated a pivotal decade in Galsworthy’s career, a decade, in which, as Galsworthy terms this himself, “the emotional again struggled for the upper hand” (Villa Rubein, xii). This infusion of religious and philosophical issues in his essays, novels and short stories is particularly visible in *The Inn of Tranquillity* (1912), *The Dark Flower* (1913), *The Freeland*s (1915) and *Five Tales* (1918). Two developments contributed to this: first, his affair with a young dancer, Margaret Morris, which put a great deal of strain on his

¹⁷ “The Man of Property”, *The Spectator*, London, 14 April 1906, XCVI, pp. 587-588.

relationship with Ada, and caused a deep, psychological struggle in Galsworthy himself. It is especially in *The Dark Flower* that this struggle becomes manifest. Second, there was the threat and finally the outbreak of the Great War, which very much preoccupied Galsworthy. He was keen to 'do his bit', actively contributed to and organised relief funds, and actually joined the Red-Cross as a masseur treating shell-shocked and wounded soldiers. It is in his volumes of essays, *A Sheaf* (1916) and *Another Sheaf* (1919), that we find most of Galsworthy's feelings about the war and particularly also about the relationship between war and religion.

After *Saint's Progress* (1919), Galsworthy's novel about a clergyman who has lost touch with the world and goes through an intense personal struggle, Galsworthy decided to return to the Forsyte family that had made him so successful, and to write a sequel to *The Man of Property*. As a result he published *In Chancery* and *To Let* in 1920 and 1921, respectively, thereby completing the first trilogy. The second trilogy, consisting of *The White Monkey*, *The Silver Spoon* and *Swan Song*, appeared from 1924 to 1928, and was finally published as *A Modern Comedy* in 1929. The third trilogy, *End of the Chapter*, was published in 1934 after Galsworthy's death, and contains *Maid in Waiting* (1931), *Flowering Wilderness* (1932) and *Over the River* (1933).

In the early twenties Galsworthy became a literary figure of national and international repute. He was frequently asked to give addresses all over the world and this only increased after his nomination as the first president of the International PEN Club, a position which he held from 1921 until his death in 1933. The PEN Club had as its main aim, "the promotion of international understanding through personal friendliness and hospitality among writers all over the world" (Ould 1934, 77). Galsworthy really proved to be a champion of this literary movement, and it contributed substantially to his international reputation. In the 1920s he also had a considerable output of literary and philosophical essays, which, in addition to his novels and plays, are of great interest to this study. Galsworthy was offered a knighthood on New Year's Day 1918, but refused it. He wrote in his diary: "I've always thought and said that no artist of Letters ought to dally with titles and rewards of that nature."¹⁸ No doubt he had Bernard Shaw's statement in mind, who had said: "Titles distinguish the mediocre, embarrass the superior, and are disgraced by the inferior."¹⁹ Anyway, Galsworthy did earn Shaw's appreciation for this rejection, because the latter wrote to him saying: "Quelle geste!" (Gindin 1987, 393). In 1929, however, Galsworthy gladly accepted the governmental Order of Merit for his literary qualities. His crowning honour was the Nobel Prize for Literature in November 1932, the ceremony of which he could not attend in person because of his increasing illness. He died on January 31st, 1933. A request for the interment of his body in Westminster Abbey

¹⁸ Galsworthy's diary as quoted in James Gindin, *John Galsworthy's Life and Art*, Macmillan, London, 1987, p. 393.

¹⁹ George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*, 1903, Penguin Books, 2000, p. 257.

was turned down by the Dean, but instead an impressive memorial service was held in Westminster Abbey, conducted by the same Dean. Such an interment was against Galsworthy's own express wish to be cremated rather than be buried, as indicated in one of his poems discovered after his death. This wish was in line with the philosophical state of mind which he had reached by the end of his life:

Scatter my ashes!
Hereby I make it a trust:
I in no grave be confined,
Mingle my dust with the dust;
Give me in fee to the wind!
Scatter my ashes! (Sauter 1967, 141)

1.3 The influence of novelists, dramatists and philosophers

This section gives a broad outline of the literary context within which Galsworthy began his career as a writer and the influence that novelists, dramatists and philosophers exerted on Galsworthy and his work, especially from a religious and philosophical point of view. This will give us a direct insight into John Galsworthy's development, because it is from the works of those writers that he distilled his ideas, embracing their philosophies, and it is on the basis of their work that he gradually worked out a worldview of his own.

In the course of his life Galsworthy mentions various writers whom he admired, or who, he thought, had influenced his thinking or his style. Galsworthy also belonged to a set of writers and literary friends who had a common vision on literature and life, a predominantly humanist vision. These two factors, the influence of the writers that preceded him and that of his contemporaries and literary friends, went to make up the writer as we know him. Who were the writers that he was familiar with, his literary predecessors of earlier times and his contemporaries and literary friends? Which of these writers did he admire and to what extent did they influence his thinking during his adolescence, his years as a student and his formative years as a writer? As Galsworthy was born in 1867, this period may be taken to have lasted until 1910, four years after the publication of *The Man of Property*, when he was 43 years old, and when he had reached artistic maturity. At that time he had become an established writer, and had formed his opinion on social, ethical, religious, philosophical and moral questions. Moreover, he had reached the most contemplative phase in his writing life.

What does the writer himself say about those who have influenced him? To find this out we can turn to Galsworthy's numerous essays and letters. Major essays for this purpose are his "Introduction to *Bleak House*" (1912), "Six Novelists in Profile" (1924), "Four More Novelists in Profile" (1928), "Some Platitudes Concerning Drama" (1909), "Meditation on Finality" (1912), "On Expression" (1924), his retrospective "Prefaces" to the Manaton Edition (1928), and the individual writer profiles published after his death in *Forsytes, Pencyces and Others* and in *Glimpses and Reflections*. Finally, there is the large number of letters to and from fellow writers and friends and the many lectures he gave in Europe and the United States. All these provide us with valuable information.

Novelists and essayists

Galsworthy was an inveterate reader all through his life. No doubt it was partly owing to his public-school education and the interest in literature nourished at home that he was well-versed in English literature from his youth. He relished eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels, such as Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*; Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*;

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, *Barry Lyndon*, *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, and *Henry Esmond*; George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, *Adam Bede*, and *Silas Marner* and, finally, Mrs Gaskell's *Cranford*. It is, however, only in passing that he mentions these writers, the titles of their main works and sometimes their protagonists, in the many literary essays that he wrote. Usually, he merely signals their importance to literature in general, and of these writers it is only Thackeray whom he praises in particular for his satirical style of writing. Echoes of Thackeray's style may be found in Galsworthy's *The Island Pharisees* and *The Man of Property*.

Galsworthy's first really retrospective remarks about literary influences were made in 1912 in an "Introduction to *Bleak House*". Thinking about those writers who had been significant to him, he found that the "spirit of Dickens" had inspired a passion in him, the "first serious and most abiding passion of my imaginative life,"²⁰ he says, and he refers to Dickens as "the greatest English novelist."²¹ As favourite Dickens novels he rated *The Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Clearly Galsworthy appreciated Dickens for his overt satire, about which he says, with a hint at the contemporary censorship issue: "We poor novelists who in these aesthetic days are nearly all banned for expressing our temperamental hatreds, what fools we are to Dickens!" (Pendycyces, 323). What attracted Galsworthy in Dickens was his exposure of hypocrisy, his criticism of the social evils of his times and his belief in the fundamental goodness of human nature and a "basic belief in the primary benevolent impulses of man—affection, charity, gaiety, fun, kindness, spontaneity."²² Religion in its philosophical sense remains relatively below the surface in all five of Dickens' novels (including *Bleak House*) that Galsworthy mentions. Dickens' references to churches, the clergy, death, providence, social conditions and the marriage bond, however, show so many parallels to Galsworthy's work that one may justifiably claim a direct influence from Dickens on Galsworthy.

Apart from Dickens there were other writers that Galsworthy admired. In the 1912 "Introduction to *Bleak House*" Galsworthy remarks that the sort of passion that Dickens inspired in him was matched by only seven other novelists:

With Whyte-Melville whose stoical dandies quite undermined my early constitution; with Thackeray, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one; with Dumas *père*, who stole me from twenty-five to twenty-eight; with Turgenev, who possessed my mind and soul at about the age of thirty; with De Maupassant, who took his leavings; with Tolstoy, and in somewhat less degree, with Monsieur Anatole France

²⁰ John Galsworthy, "Introduction to *Bleak House*", in *Forsytes, Pendycyces and Others*, New York, 1936, pp. 318-319.

²¹ John Galsworthy, *Castles in Spain and other Screeches*, London, Heinemann, 1927, p. 148.

²² Albert C. Baugh (ed.), *Literary History of England, Part IV, The Nineteenth Century and After*, London, 1975, p. 1351.

Outside the works of these seven novelists, I have had affairs with Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*; with *Don Quixote*; and with Flaubert's *Trois Contes*. I am confessed. A singularly pure and blameless life, as literary lives do go (Pendyces, 319).

According to Marrot, Galsworthy had fallen under the spell of Whyte-Melville in his early days in Oxford, and for a time he more or less adopted the life style of such characters as the Honourable Crasher in *Market Harborough*, or that of Digby in *Digby Grand* (Marrot 1936, 59). However, and perhaps contrary to expectation, there is more in Whyte-Melville than 'stoicism' and 'dandyism' that contributed to Galsworthy's development as a young writer. There are many thematic parallels in the work of these two writers, for instance in such themes as the belief in God, life after death, the futility of life, marriage and divorce, the clergy, humanitarianism and the emptiness of the life of the gentry.

Galsworthy also mentions Dumas *Père* as a writer whose novels he relished. Galsworthy started reading Dumas when he was twenty-five and was upon his travels. For the next four years he "soaked" himself in the twenty-five Dumas volumes of *Monte Cristo*, *The Musketeer* trilogy, and *The Reine Margot*.²³ Although he places Dumas at the head of all the writers of historical romance, he feels that Dumas was "primarily bent on entertaining". Dumas' work "gives practically no indication that he had predilections, prejudices, passions or philosophy." He adds that "his tales offer no criticism of life" (Candelabra, 253). Although Galsworthy, as a young man, had a penchant for the works of Dumas, they did not play a major role in his religious or philosophical development. Galsworthy himself indicates that other writers were of greater significance to him.

During Galsworthy's travels to and from Australia he wrote a letter to his sister Lillian in April 1893, saying: "I . . . have read the *Story of an African Farm* again. I like it awfully; it is crammed full of thought and most pathetic in parts" (GP, JG 10/9/1-10). This reference to Olive Schreiner's novel set in South Africa and published in 1883, is the first indication of Galsworthy's interest in such issues as the oppression of women, feminism and agnosticism. When one year later, in November 1894, Galsworthy says: "I have found two passages in *The Story of an African Farm* that just about sum up my idea of religion" (Marrot, 1936, 96), this shows the influence this novel may have had on Galsworthy. The relationship between this novel of Schreiner's and Galsworthy has not been looked into so far by critics or biographers. Further analysis will show what impact this novel has had on the development of Galsworthy's worldview.

Galsworthy states that Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was "an inspiration" to him too. No doubt Galsworthy was attracted by the satire and the humanism underneath the surface story of *Don Quixote*, but as there is no evidence of the year or period in his life that Galsworthy first read

²³ John Galsworthy, *Candelabra*, New York, Scribners' Sons, 1933, p. 250.

this novel, it is difficult to ascertain its influence on Galsworthy's development. The first time that Galsworthy actually refers to "insane Don Quixote" (Candelabra, 46) is in 1912. In 1924 he labels this novel as "the first great Western novel" (Castles, 149). I have looked into *Don Quixote* in an attempt to find out what elements there are in this early novel that may have contributed to Galsworthy's own philosophy and worldview.

Russian writers

The first major group of writers that influenced Galsworthy significantly are the nineteenth-century Russian novelists, of whom Ivan Turgenev and Leo Tolstoy stand out. Galsworthy saw close links between Dickens and Turgenev, particularly in three all important points: "the intense understanding they both had of human nature, the intense interest they both took in life, the intense hatred they both felt for cruelty and humbug" (Castles, 151). Galsworthy goes on to say that he himself owes a great debt to Turgenev for his "spiritual and technical apprenticeship . . . and the deep kinship in spirit" (Castles, 152-153). Galsworthy refers to Turgenev in his work numerous times, thereby repeatedly confirming this kinship. In *The Inn of Tranquillity* he refers to him as "no greater poet ever wrote in prose" (Inn of Tranquillity, 272). Ada Galsworthy substantiated the theory of Turgenev's relative significance to her husband in a letter to Scribner's in 1936, stating that Galsworthy was "unconscious of any other influence on his style of work, apart from *Turgenev* and *Maupassant*, his only schoolmasters" (Gindin 1987, 98). In this study I will try to ascertain what influence it was exactly that Turgenev had on Galsworthy's work, especially with regard to the themes of religion and philosophy.

Another major Russian writer that Galsworthy admired was Tolstoy. In 1932, shortly before his own death, Galsworthy wrote:

I still do read Tolstoy, and wish I had more time to do so. But I read him as a master novelist, not as a preacher. I do not think his art or his ethics have ever influenced me (Marrot 1936, 803).

This may, perhaps, have been true of the later Tolstoy, who had become fanatically religious. However, given the thematic parallels between the younger Tolstoy, who was struggling with various kinds of religious and philosophical questions, and Galsworthy, it would seem to be an understatement of Galsworthy's when he says that Tolstoy's art and ethics have never influenced him. Indeed, in 1914 Galsworthy himself acknowledges that "the sort of passion that Dickens inspired in him was matched by only seven other novelists" (Pendyces, 319), among whom Tolstoy. Moreover, in "Note on Edward Garnett" in 1914, he remarks that he considers Tolstoy "the greatest of the Russians" (Pendyces, 299). This is not to say that Tolstoy and Galsworthy's ideas are always entirely in agreement, far from it. There are

essential differences, for instance in the concepts of Christ, God and free will. But these concepts will also prove to be the building stones of Galsworthy's own development, with both writers arriving at different conclusions in the end. However, apart from the differences, which are also partly to be explained by their different ages, the times and circumstances in which they lived, backgrounds and cultures, there are also major similarities between these two authors.

The first mention of Tolstoy's work is in Galsworthy's debut novel *Jocelyn* (1898). The protagonist, Giles Legard, enters his wife's boudoir and notices that on "the little table by the couch were the books she had been reading—Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*—three roses, a medicine glass and a bottle."²⁴ Galsworthy must have read *The Kingdom of God is Within You* before 1898 then, probably in Constance Garnett's translation from 1893, when Galsworthy was twenty-seven, or in a French translation of the Russian original.

Galsworthy's praise of Tolstoy is also apparent from his letter to Constance Garnett, the translator of *Anna Karenina* (Heinemann 1901), in which he says: "I'm inclined to think that Tolstoy will go down to posterity on the same mark as Shakespeare." He quotes Edward Garnett as saying that Tolstoy's art "touches a new and deeper degree of self-consciousness and therefore of analysis" (Garnett 1934, 36).

From a thematic point of view striking similarities are to be found between *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, on the one hand, and Galsworthy's major works, on the other. There is the unhappy marriage of Anna Karenina to Karenin; his refusal to allow her a divorce for religious and social reasons; and Anna's expulsion from society, reminiscent of Ada Galsworthy's expulsion, and Irene's in *The Forsyte Saga*. Parallel to Anna Karenina's story is that of Levin, Pierre and Prince Andrei's, and, indeed, Tolstoy's, search for faith. The end of that search is perhaps best illustrated in *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893). Though moralistic in nature, this book contains a number of similarities to Galsworthy's own view on Christianity, his own search for inner peace and his admiration for Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

The third great Russian to be mentioned is Chekhov. Galsworthy refers to Chekhov as a "very great writer" characterised by "pitiful and ironic fatalism" and "intense and melancholy emotionalism" (Candelabra, 254). Galsworthy read most of Chekhov's work before the Great War. It is not clear when exactly he read all his tales, and whether he read them in English or in French. We know that in 1906 Constance Garnett sent Galsworthy her translation of Chekhov's "Peasant Wives", a short story first published in Russian in 1891. She expected that John and Ada would find this "too grim and ugly" (Garnett 1934, 104). Another story that Galsworthy explicitly mentions in another letter, this time from 1912,²⁵ is the "The Black Monk", published in Russian in 1894. I have examined these two short stories, in addition to

²⁴ John Galsworthy, *Jocelyn*, 1898, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977, p. 79.

²⁵ John Galsworthy, *Glimpses and Reflections*, London, Heinemann, 1937, p. 317.

the two plays, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Uncle Vanya*,²⁶ which Galsworthy mentions explicitly, for any parallels between the works of these two writers. Galsworthy found Chekhov's *Three Sisters* "unsuited to English acting" (GD, 28 May 1911).

In addition to Turgenev, Tolstoy and Chekhov, Galsworthy mentions Dostoyevsky and refers to Kuprin, Gorki and Gogol in passing. In his essay "Englishman and Russian" (1916) Galsworthy articulates his appreciation of the Russians as follows: "Those great Russian novelists, in whom I have delighted, possess, before all other gifts, so deep a talent for the revelation of truth."²⁷

Over the years Galsworthy changed his appreciation of Dostoyevsky, however. In April 1910 he expressed a desire to read Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, which he read in French that same year, a present from Constance Garnett, and *The Possessed*. He agreed "that Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky reach places which Turgenev doesn't even attempt" (Garnett 1934, 177). In May 1910 he read *The Dead House* and qualifies it as "splendid" (Garnett 1934, 178). In 1911 he says: "no more deeply fantastic writer can I conceive than Dostoyevsky" (Inn of Tranquillity, 272). Three years later in "Note on Edward Garnett" he still stands "amazed at Dostoyevsky" (Pendycyces, 298-299). However, in April 1914 he read *The Brothers Karamazov* a second time and adjusts his former appreciation: "I'm bound to say it doesn't wash. Amazing in places, of course; but my God!—what verbiage." He hastens to add: "Tolstoy is far greater, and Turgenev too" (Garnett 1934, 217). In another letter to Garnett in April 1914, after reading D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, and qualifying Lawrence's "revelling in the shades of sex emotions" as "anaemic", he says: "PS—Confound all those young fellows; how they have gloated over Dostoyevsky" (Garnett 1934, 218-219). Finally, in 1932, shortly before his own death, Galsworthy remarks that he was still reading Dostoyevsky and still found him "an interesting (and in some sort irritating) writer." He greatly doubts Dostoyevsky's universal influence and still feels he was inferior to Tolstoy both as an artist and as a thinker. He concludes by saying: "His insight was deep and his fecundity remarkable. I think he will live" (Marrot 1936, 804). His earlier appreciation of Dostoyevsky offers ample justification, however, for a closer look at *The Dead House* and *The Brothers Karamazov* in Constance Garnett's translation of 1912, to find out what parallel religious themes both writers address in their work.

Emerson and Arnold

Other writers exerted a lasting influence on Galsworthy's development too. In this context Ralph Waldo Emerson and Matthew Arnold stand out. Dupré (1976) signals the importance of these two thinkers for Galsworthy's religious and philosophical development in his student days. Dupré found evidence in Lillian Galsworthy's diaries that "Lillian and John were both

²⁶ Anton Chekhov, *Five Plays*, Ronald Hingley (tr.), Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1998.

²⁷ John Galsworthy, "Englishman and Russian", in *Another Sheaf*, London, Heinemann, 1919, p. 64.

preoccupied with religious ideas, and Lillian had already decided that she could no longer accept the Church of England faith of her parents.” Lillian “had long discussions on religion with her brother. Together they had read Matthew Arnold’s *Literature and Dogma* and studied Emerson, and in the end both were to discard conventional Christian teaching” (Dupré 1976, 33). Although it is not clear when and how the reading of these writers affected him exactly, we do know that Galsworthy himself referred to Emerson in one of the lectures (1919) that he gave in America, as “so great a thinker” and “poet.”²⁸ In addition to a number of Emerson’s best-known sermons, addresses and essays, I have examined Matthew Arnold’s *Literature and Dogma*, *God and the Bible*, and *Culture and Anarchy*, as the main texts that Galsworthy must have been familiar with, in order to gain a better understanding of the impact these two writers had on his thinking.

Nineteenth and early twentieth-century French authors

Another major group of writers that profoundly influenced Galsworthy was made up of the French novelists Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Prosper Mérimée, Guy de Maupassant and Anatole France. Galsworthy mentions Emile Zola’s *J’Accuse* only in passing. He explicitly mentions Balzac’s *Père Goriot*, which pivots on the theme of extreme fatherhood, elements of which resonate in the father-daughter relationship between Soames and Fleur in *The Forsyte Saga*. Galsworthy refers to *Père Goriot* as a novel which brings the “souls of readers to the same sweet waters” as Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Goethe do. He adds to this that “when books are made in the large and welcoming spirit of Art they distil a balm into the parched human soul, and dispose it to gentillesse” (Castles, 173).

Galsworthy also appreciated Gustave Flaubert and Prosper Mérimée. He admired Flaubert primarily for his artistic mastery and his characters in *Madame Bovary* and “Un Coeur Simple”. Although he appreciated Flaubert as a “determined stylist”, he felt that Flaubert’s pupil and friend, Guy de Maupassant, exceeded him in “style and temperamental gifts”. He also felt that “Flaubert, the apostle of self-conscious artistry, never had quite the vital influence that Turgenev exercised on English writers” (Castles, 89, 155, 153). Still, Galsworthy especially appreciated the profound criticism of life as expressed in masterpieces such as “Un Coeur Simple”, “St Julien L’Hospitalier”²⁹, and *Madame Bovary* and, indeed, qualified Flaubert’s philosophy as “very sympathetic” (GD, 16 September 1910). It is in this very philosophy that parallels between Flaubert and Galsworthy may be detected.

Galsworthy shared a love for Prosper Mérimée’s *Carmen* and Bizet’s opera *Carmen* with Joseph Conrad. Together with Ada, Galsworthy translated the opera from the French. Analysis shows that there are clear thematic parallels between *Carmen* and Galsworthy’s own work, especially pertaining to the themes of love and fate.

²⁸ John Galsworthy, “At the Lowell Centenary” in *Addresses in America*, London, Heinemann, 1919, pp. 1-2.

²⁹ Gustave Flaubert, *Three Tales (Trois Contes, 1877)*, Penguin Books, 1961.

I have already referred to Ada Galsworthy's letter to Scribner's in 1936, in which she states that John Galsworthy was unconscious of any other influence on his work than Turgenev and Maupassant. It was not until he had been writing for four years and had completed *From the Four Winds* (1897) and *Jocelyn* (1898) that he actually began to read Guy de Maupassant in French. Galsworthy's admiration for Maupassant (1850-1893) is clear from what he says in 1927 in retrospect: "To him [Turgenev] and to Maupassant I served that spiritual and technical apprenticeship which every young writer serves, guided by some deep kinship in spirit to one or other of the old past-masters of the craft" (Castles, 152). It was his reading of Turgenev and Maupassant at the turn of the century that gave him "real aesthetic excitement and an insight into proportion of theme and economy of words" (Marrot 1936, 136). Of all novelists that influenced Galsworthy most, Turgenev and Maupassant clearly stand out.

Galsworthy felt that Maupassant's "sardonic nature hated prejudice and stupidity, [and] had in it a vein of deep and indignant pity" (Castles, 154). Mottram confirms that "if Turgenev inspired him most, he learned more from Maupassant" (Mottram 1956, 167). John and Ada's love for Maupassant is also clear from the fact that Ada translated some of the latter's works, among which *Yvette and Other Stories* (1904), to which Joseph Conrad added a preface. In addition, there are also John Galsworthy's lecture tours on Turgenev and Maupassant, which testify to his special interest in these two writers. One example is his lecture at the University of Amsterdam on 24 October 1922, in which he compared Dickens with Turgenev and Maupassant, and concluded that in all three one may find the "great belief in the true meaning of life, an interest in everything human, a noble altruism."³⁰ I have examined the religious aspects of Maupassant's *Pierre et Jean*, *Boule de Suif*, *Yvette*, *Bel-ami*, *Une Vie*, *Fort Comme La Mort* (or *the Ruling Passion*), which Galsworthy mentions as the Maupassant novels and stories that he admired most.

Galsworthy also elaborately discusses the merits of Anatole France in "Homage to Anatole France" (1924), written on the occasion of France's death. Galsworthy refers to France as "the greatest writer of our time" and brands him the "blandest, yet most genuine and poignant of ironists" and "the destroying angel of all that is crude and vulgar, brutal, narrow and insensitive." He concludes that there had never been an age that so needed an Anatole France: "deep learning, wide and humane thinking, self-sacrificing craftsmanship, and an exquisite sense of balance, he had all that the age has not" (Pendyces, 271-272). He was "erudite as few men have been, and withal—a scourge." In his profile on France Galsworthy adds that "his ... was the profile of a humanist, the most convinced and proselytising of them all." The final accolade is that, "Born fortunately too late for the glory of being burned or beheaded, he succeeded in being excommunicated by the Vatican" (Castles, 163, 165). Something of the

³⁰ *Algemeen Handelsblad*, Amsterdam, 25 October 1922 (morning edition).

similarity between Galsworthy and France and the deeper kinship between the two authors comes out in the following:

Loving the pagan, he yet seems to have revered the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, for 'Heureux les Simples' is the moral of many of his tales. . . . He revelled in shredding away from the core of Christianity with his thin chased knife all pretences, shams, and superstitions (Castles, 165).

I have analysed the following novels by France for any thematic parallels with Galsworthy's work: *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, *Thaïs*, *At the Sign of the Reine Pédaque*, *The Red Lily*, *The Elm-Tree on the Mall*, *The Wicker-work Woman*, *The Gods are Athirst* and *The Revolt of the Angels*.

The Travellers

Conrad, Hudson, Cunninghame Graham and Nevinson all shared a friendship with Galsworthy, an enthusiasm for travel, a love of nature, and humanism. In "Tributes to Conrad", an address given at Warsaw and Krakow in 1930, Galsworthy emphasises the closeness of his friendship with Conrad. He refers to Conrad as "for thirty years my best and dearest friend in the writing world" (Pendyces, 259).

To my mind, travelling over all those years, the early days come back most vividly; when with the earnestness of comparative youth we discussed all things in heaven and earth and some that seemed beyond those spheres. . . . It was the great quality of Conrad that with all his sense of the cosmic, of the enveloping mystery of Nature, he kept ever to the touchstone of fact, never became theoretical and misty, never lost grip of human feeling Mystery enwraps the cause, the origin, the end of life, yea even of human life. And acceptance of that mystery brings a certain dignity to existence, the kind of dignity we find in the work of Conrad (Pendyces, 259-261).

This passage shows the philosophical aspects that were part of Galsworthy and Conrad's discussions in the early 1890s when they first met on a sailing ship of the English merchant service, on which Conrad served as first mate. These aspects are also manifest in Galsworthy's early short stories, among which "The Doldrums" (1895-1896). Galsworthy appreciated Conrad as the best specimen he could think of "as a pure artist (there is practically nothing of the moralist in him) amongst moderns" (Marrot 1936, 194). However, he denies that Conrad exerted any influence on him. Galsworthy expressly states in a letter in 1931: "Conrad had no influence whatever on my writing. He was a most kind and helpful critic of it, but in manner we were poles apart" (Marrot 1936, 636). Of course, this statement of

Galsworthy's begs further analysis. What we can say at least is that Galsworthy held Conrad in great esteem. He says: "I doubt if he will ever be surpassed as a creator of what we Westerners term 'exotic atmosphere,'" and he ranks Conrad "among the finest writers of all ages" (Castles, 80, 81). To find out to what extent Galsworthy was influenced by Conrad, if at all, I have had a closer look at the novels of Conrad's early period: *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Heart of Darkness* (1902), *Youth* (1902), *Typhoon* (1903), *Nostramo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Mirror of the Sea* (1906). However, whatever differences there may have been between Galsworthy and Conrad, what they shared was a love of "Flaubert, de Maupassant and Turgenev" (Castles, 89), and it is these writers that influenced them equally.

In his "Preface to *Green Mansions*" (1915), W.H. Hudson's best-known novel, Galsworthy says, "of all living authors—now that Tolstoy has gone—I could least dispense with W.H. Hudson" (Pendyces, 283). In Hudson (1841-1922), born in Argentina and later naturalised as a British citizen, Galsworthy recognised a kindred spirit. The fact that in 1915 Galsworthy had known him for twenty-four years, coupled with his remarks that "Hudson is a very great writer" and, to his thinking, "the most valuable our Age possesses," and that he was one of "the deepest and most varied thinkers" (Pendyces, 297), indicates that this is a writer who justifies further analysis. Galsworthy himself mentions Hudson's *Green Mansions* (1904), *Far Away and Long Ago* (1918), *The Purple Land* (1885), *El Ombó* (1912), *Idle Days in Patagonia*, *Afoot in England* (1909), *The Land's End* (1908), *Adventures among Birds*, *A Shepherd's Life* (1910) and *Hampshire Days* (1903) as the novels he appreciated most.

In "Note on R.B. Cunninghame Graham" Galsworthy argues that Cunninghame Graham approaches the perfection of Maupassant and Chekhov. Galsworthy was attracted by his "clear, poignant realism that makes his philosophy ring out so convinced and convincing, and gives it the power to rip the gilding off the shoddy and snobbishness of our civilisation" (Pendyces, 310). Cedric Watts in his *Selected Writings of Cunninghame Graham* (1981), calls him a "modern Don Quixote". Not only did he have the style and swagger of a Spanish grandee, he also admired Cervantes' hero and even resembled him to such a degree that his friends affectionately addressed him as "Don Roberto".³¹ Galsworthy could not "honestly recall any story of his in which his knight-errant philosophy [did] not here and there lift its head out of the fabric of his dreams," and "in an age and country very much surrendered to money and materialism," Galsworthy praises Cunninghame Graham as a "gallant foe of oppression, of cruelty, of smugness, and fatty degeneration; a real tonic salt to the life of an age that needs it" (Pendyces, 309, 310, 311).

In a letter to Edward Garnett of 31 December 1907, Galsworthy asks Garnett if he has ever read Nevinson's *A Modern Slavery*. He tells him that it has impressed him tremendously. He

³¹ Cedric Watts, *Selected Writings of Cunninghame Graham*, Toronto and London, Associated University Presses, 1981, p. 15.

adds: “With the exception of Hudson there’s no one can write like that—so direct, so genuine, so insightful, and ironical” (Garnett 1934, 160). An analysis of *A Modern Slavery* shows that it is in this book that Galsworthy’s own concern for the slave trade originates.

Butler and Stevenson

Galsworthy read *The Way of All Flesh* in 1903 when he was given a copy by Edward Garnett. In a letter to Frank Lucas in 1910 Galsworthy says: “His *Way of All Flesh* is the best modern novel” (Marrot 1936, 688). In the same letter he also refers to Butler’s *God the Known and God the Unknown* (1909). It is not surprising that Galsworthy should be reading this around 1910 on the eve of a more contemplative phase in his life. Galsworthy also refers to *Erewhon* a number of times in *The Freelanders* (1915) and later in *Another Sheaf* (1919). Examination of Butler’s treatises and novels shows that there are many parallels with the religious, philosophical and social ideas that are expressed in Galsworthy’s work.

Of Stevenson Galsworthy says that the older he himself got, the more he began to appreciate him. He admits that the Russian and French writers eclipsed Stevenson entirely in his own early days as a writer. In 1928, however, he tries to do justice to Stevenson, qualifying the latter as “the best British romanticist” (Candelabra, 261), who, regrettably was too much “absorbed in telling a tale rather than revealing human types and phases of human life” (Candelabra, 263). Galsworthy says that Stevenson felt “life . . . too keenly to want to probe into it; he spun his gossamer to lure himself and all away from life” (Candelabra, 35). For his storytelling qualities, however, Galsworthy ranked Stevenson alongside Dumas and Dickens. I have examined those works that Galsworthy appreciated most. *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* “come first” with him, while *The Master of Ballantrae* “comes second”. He also says he had “a weakness” for that “stirring” tale *The Black Arrow*. However, he “could have done without” *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Candelabra, 262). That Galsworthy must have had a weakness for *The Black Arrow* appears from the fact that in his early novel, *The Island Pharisees*, he uses the same name for his protagonist as Stevenson did for his: “Richard (Dick) Shelton”. Apart from this, other parallels between these two novels may also be detected, some of which are beyond the scope of the present study.

American writers

In his address “At the Lowell Centenary” (1919) Galsworthy refers to “that glorious group of New England writers” that strike him by their “measure and magnanimity” (Addresses, 1). In “American and Briton” (1917) Galsworthy says that he rejoices “in Hawthorne and Mark Twain, Henry James and Howells” (Another Sheaf, 79), and praises Emerson for being “so great a thinker or poet,” Hawthorne for being “so creative,” Thoreau for being “so original in philosophy and life” (Addresses, 1-2).

It is unclear when exactly Galsworthy read Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). In "Six Novelists in Profile" in *Castles in Spain* (1927), he reminds the reader that when Dickens, as one of the founding fathers of the present-day novel, was writing in England, Hawthorne was writing *The Scarlet Letter* in the United States. Hawthorne's attack on the rigours of Calvinist Puritanism, the Puritans' moral code, their concept of sin and guilt, *vis-à-vis* Hawthorne's own transcendental views, contributed towards Galsworthy's own religious and philosophical development. Galsworthy was also attracted by Hawthorne's allusions to the cruelty of prison life and the inferior position of women.

One of the major resemblances between *The Scarlet Letter* and Galsworthy's work is the conflict between the laws of nature and the laws of man, particularly moral laws stemming from established religion. This reminds us of Bernard Shaw's play *The Devil's Disciple*, which, like *The Scarlet Letter*, is set in the early days of the American colonies. We come across the thematic parallels in nearly all of Galsworthy's novels. Hester and Dimmesdale's adultery recalls the love scene of Noel Pierson in *Saint's Progress*, Miltoun's struggle in *The Patrician*, and Irene's love for Bosinney in *The Man of Property*. All these concern conflicts between his characters' deepest feelings and established morality.

Galsworthy characterises Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) as "that joyous work as sure of immortality as any book I know" and "the perfect example of 'familiar spirit' permeating both book and its characters." By "familiar spirit" Galsworthy means the sort of atmosphere and characters that one might come across in everyday life (Castles, 46). The theme of both *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* is the quest for personal freedom and the escape from the limitations set by society. The slavery issue in *Huckleberry Finn*, the hypocrisy of orthodox Christianity and its oppressive morality make for close links with Galsworthy's work.

In "Note on *The Portrait of a Lady*" Galsworthy elaborates on Henry James' Isabel Archer, and compares her with Turgenev's Irina in *Smoke*. Galsworthy's own creation, Irene in *The Forsyte Saga*, forces itself upon the reader when, with regard to James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, Galsworthy says that "something is wanting to this almost breathing shadow . . . [which] will never make us see quite plainly" (Pendyces, 280). He calls Isabel Archer "the best American of the best Americans—as they were in the nineteenth century, a priestess of their peculiar flame" (Pendyces, 282). Galsworthy also speaks about James in relation to Conrad, and how Conrad most appreciated Henry James in James' middle period, "the Henry James of *Daisy Miller*, *The Madonna of the Future*, *Greville Fane*, *The Real Thing* and *The Pension Beaurepas*" (Castles, 90). These are the works that Galsworthy himself was familiar with and it is these works, therefore, that I have looked into for evidence of Galsworthy's literary sources.

We have also seen Galsworthy's appreciation of William Dean Howells. Howells' *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885) will have appealed to Galsworthy for such themes as class

distinctions and rivalry, determinism, fate and self-reliance, love and marriage, the position of women, religion and the church, ethics, urban and pastoral values, and Howells' realism. It is unknown when Galsworthy read this novel, but if he did so before he wrote *The Man of Property* it would seem that elements of Howells' novel found their way into Galsworthy's, for instance, the new house on "the hill", the youthful and innovative architect constantly exceeding his budget, and Silas' daughter Irene. Howells' sentence: "He . . . recalled the night when he had stopped with Irene before the house, and she had said that she should never live there, and he had tried to coax her into courage about it," may have sparked Galsworthy's imagination, providing him with the germ of a story which eventually was to develop into *The Man of Property*.

Finally, Galsworthy also speaks very appreciatively of Stephen Crane: "no more impressionistic writer ever painted with words" (Inn of Tranquillity, 272), not unlike what H.G. Wells observed: "There is a Whistler even more than there is a Tolstoy in *The Red Badge of Courage*."³² This study shows that it is this same "courage" that also features prominently in Galsworthy's work.

Other contemporary British authors

In addition to the British writers mentioned so far, Galsworthy also refers in some detail to writers such as: Ralph Hodgson, Katherine Mansfield, Thomas Hardy, John Masefield, and Stacey Aumonier. Thus he explicitly mentions Ralph Hodgson's poem *The Bull*, Katherine Mansfield's "Life of Ma Parker" in *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, "Prelude" in *Bliss*, and Thomas Hardy's poem "Afterwards" in *Moments of Vision* as examples of "verbal expression of true feeling" (Castles, 121). Also there are various references to Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *The Dynasts*.

Hermon Ould, secretary of the PEN-club, indicates in his biography of Galsworthy, that Galsworthy "had a great liking" for Ralph Hodgson (Ould 1934, 196). No doubt this was due to their common protest against cruelty to animals, their love of nature, their humanism and views on religion. Galsworthy compares Katherine Mansfield with Chekhov, saying that "she had the same intense and melancholy emotionalism as Chekhov, the same way of thinking and feeling, and died—alas—of the same dread malady." He also notes that Mansfield's and Chekhov's stories "have a real pastmastership of everyday moments, of significant insignificancies, and of differentiation through little in-between events" (Candelabra, 253,174).

Galsworthy was a personal friend of John Masefield's. Most of the surviving correspondence from 1907-1932 deals with Masefield's helpful suggestions for the improvement of Galsworthy's plays. An entry in Galsworthy's diary from 1911 shows that

³² Lionel Kelly, "Introduction" in, Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 2003, p. xi.

Masefield read out his *Widow in the Bye Street* to John and Ada, which Galsworthy characterises as “first rate” (GD, 13 August 1911). In “John Masefield and his Narrative Poems” (1912) Galsworthy praises the publication of *The Everlasting Mercy* and *The Widow in the Bye Street*. He says the latter poem is an illustration of “the fate which the life force coils round human lives; the fate which lurks, waiting but for the favouring moment—sometimes mercifully, never reached—to leap out and destroy” (Pendyces, 273). Masefield’s play *The Tragedy of Nan*, referred to by Galsworthy as “a play of much beauty and much strength” (Pendyces, 273), is similar in theme. These three works share a number of the themes that Galsworthy addresses too, mainly those of providence and fate. Galsworthy and Masefield also had a common interest in issues such as prison life and capital punishment, the position of the poor and the role of the Church.

In “Foreword to *The Assembled Tales of Stacy Aumonier*” Galsworthy hails Aumonier as a “real master of the short story” and “one of the best short-story writers of all time.” He particularly appreciates him for his “richness and precision of observation, the poignancy of irony, and the humane breadth and tolerance of the feeling and philosophy.” No doubt Galsworthy recognised a kindred spirit in Aumonier because of the latter’s “belief in life and a philosophy of life” (Pendyces, 312, 315).

Dramatists

In *The Inn of Tranquillity* Galsworthy mentions a number of dramatists whom he labels as “noble artists”, and to whose works he refers as “those great works” (Inn of Tranquillity, 232). He thus mentions Aeschylus and his *Choephorae* and *Prometheus*; Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Electra*; Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, *Medea* and *Hippolytus*; Shakespeare’s *King Lear*; Goethe’s *Faust*; Ibsen’s *Ghosts* and *Peer Gynt*; and Tolstoy’s *The Power of Darkness*.

In “The Great Tree” Galsworthy poses the question why Shakespeare is “such an everlasting solace and inspiration.” It is Shakespeare’s preoccupation with the here and now that must have fascinated him. To Galsworthy Shakespeare’s writings embody “the faith that sufficient unto this Earth is the beauty and the meaning thereof.” Galsworthy felt that Shakespeare’s writings are, “as it were, the proud exuberance of Nature, and no eye turned on the hereafter; and so they fill us with the gladness to be alive—though ‘the rain it raineth every day.’” It was Shakespeare’s “wide, free, careless spirit . . . incarnate lesson to narrow-headed mortals, their strait moralities, and pedantic hearts!” which Galsworthy admired most of all (Pendyces, 332). Of Shakespeare’s plays Galsworthy mentions *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* in particular. Galsworthy does not mention any other eighteenth or early nineteenth-century dramatic works, apart from Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*, which he saw in the theatre a number of times.

Galsworthy himself embarked on his career as a dramatist in 1906 with *The Silver Box*, followed a year later by *Joy* (1907). Major plays that established his name as a playwright were *Strife* (1909) and *Justice* (1910). Galsworthy himself felt that he had not been influenced by earlier dramatists. In 1913 he confirms this by saying: "I think I may say (without exaggeration) that I came into theatreland quite free from the influence of any dramatist, or any kind of stage writing" (Marrot 1936, 714). He also denies having been influenced by Ibsen. In the same letter he states: "I had never seen an Ibsen play, and only read four or five (some years before) without either understanding or appreciating them" (Marrot 1936, 714). This statement is in sharp contrast to what he remarked one year earlier in *The Inn of Tranquillity*, in which he refers to Ibsen as one of the "noble artists", comparing him with the great Greek playwrights, as well as with Shakespeare, Goethe and Tolstoy. In 1925 he once more denies any claim that he was influenced by Ibsen and states: "My dramatic invasion, and the form of it, was dictated rather by revolt at the artificial nature of the English play of the period, and by resolute intention to present real life on the stage" (Marrot 1936, 793). Ibsen's influence on Galsworthy has been proved by MacDonald, however, who claims that not only did Ibsen influence Galsworthy thematically, but it was also "his technique of using naturalist settings and properties as vehicles for symbolic meaning to convey thematic significance"³³ that Galsworthy adopted. It is clear that Herman Ould overlooked this point entirely when he said in 1935 that "Ibsen . . . touch[es] Galsworthy only at comparatively unimportant points" (Ould 1934, 135). Shaw too states in 1930 that Ibsen's influence on drama in the 1890s and, indeed, on life itself was "staggering" (Plays Unpleasant, 98). MacDonald confirms this when he refers to Ibsen as "perhaps the greatest influence on the 'new drama' in England" (MacDonald 1986, 4). Ibsen's ideas were familiar to the intelligentsia of those days and permeated the intellectual debate in Galsworthy's circles. Galsworthy himself says that Ibsen's *Ghosts* was censored because it was "suggestive of new thought" (Inn of Tranquillity, 244), and he calls Ibsen a "fervent idealist" (Inn of Tranquillity, 272), thereby once more accentuating his appreciation of this dramatist. I will endeavour to show how echoes of Ibsen's work reverberate throughout Galsworthy's, proving that Ibsen influenced Galsworthy more profoundly, directly or indirectly, than Galsworthy himself was aware of.

Ould also contends that Galsworthy had little in common with "the perfervid work of Strindberg" (Ould 1934, 123). What we know from his diary (12 June 1912) is that Galsworthy at least read or reread Strindberg's plays in 1912. He made the diary entry without further comment. The themes of the loveless marriage, women's emancipation and the 'new woman', death and original sin in Strindberg's major works, such as *The Father* (1887), *Miss Julie* (1888) and *Dance of Death* (1901) are echoed, however, in many of Galsworthy's novels and plays. The same goes for Strindberg's mystic, surrealist *A Dream Play* (1902) and Galsworthy's allegorical play *The Little Dream* (1911).

³³ Jan MacDonald, *The New Drama 1900-1914*, London, Macmillan, 1986, p. 7.

In 1909, in an essay called “Some Platinudes Concerning Drama”, Galsworthy states that drama in Britain was renescent. He felt that this renaissance was not due to any particular writer, but “because of a new spirit. . . . which in the main rises from an awakened humanity in the conscience of our time” (Candelabra, 11). This new movement, he felt, was based on “sincerity”. It becomes clear how significant this development was to him personally when he contrasts the sincerity of this new movement with the implied insincerity of traditional thinking and religion:

Sincerity distrusts tradition, authority, comfort, habit; cannot breathe the air of prejudice, and cannot stand the cruelties which arise from it. So it comes about that the new drama’s spirit is essentially, inevitably human—and humane, essentially distasteful to many professing followers of the Great Humanitarian, who, if they were but sincere, would see that they secretly abhor His teachings and in practice continually invert them (Another Sheaf, 98).

The dramatists that he mentions making up this new movement in drama are George Bernard Shaw, James Barrie, John Millington Synge, St John Hankin and John Masefield. Galsworthy considers it unfortunate that often this new drama is referred to as “serious drama”. He did not consider this epithet a suitable one for these dramatists. What the writers of this movement had in common was that “they [were] sincere” (Another Sheaf, 88-90). Galsworthy elaborates on the issue of “sincerity” by comparing Synge and Hankin, who were “as far apart as dramatists well could be” (Another Sheaf, 90-91):

Each had found a special medium—the one a kind of lyric satire, the other a neat, individual sort of comedy—which seemed exactly to express his spirit. Both forms were in a sense artificial, but both were quite sincere; for through them each of these two dramatists, so utterly dissimilar, shaped forth the essence of his broodings and visions of life, with all their flavour and individual limitations. And that is all one means by—all one asks of—sincerity (Another Sheaf, 90-91).

Galsworthy was particularly impressed by Synge’s works that appeared on the London stage right after he himself had completed his first plays. It is therefore not surprising that both stylistically and thematically elements of Synge’s may be detected in Galsworthy’s later plays, e.g. *The Little Dream*. Galsworthy refers to Synge’s plays as rich in fantasy and symbolism, “a poetic prose-drama emotionalising us by its diversity and purity of form and invention and whose province will be to disclose the elemental soul of man and the forces of nature” (Candelabra, 13). Galsworthy labels Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* as “a masterpiece” and the writer as: “There is flower of author!” (Candelabra, 44).

Galsworthy and James Barrie became friends in 1908 and corresponded with each other until Galsworthy's death in 1933. Barrie commented on many of Galsworthy's plays and novels, nearly always in a positive and rarely in a really critical vein. Galsworthy, Barrie, Shaw and Granville-Barker belonged to a small set of friends reading and commenting each other's plays before they were performed on stage. Galsworthy was familiar with most, or all of Barrie's plays. He either read them, or saw them in the theatre, where they were usually box-office successes. Some thematic parallels are noticeable between Barrie's and Galsworthy's drama, although, on the whole, Galsworthy was more inclined to write about deeper social, philosophical and psychological themes than Barrie. Barrie's *Quality Street* (1902), for example, is hardly more than a romantic comedy. *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), does, however, approach Galsworthy's social drama, and the same goes for the dramatised novel *The Little Minister* (1897). James Barrie's appreciation of Galsworthy, as a friend, is clear from a letter to Ada after Galsworthy's death, stating that, "Mortality is a hateful thing, when one considers it in relation to such a man as he was—a man who had never thought or said or done; and was incapable of doing or saying or thinking, a mean thing" (GP, JG 7/2/1a).

However close Barrie may have been to Galsworthy, St John Hankin was much more akin to Galsworthy than Barrie. When Galsworthy states that the writers of the new movement are sincere in that they express the "essence of [their] broodings and visions of life," this applies to Galsworthy and to Hankin alike. The latter was not only out to entertain people, but also to get a message across. John Drinkwater confirms that "it is certainly to be accounted to [Hankin] artistically as a virtue that although he exposed what he considered to be ethical and social fallacies in some measure by statement and argument, he did so in a larger measure by the operation of character."³⁴ The socio-economic disparities and ethical fallacies that Hankin exposes concern the divide between the classes and the artificial way in which this divide was maintained; the emptiness of the lives of the gentry, the semi-feudal social abuses in the country; moral rectitude as related to divorce; the plight of unmarried daughters and the objections raised against women's emancipation. Finally, there are the humanist and humanitarian aspects and the concept of 'fate', such as the motto "Character is Fate", which Hankin shares with Galsworthy. St John Hankin died, prematurely, in 1909 at the age of 39. His *Return of the Prodigal* dates from 1904, *The Charity That Began at Home* and *The Cassilis Engagement* from 1905, and *The Last of the De Mullins* from 1907. With the exception of this last work, all plays were written before Galsworthy embarked on his career as a dramatist and major parallels may be found in their work, showing Hankin's influence on Galsworthy. Galsworthy, however, was the greater crusader of the two, and his plays are characterised by a greater profundity. Much of the social criticism expressed by St John

³⁴ John Drinkwater, "Introduction," in St John Hankin, *The Dramatic Works of St John Hankin*, London, Martin Secker, 1912, p. 21.

Hankin is mirrored in Galsworthy's novels *The Country House*, *The Patrician* and *The Freeland*s, but also, both thematically and as to setting, in his plays *The Silver Box*, *Joy* and *The Feud*. *The Return of the Prodigal* and *The Charity That Began at Home* were produced in London by Granville-Barker in 1905 and 1906, respectively, just before Galsworthy's own theatrical productions. Another aspect that St John Hankin and Galsworthy had in common was their abhorrence of the censorship that had been introduced into the theatre. In an article in the *Fortnightly Review* in December 1906, called "Puritanism and the English Stage", Hankin expresses his criticism of the current censorship. Only a year later, when Granville-Barker's play *Waste* failed to be accepted by the censors, Galsworthy too launched a campaign against censorship and received support from many literary figures. In November 1907 St John Hankin says that his, Galsworthy's and Barker's plays suffer from the same problem, namely that the production of this type of "intellectual drama" invariably means a substantial loss to the theatre management. "For years we have been clamouring for an artistic drama, an intellectual drama, an advanced drama. Well, we have got it. . . . There is only one weak point about the intellectual drama as at present supplied in London. *It does not pay.*"³⁵

What remains to be established is the possible influence on Galsworthy of George Bernard Shaw's early works. Galsworthy admired Shaw and says that "no one else could have broken through the conventions that crippled the English stage in 1900" (Mottram 1956, 104). In 1906 Granville-Barker and Shaw accepted Galsworthy's *The Silver Box* for production on the London stage and Shaw praised him for his achievement. Galsworthy was impressed by this and wrote: "I met Shaw, who told me he'd read the play and thought it very fine. H'm!" (Marrot 1936, 196). Although Galsworthy and Shaw were greatly different in character, eventually they became close friends. Comparing Shaw's earlier plays from before 1906 with Galsworthy's, one cannot fail to notice the parallel in social satire. Shaw himself states in the Preface to his *Plays Unpleasant* what his satire aims at:

But here we are confronted . . . with those social horrors which arise from the fact that the average homebred Englishman, however honourable and good-natured he may be in his private capacity, is, as a citizen, a wretched creature who, whilst clamouring for a gratuitous millennium, will shut his eyes to the most villainous abuses if the remedy threatens to add another penny in the pound to the rates and taxes which he has to be half cheated, half coerced into paying.³⁶

The social fallacies and gross injustice that Shaw refers to are those of slum housing and slum landlords growing rich on the backs of the poor, the position of women and marriage laws, the plight of women that had to work as prostitutes, and the circumstances that had driven them to

³⁵ St John Hankin, *The Dramatic Works of St John Hankin*, Vol. iii, London, Martin Secker, 1912, p. 173.

³⁶ George Bernard Shaw, *Plays Unpleasant*, Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 25-26.

this. His plays are infused with a strong note of moral anger. What Shaw basically does in *Widowers' Houses*, *The Philanderer* and *Mrs Warren's Profession*, is to make strong political statements from clear political motives, which, however, at that time did not help him in his career as a playwright. His plays were either not produced on the commercial stage, or, as in the case of *Mrs Warren's Profession*, censored. Still, this is the kind of material that formed the foundation of Galsworthy's drama, less propagandist, it is true, less provocative, less sceptical, perhaps, but also exposing the hypocrisy of the upper middle and middle classes. The reason why Galsworthy seemed initially more successful in getting the same message across than Shaw, was that Shaw's plays looked so much more plainly political and sceptical, hitting the playgoer himself rather than society at large, whereas Galsworthy's message was couched in more mellow terms. Moreover, Galsworthy was seen as a representative of everything that Harrow and Oxford stood for, and the things he said were therefore not immediately associated with socialist propaganda (Mottram, 1956, 54).

Shaw's influence on Galsworthy in terms of social involvement and broad humanitarianism is unmistakable. Especially a play like *Man and Superman* (1903) contains many ingredients that we also come across in Galsworthy, from social criticism to views on religion. Ibsen's influence on Shaw is also clearly visible. Galsworthy realised that Ibsen and Shaw were "two personalities . . . fundamentally opposed," but what they had in common was that "they [were] new!" (Inn of Tranquillity, 267-268).

In addition to *Plays Unpleasant*, the following Shaw plays will be set off against Galsworthy's work: *Arms and the Man*, *Candida* and *You Never Can Tell* from *Plays Pleasant*; *The Devil's Disciple* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* from *Three Plays for Puritans*; *Major Barbara* and *Man and Superman*. Most were produced on the London stage before Galsworthy embarked on his career as a playwright. A closer look at these plays reveals such a degree of thematic similarity that the conclusion that Galsworthy was influenced by Shaw is justified.

In this survey from Dickens to Shaw we have seen many novelists and dramatists who in some way were an inspiration to Galsworthy. In many cases, such as Dickens and the Russian and French authors, Galsworthy was well aware that he was indebted to them. Of other writers he either flatly denied that they had influenced him, for example Conrad, Ibsen and Shaw, or was simply not aware of it. Galsworthy was part of a small circle of literary friends, who all influenced each other. Of those, Conrad and Hudson were his closest friends and, of course, there was Edward Garnett, who was his literary mentor in the first few years of his career. Conrad and Hudson were his seniors by ten and twenty-five years, respectively, and were sources of inspiration to him, as an analysis of their work and Galsworthy's shows. All those writers had one common denominator: basically they were all humanists. They all represented a philosophy and an outlook on life which Galsworthy describes as follows:

Humanism is the creed of those that believe that, within the circle of the enwrapping mystery, men's fate is in their own hands, for better for worse; and these . . . novelists, by their natural absorption in all things human, and their great powers of expression, have furthered a faith which is becoming for modern man—perhaps—the only possible faith (Castles, 171).

Philosophers and thinkers

Fréchet states in 1982 that there “are very few philosophical works, or works with a philosophical bent, that [Galsworthy] is known to have read” (Fréchet 1982, 185). Fréchet may have based this on Galsworthy's own modesty in his letter to Thomas Hardy of March 27, 1916: “I am miserably read in Philosophy, but always feel that the process of Art supplies the best key to our conjecturing of what the great riddle comes to” (Marrot 1936, 749). Hardy felt that this was indeed a piece of unjustified modesty and replied: “I am not a philosopher any more than you are, though from your letter I think I can hardly let you off the charge of at least having associated with Philosophy” (Marrot 1936, 751).

Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche

When reading Galsworthy's novels, dramas, essays and letters, one comes across various references to and quotes from philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche (Sheaf, 234-235). Galsworthy was aware of the ideas of these thinkers well before 1900, because in one of his earliest novels, *Villa Rubein* (1900), one of the characters states: “Ah If they [i.e. Kant and Hegel] would teach me to draw better, or to see a new colour in a flower, or an expression in a face, I would read them all.”³⁷ He thereby dismisses them as not very relevant to him, and indeed this is a first and very early indication of Galsworthy's disapproval of these philosophers. However, Galsworthy had a particular interest in Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche where their views on the state versus the individual were concerned. In this respect Kant's political views may have appealed to Galsworthy, especially the idea of a federation of free states as a means to prevent war. He actually quotes Kant as saying:

The fact that the sense of community among the peoples of the earth has gone so far that the violation of right in one place is felt everywhere, has made the idea of a Citizenship of the world no fantastic dream, but a necessary extension of the unwritten Code of States and Peoples (Kant) (Sheaf, 235).

To the question: “What can we do, when this war is over, to ensure that we shall not again be stampeded by professional soldiers?” Galsworthy replies in a vein reminiscent of Kant: “the

³⁷ John Galsworthy, *Villa Rubein*, 1900, London, Heinemann, 1933, p. 43.

formation of a United States of Europe—linked if possible with the countries of America” (Sheaf, 225, 234).

Galsworthy was more wary of Hegel, however, who argues that the existence of the individual has no meaning in itself, but only through its subordination to the State.³⁸ Hegel’s idea is that the duty of a citizen is entirely confined to upholding the substantial individuality and independence and sovereignty of his own State. Hegel looks upon the State as independent of other states. He argues against any sort of League of Nations by which the independence of the separate States might be limited. Russell indicates that such is Hegel’s doctrine of the State—a doctrine, which, if accepted, justifies every internal tyranny and every external aggression that could possibly be imagined (Russell 1974, p. 711). Galsworthy refers to Hegel’s view on the state as “a false notion as what States should be” (Sheaf, 234), and makes a direct link to contemporary Germany:

They should not roam the earth considering only their own strength. True that, in the absence as yet of the system of group-States, States still can seize here or there, if they be strong enough, but we emphatically deny that they should do so *on principle*, as the new German philosophy seems to teach, and set the robber’s ideal, the robber’s fashion of morality, for the individuals who compose those states (Sheaf, 234).

In 1916 Galsworthy refers to Nietzsche as “an individualist, a hater of the State and of the Prussians, a sick man, a great artist in words to be read with delight—and your tongue in your cheek” (Sheaf, 234). This is sufficient evidence that Galsworthy was very well aware of Nietzsche’s ideas. However, Galsworthy’s characterisation of Nietzsche as a “sick man” also shows his unequivocal rejection of this philosopher. There were elements in Nietzsche’s writings, though, as expressed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-1892) that Galsworthy may have sympathised with. There is Nietzsche’s criticism of religion and his rejection of God: “God is a conjecture Could you *conceive* a God?”³⁹ There is also his objection to Christianity as it caused the acceptance of what he calls “slave morality.” Nietzsche was not interested in the metaphysical truth of either Christianity or any other religion, convinced as he was that no religion was really true. Another reason why Nietzsche inveighed against Christianity was that it treated all men as equal. He refers to Buddhism and Christianity as “nihilistic religions”, as both deny an ultimate difference of value between one man and another (Russell 1974, 732). Nietzsche also expresses his dislike of the New Testament, but not the Old, of which he speaks in terms of the highest admiration. He refers to the New

³⁸ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1946, 7th impr., 1974, p. 711.

³⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 1883-1892, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 1997, p. 82.

Testament as “the gospel of a completely ignoble species of man” (Russell 1974, 733). What Galsworthy will definitely have rejected is Nietzsche’s aversion of common people: the “rabble”, and his belief in the “superman” (Zarathustra, 94, 277). Russell calls Nietzsche “megalomaniac” and says that Nietzsche’s “noble man” is a being “wholly devoid of sympathy, ruthless, cunning, cruel and concerned only with his own power” (Russell 1974, 734). Galsworthy will also have objected strongly to Nietzsche’s concept of women as a “means” to get children and a “plaything” for man’s diversion (Zarathustra, 62).

Of the many authors that Galsworthy had read, only Shaw was outspoken in his dislike of Nietzsche. In Shaw’s play *Man and Superman* the Devil refers to Nietzsche as “that German Polish madman” (Superman, 172). The Devil that figures in this play goes on to say that “it was [Nietzsche] who raked up the Superman, who is as old as Prometheus; and the 20th century will run after this newest of the old crazes when it gets tired of the world” (Superman, 172). Shaw utterly rejects Nietzsche’s conception, as expressed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, of “der Übermensch”, or Superman, or in popular English: “big blond beast” (Major Barbara, 13). He admits, however, that it would be doing an injustice to Nietzsche to say, as is done, that his rule of life was “a glorification of a selfish bullying” (Major Barbara, 13). In the preface to *Major Barbara* Shaw maintains that he had been familiar with the modern objection to Christianity as “a pernicious slave morality,” before he ever heard of Nietzsche and that it was therefore not through Nietzsche that he became familiar with it.⁴⁰ Galsworthy wrote to Garnett in February 1906 that he had enjoyed *Major Barbara*, but rejected the third Act as having too much “Shawdom and Nietzscheism” (Garnett 1934, 107). All this may serve as substantial evidence that Galsworthy was very much aware of what Nietzsche stood for as early as 1906, the year of publication of *The Man of Property*, which thematises Nietzsche’s concept of ‘women as property’.

Most of Galsworthy’s own references to Nietzsche are negative. In a letter to R.H. Mottram in 1905 he refers to Nietzsche as “a reactionist, and . . . rather a cowardly one.” He says: “As the founder of a remedy, as the propounder of a practical philosophical scheme, he is a hopeless and rather childish failure,” and he adds that Nietzsche “fails to propound any hopeful issue for man *as he is*.” (Mottram 1956, 70). In addition to this it is Lord Dennis in *The Patrician* (1911), who says: “I never could stomach ‘the strong man’—captain of his soul, Henley and Nietzsche and that sort—goes against the grain with me.”⁴¹ In the play *The Little Man* a German says: “Tolstoy is sentimentalisch. Nietzsche is the true philosopher, the only one.” An American replies: “. . . old Nietch—virgin mind. But give me Leo. . . .”⁴² In Galsworthy’s *Windows* (1922) Nietzsche is labelled as “this Anti-Christ, Neesha”, and there is a clear reference to Nietzsche’s “Superman” concept: “What’s the use of telling the

⁴⁰ George Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara*, 1905-1907, Penguin Books, 2000, p. 13.

⁴¹ John Galsworthy, *The Patrician*, 1911, New York, Scribners, 1926, p. 129.

⁴² John Galsworthy, *The Plays of John Galsworthy*, London, Duckworth, 1929, pp. 926-927.

Englishman to act like an angel. He ain't either an angel or a blond beast" (Plays 694). Galsworthy blames the German philosophers for having "anointed the present immorality of States and thereby fixed it as the morality of individuals," and he warns his readers for the dangers ahead: "Man never attains to his philosophical ideal; but it's just as well that he should see clearly its apotheosis before he tries too hard to reach it" (Sheaf, 235). He realised that Hegel and Nietzsche's philosophy was fatal to the German temperament, and says that "The Teuton, of all men, requires the Christian, or shall we say the humanistic, ethic, to modify something science-ridden, overbearing, and heady in his soul." He felt that "his was the last nature that could afford to succumb wholesale to the faith that his race was the only race that mattered" (Sheaf, 238-239). With the approach of the 1930s Galsworthy realised that after the Great War another war was already looming.

Schopenhauer and William James

Galsworthy mentions Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) in a profile on Joseph Conrad and says of him that "he used to give [Conrad] satisfaction twenty years and more ago" (Castles, 91). We may assume, therefore, that Galsworthy was at least familiar with Schopenhauer's philosophy, given Galsworthy and Conrad's frequent talks about philosophical issues in the mid-1890s. Schopenhauer was interested in mysticism, Buddhism and Indian religions. He had an aversion of the Hebraic elements in Christianity and was basically a pessimist (Russell 1974, p. 723). These are elements we also come across in the works of both Conrad and Galsworthy. There were notions in Schopenhauer that Galsworthy may have appreciated, such as Schopenhauer's rejection of the Christian concept of creation and his plea for an ethic Christianity based on the New Testament. Galsworthy will have been intrigued by Schopenhauer's vision on death and suicide, but will have thoroughly disagreed with his thoughts on the inferiority of women. I have examined Schopenhauer's *On the Suffering of the World* and *The World as Will and Idea* to find any parallels between his and Galsworthy's views.

Galsworthy also mentions Conrad's sympathy for the "personality and the writings of William James" (1842-1910) (Castles, 91). Galsworthy himself tried to read James' *Psychology*, but says the book gave him "fits", referring to it as "altogether too learned for this child" (Garnett 1934, 179). In his diary for 1910 he admits he only "skimmed" the book, because he found it "too technical and too wordy" (GD, 10 May 1910).

Spencer

Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* (1862) was mentioned to Galsworthy by Hardy in a letter from 1916, in which Hardy remarks that Galsworthy's view of existence was not unlike that of Spencer's. Analysis shows Spencer's decisive influence on Galsworthy where religion and philosophy are concerned. Particularly Spencer's concept of the "Unknowable God" is

significant in this respect. It was this concept that gave rise to the growth of agnosticism in Britain, a movement that reached its peak when Galsworthy was in his early twenties.

Huxley

Thomas Huxley's philosophy and outlook on life comes close to Galsworthy's too. Galsworthy mentions Huxley in his "About Censorship" (1909), one of the studies in *The Inn of Tranquillity*, and refers to the way society's "taste and feeling were inexpressibly shocked" by Huxley's emphasis on "Man's descent from Apes" (Inn of Tranquillity, 246). My analysis of the works of Thomas Huxley includes "Lectures on Evolution" (1876)⁴³, "Agnosticism" (1889) and "Naturalism and Supernaturalism" (1892). Huxley is particularly relevant for this study for his trenchant criticism of the orthodox Church and his rejection of a literal interpretation of the Bible. Huxley, like Matthew Arnold, stresses that there is no proof that any of the Gospels existed, as we find them in the Authorised Version of the Bible. Huxley also poses the question whether the "Sermon on the Mount" was ever really preached, and whether the "Lord's Prayer" was ever really prayed, given the fact that the second gospel, the nearest extant representative of the oldest tradition, does not contain these two elements (Lectures, 83). In "Agnosticism" (1889) Huxley gives us an insight into the debate that was going on in the late 1880s and early 1890s about the rise of agnosticism, to which he actively contributed until his death in 1895. This also shows us the world in which Galsworthy reached maturity, a world that was rapidly discarding orthodox religion and faith in the Christian God.

Bergson

Henri Bergson's book *L' Evolution créatrice*, published in French in 1907, and in English as *Creative Evolution* in 1911, was widely read among intellectuals. Bergson's influence on modernist literature is highly significant and can be traced in the works of many prominent European and American writers of the first decades of the twentieth century. Kolakowski claims that, at the time, Bergson was "not just a famous thinker and writer; in the eyes of Europe's educated public he was clearly *the* philosopher, the intellectual spokesman *par excellence*."⁴⁴ I aim to show how Henri Bergson's philosophy was also of overriding significance for the development of Galsworthy's philosophical outlook, in particular with respect to such issues as free will and determinism, creation and existence and belief in a deity. A study of Bergson's major works and essays, *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Introduction à la Métaphysique* (1903), *L' Evolution créatrice* (1907) and "Life and Consciousness" (1911) brings to light major parallels between Bergson's philosophy expressed in these works and

⁴³ Thomas Henry Huxley, "Lectures on Evolution" in *Lectures and Essays*, London, Macmillan, 1910, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Leszek Kolakowski, *Bergson*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985, pp. 1-2, quoted in Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot and American Literature*, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1986, p. 1.

Galsworthy's philosophical ideas. This also proves that Galsworthy must have had in-depth knowledge of Bergson's philosophy.

The first time that Galsworthy mentions Bergson, is in *Loyalties* (1922), where Galsworthy ridicules society ladies and their mock-intellectualism:

Lady Adela: "You got it from Bergson, Meg. Isn't he wonderful?"

Margeret: Yes; have you ever read him?

Lady Adela: Well—No.

As such it may not be enough evidence to maintain that Galsworthy actually studied Bergson in great depth. However, in a number of works of Galsworthy's from after 1910 clear allusions to Bergson's philosophy may be detected, proving that Galsworthy was well-versed in Bergson's concepts. Of overriding importance is Bergson's concept of the "*élan vital*", underlying his philosophy on "evolution" and "creation". Bergson maintains that evolution is truly *creative*, like the work of an artist; it is dynamic and the result of perpetual movement (Russell 1974, 757). This is a notion that recurs in Galsworthy's work to such an extent that Bergson's influence is unmistakable.

Bergson was also known for his distinction between *intellect* and *instinct*. "*Instinct* at its best is called *intuition*, instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object, basically anti-intellectual" (Russell 1974, 762). Veldkamp (1932) was the first to notice this link between Bergson and Galsworthy. He pointed to Galsworthy's *The Roof* (1929), in which Lennox, a famous author, on his deathbed, states that he regrets not having known all about everybody he ever met. However, most of all he regrets "not having been in the skin of everybody else." Veldkamp argues that this desire to be "in the skin of" is Lennox' insatiable hunger for a thorough understanding of life.⁴⁵ This must be taken to be Galsworthy's own desire to be "in the skin" of his characters. Veldkamp points to Bergson's *Introduction à la Métaphysique* for an explanation of this concept of intuition: "On appelle intuition cette espèce de *sympathie intellectuelle* par laquelle on se transporte à l'intérieur d'un objet pour coïncider avec ce qu'il a d'unique et par conséquent d'inexprimable."⁴⁶ Clearly, what Lennox expresses, is that he lacks "intuition" in Bergson's sense. My analysis of Galsworthy's views on determinism, creation, existence and belief in a deity, shows the many parallels between Bergson and Galsworthy's philosophies and the extent to which Galsworthy was familiar with Bergson's ideas.

⁴⁵ J. Veldkamp, *Moderne Engelsche Literatuur*, Zutphen, Ruys, 1932, pp. 134-164.

⁴⁶ Henri Bergson, *Introduction à la Métaphysique*, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 1903, p. 3.

Conclusion

These are the thinkers and philosophers that Galsworthy read, and it is their works that gave rise to the cultural debate to which he actively contributed at home, at university and among his literary friends. It goes to show that Galsworthy was far from “miserably read in Philosophy”. He had actively read the German philosophers and had actively discussed Schopenhauer with Conrad. Analysis of Galsworthy’s work shows that he was familiar with Spencer and Huxley’s philosophies and that he was well-versed in Bergson’s. Indeed, Galsworthy must have enjoyed Huxley’s thinking in those formative years of his life, the period between 1887 and 1905, and will have recognised a kindred spirit in Huxley when the latter said:

When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist or a pantheist; a materialist or an idealist; a Christian or a freethinker; I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready was the answer; until at last I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last. The one thing in which most of these good people were agreed was the one thing in which I differed from them. They were quite sure they had attained a certain ‘gnosis,’—had, more or less successfully, solved the problem of existence, while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble. And with Hume and Kant on my side, I could not think myself presumptuous in holding fast by that opinion (Lectures, 93).

2. Churches

In my quest for Galsworthy's religious views and philosophy of life I gradually move from the more concrete and tangible aspects, as we find them in his work, to the more abstract and philosophical ones. It is for this reason that I will first consider the physical appearance of the church buildings that we encounter in many of Galsworthy's novels, short stories and plays. These churches range from the small derelict village church to the majestic cathedrals of London, Winchester and Seville. What I aim to do in this chapter is to explore the descriptions of these buildings and the imagery Galsworthy uses, and to find out to what extent his descriptions are original or borrowed from earlier writers, the sort of feeling Galsworthy was trying to convey through these descriptions and what conclusions we may draw from this.

What follows is an analysis of Galsworthy's churchgoers. Who are they? How are they dressed? What feelings are involved in going to church and why do they go to church? This analysis shows that Galsworthy's descriptions of buildings and people are not coincidental, but carefully planned and well thought-out. They are noteworthy in that they give us a first glimpse of Galsworthy's views on religion.

The village church

As Brooks argues, from 1850 to 1880 the building and restoration of churches reached a peak in Britain. Where new churches were built they were nearly always built in mediaeval style and were planned for ritual more than for preaching, in line with the growing contemporary interest in symbolism and elaborate liturgy. Nonconformists, however, continued to give pride of place to the pulpit in their new chapels.¹ By about 1880 most mediaeval and later churches had been restored—some badly, some well. Clark and Betjeman claim that “there is no doubt that many restorations succeeded in making charming and attractive churches out of dull and undistinguished ones.”² Eighty per cent of the restoration and building schemes were still individually funded, of which 65 per cent by local squires. However, in the recession-hit years after the late 1870s the rate of church-building and restoration fell dramatically (Brooks 1995, 60), as rural depopulation had substantially strained the resources of most rural congregations. This is a picture that we also recognise in Galsworthy's work. Land reform, industrialisation and urbanisation are recurrent issues in Galsworthy's work, and are frequently expressed with a sense of nostalgia. However, if we look at the church buildings through Galsworthy's eyes we notice that he presents a different picture from that drawn by Clark and Betjeman.

¹ Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint (ed.), *The Victorian Church*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1995, p. 89.

² Clark and Betjeman, *English Churches*, London, Vista Books, 1964, p. 45.

Galsworthy's descriptions of village churches show an abundance of negative epithets, such as "grey", "black", "stuffy", "damp" and "cold", to name but those Galsworthy uses most frequently. Galsworthy does not mention any church before 1906, in his *The Man of Property*. In this novel James Forsyte goes down to Dorsetshire to find out what sort of place it was the Forsyte forefathers had come from, and found "a little grey church with a buttressed outer wall, and a smaller and greyer chapel."³ It is Galsworthy's standard picture of the small and ancient village church. The Nonconformist chapel is even smaller and greyer, for that matter. Twenty-two years later, in *Swan Song* (1928), Soames, James Forsyte's son and the character around whom *The Forsyte Chronicles* is centred, follows his father's footsteps to this same village on the Dorsetshire coast and he too finds a "little old grey church with funny pews and a damp smell."⁴ The picture seems to have remained unchanged over a period of twenty-two years of writing. This is confirmed in *The Dark Flower* (1913), where the church is referred to as "black, white-veined, with shadowy summits in that half darkness"⁵ and in *The Freelands* (1915), where it is described as "that little, lichened, grey, stone building."⁶ In the short story "A Strange Thing" the narrator calls the church "an old, grey, square-towered church. . . . lofty and unwarmed."⁷ In the short story "Spindleberries" Galsworthy refers to the church as "the hideous new grey church" (*Caravan*, 486). Many more examples could be given to prove how consistently negative these epithets are from the beginning of his career to the very end, without any noticeable change.

Was Galsworthy original in portraying these churches in such negative terms? If we look at the writer who was the first to inspire him, Charles Dickens, it becomes clear that here is a major source on which he may have drawn in this respect. In Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* there is "a very hideous church with four towers at the four corners, generally resembling some petrified monster."⁸ In another instance in *Our Mutual Friend* Dickens describes the churches as "dark and dingy as the sky that seems descending on them" (*Mutual Friend*, 370). In *Bleak House* he terms the church near Chesney Wold "mouldy" with a "general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves."⁹

Most of Galsworthy's negative descriptions of church buildings may be found in his works from 1910 to 1920. In the novels of his lifelong friend, W.H. Hudson, most of which were written before 1910, Galsworthy had come across numerous examples of descriptions of churches that may have affected his thinking. Hudson, however, distinguished between old and new village churches. He called the old village church the "essential feature and part" of

³ John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*, 1906, Penguin Books, 1973, p. 24.

⁴ John Galsworthy, *Swan Song*, 1928, in *A Modern Comedy*, Penguin Books, 1980, p. 812.

⁵ John Galsworthy, *The Dark Flower*, 1913, Heinemann, London, 1924, p. 150.

⁶ John Galsworthy, *The Freelands*, 1915, London, Heinemann, 1927, p. 92.

⁷ John Galsworthy, "A Strange Thing", in *Caravan, The Assembled Tales of John Galsworthy*, London, Heinemann, 1925, p. 623.

⁸ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 1864, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 1997, p. 207.

⁹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, 1852, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 56.

the Hampshire village. Such churches gave Hudson a sense of “enduring peace with something of that solitariness and desolation which we find in unspoilt wilderness.” However, Hudson turned away from the large and new churches “as from a jarring and discordant thing.”¹⁰ He felt that the “cold and vacant” interiors of these new churches were not in line with the “old traditions and associations” of the villagers’ religion: “Touch these things and you hurt their souls” (Hampshire, 186-187). To Hudson the old village church was part of its natural surroundings and was steeped in history and tradition: “The churches . . . are mostly small and ancient and beautiful, half-hidden in their tree-shaded churchyards, rich in associations which go back to a time when history fades in myth and legend.”¹¹ This is not unlike Galsworthy’s only positive description of a village church in the poem “The Cliff Church.” It is different in that it has lost its religious connotation and is described as part of nature, a symbol of strength and eternity.

Here stand I,
Buttressed over the sea!
Time and sky
Take no toll from me

.....

I stand fast—
Let the waters cry!
Here I last
To Eternity!¹²

There are hardly any other instances of Galsworthy speaking about churches, and what they represented, in such a positive vein. This is all the more striking given the fact that Galsworthy says of his poetry to Margaret Morris that “in a way [his poems] are nearest to [his] heart of all [his] work.”¹³

Time and again Galsworthy contrasts these cold and dark churches with the bright sunlight outside, reinforcing the negative idea associated with the church, almost turning it into a contrast between life and death. In *A Bit o’ Love* we see “the porch of a church, bathed in May sunlight” (Plays 419). The ‘sunlight’ imagery is further strengthened by the addition of the word “May”, with its association of spring and life. A similar example is from the short story “A Strange Thing”, in which the narrator comes upon a grey village church where the

¹⁰ W.H. Hudson, *Hampshire Days*, 1903, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1923, p. 191.

¹¹ W.H. Hudson, *A Shepherd’s Life*, London, Methuen, 1910, p. 156.

¹² John Galsworthy, “The Cliff Church” in *Moods, Songs and Doggerels*, New York, 1913, p. 92.

¹³ Margaret Morris, *My Galsworthy Story*, New York, Scribners, 1968, p. 74.

marriage of a country girl is about to commence. When the bride and bridegroom enter the church, the narrator says that seeing the bride walk down the aisle “was like watching the dance of a sunbeam” (Caravan, 623). Again there is this contrast of the grey, cold church and everything it stands for, and the “dance of a sunbeam”, representing love and life. It is a picture that also reminds us of Maupassant’s *Bel Ami*, in which we see another bride enter a church: “*Et la jeune femme apparut, au bras de son père, dans la vive lumière de portail.*”¹⁴ What follows is a description of the church interior, which makes it abundantly clear that Galsworthy used Maupassant as the source upon which he drew for this type of imagery.

Un flot de soleil entrant par l’immense porte ouverte éclairant les premiers rangs d’amis. Dans le chœur qui semblait un peu sombre, l’autel couvert de cierges faisait une clarté jaune, humble et pâle en face du trou de lumière de la grande porte (*Bel-Ami*, 365).

We must also turn to Dickens again. He too frequently uses *dark* versus *light* imagery in church descriptions. In *David Copperfield*, for instance, David passes a church, where the congregation were inside, “and the sound of singing came out into the sunshine.”¹⁵ In *Bleak House* the protagonist Esther Summerson looks at the church windows that “admitted a subdued light that made the faces around [her] pale, and darkened the . . . time and damp-worn monuments and rendered the sunshine in the porch . . . inestimably bright” (*Bleak House*, 304). The ‘sun’ imagery returns in a wedding description in Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend*, saying that “the shadow of the church porch swallowed up” the bride, followed by the narrator’s remark that after the wedding the church porch “slid into that happy sunlight . . . Mrs . . .” (*Mutual Friend*, 629).¹⁶ We also find this type of imagery in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*. Again “the light shines in through the windows”, in contrast to the “miserable feeling” the protagonist derives from the “man in the pulpit”, who says that: “He that believeth not shall be damned.”¹⁷

We have seen ample evidence how Galsworthy’s church descriptions in terms of ‘light’ and ‘dark’ were borrowed, either consciously or unconsciously, from those earlier writers for whom he expressed his admiration. It also shows that Galsworthy uses these descriptions throughout his life for the sole purpose of expressing his aversion to the Church, couched in such terms, however, that no reader could find fault with them.

¹⁴ Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-Ami*, 1885, Paris, Flammarion, 1999, p. 366-367.

¹⁵ Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 1849-1850, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 2000, p. 159.

¹⁶ In *David Copperfield* there is the same imagery when young David’s eyes wander away from the pulpit and look “at the sunlight coming in at the open door through the porch” (*Copperfield*, 18).

¹⁷ Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, 1883, Penguin Books, 1979, p.146.

Roman Catholic churches

Galsworthy takes a slightly different approach where Roman Catholic churches are concerned. Again, he seems to be using a formula for the descriptions of these buildings and their interiors. This formula, however, is different from that which he uses for the English village church. There is an early example in *Villa Rubein*, where the narrator says about a church: “Here and there were figures on their knees; the faint, sickly odour of long-burnt incense clung in the air” (*Villa Rubein*, 135). Another example is from the short story “The Grey Angel”: “It struck cold that morning in the church . . . some women in black were kneeling, and four candles burned in the gloom of a side aisle” (*Caravan*, 172). In an earlier passage Galsworthy describes the same church in terms of “mellow darkness”, and refers to “the scent of incense [and] the drone of incantations” (*Caravan*, 165). Time and again we come across the kneeling figures and the “scent of incense”, apparently Galsworthy’s standard association with a Roman Catholic church. A final example is from “Flotsam and Jetsam”, a short story in *Tatterdemalion*. Roche, a Breton, is hospitalised in a French hospital during the Great War. One day Roche enters the village and walks past the church, “so ancient it had fortunately been forgotten, and remained unfinished and beautiful.”¹⁸ The narrator wonders if Roche has ever entered “the dark loveliness of that grave building, where ... a dim carved Christ of touching beauty looks down on his fellow-men from above some dry chrysanthemums.” Here is a description that is strikingly different from any other description Galsworthy ever gave about English village churches. Mildly positive as this may be, however, here too Galsworthy’s real feelings emerge. Of the same church he says: “A tall candle burned quiet and lonely here and there, and the flags of France hung above the altar, that men might know how God—though resting—was with them and their country”. The subtle addition of the words “though resting” shows us the fine irony that is Galsworthy’s hallmark. Not all his readers may have appreciated this type of comment or the sort of humour, though, that we find in the following passage from the same story. Instead of entering the church, Roche, “Breton that he was, entered the nearest cabaret.” The narrator comments: “One cannot spend one’s earnings in a church, nor appease there the inextinguishable thirst of a sailor” (*Tatterdemalion*, 63-64).

The descriptions of Roman Catholic churches in France and Italy in general are slightly more positive through the use of terms like “mellow darkness” and phrases such as “a tall candle burned quiet and lonely”, almost as if the Roman Catholic Church did not carry with it the associations Galsworthy had with orthodox religion at home. This also applies to his attitude towards the French clergy. The reason for these comparatively positive descriptions lies in his own favourable experiences with the French clergy during the Great War.

¹⁸ John Galsworthy, “Flotsam and Jetsam”, in *Tatterdemalion*, 1920, London, Heinemann, 1927, p. 63.

Cathedrals

The cathedrals that Galsworthy mentions in his work also deserve special attention, as their descriptions are greatly different from those of village churches and Roman Catholic churches. The first example is still negative, though. In 1915, during the war, an embittered Galsworthy says of Worcester Cathedral: “The great cathedral, cutting the heavens with its massive towers, was shut. No means of getting in” (Freelands, 347). Galsworthy shows how inhospitable the Christian church was, in spite of its outward show. Galsworthy uses his stock imagery of *light* and *dark*, *warm* and *cold* and *life* and *death* to accentuate its inaccessible nature: “They turned away from that, passing below the dark pile of the cathedral. Here couples still lingered on benches along the river-bank, happy in the warm night, under the August moon” (Freelands, 348).

However, there are other examples in which Galsworthy strikes a more positive note. There is Galsworthy’s visit to Seville Cathedral, which he depicts as “a glorious cathedral . . . [which] has the finest interior of any Church, I think in the world” (Reynolds 1936, 103). This description is not unlike W.H. Hudson’s description of Salisbury Cathedral in *A Shepherd’s Life*:

that immense interior, that far-extending nave with pillars that stand like the tall trunks of pines and beeches, and at the end the light screen which allows the eye to travel on through the rich choir, to see with fresh wonder and delight, high up and far off, that glory of coloured glass as of a window half-open to an unimaginable place beyond—a heavenly cathedral to which all this is but a dim porch or passage (Shepherd’s Life, 32).

Again there is the *light* versus *dark* imagery, so familiar also in Dickens, Maupassant and Galsworthy. It is this same positive vein, however, that prevails in Galsworthy’s descriptions of St Paul’s, Winchester Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. St Paul’s is the cathedral to which Soames, the eponymous hero of *The Man of Property*, pays a regular visit, though not for reasons of worship. “It had a peculiar fascination for him, that old dome The attraction to him of this great church was inexplicable” (Man of Property, 62). It is a relatively positive, but completely secularised picture. To Soames, St. Paul’s is definitely a work of art to be respected (“that old dome” and “this great church”), a far cry from village churches, and apparently something from which he derives a special kind of inspiration, though not of a religious nature. It is one of tradition, of venerable age, culture, a sense of history, stability instead of change, peace instead of war. This is perhaps best described in 1928 in Galsworthy’s picture of Soames in Winchester Cathedral:

The place was rather dark, but very rich—like a Christmas pudding! These old buildings certainly gave one a feeling. He had always had it in St Paul’s. . . . They had lighted some candles in the chancel. Insignificant in the daylight. . . . They were singing now. . . . He sat very still—not thinking now; lost, as it were, among the arches, and the twilight of the roof. He was experiencing a peculiar sensation, not unpleasant. To be in here was like being within a jewelled and somewhat scented box. The world might roar and stink and buzz outside, strident and vulgar, childish and sensational, cheap and nasty—all jazz and cockney accent, but here—not a trace of it heard or felt or seen. This great box . . . had been made centuries before the world became industrialised; it didn’t belong to the modern world at all. In here everyone spoke and sang the King’s English; it smelt faintly of age and incense; and nothing was unbeautiful. He sat with a sense of escape (Swan Song, 824).

At the end of Soames’ life and only five years before Galsworthy’s own death, Galsworthy allows Soames a number of positive thoughts about a cathedral: “very rich”; “these old buildings gave one a feeling”; “a peculiar sensation, not unpleasant”; “the King’s English” (note that Galsworthy was a keen supporter of children learning to speak and write proper English); “it smelt only *faintly* of age and incense”; “nothing was *unbeautiful*” and it gave him “a sense of escape”. Galsworthy’s picture of Soames in Winchester Cathedral is not unlike that of Lambert Strether in Notre Dame Cathedral in Henry James’ *The Ambassadors* (1902). Lewis remarks that Strether is drawn to this cathedral “largely by an awkward reverence for the past and for the residues of sacramental power to be found there.”¹⁹ To Strether “the great church had no altar for his worship, no direct voice for his soul; but it was none the less soothing even to sanctity; for he could feel while there what he couldn’t elsewhere, that he was a plain tired man taking the holiday he had earned.”²⁰ It also resembles the scene of Isabel Archer in a church in Rome in James’ *The Portrait of a Lady*. Isabel Archer, like Strether, found a different kind of inspiration in church than religious inspiration: “This was what came to her in the starved churches, where the marble columns, transferred from pagan ruins, seemed to offer her a companionship in endurance and the musty incense to be a compound of long-unanswered prayers. There was no gentler nor less consistent heretic than Isabel; the firmest of worshippers, gazing at dark altar-pictures or clustered candles, could not have felt more intimately the suggestiveness of these objects nor have been more liable at such moments to a spiritual visitation.”²¹

¹⁹ Pericles Lewis, “Churchgoing in the Modern Novel” in *Modernism/Modernity*, Baltimore, Nov 2004, Vol. 11, Iss. 4; pp. 669-695.

²⁰ Henry James, *The Ambassadors*, 1903, New York Edition, vols. 21 and 22 of *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, New York, Scribner’s, 1909, 2:5.

²¹ Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881, Penguin Books, 1978, p. 518.

Lewis considers the churchgoing scenes in modernist literature meaningful. He argues that these scenes stage “the encounter between the great public monuments of Christian faith and the intimate monuments of an increasingly privatised form of religious experience, modern novels” (Lewis, 2004). This also applies to Galsworthy’s cathedral scenes and they go to show how also in this respect Galsworthy was “the son of a time between two ages” (Caravan, 157). His works echo nineteenth-century realism, naturalism and early twentieth-century modernism.

We return to St Paul’s once more in 1930 in the short story “Soames and the Flag”, where Soames, at the moment the news of the armistice reaches him, is moved to tears. “He would not have believed them possible and he let them roll.”²² In this mood he enters St Paul’s: “There stood the dome, curved massive against the grey November sky, huge above the stir of flags and traffic, silent in the din of cheering.” It is still the picture of a massive building towering in the grey sky and far from the madding crowd. However, it is not inhospitable to him. This is in fact what Soames is looking for, in order to escape from the din in the streets and the world of flags and fighting. The narrator adds: “He hadn’t been since the war began, and his visit now had no connection with God. He went because it was big and old and empty, and English, and because it reminded him” (Forsythe ‘Change, 292).

Finally, Westminster Abbey figures in *Flowering Wilderness*, published in 1932, one year before Galsworthy’s death. After finding out that her friend Wilfred Desert has left her, Dinny Charwell, the protagonist, goes to Westminster Abbey, physically and mentally exhausted.

She went in and sat down in a pew. There, bent forward, with her face resting on her arms, she stayed quite half an hour. She had not prayed, but she had rested, and the expression on her face had changed. She felt more fit to face people and not show so much.²³

Galsworthy again attaches this positive effect to a cathedral, so similar to the passages about Soames in Winchester and St Paul’s. It should be borne in mind, however, that deep down there is still this great aversion to the Church as an institution. Thus, in “Totally Disabled” in 1916, during the war, Galsworthy describes a home for disabled soldiers and sailors as a “more sacred place than any church, for within it every hour of day and night pain will be assuaged, despair be overcome, actual living tenderness be lavished” (Sheaf, 246). Galsworthy cannot be more bitter about the role of the church, and it explains once more why Galsworthy generally sheds such a negative light on these buildings. Admittedly, Galsworthy seems to be more appreciative of cathedrals by the end of his life, seeing them as works of art, remnants of Britain’s past, of the King’s English, feeding him too, perhaps, with a “sense of

²² John Galsworthy, *On Forsythe ‘Change*, London, Heinemann, 1930, p. 291.

²³ John Galsworthy, *Flowering Wilderness*, 1932, in *The Forsythe Sage Volume 3*, Penguin Books, 2001, p. 502.

escape”. For all the bitterness that Galsworthy harboured towards the church and religion, it is ironical that after his death he was commemorated in a memorial service in Westminster Abbey.

This seemingly positive stance towards cathedrals can also be found in Butler’s *Erewhon Revisited*, where it is almost as if we hear Soames in St Paul’s. Mr Higgs strolls through one of the oldest Musical Banks, a parody of the Established Church, and thinks: “How strange it is that, no matter how gross a superstition may have polluted it, a holy place, if hallowed by long veneration, remains always holy.”²⁴ Galsworthy borrowed similar descriptions from other writers too. In Dickens’ *David Copperfield* Canterbury Cathedral is referred to by Mr Micawber as “that venerable Pile for which this city is so justly eminent.” Its interior is described by the narrator as: “The earthy smell, the sunless air, the sensation of the world being shut out . . .” (*Copperfield*, 744). Cathedrals in Maupassant are not much different. He describes the tower of Rouan Cathedral as follows: “*la flèche aiguë de la cathédrale, suprenante aiguille de bronze, laide, étrange et démesurée, la plus haute qui soit au monde*” (*Bel-Ami*, 226). Of another church Maupassant says: “*Un fraîcheur de cave le saisit . . . Une sensation de solitude, de désert, de repos, saisissait l’esprit*” (*Bel-Ami*, 270). Similarities may also be found in the novels of Anatole France. The clearest example of France’s sceptic stance towards religion, as he saw it embodied in church buildings, is his description of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. He introduces it in *The Red Lily* (*Le Lys Rouge*, 1894) as “the black mass of the cathedral.” It is his protagonist, Thérèse Martin-Bellême, who says: “Look it’s as heavy as an elephant and as finely made as an insect.” The cathedral makes such a frightening impression on her, that it reminds her of some “gigantic beast, a beast out of the Apocalypse.”²⁵

Churchgoers

Judging by Galsworthy’s representation of churches and cathedrals, one might be inclined to think that during his childhood churchgoing had been a traumatic experience. Marrot states, however, that Galsworthy’s mother “was unaffectedly, but not obtrusively or tyrannically, religious” (Marrot 1936, 56). About Galsworthy’s mother’s churchgoing Marrot quotes Galsworthy as saying that “her sense of form inclined her naturally to observance.” In other words, her churchgoing was just as much inspired by convention as by sincere belief. Galsworthy adds that churchgoing and prayers were a matter of course of his childhood, “but never pressed to the point of fatigue or tyranny” (Marrot 1936, 56). This makes it more doubtful that forced churchgoing is the only explanation for Galsworthy’s rejection of the church later in his life. There is another piece of evidence, however, that might provide a counter argument. The passage is from the Interlude “Awakening”, the linking story between

²⁴ Samuel Butler, *Erewhon Revisited*, 1901, London, Page and Company, 1923, pp. 118-119.

²⁵ Anatole France, *The Red Lily* (*Le Lys rouge*, 1894), London, The Bodley Head, 1924, pp. 32-33.

In Chancery (1920) and *To Let* (1921). In this interlude the central character is Little Jon, the son of Irene and Jolyon. Gindin suggests that little Jon's childhood is modelled on Galsworthy's own in the 1870s (Gindin 1987, 440-441). The following passage is therefore all the more interesting, as it says something about Irene and Jolyon's churchgoing and maybe that of Galsworthy's parents and of Galsworthy himself. Little Jon asks his mother, Irene, why they never go to church, to which she replies: "Well dear, we both of us went when we were little. Perhaps we went when we were too little."²⁶ When "Awakening" was first published in 1920, this passage gave rise to the following comment in *Bookman*: "there is humour as well as sympathy there," but also: "This, we think, is not a boy observed, but a mood remembered."²⁷ This comment gives us some idea of contemporary reception, especially when considered in combination with the many reviews hailing "Awakening" as one of the best Christmas presents available. One should, however, bear in mind that it was published two years after the Great War, when times and customs had changed dramatically.

Little is known about John Galsworthy's own churchgoing. Examination of his sister Lillian's diaries shows us, however, that he still joined the family in going to church on Christmas in 1891 and 1892, when he was twenty-five. A diary entry of 4 September 1892 even shows him attending a service of the Scottish Episcopal Church when on holiday with his two sisters in Scotland (GP, JG 10/1/1-26). A final detail comes from a letter to his sister Lillian, written on the "Torrens" on his return voyage from Australia, in which he states very neutrally: "We have a service every Sunday, read by the captain" (GP, JG 10/9/1-10). There is not a hint even of disrespect or irritation.

Galsworthy came across numerous examples in literature that satirised churchgoing. In Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) he read:

The whole train went to church, where Mr Benjamin Allen fell fast asleep; while Mr Bob Sawyer abstracted his thoughts from worldly matters, by the ingenious process of carving his name on the seat of the pew, in corpulent letters of four inches long.²⁸

Similarly, in *Erewhon* Samuel Butler satirises contemporary churchgoing through the character of Mr Nosnibor, who goes to these "banks . . . sometimes, but not very often." The narrator comments that "the ladies generally went alone; as indeed was the case in most families, except on state occasions,"²⁹ which shows us how churchgoing in Butler and Galsworthy's time was very much a female affair. Indeed the 1902-1903 census of London shows that 61 per cent of churchgoers aged 15 and over were female, whereas 54 per cent of

²⁶ John Galsworthy, *In Chancery*, Penguin Books, 1973, p. 313.

²⁷ *Bookman*, Christmas 1920.

²⁸ Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, 1836-1837, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 2000, p. 384.

²⁹ Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*, 1872, Amherst, Prometheus Books, 1998, p. 146.

the population were female.³⁰ There is a similar picture in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Stepan Arkadyich "could not even stand through a short prayer service without aching feet and could not grasp the point of all these fearsome and high-flown words about the other world, when life in this one could be so merry."³¹ Maupassant's remark in *Une Vie* no longer contains Dickens' and Tolstoy's irony, or Butler's satire, but is plainly sarcastic about the reasons people have for going to church: "*Le doute lâche, qui pousse aux églises les hésitants, les troublés.*"³²

The picture of Galsworthy's churchgoers is not less dismal than that of his churches. Galsworthy writes in his very first book, *From the Four Winds* (1897): "Because it is the Sabbath, they will not stir forth—these fools—but sit at home in sad garments, and eat, thinking to make the day holy."³³ This shows how Galsworthy, so early in his career, looks upon churchgoers disdainfully for their strict observance of the Sunday. It is the first example in which he speaks of "sad garments". Less negative, perhaps, but equally dismal, is what Galsworthy says in *The Man of Property* (1906), where Soames wonders "how the primeval Forsytes had been content to walk [to church] Sunday after Sunday for hundreds of years . . . with their feet deep in the mud and their faces towards the sea" (*Man of Property*, 24). As was the case with the description of the church buildings, there does not seem to be much change in his depiction of churchgoers over the years. Thus, we see parishioners described as "all those dark-clothed people", and "dark-clothed, dreadfully plain workpeople" throughout his work (*Caravan*, 623, 486).

Galsworthy draws heavily upon the writers that he read in his younger years. In Hawthorne he came across the "bearded men, in sad-coloured garments and grey, steeple-crowned hats."³⁴ In *The Way of All Flesh* Butler describes the congregation as "the row of stolid, dull, vacant ploughboys, ungainly in build, uncomely in face, lifeless, apathetic."³⁵ Butler too puts his hopes on "a more hopeful generation, which has discovered that it too has a right to as much happiness as it can get, and with clearer ideas about the best means of getting it" (*Way of All Flesh*, 52).

Galsworthy nearly always refers to congregations as "scanty congregations", as if he wants to accentuate time and again that churches became emptier and emptier and were losing touch with society in general. In "A Fisher of Men" (1908), for instance, the narrator refers to "that ever scantier flock of faces" (*Caravan*, 770). Also the congregation in *The Country House* seems to consist of not more than the Pendyce household, the maids, the butler, a footman and a groom, apart from Mr and Mrs Pendyce themselves. The only other parishioners mentioned

³⁰ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914*, London, Macmillan, 1996, p. 67.

³¹ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, 1873-1876, Penguin Classics, 2003, p. 7.

³² Guy de Maupassant, *Une Vie*, 1883, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1974, p. 191.

³³ John Sinjohn (John Galsworthy), *From the Four Winds*, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1897, p. 232.

³⁴ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850, Penguin Books, 1970, p. 75.

³⁵ Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, 1903, Ware, Wordsworth Classics, 1994, p. 52.

are “a deaf old cottager” and “an aged cottage woman,”³⁶ and in *The Freeland*s (1915) we can “see the scanty congregation passing through the churchyard into that weekly dream they knew too well” (Freelands, 200).³⁷

Again Galsworthy uses the type of description he found in Dickens and Butler. It is Dickens, who speaks of an “inconsiderable congregation” in *Bleak House* (Bleak House, 299) and the narrator in Butler’s *Erewhon* is struck by the fact “that the building should be so nearly empty” and that beside his hostess and her daughters there were “two or three other ladies, also three or four old women . . . but there was no one else” (Erewhon, 149-150).

The drop in church attendance in Britain around the turn of the century is also clear from St John Hankin’s *The Charity That Began at Home*, in which Mrs Eversleigh makes the following observation: “Twenty years ago everyone in society went to church—or at least pretended to do so. Nowadays people seem to go anywhere!”³⁸ This corresponds to the data from the religious census of 1851, revealing that of a population of nearly eighteen million in England and Wales, over five-and-a-quarter million, as much as 38 per cent, did not attend any form of religious worship, and of the remaining worshippers the number of Dissenters almost equalled that of Anglicans.³⁹ From the mid-nineteenth century onwards virtually every exclusively agricultural parish was depopulated, particularly after the onset of the agrarian depression of the 1870s. The period from 1881 to 1911 was characterised by the sharpest depopulation. Traditionally a flock of 640 parishioners, say 120 families, was thought about right (Brooks 1995, 54-56). In Galsworthy’s work we discern how that picture had radically changed. Research into church attendance in urban areas shows that Anglican attendance declined slightly between 1851 and 1881, and much more rapidly between the later 1880s and the First World War. The Nonconformist attendance rate remained about the same between 1851 and 1880, but decline set in during the later 1880s and 1890s, and continued up to the First World War. As there is very little evidence concerning the trends in rural churchgoing, it can only be assumed that the average attendance rate in the country showed an even sharper decline (McLeod 1996, 173).

Galsworthy also emphasises the sense of relief in his characters after going to church. In “A Strange Thing”, for example, the male congregation is to be found in the inn after church “wetting its whistle noisily” (Caravan, 624). In *The Freeland*s the church service is followed by the exclamation: “Thank God! And now to eat!” (Freelands, 200). This is an element that Galsworthy came across in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, for instance. Mark Twain is even more explicit than Galsworthy about traditional church services when he says: “It was a

³⁶ John Galsworthy, *The Country House*, 1907, London, Heinemann, 1930, pp. 58-62.

³⁷ Other examples are from “A Fisher of Men” (1908), where the vicar’s congregation consists only “of his clerk, two tourists, three old women, one of them stone deaf, and four little girls” (Caravan, 778), and in *A Bit o’ Love* (1915) only six voices are heard singing a hymn (Plays, 447).

³⁸ St John Hankin, *The Dramatic Works of St John Hankin*, Vol. ii, London, Martin Secker, 1912, p. 31.

³⁹ M.A. Crowther, *Church Embattled, Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England*, Newton Abbot (UK) and Hamden, Connecticut (USA), David & Charles, Archon Books, 1970, p. 13 and 219.

general relief to the whole congregation when the ordeal was over and the benediction pronounced.”⁴⁰

In addition to the “dark-clothed” churchgoers who went to church to please the squire on whom they were dependent, there are also examples of well-to-do churchgoers. It is in them that Galsworthy strongly accentuates the element of hypocrisy. The Pencyces in *The Country House*, whom we observe during the Rev. Hussell Barter’s church service, are a case in point. Not only does Mr Pencyce doze off, his wife too is thinking “Skyward’s in Bond Street used to have lovely lace. Perhaps in the spring I could—” (*Country House*, 62). Clearly, to them churchgoing is a social obligation too, as it is their role to set the constant example to their peasants. Similarly, Lady Malloring in *The Freelands* feels responsible for the “moral welfare of their humbler neighbours” (*Freelands*, 167). This is not unlike what Thackeray’s Major Arthur Pendennis says to his nephew about the importance of churchgoing: “‘It don’t matter so much in town Pen,’ he said, ‘for there women go and the men are not missed. But when a gentleman is *sur ses terres*, he must give an example to the country people.’”⁴¹ McLeod shows, that until 1914 there were still many parishes where the squire and parson worked hand in hand to keep the inhabitants God-fearing and law-abiding, and in return recognised a responsibility for their material well-being. However, with the arrival of the “new squire”, who saw the countryside as a pleasant place to live, and had no special tie with the people living in his village, all this changed (McLeod 1996, 204).

Another example of a middle-class churchgoer comes from Galsworthy’s short story “The Stoic” (1916), with the unscrupulous Charles Ventnor as its central character. The impression he makes is that of “a hail-fellow-well-met man”, someone who “[goes] to church every Sunday morning . . . look[s] upwards as he move[s] through life.” However, a clear look into his eyes gives the feeling: “There’s something fulvous here; he might be a bit too foxy.” In the end one realises that “he’s certainly a bully” (*Caravan*, 99). The fact that he goes to church every Sunday is an interesting detail in a character description that is meant to expose hypocrisy. This expresses Galsworthy’s dislike of self-righteous people that “look upwards” as they move through life, but turn out to be harsh and unscrupulous businessmen, bad husbands and unloving fathers, once you get to know them better. One more example will suffice to show Galsworthy’s deep-seated scepticism in this respect. In “The Plain Man”, first published in *The Little Man* (1915), Galsworthy satirises the plainness of the average Briton, and his refusal to shake off the old belief. One should bear in mind, though, that this was written during the Great War. For this reason the narrator says: “However little in these days one could believe and all that, yet, as a plain man, he did not refuse to go to church and say he

⁴⁰ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer & The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1876 and 1884 resp., Ware, Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2001, p. 31.

⁴¹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis* (1848-1850), London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1882, pp. 87-88.

was a Christian.”⁴² In other words, no matter how his real thinking had changed, and no matter what happened, “he continued . . . to be a churchman—living in Hertfordshire.”⁴³

Galsworthy had come across examples in earlier literature that contributed to this mindset. He noticed how Dickens lashes out at the hypocritical churchgoer. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for example, it is Mr Pecksniff who represents the self-righteousness that Dickens found among the middle classes. In one of the central scenes in the novel Mr Pecksniff enters the church and takes a seat in a “red-curtained and soft-cushioned pew, wherein the official dignitaries of the place (of whom Mr Pecksniff was the head and chief) enshrined themselves on Sundays.” Dickens describes his seat in even greater detail by saying: “Mr Pecksniff’s seat was in the corner: a remarkably comfortable corner; where his very large Prayer-Book was at that minute making the most of its quarto self upon the desk.”⁴⁴ These details speak volumes about the Pecksniffs of Dickens’ times. A similar character is Mr Murdstone in *David Copperfield* (1850), about whom the narrator comments: “the gloomy taint that was in the Murdstone blood darkened the Murdstone religion, which was austere and wrathful” (*Copperfield*, 48). All along the reader knows that Mr Murdstone is the very opposite of a good Christian. It is for this reason that the village doctor tells David at the close of the novel that he found no “authority for Mr and Mrs Murdstone in the New Testament” (*Copperfield*, 708).

Galsworthy describes his churchgoers in dismal tones, consistent with his description of church buildings. He stresses that churches become emptier and emptier, by frequent mention of the scantiness of the congregation, a picture reflecting the contemporary situation. Time and again Galsworthy also shows how people experience a sense of relief when the church service is over. Finally, he exposes the hypocrisy in churchgoing of the middle classes. In all cases it would particularly seem to be Charles Dickens and Samuel Butler on whose satire of churchgoers Galsworthy models his own. It is in this way that Galsworthy’s description of churches and churchgoers mirrors his feelings about the position of the church and the role churchgoing played in people’s lives.

⁴² John Galsworthy, “The Plain Man”, in *Satires and a Commentary*, London, Heinemann, 1928, p.32.

⁴³ Galsworthy presents a similar picture in “The Perfect One”, where, again, he offers a caricature of an average English gentleman and his relation to the Church: “There seemed to be things in the Bible about turning the other cheek, and lilies of the field, about rich men and camels, and the poor in spirit, which did not go altogether with his religion. Still one remained in the English church, hit things, and hoped for the best” (*Satires*, 107).

⁴⁴ Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 1864, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 1997, pp. 470-471.

3. The Clergy

Clergymen abound in Galsworthy's work. In many cases they are caricatures of the impoverished village curate or parson, or the country rector. Smit argues in 1947 that "to Galsworthy the good clergyman seems to have been an exception," and he felt that "on the whole the clergy are not given a fair deal by him."¹ Fréchet (1982) claims that, in Galsworthy's eyes, "they are ill-placed to preach acceptance of suffering, not being among those who suffer most," and he maintains that most of Galsworthy's clergymen are depicted as "narrow-minded, selfish, [and] even malevolent" (Fréchet 1982, 189). The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to submit Galsworthy's treatment of the clergy to a closer scrutiny, in order to arrive at a completer overview than has been offered so far, and to establish the developments, if any, in his treatment over the years. Also I will analyse to what extent he models his satirical picture of the English clergy on that of earlier writers.

The context

In the nineteenth century there were two ways in which a person could train for ordination, either through university education leading to a Bachelor's degree, or through non-graduate training at theological colleges. Haig shows that demand for non-graduate clergy rose especially in the North and in urban districts. In the more prosperous South only one-sixth of the clergy were non-graduates and nearly four in every five new clergymen were from Oxford or Cambridge.² It was relatively rare for eldest sons to seek ordination. Research shows that only one-tenth of all men ordained as priests are known to be eldest sons. Most of the eldest sons were trained for the legal profession. This contrast between the careers of eldest and younger sons was strongest among sons of the gentry (Haig 1984, 42). In the final quarter of the nineteenth century material prospects for the clergy were considered to be poor and only a small minority of clergy could be regarded as "better-off" and as the social equals of the landed gentry (Haig 1984, 11-12).

The achievement of incumbent status was the normal desire of the clergy. For all clergy, however, there was some period, ranging from a year to fifteen years and longer, in which they worked as curates. In most cases curacies were the sole employment before their first benefice. Curates received stipends that were perhaps sufficient for young and single men, but seemed inadequate for men with families. Curates complained about the relative insecurity of tenure and the degrading employer-employee relationship with the incumbent (Haig 1984, 225). The incomes of vicars and rectors could also vary greatly depending on the size of the

¹ Jan Hendrik Smit, *The Short Stories of John Galsworthy*, Rotterdam, Van Sijn, dissertatie Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1947, p. 129.

² Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy*, London and Sidney, Croom Helm Ltd., 1984, p. 118.

parish and the revenues the living provided them with. In the second half of the nineteenth century great changes had taken place in this respect. The pleasant image of mid-nineteenth-century rural parishes had been a reflection of the general prosperity of rural society, when money for churches and parsonages was flowing amply from private means and tithes. In the final quarter of the nineteenth century economic conditions had changed dramatically and country clergy began to feel the effects of the agricultural depression as much as the farmers and labourers in their parishes and the local gentry. Meanwhile towns were growing and the congregations of country parishes were dwindling. In the 1890s it was argued that imprudent marriages were at the root of the poverty of the greater portion of the clergy, as men would marry whether they could afford to keep a family or not. It even had a negative effect on the prospects of curates, as incumbents were loathe to employ a curate that might be involved in debt or live in poverty. The majority of vicars and rectors had an average income of £300 - £400 per annum, and curates had an average income of £100 (Haig 1984, 305, 300, 224). In small parishes this could be substantially lower, however. Conditions for some clergy were so miserable that voluntary societies, such as the Poor Clergy Relief Society and Curates' Aid Society were necessary to provide (insufficient) relief for the lowest ranks of the clergy (Crowther 1970, 221). George Eliot's *The Sad Fortunes of the Revd Amos Barton* offers a good example of the poverty of curates. Amos Barton's curacy yields £115 per annum, of which he receives an income of £80. The vicar, who holds three such livings, pockets the remaining £35. Barton cannot maintain a family of six children on this income and he too resorts to "a certain charity for the relief of needy curates."³

Galsworthy had observed the life of the clergy from nearby. Not only had he studied at Oxford with its long-standing tradition in the training of the clergy, a clerical career was also a common occurrence in his family. Galsworthy's uncle Lionel on the maternal side, and, not surprisingly, his mother's youngest brother, "revolted into the Church" after training as a solicitor. Galsworthy's father considered Lionel a "dogmatic chap." Galsworthy himself describes him as "an ascetic man of short stature, very upright, with a dark beard and hair, sallowish face, grey eyes . . . [and] he was certainly always in the right." He never married. There was also his uncle Robert, a clergyman, married to his aunt Vera, an aunt on the maternal side, of whom Galsworthy says: "a man of means, of which he disposed very quickly," and he recalls that they had twelve children (Marrot 1936, 54).

Galsworthy's country parson

Crowther maintains that "by the mid-nineteenth century the image of the parson in popular literature, especially of the Ritualist clergyman, tended to be 'anaemic and effeminate'" (Crowther 1970, 222). Galsworthy does not deviate from this general type. His uncle Lionel was perhaps the best representative of this type and served as a model for many clergymen in

³ George Eliot, *The Sad Fortunes of the Revd Amos Barton*, 1857, London, Hesperus Press Limited, 2003, p. 55.

Galsworthy's work. The very first example is that in *Jocelyn* (1898). Jocelyn's aunt Mrs Travis attends a party and speaks to "an anaemic curate" (Jocelyn, 28). It is only a minor reference in his first novel, but this curate will prove to be the first in a long row of pale and impoverished clergymen. Galsworthy depicts the parson in *The Island Pharisees* as "a bloodless and clean-shaven man, whose hollow cheeks and bony hands suggested a perpetual struggle."⁴ For the portrayal of the rector in "A Fisher of Men" Galsworthy uses the following terms: "his black thin figure . . . his meagre cheeks . . . his dry spasmodic voice, whose harsh tones . . . spare, black and clean shaven . . . his hungry eyes fixed straight before him." To finish this picture the narrator adds: "His whole form gave the impression of a dark tree withered and eaten by some desiccating wind, like the stiff oaks of his Cornish upland, gnarled and riven by the Atlantic gales" (Caravan, 771-773). In "A Christian" (1911), a study in *The Inn of Tranquillity* (1912), the first-person narrator meets an old college friend who has become a parson. The description is completely in line with earlier ones: "Lean he always was, but not very lean."⁵ In *A Bit o' Love* (1915) the curate, Michael Strangway, is described in the stage directions as: "His figure is thin and very upright and his clean-shorn face thin, upright, narrow, with long and rather pointed ears" (Plays, 419).⁶ Their dismal appearances correspond entirely with the descriptions of churches and churchgoers of the previous chapter.

As these examples show, Galsworthy sometimes deviates from these stock descriptions. When he compares one of the parsons to "a dark tree withered and eaten by some desiccating wind," or when he says that "his hollow cheeks and bony hands suggest a perpetual struggle" (*Island Pharisees*, 139), that the parson in "A Christian" "had the mouth of a man crucified—yes crucified!" and that Michael Strangway in *A Bit o' Love* looks as if he is being "crucified . . . A gentle creature burnt within" (Plays, 419), we come to realise that Galsworthy was aware what great psychological struggles and conflicts with their consciences some parsons were going through in reality.

Now the question is whether Galsworthy was original in his descriptions of the clergy, or whether he had borrowed them from the novels that he read as a young writer. In *The Pickwick Papers*, for instance, Dickens introduces the "deputy shepherd", Mr Stiggins, as "a man in threadbare black clothes with a back almost as long and stiff as that of the chair itself" (*Pickwick*, 344). Elizabeth Gaskell's rector in *Cranford* is described as "tall, thin, dry [and] dusty."⁷ Maupassant describes a village parson in *Une Vie* as "*un tout jeune prêtre maigre, fort petit, à la parole emphatique, et dont les yeux, cerclés de noir et caves, indiquaient une âme violente*" (*Une Vie*, 166). To emphasise the point he wants to make Maupassant adds that

⁴ John Galsworthy, *The Island Pharisees*, 1904, London, Heinemann, 1908, p. 139.

⁵ John Galsworthy, "A Christian," in *The Inn of Tranquillity*, 1912, London, Heinemann, 1927, p. 61.

⁶ Another example is the rector in the short story "Manna", who is said to have a "tall, thin, black figure down which a ramrod surely had been passed at birth," and his face is depicted as "narrow, hairless, white and wasted" (Caravan, 782).

⁷ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, 1853, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 88.

he looks “*tout frêle et tout maigre dans sa soutane usée déjà, mais propre*” (Une Vie, 166). Samuel Butler’s “cashiers and managers” of the Musical Banks in *Erewhon* closely resemble Galsworthy’s clergymen too, in that “as a general rule, [they had] a cramped expression upon their faces which pained and depressed” the narrator. The latter cannot help feeling that there must have been “a something in their lives which had stunted their natural development, and that they would have been more healthily minded in any other profession” (Erewhon, 156). Butler too pays attention to the clergy’s modest income. In a way he feels sorry for them, “for in nine cases out of ten they were well-meaning persons; they were in the main very poorly paid” (Erewhon, 156).

Then why if the prospects for clergymen were so bleak did they become curates or vicars in the first place? We should bear in mind that the ministry was usually the fate of a “younger son”, the elder son inheriting his father’s estate and thus being provided for. Younger sons studied theology, and after some time their fathers would buy them a living, or they continued to live as curates. Butler is clear about this in *Erewhon*, saying that they “had the misfortune to have been betrayed into a false position at an age for the most part when their judgment was not matured” (Erewhon, 157). Bernard Shaw is also overtly critical of younger sons entering the church. One of his characters in *Mrs Warren’s Profession* is the Rev. Samuel Gardner, whom he refers to as “that obsolescent social phenomenon the fool of the family dumped on the Church by his father the patron” (Plays Unpleasant, 227). Gardner’s son is not very complimentary about his father either when he says: “He was shoved into the Church rather; and in trying to live up to it, he makes a much bigger ass of himself than he really is” (Plays Unpleasant, 237). One of Galsworthy’s favourite writers during his Oxford years, Whyte-Melville, also contributed to Galsworthy’s caricature of clergymen. The first clergyman whom we come across in *Digby Grand* (1853), the curate Mr Stubbles, is referred to as “little Mr Stubbles” and “poor Mr Stubbles”⁸ and makes a complete fool of himself. The second clergyman, the Reverend Amos Batt, was described as a “short-sighted man, mentally and physically” (Digby, 373).

In his portrayal of clergymen Galsworthy drew heavily upon the literary works he had read in the 1890s, resulting in stock descriptions and caricatures. Galsworthy, however, indicates that he sympathises with some of these clergymen because of the psychological struggle they were going through. It is this very struggle with religious doubt and their transparency about this that finally softened Galsworthy’s anti-clericalism and turned his caricatures into rounder characters.

⁸ G.J. Whyte-Melville, *Digby Grand*, 1853, London & New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1890, p. 10.

The vicarage and the parson's family

The first vicarage we come across in Galsworthy's work is that which Shelton visits in *The Island Pharisees*. The parson offers Shelton and his friend accommodation, thereby living up to the Christian virtue of hospitality, but he cannot offer them a proper meal, as there was nothing in the house but bread. Descriptions of vicarages in Galsworthy's work hardly vary. They all look very poor and this one was no exception: "Everything in the room had been bought for cheapness . . . It was bleak and bare; the ceiling cracked, the wallpaper discoloured." The parson blames the state of the house on his predecessor: "You can, unfortunately, expect nothing else these days, when livings have come down so terribly in value!" (*Island Pharisees*, 144). In the humorous short story "Manna" (1916), the rectory is described as "that red-brick building surrounded by laurels which did not flower, heightened ironically the conditions within" (*Caravan*, 783). The rector's poverty is further accentuated by the fact that his eighty-year-old mother cannot leave her bed because they have no coal to warm the rectory, that their servant is not paid and that the tradesmen no longer leave goods as they are never paid. In order to survive he borrows food from his parishioners, saying, "I want a pound of butter—pay you Monday" (*Caravan*, 782). The rector is eventually accused of having stolen a loaf from the baker's cart. One of his parishioners makes a statement to his defence, however, and claims that the loaf was on the ground and that it must have fallen from the sky. The rector adds: "Hungry—God's elect—to the manna born!" (*Caravan*, 790). Galsworthy writes in a much more ironical and humorous vein here, no longer so bitingly sarcastic. A final example of a rectory from *Swan Song* confirms this milder tone. The interior of the rectory is again described in familiar terms: "in one place the old Turkey carpet was rotted away," and "in a cabinet on one side of the fire he kept all his religious books, many of them well worn." Indeed it is also a rector of the old stamp: "a thin man in a thin suit and a thin beard," to which the narrator adds, "a gentleman in trousers shiny behind" (*Swan Song*, 813-816). However, this time there is no debate on theological or moral issues, the vicar is quite helpful, and the overall impression is that of a friendly, but completely impoverished country parson.

To what extent have descriptions like the ones above, been borrowed from or inspired by earlier writers? As was the case with the portrayals of the clergy, it is mainly to Dickens that we must turn for obvious parallels. In Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* there is the Rev. Frank Milvey and his wife. Milvey too is a clergyman after the Galsworthian fashion. His house is described as "a very modest abode, because his income was a very modest income". The comment on Mr Milvey himself is a familiar one too: "He was quite a young man, expensively educated and wretchedly paid. . . . He accepted the needless inequalities and inconsistencies of his life with a kind of conventional submission that was almost slavish" (*Mutual Friend*, 97-98).

Galsworthy seizes every opportunity to point to the sheer size of clergymen's families. From close by he saw his uncle Robert's family with twelve children and uses that as a model for the clergymen's families in his fiction. Thus, in the opening scene of *The Fugitive* (1913) two characters speak about an old rector. One of the characters describes him as "a very steady old man." The question is then asked, "Not a penny I suppose?" And this is followed by the answer, "No, and seven of them" (Plays 277). The best-known rector with a large family in Galsworthy's work is the Rev. Hussell Barter. His wife has had ten children, and is expecting her eleventh child. Galsworthy describes this graphically when referring to the family portrait, in which Mr Barter sits in the centre with the dog between his legs; his wife stands behind him, "and on both sides the children spread out like the wings of a fan or butterfly" (Country House, 113). All this reminds one of the discussion between Shelton and the parson in *The Island Pharisees*. Shelton cannot help asking the parson the question: "Ah! why *do* they have such families?" A discussion follows in which the parson indicates that "a mother's chief delight is in her motherhood . . . and motherhood is motherhood whether of one or of a dozen." Shelton confronts him with the question if he has ever lived in London and adds, "It always makes me feel a doubt whether we have any right to have children at all." The divide between Shelton and the parson is too big, which becomes manifest from the parson's remark that Shelton's view of morality was unintelligible to him. He goes on to say that Shelton's ideas "foster in women those lax views of the family life that are so prevalent in Society nowadays" (Island Pharisees, 142-145). After that the parson rises and stands before the fire:

Whole centuries of authority stood behind him. It was an accident that the mantelpiece was chipped and rusty, the fire irons bent and worn, his linen frayed about the cuffs (Island Pharisees, 145).

Galsworthy thus presents an image of the crumbling authority of the Church.

References to clergymen's large families also frequently occur in the works of earlier writers. In Dickens' *David Copperfield* Traddles' girlfriend Sophy is introduced as: "She is a curate's daughter . . . one of ten, down in Devonshire" (Copperfield, 346).⁹ Joseph Conrad too avails himself of the standard description of a country parson with a large family. In *Lord Jim* Captain Marlow describes Jim's father as "the good old rural dean [who] was about the finest man that ever had been worried by the cares of a large family since the beginning of the world."¹⁰ In Conrad's *Nostromo* there is a similar description. The parson mentioned is

⁹ There is another example in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, where Mr Milvey is said to have "quite a young wife and half a dozen quite young children" (Mutual Friend, 98).

¹⁰ Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, 1900, Penguin Books, 1973, p. 65.

characterised as a “most worthy man, incumbent of a small parish in Sussex; no end of children.”¹¹

The children in clergymen’s families were the butt of ridicule too. Sir Charles Dedmond says in Galsworthy’s *The Fugitive*: “I’ve often noticed parson’s daughters grow up queer. Get too much morality and rice puddin’ ” (Plays, 281). Samuel Butler too points to the plight of clergymen’s children. He maintains that “it is a matter of common observation in England that the sons of clergymen are frequently unsatisfactory.” The reason for this is that clergymen were expected to be “a kind of human Sunday,” and were paid for leading a stricter life than other people. Butler claims that the unnatural tension in public resulted in the harsh treatment of their children in private. “His children are the most defenceless things [a clergyman] can reach, and it is on them in nine cases out of ten that he will relieve his mind” (Way of All Flesh, 89).

Parson’s wives are not to be envied either, according to Galsworthy. In *The Patrician* he indicates that “the wife of a man like that’s no better than a slave” (Patrician, 110). The clearest example, of course, of such slavery is Hussell Barter’s wife. Barter has not applied the moderation which he preaches to his congregation, as his wife is to give birth to their eleventh child, which might easily be the death of her, as happened to Amos Barton’s wife in George Eliot’s *The Sad Fortunes of the Revd Amos Barton*. It is obvious from Mrs Barter’s looks that she loathes Barter for this: “a gleam of malice shot into her eyes” (Country House, 197). That she suffers under Barter’s authoritarian behaviour is also clear from the way she plays the organ in church. “At the least fold or frown on his face the music seemed to quiver, as to some spasm in the player’s soul” (Country House, 59).¹² Galsworthy’s parsons’ wives also have their predecessors in Dickens. Mrs Milvey in *Our Mutual Friend*, for instance, is portrayed as a “pretty, bright little woman, something worn by anxiety, who repressed many pretty tastes and bright fancies, and substituted in their stead, schools, soups, flannel, coals, and all the weekday cares and Sunday coughs of a large population” (Mutual Friend, 98). Dickens describes Mr and Mrs Milvey ironically as a “good Christian pair, representatives of hundreds of other good Christian pairs” (Mutual Friend, 708).

The parson’s authority and dogmatism

Frequently Galsworthy’s criticism and contempt are implicit in the descriptions of the parson’s authoritarian behaviour. In *The Island Pharisees* (1904), for instance, the clergyman in a wedding service is said to be “massive and high featured . . . [and] towered, in snowy cambric and a crimson stole, above the blackness of his rostrum” (Island Pharisees, 68). Hussell Barter in *The Country House* was not much different. “The rector quartered his

¹¹ Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo*, London & New York, Harper & Brothers, 1904, p. 404.

¹² Galsworthy gives another example of the inferior position of parsons’ wives in *The Island Pharisees* (1904), saying that their husbands are convinced that “the questions of morality . . . have always lain through God in the hands of men, not women,” and that men “are the reasonable sex” (Island Pharisees, 146).

congregation with a gaze, lest any amongst them should incline to sleep. He spoke in a loud sounding voice” (Country House, 61).

Looking at Galsworthy’s clergymen, one may see the close resemblance to Butler’s clergymen in *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*. Like Galsworthy, Butler hates dogmatism in the clergy: “It is in the uncompromisingness with which dogma is held and not in the dogma or want of dogma that the danger lies” (Way of All Flesh, 248). Butler and Galsworthy share a fundamental distrust of religion and the confidence with which the clergy speak to their congregations. When the narrator concludes the chapter on the Musical Banks, Butler’s own feelings become very evident. Speaking of religion in general he says:

It is here that almost all religions go wrong. Their priests try to make us believe that they know more about the unseen world than those whose eyes are still blinded by the seen, can ever know—forgetting that while to deny the existence of an unseen kingdom is bad, to pretend that we know more about it than its bare existence is no better (Erewhon, 160).

Also in Maupassant’s *Une Vie* Galsworthy came across the type of priest he took exception to: “*D’une inflexible sévérité pour lui-même, il se montrait pour les autres d’une implacable intolérance*” (Une Vie, 168). Anatole France too rejects this type of dogmatic priesthood. In *The Elm-Tree on the Mall* he says: “What we want is many priests like you, enlightened, tolerant, free from prejudice . . . priests who recognise the needs of the present day and the requirements of a democratic society.”¹³ He repeats this later in the novel: “You are an enlightened priest; you see in religion a collection of moral precepts, a necessary discipline, and not a set of antiquated dogmas, of mysteries whose absurdity is only too little mysterious” (Elm Tree, 79). These examples from Butler, Maupassant and France show, how it was their novels that biased Galsworthy against dogmatism and authoritarianism in the clergy.

Double standards

Galsworthy also goes to great lengths to expose clergymen’s double standards. In *The Man of Property* the Rev. Mr Boms is the butt of Galsworthy’s ridicule. He is a shareholder of the company of which Old Jolyon is chairman of the board. He “always proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman, in which he invariably expressed the hope that the Board would not forget to elevate their employees.” Galsworthy does not need to say more to satirise this clergyman. The mere fact that he is a shareholder and thereby an upholder of Forsyteism, makes him suspect. It is the Rev. Mr Boms’ “salutary custom to buttonhole a director afterwards and ask him whether he thought the coming year would be good or bad; and according to the trend of

¹³ Anatole France, *The Elm-Tree on the Mall* (*L’Orme du Mail*, 1897), London, The Bodley Head, 1924, pp. 35-36.

the answer, to buy or sell three shares within the ensuing fortnight” (Man of Property, 151). It is his pettiness, narrowness, selfishness and hypocrisy that Galsworthy objects to. He therefore deals a final blow to Mr Boms when the latter raises objections to a grant of £5,000 to be awarded to the widow and family of the company’s deceased superintendent. The superintendent committed suicide and this induces Mr Boms to make the following statement:

“If I may venture to express myself,” he said, “I should say that the fact of the —er— deceased having committed suicide should weigh very heavily—*very* heavily with our worthy chairman. . . . We all desire, I should hope to be charitable, but I feel sure . . . that he will in some way, by some written expression, or better perhaps by reducing the amount, record our grave disapproval that so promising and valuable a life should have been thus impiously removed from a sphere where both its own interests and—if I may say so—*our* interests so imperatively demanded its continuance. We should not—nay, we may not—countenance so grave a dereliction of all duty both human and divine” (Man of Property, 153).

Characteristically, Soames, an astute lawyer and businessman, sympathises with one of the shareholders who says it “was high time a stand was made against this sentimental humanitarianism” (Man of Property, 154). However, equally characteristic, it is Old Jolyon who by sheer authority manages to silence those shareholders, including the Rev. Mr Boms.¹⁴

The Rector in *The Country House* (1907) is, perhaps, Galsworthy’s best representation of what he found repellent in the clergy: their complacency and hypocrisy. Unlike many other country clergymen, mostly curates and vicars, the Rev. Hussell Barter is of a build that “may be seen in portraits of the Georgian era” (Country House, 14). The narrator describes him as “authoritative . . . and he did not encourage his parishioners to think for themselves.” However, unlike all other clergymen that we have seen so far, “he was popular in his parish—good cricketer, a still better fisherman [and] a fair shot” (Country House, 15). Early in the novel, in the chapter called “Sabbath at Worsted Skeynes”, we witness a sermon by Hussell Barter. The tone is set by Mr Pendyce’s remark, “I hope to goodness Barter’ll be short this

¹⁴ There is another example in *The Eldest Son* (1912), concerning the Rev. John Latter. He is “dressed in a clergyman’s evening dress . . . a tall, rather pale young man, with something in him, as it were, both of heaven and the drawing room” (Plays 160). The theme of this play concerns the double standards that are applied to the forced marriage of a village youth called Young Dunning and his girlfriend Rose, on the one hand, and Sir William Cheshire’s eldest son Bill, and Lady Cheshire’s lady’s maid, Freda Studdenham, on the other. When Young Dunning initially refuses to marry Rose, Latter’s reaction is that “if a man wrongs a woman, he ought to right her again.” And when his future brother-in-law Keith takes a less decisive stand and says, “it all depends,” Latter accuses him of “rank opportunism” (Plays, 164). However, faced with the possibility of a forced marriage of his brother-in-law Bill and Freda, the lady’s maid, Latter articulates his abhorrence by saying, “perfectly disgusting”, and “one doesn’t take lighted pipes into straw yards, unless one’s an idiot or worse” (Plays, 188). However, when asked what was to be done, he says, doubtingly, “of course, he’ll have to—”, but does not finish his sentence realising the consequences also for his own position, and stammers, “the whole thing is—is most unfortunate” (Plays, 189).

morning” (Country House, 57). In the sermon that follows, Barter exhorts his parishioners to be fruitful. “God had set bounds, the bounds of marriage, within which man should multiply.” He warns them that “these days men went about and openly, unashamedly advocated shameful doctrines” (Country House, 61), for example, that it is better to have a divorce than to remain unhappily married. This is an obvious link with Ada and John Galsworthy’s personal history. Adding to our suspicion of hypocrisy, the narrator informs us that Mr Pendyce and Mr Barter go to London a number of times a year, on which they rarely take their wives, having “important business in hand,” later specified as visits to old colleges, clubs and cricket matches. “They always [go] up to London, grumbling . . . because of their wives; and they always [come] back grumbling, because of their livers” (Country House, 132).

Barter chose “Judge not, that ye be not judged” for his motto in the first year of his cure and the text was printed on the frame of the picture of the Barter family. The Biblical reference, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” returns in *Flowering Wilderness* (1932), which makes the contrast between the two clergymen involved even more forceful. Hilary Charwell in *Flowering Wilderness* states: “That saying . . . is extraordinarily comforting, until you’ve got to do something about it. After that it appears to amount to less than nothing; all action is based on judgment, tacit or not” (Flowering Wilderness, 399). Galsworthy cleverly exposes Barter’s character. Although in his sermon he exhorts his parishioners to be fruitful and to multiply, he also teaches them, that “there is moderation in all things.” He was not very moderate, though, as far as his own fruitfulness is concerned. He is even exposed as a coward when he leaves home for a walk while his wife is in labour. He returns just in time to hear how she is suffering. There are two moments during this walk that deserve attention though. Passing a primary school he hears the children saying their multiplication tables, a humorous detail if connected with Barter himself. Hearing this makes him think, that this is “a fine thing; but if we don’t care we shall go too far; we shall unfit them for their stations” (Country House, 202). Not a very appropriate thought for a clergyman who should want the best for his parishioners. Keeping the working classes simple would not be in their interest, but apparently it would be in his. The other instance is that of an old horse that he comes across standing on a bare strip of pasture, in the full sun and tied to a peg, whereas at the bottom of the field there is a little pond overhung with willows. It makes him say: “A shame to tie the poor beast up here in the sun. I should like to give the owner a bit of my mind!” (Country House, 202). What he does not realise is that his own wife is equally tied up and that he keeps her on a tight rein. Mrs Barter eventually gives birth to a girl and it seems that Barter immediately forgets all his pangs of conscience and good intentions for “moderation”, because the following chapter opens with: “That same evening at nine o’clock, sitting over the last glass of a pint of port, Mr Barter felt an irresistible longing for enjoyment, an impulse towards expansion and his fellow man.” The narrator comments mildly saying: “The aspens

with their tender rustling, seemed to watch and whisper: “Oh, little men! Oh, little men!” (Country House, 206-207).

In a letter to Galsworthy of March 3, 1907, Hudson writes to him about the *Country House*, generally praising him for the novel. He seems to disagree, however, with “the slight amount of disdain” he detected in Galsworthy’s description of the Rev. Hussell Barter:

I have long known the Rev. H.B. I know him now in two or three pleasant Rectories—and find it easy to smile at his little weaknesses, as when he runs terrified away to escape a domestic upset. But I fancy you exhibit some slight hostility towards “the cloth” on that occasion—and still more when, with ten children to the good and another coming, he preaches a sermon on—well our duty as good citizens with reference to this point. I think Mr Barter’s portrait would have seemed truer to me if the writer had used the same passionless pencil with which he drew Mrs Pendyce (Marrot 1936, 207).

In 1923, in his retrospective preface to *The Country House* in the Manaton Edition, Galsworthy indicates that he does not feel the character of Hussell Barter “overdrawn”, and he shows us how this character came about. “Chance observation of a clergyman on a journey from Teignmouth to Exeter supplied a germ which crossed with sundry others produced this worthy cleric” (Manaton VI, Pref. x).

In *Justice* (1910) there is the first example of a churchman’s double standards in relation to humanitarianism, especially with regard to solitary confinement. The tone and atmosphere are more bitter and realistic, a far cry from the country scenes in Galsworthy’s novels. The scene is laid in prison and it is Christmas Eve. The prison chaplain is described in familiar terms as a “dark-haired, ascetic man, in clerical undress, with a peculiarly steady, tight-lipped face and slow, cultured speech” (Plays, 251), the very picture of Galsworthy’s uncle Lionel. The prison governor and the chaplain speak to Cokeson, the managing clerk of the solicitors’ office of James and Walter How. Their junior clerk, Falder, has forged a cheque to be able to emigrate to South America with Ruth Honeywill. She is unhappily married to a man who abuses her. Cokeson pleads with the governor and the chaplain to make Falder’s life bearable in prison, especially on Christmas Eve. From the very outset of their conversation it is clear that Cokeson does not stand a chance. To Cokeson’s plea the Chaplain replies “[with a touch of impatience]: The Law hardly shares your view, I’m afraid.” Cokeson’s remark, “but to shut them up alone, it only makes them savage,” is rebutted by, “surely you should allow those who have had a little more experience than yourself to know what is best for prisoners,” and “our friend seems to think that prison is a hospital.” The scene ends with the Church exposed as an unfeeling and authoritarian institute. When the Chaplain says to the prison governor on

Cokeson's departure, "Come and have some lunch, Clements?" (Plays, 253-255), Galsworthy could not have been more cynical.

In the closing scene of the play Falder commits suicide after his arrest for having forged a reference which he needed to find himself a job. Cokeson says in the final dialogue: "No one'll touch him now! Never again! He's safe with gentle Jesus!" (Plays, 274). Here Galsworthy is in fact very bitter about established morality and the Church that damn ex-convicts for their entire lives. Galsworthy rejected this and actively campaigned against the harshness of judgment and the cruelty of solitary confinement. In an Open Letter to the Home Secretary, Mr Gladstone, in May 1909, Galsworthy quotes a former prison chaplain, Dr W.D. Morrison, and uses this clergyman's authority to plead once more for the abolishment of solitary confinement. He quotes him as saying: "It tends to have a demoralising effect upon many classes of prisoners" (Sheaf, 102). Thus, *Justice* and Galsworthy's campaign resulted in greater awareness among politicians about the cruelty and alleged futility of solitary confinement. Over time this also led to changes in government policy in this respect.

These examples show how Galsworthy was averse to the double standards applied by clergymen. This aversion was something Galsworthy also came across in earlier literature, which gave him the inspiration for his novels. Dickens, for example, in *The Pickwick Papers*, exposes the Rev. Mr Stiggins as a hypocrite. We are told that Mr Stiggins suffers from a liver complaint, and Mr Weller one moment refers to him as "Saint Simon Without, and Saint Walker Within" (Pickwick, 588). The only minister in *Bleak House*, Mr Chadman, is another example of a hypocritical clergyman, closely resembling Samuel Butler's and John Galsworthy's parsons.¹⁵

Galsworthy recognised similar feelings in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. The narrator says about John Wilson, a senior member of the clergy, stern and dogmatic, but living in luxury: "It is an error to suppose that our grave forefathers . . . made it a matter of conscience to reject such means of comfort or even luxury, as lay fairly within their grasp" (Scarlet Letter, 138). Another example may be found in Whyte-Melville's *Market Harborough* (1861), in which the local parson and his wife try hard to be part of the local elite. Parson Dove is introduced as a keen lover of fox-hunting and an excellent sportsman. Whyte-Melville's irony becomes clear from the narrator's description of the parson's hunting outfit: "Nobody's leathers were so well-made, so well-cleaned, so well put on as Parson Dove's . . . no scarlet coat that was ever turned out by Poole looked so like hunting as that well-cut unassuming black . . . And it is needless to state that he was riding a thorough-bred bay."¹⁶ The writer lifts the veil a little when Parson Dove is told that "the old 'oss was about wore

¹⁵ Mr Chadman is described as "a large yellow man, with a fat smile, and a general appearance of having a good deal of train oil in his system" (Bleak House, 316). We see him visiting Mr and Mrs Snagsby's where he says after dinner: "we have partaken in moderation . . . of the comforts which have been provided for us." But the narrator adds, "which was certainly not the case as far as he was concerned" (Bleak House, 324).

¹⁶ G.J. Whyte-Melville, *Market Harborough and Inside the Bar*, 1861, London, Ward, Lock & Co, p. 57.

out,” and he realised that “he wanted for half a dozen other purposes the couple of hundred it would take to replace him.” When Mrs Dove asks him if they could spend two months in Brighton in the spring, he asks her desperately “where the money is to come from” (Market Harborough, 138-139).

Samuel Butler too is quite outspoken about the clergy’s double standards. In his motto to *Erewhon Revisited* he clearly states his aversion by saying “Him do I hate even as I hate Hell fire, Who says one thing, and hides another in his heart (Iliad, ix. 312, 313)” (Erewhon Rev., i).

Also Galsworthy’s friend, W.H. Hudson is exceptionally critical of this aspect of the clergy. In *Hampshire Days* (1903) Hudson relates that he once met a parson, who was a lepidopterist, the cruelty of which irritated Hudson to a large degree:

I cannot imagine him in that beautiful country of the Future . . . I cannot imagine him in white raiment, with a golden harp in his hand; for if *here* in this country, he could see nothing in a humming bird hawk-moth among the flowers in the sunshine but an object to be collected, what in the name of wonder will he have to harp about! (Hampshire, 113-114).

Another friend of Galsworthy’s, Joseph Conrad, is equally critical of the double standards of the clergy in his novel *Lord Jim* (1900). Marlow speaks sympathetically of Jim’s father, a clergyman, but there are clear traces of criticism too. He says of Jim’s father that he “possesse[s] such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness for people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions” (Lord Jim, 10).

Also in literature of more recent date we come across this theme. The parson in John Masefield’s *The Everlasting Mercy* (1911) is described as an “old puffing parson” and “red-eyed as a ferret, from nightly wrestlings with the spirit.”¹⁷ Similar descriptions are used for the rectors in Masefield’s *The Tragedy of Nan* and Synge’s *The Tinker’s Wedding*.

Growing sympathy

In Edward Pierson, the protagonist of *Saint’s Progress*, Galsworthy portrays the stereotypical High Churchman. In his very name, Pierson, there is an allusion to ‘son of Piers’, Piers Plowman, the Christ-like figure in the mediaeval allegory, who tries to help his fellowman reach salvation. Before his marriage Pierson was a vicar of an East-End parish. He had some private means and “to have not only the opportunity but power in the lives of the poor had been fascinating; simple himself, the simple folk of the parish had taken hold of his heart.”¹⁸

¹⁷ John Masefield, *The Everlasting Mercy*, 1911, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd, 1912, p. 47.

¹⁸ John Galsworthy, *Saint’s Progress*, 1919, London, Heinemann, 1950, p. 8.

After his marriage he got his own living in the country. His character is a far cry from the caricatures of clergymen in earlier novels and plays, and he is one of Galsworthy's first clergymen with whom he felt a degree of sympathy. Pierson's wife died many years before, his daughters no longer believe in God and his daughter Noel falls pregnant before she is married and subsequently her boyfriend is killed in the war. Pierson's congregation turns against him and he is forced to give up his living and to become an army chaplain. The main issue is that Pierson is completely out of touch with life. Pierson himself does not agree with this:

After all he saw people when they were born, when they married, when they died. He helped them when they wanted money, and when they were ill; he told their children Bible stories on Sunday afternoons; he served those who were in need with soup and bread from his soup kitchen. He never spared himself in any way, and his ears were always at the service of their woes. And yet he did not understand them, and they knew that. It was as though he or they were colour-blind. The values were all different. He was seeing one set of objects, they another (Saint's Progress, 163).

Pierson's brother Robert realises the "stubborn loneliness of that thin black figure" (Saint's Progress, 187) and thinks:

I believe old Ted's like one of those Eastern chaps who go into lonely places. He's got himself surrounded by visions of things that aren't there. He lives in unreality—something we can't understand. . . . He doesn't even drink—hasn't a pleasure in life, so far as I can see, except doing his duty, and doesn't even seem to know what that is. There aren't many like him—luckily! And yet I love him—pathetic chap! (Saint's Progress, 188)

At the close of the novel Pierson works as an army chaplain and tries to help a dying soldier. At least he is part of reality again, part of the horror of warfare, and far away from the ivory tower he was in at home. The young man dies "without hope and without faith." He "moved out uncertain, yet undaunted." This is what Pierson recoils from: "In faith I have lived, in faith I will die!" (Saint's Progress, 353), is what he says to himself as if clinging on to the only certainty he has left in life.

Galsworthy may have modelled Edward Pierson on two characters in the earlier works of Conrad and Shaw. In Conrad's *Lord Jim* the narrator says Marlow could picture Jim's father in his study "where for forty years he had conscientiously gone over and over again the round of his little thoughts about faith and virtue, about the conduct of life and the only proper manner of dying" (*Lord Jim*, 257). Like Edward Pierson this amiable man is no longer in

touch with society and lives in a small and secluded world of his own. The same goes for Shaw's "Christian-Socialist" clergyman, the Rev. James Morell in *Candida*. Shaw describes him as a "first rate clergyman"¹⁹, who, shortly after his marriage to Candida, defied his father-in-law for his practice of sweated women labour. Now, a few years later, for all his oratorical skills, we see little practical goodness left in him. In a way he resembles Edward Pierson in that he too is relatively self-satisfied, but has lost touch with what is really going on in the world, to begin with relations with his own wife. Candida, as her name suggests, tells him exactly what she thinks of his sermons: "mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day" (*Plays Pleasant*, 137).

In many ways the Great War was a watershed in Galsworthy's thinking, also with respect to his ideas about the clergy. Thus, in his article "France, 1916-1917" (1917) Galsworthy speaks appreciatively of the French clergy. This is the first time that he expresses sympathy for any representative of the Church, albeit the Roman Catholic Church, and as such, perhaps, very different from the clergy at home. Again it is the clergyman offering basic human kindness, rather than empty words, which evokes Galsworthy's sympathy. No doubt Galsworthy's personal experience during the war played a prominent role here:

I remember so well the old *curé* of our little town coming up to lunch, his interest in the cooking, in the practical matters of our life, and in wider affairs too; his enjoyment of his coffee and cigarette. . . . I saw him in the courtyard talking to one of our *poilus*, not about his soul, but about his body; stroking his shoulder softly and calling him *mon chère fils*. Dear old man! Even religion here does not pretend to more than it can achieve—help and consolation to the bewildered and the suffering (*Another Sheaf*, 57).

This picture is confirmed by Ada Galsworthy in her book *Over the Hills and Far Away* (1937), in which she describes this *curé* as a "remarkably charming old man."²⁰

Appreciation

In *Escape* (1926) it becomes clear once more that Galsworthy became more sympathetic towards the clergy by the end of his life. This play is about Captain Matt Denant, a young army officer, convicted of having killed a policeman, by accident though. He manages to escape from prison and seeks shelter until he is finally caught again. At one moment during his escape he hides in the house of two maiden ladies, Miss Grace and Miss Dora. He overhears a discussion between the two ladies about religion, in which Dora says to Grace that she wished she would give up religion, to which Grace replies: "You only hurt the vicar

¹⁹ George Bernard Shaw, *Plays Pleasant*, Penguin Books, 2003, p. 95.

²⁰ Ada Galsworthy, *Over the Hills and Far Away*, London, Robert Hale Limited, 1937, p. 58.

by it,” resulting in Dora’s statement: “[*shaking her head*] He’s too good a sort to mind” (Plays 1023). This portrays the vicar as a friendly man and this picture is confirmed in the final episode of the play when the parson makes his appearance. He is described as a “slim, grizzle-haired, brown, active, middle-aged man with a good, lined, clean-shaven face, and a black, Norfolk jacket; obviously a little ‘high’ in his doctrine” (Plays, 1024). The audience will immediately feel sympathetic towards the parson, because of what he says about Miss Grace and Miss Dora and especially because of the element of doubt in his voice:

Parson: [*with a little smile*] Miss Dora wanted to keep you and Miss Grace to throw you out. H’m? And yet Miss Dora doesn’t come to church, and Miss Grace does. Something wrong there; or is it something right? (Plays, 1027)

In this play Galsworthy does not portray the parson as a caricature, but as a character facing a true dilemma. Galsworthy says that the parson was a padre in the war, which makes him different from many clergymen in his earlier works. The first time we hear this parson is when he is singing, “Oh for the wings—for the wings of a dove!” It is the first indication that he too wants to escape. A moment later, when he is confronted with the escaped convict, Matt Denant, he says, “Oh!” The stage direction indicates: “[*That ‘Oh’ is something more than astonishment; it has in it an accent of dismay, as if the speaker were confronted by his own soul*]” (Plays, 1027). We also see an element of the parson’s struggle in the following dialogue:

Matt: [*suddenly*] Wonder what Christ would have done!

Parson: [*gravely*] That, Captain Denant, is the hardest question in the world. Nobody ever knows. The more you read those writings, the more you realise that he was incalculable. You see—He was a genius! It makes it hard for us who try to follow him (Plays, 1028).

It is in fact the same struggle that we see in *A Bit o’ Love* (1915) and in the novel *Saint’s Progress* (1919), but much more sympathetically drawn.

The best example of a clergyman from whose character it becomes clear how Galsworthy gradually adjusts his anti-clerical feelings, is Hilary Charwell and his wife May in *Swan Song* (1928). Hilary Charwell is Michael Mont’s uncle. Hilary is the vicar of St. Augustine’s-in-the-Meads in London and another example of a younger son who entered the church, not knowing, perhaps, what he would be in for. This chapter opens as follows:

The Meads of St Augustine had no doubt, once on a time been flowery, and burgresses had walked there of a Sunday, plucking nose-gays. If there were a flower now, it would

be found on the altar of the Reverend Hilary's church, or on Mrs Hilary's dining table (Swan Song, 672).

In addition to the flower imagery there is another indication that Hilary is a different type of clergyman. Galsworthy introduces him to us when he and his wife are seeing off twenty boys from the slums on a fortnight in the country. That makes a difference from all the parsons we have seen before. Also, we learn that Hilary is involved in a slum-conversion scheme and has just bought a street on credit, hoping to gain enough money through sponsor projects to pay back his debts. Michael Mont is impressed by what he sees and says to his uncle: "You restore my faith in the Church," to which Hilary replies: "My dear old boy. . . . The old Reformation was nothing to what's been going on in the Church lately" (Swan Song, 676). What he refers to, among other things, is the growing awareness in the Church of its social role and the resulting emergence of a new style of clergyman in the 1880s and 1890s, especially in urban, working-class parishes, a clergyman who was trying to get away from the image of clergymen as 'gentlemen'. It was the 'slum priest' who devoted his life to work in an urban, working-class parish, trying to identify himself totally with the life of its people (McLeod 1996, 18).

In the sequel to *Swan Song*, *Maid in Waiting*, we gain a better insight into Hilary's life. When the protagonist, Dinny, enters the vicarage, she is shown into a "pleasant room which looks as though it would be glad if someone had the time to enter it some day."²¹ This detail adds to the positive picture Galsworthy has drawn so far. This is Galsworthy as we have not seen him before, setting an example to clergymen and the Church in general, and pointing out the only role that he felt they had: to serve mankind. In this Galsworthy closely resembles Anatole France in *The Elm-Tree on the Mall*, who says, we need "priests who recognise the needs of the present day and the requirements of a democratic society."

This leads us to Fréchet's assertion that Hilary's character "should not be taken as reflecting any change in Galsworthy's attitude towards organised religion." I concur with Gindin, however, that "Galsworthy's agnosticism was no longer a barrier to his willingness to include reformed, genial and metaphysically or doctrinally equivocal clergymen among those who represented the concerned and the civilised" (Gindin 1987, 517). In other words, Fréchet is right in saying that it does not mean acceptance of organised religion, but it does mean acceptance of those churchmen who were honestly involved in humanitarian actions, and those with a willingness to drop dogmatism and to be open to other views and doubt. Thus, in *Flowering Wilderness*, Hilary Charwell no longer understands why he became a parson: "What sort of young man could he have been to think he was fit for it?" He realises that he serves "an idea, with a superstructure that doesn't bear examination," and his conclusion remains: "The good of mankind was worth working for" (*Flowering Wilderness*, 401). In

²¹ John Galsworthy, *Maid in Waiting*, 1931, in *The Forsyte Sage Volume 3*, Penguin Books, 2001, p.32.

Over the River (1933), published after Galsworthy's death, Hilary Cherrell (Charwell) makes another appearance. So far he has always been liberal and prepared to accept new developments and a new role for the Church. However, in the case of Clare spending the night with Tony Croom in a car, Hilary draws the line. "Where there's real love I can accept most things; but I don't like messing about with sex. It's unpleasant,"²² is what Hilary says about this. His acceptance of "most things" would include acceptance of divorce after an unhappy marriage. The church's rejection of this is no doubt one of Galsworthy's most important grievances against the orthodox church. However, he also uses Hilary Cherrell here to draw a moral line regarding promiscuity.

Thematically Galsworthy may also have modelled Hilary Cherrell on the clergyman in Shaw's *Widower's Houses* (1892). This clergyman actively campaigns against the social abuses committed by slum landlords, and he even manages to get Sartorius into trouble by exposing his slum exploitation. Shaw, like Galsworthy, considers this the only proper role of a clergyman: offering human kindness where this was due, instead of leading the comfortable life of a rector of a large country parish.

Clergymen and doubt

Marsh refers to the Victorian Age as an age notorious for "its vituperative denominational warfare."²³ Clergymen in Victorian England therefore not only fought against increasing anti-religious feelings among their parishioners and consequently decreasing numbers of churchgoers, they also took part in the general debate among theologians. The main issues of this debate were Church and Dissent, the ideas of the Oxford Movement and the Broad Church, the debate about ritualism, holy communion, the burial of Nonconformists on Church of England churchyards, the Church versus State controversy, the debate about the literal interpretation of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, the historical correctness of the Gospels, Charles Darwin's evolution theory (1859), and the clergy's obligation to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles and the *Book of Common Prayer*. In literature this increasing doubt is reflected, for example, in William Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852), George Eliot's *Amos Barton* (1858) and Mrs Humphrey Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888). This latter novel provided Galsworthy with, perhaps, the best example of a late Victorian clergyman struggling with faith. Through his historical studies and his talks with squire Endover, an avowed atheist and cynic, Robert's faith is shaken and he consequently decides to give up his living. He confesses his problem to his wife: "For six or seven months . . . I have been fighting with doubt of what the Church teaches—of what I have to say and preach every Sunday." He admits that he can no longer believe in incarnation and resurrection and says:

²² John Galsworthy, *Over the River*, 1933, in *The Forsyte Chronicles, Volume 3*, Penguin Books, 2001, p. 722.

²³ P.T. Marsh, *The Victorian Church in Decline*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 246.

“Christ is risen in our hearts, in the Christian life of charity.”²⁴ This novel corroborates McLeod’s statement that by the end of the nineteenth century England was moving from an age of religious ‘certainties’ to one of ‘uncertainty’ and ‘doubt’. To underline this point McLeod refers to ‘Do we Believe?’, the title of a correspondence in *The Daily Telegraph* published in 1904. Several thousand readers sent in their answers showing how Christian orthodoxies were under widespread challenge (McLeod 1996, 176). It is these challenges to faith and the personal struggles resulting from it that we also come across in the clergymen in Galsworthy’s work.

In *Saint’s Progress* (1919), for example, religious doubt is embodied by Edward Pierson, the focal character of this novel. We see him struggling with his love for his daughter, who is pregnant with an illegitimate child. He is worried about his daughter’s loss of faith and indeed struggles with his own faith. He is rejected by his parishioners, as they could no longer accept him as their spiritual guide, because of what happened to his daughter. In the preface to the Manaton Edition, written in retrospect, ten years after the original publication, Galsworthy explains that he intended to present Pierson as “a symbol of the English Church, left somewhat high and dry by the receding waters of orthodox faith.”²⁵ Another example of a clergyman in doubt is the parson in *Escape*. He says to the escaped convict: “What bothers me is my own peace of mind And is it right for a parson to go on where he has no influence?” (Plays, 1029).²⁶

The best example of a clergyman who did away with dogma and accepted his own doubts is that of Hilary Cherrell. As the last clergyman to appear in Galsworthy’s work, he shows the gradual development Galsworthy himself went through in his feelings about the clergy:

If you had examined Hilary Cherrell . . . in the privacy that lies behind all appearance, all spoken words, even all human gesture, you would have found that he did not really believe his faithful activity was leading anywhere. But to ‘serve’ was bred into his blood and bone, as they serve, that is, who lead and direct (Maid in Waiting, 139).

“They serve . . . who lead and direct” seems to be in marked contrast to John Milton’s *On His Blindness*, in which Milton states, “they also serve who only stand and wait,” and “who best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.” This is how Galsworthy emphasises the Church’s duty to try actively to improve people’s lives instead of submissively accepting what Providence had in store for them.

²⁴ Mrs Humphrey Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, Oxford University Press, World’s Classics, 1987, p. 351.

²⁵ John Galsworthy, “Preface” to *Saint’s Progress*, London, Heinemann, Manaton Edition, 1923, pp. vii-ix.

²⁶ Doubt was something that Galsworthy found in all layers of the clergy, from curates to bishops. Of the Bishop of Porthminster, who figures in *Maid in Waiting*, the narrator says after the latter’s death that, “none of those present, not even his chaplain . . . knew whether Cuthbert Porthminster had really had faith, except in that temporal dignity of the Church which he had so faithfully served” (Maid in Waiting, 10).

Galsworthy also read about the psychological and religious struggles clergymen were going through in earlier literature. In Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* "some of the Reverend Frank Milvey's brethren had found themselves exceedingly uncomfortable in their minds, because they were required to bury the dead too hopefully" (*Mutual Friend*, 313). Another clergyman in doubt is Hawthorne's Rev. Mr. Dimmesdale, whose "large dark eyes had a world of pain in their troubled and melancholy depth" (*Scarlet Letter*, 136). His thoughts too sometimes roamed outside "the accepted bounds of orthodox theology", described by Hawthorne as "an iron framework" (*Scarlet Letter*, 145). A more contemporary example is Bernard Shaw's Anthony Anderson in *The Devil's Disciple* (1900), whom Shaw describes in his stage directions as: "No doubt an excellent parson, but still a man capable of making the most of this world, and perhaps a little apologetically conscious of getting on better with it than a sound Presbyterian ought."²⁷ At the end of the play Anderson turns his back on the Church and becomes a captain of the rebel forces in the American struggle for independence: "It is in the hour of trial that a man finds his true profession" (*Puritans*, 117).

Smit and Fréchet's assertion that Galsworthy was heavily biased against the clergy and Smit's claim that they were not given "a fair deal" by him is therefore only partly true. Most caricatures may be traced to the period from 1900 to 1915, whereas his portraits of clergymen struggling with their faiths date to the period from 1915 to 1933. It is Galsworthy's psychological portraiture that makes them so much more human, so much more recognisable and more amiable, and one may therefore justifiably claim that Galsworthy had meanwhile adopted a less one-sided and more sympathetic picture of the clergy. Take Michael Strangway in *A Bit o' Love*, Edward Pierson in *Saint's Progress*, the parson in *Escape*, and Hilary Charwell in the later *Forsyte Chronicles*. They try to carry out their professions with devotion to duty and clearly act from both religious zeal and a humanitarian mainspring, which to Galsworthy was the only religion suitable to modern man.

²⁷ George Bernard Shaw, *Three Plays for Puritans*, Penguin Books, 2000, p. 47.

4. The Church as an Institution

In this chapter I will focus on Galsworthy's feelings about the Church as an institution, the position of the Church in especially upper-middle-class society in the first two, turbulent decades of the last century, from the *fin de siècle* through the Great War until Galsworthy's death in 1933. I will also look into the increasing demand for a shift from orthodoxy towards humanitarianism, the Church's role before and in the Great War, Galsworthy's feelings about Nonconformism and his relative appreciation of Roman Catholicism.

Institutionalised religion

That institutionalised religion was a theme that Galsworthy had set his mind on appears from his correspondence with Edward Garnett. In 1905, when he was still writing *The Man of Property*, Galsworthy asked Garnett's advice about a theme he had had in mind for some time, indeed since the time he had been writing *The Island Pharisees*. In his letter to Garnett he points to the "disharmony of the Christian religion with the English character," and wonders about the "cant and humbug" of the English professing it as a *national* religion. He tells Garnett that he intends to "carry on this idea for at least two more volumes" (Garnett 1934, 84). For *The Man of Property* he therefore suggests such subtitles as "National Ethics—I," or "Christian Ethics—I," or "Tales of a Christian People—I" (Garnett 1934, 84-85). Garnett apparently advised him otherwise, as in a letter in June 1905 Galsworthy replies: "I expect you are right about the sub-titles" (Garnett 1934, 93). That is all we hear about this. Still, this clearly shows how Galsworthy intended to explore the themes of the Church and religion further in his novels. *The Country House* (1907) and *Fraternity* (1909) sufficiently bear witness to that. As a matter of fact, he writes to an unrecorded correspondent, probably in 1909, that if one reads *The Man of Property*, or *The Island Pharisees*, or even *The Country House*, one will notice that the writer is constantly trying to make people aware of "Pharisaism . . . intolerance and humbug, which stand in the way of sympathy between man and man" (Reynolds 1936, 79). This shows us how Galsworthy himself realised how this theme suffused his work.

The first indication of Galsworthy's views on the Church as an institution appears in *The Island Pharisees* (1904). Shelton, the protagonist, expresses his critical view on the Christian Church when he says, "Cathedrals are very fine, and everybody likes the smell of incense; but when they've been for centuries without ventilation you know what the atmosphere gets like" (*Island Pharisees*, 105). The same criticism is noticeable in Galsworthy's early short story, "A Fisher of Men" (1908). The rector in this story argues that God has passed himself into his Church and that the Church has passed itself into its ministers. Thus, on the Church's ministers "there ha[s] been enjoined the bounden duty of instructing, ruling and saving at all

costs the souls of men” (Caravan, 772). It is with this basic concept in mind that the rector in “A Fisher of Men” says to his congregation: “God, who has set his holy Church over you, is a just and strong God; as a kind master chastises his dogs for their own good, so will He chastise you” (Caravan, 776). Of the Church he says: “Its mission is to command, yours to obey” (Caravan, 777). Galsworthy gives this type of Church the epithet of the “Church militant that lived by domination” (Caravan, 779), and rejects any suggestion that people are guarded by a superior force, or derive authority for their actions from any such force. In the words of one of the parishioners in “The Fisher of Men”: “Talk of lovin’ kindness, there’s none ‘bout the Church, ‘sfar’s I can see, ‘tes all: ‘Du this, or ye’ll be blasted!” (Caravan, 778)

Galsworthy found a justification for his ideas in Emerson, among others. In Emerson’s address delivered at the graduation of the Senior Class in Divinity College of Harvard University, called “An Address” (1838), Emerson advises the young theologians in his audience to “cast behind [them] all conformity.”¹ In his *Sermon CLXII* (1832), known as the “Lord’s Supper Sermon”, Emerson practised what he preached and renounced his office as a minister of the Unitarian Church. In this sermon Emerson points to the ritualistic and liturgical aspects of contemporary church services and compares them with the Jewish religion and pagan religions: “It was all body, it had no life,—and the Almighty God was pleased to qualify and send forth a man to teach men that they must serve him with the heart; that only that life was religious and good.” It was especially its institutionalised, compulsory character that went against the grain with Emerson. He therefore states: “Freedom is the essence of Christianity. It has for its object simply to make men good and wise. Its institutions should be as flexible as the wants of men” (Emerson, 25). This idea of freedom Galsworthy also came across in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. One of Flaubert’s characters argues that “Toleration is the surest way to draw people to religion.”² Anatole France too points to the domination of the Church in his *The Gods are Athirst* when he says: “The empire the clergy still wields over the masses of the foolish . . . I beg pardon, I meant to say,—of ‘the Faithful.’”³ Also a contemporary writer like John Masefield confirms Galsworthy’s thinking. Thus, Masefield writes to Galsworthy in 1914 about the Church’s “authority and want of understanding” (Marrot 1936, 450), which goes to show how much the Church’s role and attitude was an issue in the debate among contemporary writers. It is Galsworthy himself who writes in the Preface to the Manaton Edition of *Saint’s Progress* in 1923, that the reason why the Church’s influence has waned, is that it “tried to command instead of being content to serve.” He adds that the Church’s tragedy is “the survival in it of the imperative mood” (Manaton vol. XII, ix-x).

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “An Address”, 1838, in *Emerson’s Prose and Poetry*, ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris, New York and London, Norton Critical Edition, 2001, p. 79.

² Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 1856, Ware, Wordsworth Classics, 2001, p. 167.

³ Anatole France, *The Gods are Athirst (Les Dieux ont soif)*, 1912), London, The Bodley Head, 1924, p. 132.

Church and the middle classes

In this section I will analyse how Galsworthy describes the role that the Church played especially for the middle classes. It is through his characters and their discussions in *The Forsyte Chronicles*, *The Freelanders*, *Fraternity* and *Saint's Progress*, to name but a few of his novels, that we get a picture of what people thought, and how they behaved in connection with the Church. This picture is Galsworthy's subtly drawn, but satirical mirror of contemporary society.

As McLeod points out, Anglicanism was very strong in the upper middle class, among, for instance, successful business and professional men and their wives. However, also Dissent was strong in this social class. The religious census in London of 1902-1903 shows that this was the time in which church membership reached its maximum level. Many members of this class were active church members devoting much of their wealth to religious causes and much of their free time to good works. This was particularly true for upper-middle-class women, who often escaped from a rather narrow existence and found a meaning to their lives in visiting the poor. There was a clear tendency also for successful businessmen brought up in other denominations to convert to Anglicanism (McLeod 1996, 22-24), which goes to show how Anglicanism and respectability were interrelated. In *The Man of Property* (1906) Galsworthy subtly satirises these middle-class women, whose names were "upon the committees of numberless charities connected with the Church—dances, theatricals, or bazaars," and whose sole purpose was to get a return for their money. The butt of Galsworthy's ridicule is Mrs Baynes, Bosinney's aunt, who is described as "one of the principle priestesses in the temple of Forsyteism," and whose motto was "Nothing for nothing, and really remarkably little for sixpence" (Man of Property, 216-217).

If we look at the older Forsytes in *The Man of Property* (1906), the generation of James, Timothy and Old Jolyon, the embodiment of the bourgeoisie at the end of the Victorian age, the first glimpses appear of Galsworthy's satire of their religion and the role of the Church. The narrator tells us that these older Forsytes were "in the natural course of things members of the Church of England, and caused their wives and children to attend with some regularity the more fashionable churches in the Metropolis." Galsworthy clearly exposes this focus on outer show and propriety. Galsworthy's satire becomes even clearer when he says: "To have doubted their Christianity would have caused them both pain and surprise. Some of them paid for pews, thus expressing in the most practical form their sympathy with the teachings of Christ" (Man of Property, 24). This way of looking at middle-class churchgoing was something Galsworthy shared with his sister Lillian, who writes in one of her notebooks in 1886/7: "It grows on me this habit of outwardness" (GP, JG 10/3/1-3). We must realise, however, that both Lillian and John went to church until at least 1892, as Lillian's diaries show. These same diaries also confirm that their father, John Galsworthy Sr., only went to church at Christmas and at Easter, very much in line with the older Forsytes.

The Church was seen as an institution one belonged to, to be baptised and married in and buried from, and which men “caused their wives and children to attend with some regularity.” The picture Galsworthy paints is clearly one of decorum, having little to do with true religion. Twenty-four years later the picture of this generation has remained unchanged, as appears from the following passage from *On Forsyte ‘Change* (1930), in which Galsworthy published a number of additional stories about the Forsytes. In the story “The Buckles of Superior Dosset”, Young Jolyon asks his aunt whether his grandfather ever went to church. Aunt Ann tells him that he was brought up to be a Wesleyan, “so he never quite approved of Church,” and she adds that he did not mind his children going to Church though. Ann concludes by saying, “I don’t think I should call your grandfather a very religious man after our dear mother’s death. He always gruded that so much” (Forsyte ‘Change, 12).

The idea that the church was for women and children is reinforced in the story “Dog at Timothy’s” about Ann, Juley and Hester, who lived with their brother Timothy. We learn that “Ann was unable to stand the fatigue of service,” and what a pity it was “that she always had such a headache on Sunday mornings.” Of Timothy the narrator comments: “Timothy, of course, did not go to church—it was too tiring for him—but he always asked the amount of the offertory, and would sometimes add that he didn’t know what they wanted all that for” (Forsyte ‘Change, 131, 137). In *Fraternity* (1908) Galsworthy paints a picture of contemporary middle-class churchgoing through a description of Bianca Dallison’s sister Cecilia and her husband Stephen. “Neither [Cecilia] nor Stephen had been to church since their daughter Thyme was christened; they did not expect to go again till she was married, and they felt that even to go on these occasions was against their principles; but for the sake of other people’s feelings they had made the sacrifice, and they meant to make it once more, when the time came.”⁴ It confirms the picture that churchgoing had decreased steadily over the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, but that most people remained members of the Anglican Church. Like the “Perfect One” in *Satires and a Commentary* one “remained in the English church, hit things, and hoped for the best” (*Satires*, 107). In Reimondo’s dissertation, *The Ethics of Galsworthy* (1937), this attitude of Galsworthy’s was referred to as “a mockery of the manner in which a devout Christian should keep the Lord’s Day” (Reimondo 1937, 50), which shows how at least this American scholar objected to Galsworthy’s morals where the observance of the Sunday as the “Lord’s Day” was concerned.

Galsworthy also states in *The Man of Property* (1906) that the Church in those days was heavily dependent on the upper middle classes, on “Forsyteism”. It is Young Jolyon who describes the relation between the Church and “Forsyteism”, the real belief of the upper middle classes, as Galsworthy terms this. Young Jolyon says in *The Man of Property*: “It’s their wealth and security that makes your art possible, makes literature, science, even religion

⁴ John Galsworthy, *Fraternity*, 1909, New York, Caroll & Graf Publishers, Inc, 1995, p. 110.

possible.” He calls the Forsytes and the class they represent “the pillars of society, the corner-stones of convention.” He adds that art, literature and religion, survive by “virtue of the few cranks who really believe in such things, and the many Forsytes who make a commercial use of them” (Man of Property, 202). Galsworthy thus points to the considerable interdependence between the Church and upper-middle-class society. Galsworthy felt that because these Forsytes were the “corner-stones of convention,” they never questioned the Church’s attitudes or views, nor did the Church question theirs. This is Galsworthy’s critical stance in 1906.

Nine years later, in *The Freelands* (1915), Galsworthy shows us the Church through the eyes of Derek Freeland, for whom “the church itself had . . . a curious fascination.” Derek and his parents were outcasts from the well-to-do Freeland family and no longer part of their social circle or church community. To Derek’s mother the Church was the “emblem of hypocrisy, of a creed preached, not practised; to his father it was nothing, for it was not alive.” But in Derek himself it roused a peculiar feeling, almost a yearning to be part of it. “Churchgoing, with its pageantry, its tradition, dogma, and demand for blind devotion, would have suited him very well,” and he looked at the village church as “the very home of patronage and property and superiority; the school where his friends the labourers were taught their place” (Freelands, 91-92).

One of the reasons for Galsworthy’s rebellion against the Church as an institution may well be found in his own youth. Galsworthy’s *The Freelands* gives us some insight in Galsworthy’s parents’ views on the role of the Church. One of the central characters in *The Freelands* is Felix Freeland, a writer. Where Felix’ ideas may be a reflection of Galsworthy’s own ideas, Felix’ mother, Frances Freeland, was modelled after Galsworthy’s own mother, as Galsworthy himself indicates in a letter from 1915 to his younger sister Mabel Edith (Reynolds 1936, 92). The picture that Galsworthy draws of Francis Freeland, shows us where his mother stood *vis-à-vis* the Church and humanitarianism:

Frances Freeland, he knew well, kept facts and theories especially unrelated, or, rather, modified her facts to suit her theories, instead of, like Felix, her theories to suit her facts. For example her instinctive admiration for Church and State, her instinctive theory that they rested on gentility and people who were nice, was never for a moment shaken when she saw a half-starved baby of the slums. Her heart would impel her to pity and feed the poor little baby if she could, but to correlate the creature with millions of other such babies, and those millions with the Church and State, would not occur to her. And if Felix made an attempt to correlate them for her she would look at him and think: ‘Dear boy! How good he is. I do wish he wouldn’t let that line come in his forehead; it does so spoil it!’ And she would say: ‘Yes, darling, I know, it’s very sad: only I’m *not* clever’ (Freelands, 239).

In a way Felix envies her for her “single-minded power of not seeing farther than was absolutely needful!” and he thought to himself: “With her love of church, how it must hurt her that we none of us go, not even John” (Freelands, 242). Through Frances Freeland we get an intimate portrait of Galsworthy’s mother and her “blind devotion”. This shows us something of the environment in which Galsworthy grew up and the solid position the Church still held in upper-middle-class life.

However, there is an indication of real change setting in in *Saint’s Progress* (1919). Travelling on a train past Tintern Abbey the protagonist of the novel, the Rev. Edward Pierson, realises, to his regret, how the position of the Church has changed over the centuries. Thinking of the old monks who lived there once, he says to himself: “They must have had peaceful lives, remote down here, in days when the Church was great and lovely and men laid down their lives for their belief in her” (Saint’s Progress, 34). That was the Church that Pierson longs for, the Church he has always believed in. However, his son-in-law, George Laird, a confessed atheist, shows us how the position of the Church has indeed changed when he says: “You see, the Church Spiritual can’t make good in this age—has no chance of making good, and so in the main it’s given it up for vested interests and social influence” (Saint’s Progress, 273), thereby indicating the predicament the Church was in. Galsworthy felt that now the Church Spiritual had lost its grip on society from a truly religious and moral point of view, it looked for material and political power.

The First World War marked a substantial change in the position of the Church in British society. The rebellion against the Church as seen in *The Freelands* (1915) and continued in *Saint’s Progress* (1919) is a reflection of what was happening in reality in society at the time. I will have a look at three more examples that illustrate how Galsworthy depicts the change that was taking place. Thus, in *To Let* (1921), the Forsyte family has lived through the war and things have changed dramatically as far as religion is concerned. Whereas in the 1890s they were “in the natural course of things members of the Church of England,” the narrator now informs us casually that Soames’ cousin Francie, “is now quite emancipated from God (she frankly avowed atheism).”⁵ Another passage from *To Let* shows us Soames, shortly after Mr Timothy’s death, the last of the old Forsytes, wandering across the graveyard at Highgate Hill where the Forsyte family grave is situated, reminiscing about all the changes that have taken place:

‘To Let’—the Forsyte age and way of life, when a man owned his soul, his investments and his woman, without check or question. And now the State had, or would have, his investments, his woman had herself, and God knew who had his soul. ‘To Let’—that sane and simple creed! (To Let, 254).

⁵ John Galsworthy, *To Let*, 1921, Penguin Books, 1970, p. 38.

It was the time that all certainties in life seemed to have vanished. There were no longer the certainties of property, nor were there the certainties offered by the Church. Indeed, certainty had been the hallmark of “Forsyteism”.

Although the times were changing, and social stratifications loosened, people still held on to middle-class values, solid elements of which were baptism, religious education, Sunday schools and church weddings. In *The White Monkey* (1924) Galsworthy shows us how Fleur, as the embodiment of the ‘roaring twenties’, still holds on to these religious conventions. She asks her husband, Michael, in what faith, if any, they would bring up their, as yet, unborn child. She tells him that her mother, Annette, was a Catholic, but “living with father down here, she left off practising.”⁶ Fleur feels that their son “ought to be taught something, because of going to school.” She adds that “having no religion makes one feel that nothing matters.” Michael, finally pressed to give an answer, says that from a doctrinal point of view he had no opinion. “I haven’t got any religion. I believe one has to play the game—but that’s ethics” (*White Monkey*, 237), he replies. Now this is the core of Galsworthy’s own belief, basically humanitarian and very much opposed to the Victorian and Edwardian phenomenon of churchgoing for propriety’s sake, or, what is worse, for property’s sake, as we can make up from Fleur’s words: “If there’s something to be had out of any form of belief, one might as well have it” (*White Monkey*, 237).

In *In Chancery* (1920), on the death of Queen Victoria, Galsworthy sums up the relationship between the Church and the upper middle classes at the end of the Victorian age. This event, “supremely symbolical, this summing-up of a long rich period, impressed his fancy” (*Chancery*, 267). It will be clear that it is not Soames, but Galsworthy himself who is speaking here: “An era which had canonised hypocrisy, so that to seem to be respectable was to be” (*Chancery*, 267). Victoria’s death, however, would mark the beginning of bigger changes yet. In Galsworthy’s final novel of *The Forsyte Chronicles, Over the River* (1933), and indeed his very last novel, published posthumously, it is Sir Lawrence, father of Michael Mont and father-in-law to Fleur Forsyte, who ponders over these same changes in society and envisages a changing role for the Church, or something that would take its place, a new faith: “Religion was nearly dead because there was no longer real belief in future life; but something was struggling to take its place—service—social service” (*Over the River*, 614). In this passage we see Galsworthy returning to the only role he envisages for the Church, a humanitarian one, in line with Anatole France’s view on Christian socialism as the only proper role for the Church or Christianity, which France refers to as “the kingdom of God on earth” (*Red Lily*, 108).

⁶ John Galsworthy, *The White Monkey*, 1924, in *A Modern Comedy*, Penguin Books, 1980, p. 237.

The Church and social issues

This section focuses on the position of the Church in social issues, such as poverty, prostitution, abortion and birth control insofar as this appears from Galsworthy's work. I will use research findings about the Church's changing role in the early twentieth century as the context within which Galsworthy's remarks must be considered.

Historical research by Machin shows that although church attendance had dropped, the Church remained influential. Part of the Church's continuing influence lay in its contribution to the current growth of interest in social reform. Denominational socialist societies were formed by Anglicans, Nonconformists and Roman Catholics in the first decade of the twentieth century. Another clear sign of the Church's interest in social issues is that the Annual Church Congress of the Church of England devoted one of its sessions to social questions in nearly every year from 1880 to 1900. In other Churches, for example the United Free Church, a heated argument took place in 1908 between progressives and conservatives, between "those who wished the Church to work for a reformation of the social and economic structures of society in order to achieve a more Christian social order, and those who held that the Church's only task was to preach the gospel to individuals, leaving it to redeemed individuals to create a more Christian society."⁷ This approach to reform, which has long been known as "Christian Socialism", or the "Social gospel", was shown in a resolution (number 74) of the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1920. The Conference considered it its duty to convince its members of the necessity of nothing less than a "fundamental change in the spirit and working of our economic life." It was their conviction that all Christian people ought to take an active part in bringing about this change, "by which alone we can hope to remove class differences and resolve industrial discords" (Machin 1998, 26). This debate about the position of the Church with regard to socialism is clearly visible in the works of St John Hankin and Shaw, for instance. Thus, there is St John Hankin's Mr Pratt, the rector in the *Return of the Prodigal* (1904), who feels that "a clergyman should have no politics."⁸ And there is Shaw's curate Lexy in *Candida*, who warns Morell that if the latter did not speak at the meeting he was supposed to speak at, the President of the Agnostic League would speak, "and he always insists so powerfully on the divorce of Socialism from Christianity" (Plays Pleasant, 138).

Attempts by the Church to achieve more cooperation in industry naturally included efforts to end strikes by conciliation. Amid the strike-laden fractiousness of industrial relations in the post-war years up to 1926, some Church leaders tried to maintain the example, going back to the 1880s, of intervening in these disputes in order to obtain mutually agreed settlements (Machin 1998, 28). In the General Strike of 1926 the Church urged conciliatory negotiations in the coal dispute, but by no means commended the General Strike. In fact, the general

⁷ Ian Machin, *Churches and Social Issues in Twentieth-century Britain*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 3-5.

⁸ John Hankin, *The Dramatic Works of St John Hankin*, Vol. ii, London, Martin Secker, 1912, p. 121.

stoppage was widely condemned by religious assemblies and newspapers, though “some sermons were strongly in sympathy with the strikers” as the *British Weekly* of 26 May 1926 states (Machin 1998, 37). Galsworthy’s clearest reference to the Church’s role in industrial disputes appears from *Strife* (1909), in which he clearly inveighs against the Nonconformist Church for preaching against the strike. Henry Thomas, a Welsh Nonconformist says in a Welsh accent: “Chapel has spoken and he must not co against *her*” and he dissociates himself from the other strikers by saying, “If you co against Chapel I will not pe with you, nor will any other Got-fearing man” (Plays, 133).

The desire to reform the social order was further stimulated by growing unemployment, not least among women who were discharged, because they were no longer needed to form a wartime workforce. Christian sympathy with the unemployed was displayed in all manner of situations and organisations (Machin 1998, 29-30).

Poverty and living conditions in the slums was the Churches’ greatest concern. Urban growth had left disease and malnutrition in its wake. It was not until Charles Booth’s initial exposure of the extent of London’s poverty in 1892 and the Boer War recruiter’s discovery that more than one-third of the men examined were unfit for military duty, that it was recognised as a national problem.⁹

Of the issues concerning personal behaviour, which were of clear concern to the Churches in the opening years of the twentieth century, drinking and gambling headed the list. The Churches had their own temperance societies overlapping with the work of many national organisations. No other social question of special concern to the Churches aroused so much debate as temperance during the war.

The Churches were also outspoken on matters such as birth control and abortion. Birth limitation was of pressing concern to many families, particularly poor ones. Abortion had been made illegal by an Act of 1803, but the prohibition was reinforced by a further measure in 1861. Abortion was none the less used as a secret back-street practice, which, if discovered, could bring severe penalties on the doctors who performed it. As far as artificial contraception is concerned, it took until 1930 before the International Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops gave a very hesitating concession that private judgment might decide, provided that there was strong justification, whereas ten years earlier the Conference had still pronounced against the practice of artificial contraception (Machin 1998, 8-10).

The Church and social issues in Galsworthy’s work

Galsworthy’s earliest writings already bear witness to his strong social involvement. In *Villa Rubein* (1900), for example, the painter Alois Harz tells his girlfriend Christian Devorell about the period that he was down-and-out: “You pray for a chance, any chance; nothing

⁹ Reba N. Soffer, *Ethics and Society in England*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1978, p. 5.

comes to the poor! It makes you hate the world” (Villa Rubein, 63). He describes how one of his fellow artists, Misek, was so desperate one day that he renounced his religion. In utter desperation Misek seized a picture of the Virgin and Child and threw it on the floor and “trampled on the bits” (Villa Rubein, 64). It is an example of how early in his career Galsworthy articulates his feelings about poverty and its relation to religion. At the time Galsworthy himself had developed a keen interest in the living conditions in the London slums where he collected the rents for his father and, as Barker suggests, began to realise that the wealth of the Galsworthy family was partly derived from the poor living conditions of these slum-dwellers (Barker 1970, 42).

The Church offered charity to the poor, but judging from the following fragment, not everybody was prepared to accept that, because of the conditions involved. In “Demos” (1908), one of Galsworthy’s stories in *A Commentary*, a working-class man says: “I don’t want no money to tell me what’s right and what isn’t” (Satires, 211), which illustrates the concept of “nothing for nothing,” which in itself was a reason for the poor not to ask for help from the Church. Galsworthy also came across this same phenomenon in Dickens’ *Bleak House*, where Mrs Pardiggle, who is distinguished for her “rapacious benevolence” (*Bleak House*, 150), visits a brickmaker’s family. The brickmaker tells her that he has no use for the little book that Mrs Pardiggle gave him during an earlier visit: “there an’t nobody here as knows how to read it; and if there wos, it wouldn’t be suitable to me” (*Bleak House*, 158). It is an example of Dickens’ satire on officious and misdirected charity, after which Galsworthy modelled his own satire. Another example of the same phenomenon comes from Dickens’ contemporary, Elizabeth Gaskell, in her novel, *Cranford*, in which she labels the “kindness to the poor” as offered by the ladies of Cranford, as “somewhat dictatorial” (*Cranford*, 1).

It is particularly Dickens, however, who was an inspiration to Galsworthy in this respect. Dickens strongly criticises moralists and the Church, referring to them as “Ye Pharisees of the nineteen hundredth year of Christian Knowledge” and “teachers of content and honest pride,” telling them to go “into the mine, the mill, the forge, the squalid depths of deepest ignorance, and uttermost abyss of man’s neglect” and asking them to say if “any hopeful plant [can] spring up in air so foul that it extinguishes the soul’s bright torch as fast as it is kindled!” (*Chuzzlewit*, 221)

Dickens also satirises the smugness of middle-class Dickensian society through Mr Pecksniff in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and Mr Podsnap in *Our Mutual Friend*. Pecksniff observes, for instance, that “it is always satisfactory to feel, in keen weather, that many other people are not as warm as you are.” Pecksniff considers this a fine arrangement because “if everyone were warm and well-fed we should lose the satisfaction of admiring the fortitude with which certain conditions of men bear cold and hunger” (*Chuzzlewit*, 116).¹⁰

¹⁰ Pecksniff’s so-called Christianity becomes even clearer when he says grace: “a short and pious grace, involving a blessing on the appetites of those present, and committing all persons who had nothing to eat, to the

A final example from Dickens' *Bleak House* shows us the contrast between the Church and the poor. Dickens gives us a picture of Jo, the crossing sweeper, "looking up at the great cross on the summit of St Paul's Cathedral . . . so golden, so high up, so far out of reach" (*Bleak House*, 326).

Relations between the Church and the poor are also the central idea of Galsworthy's *The Pigeon*. It is through the character of Canon Bertly that we notice that the Church does not want to take sides in the dilemma "to give the State all we can spare, to make the undeserving deserving," or "to support private organisations for helping the deserving, and damn the undeserving" (*Plays*, 331). It is at the end of the play that even this church official says that now he is "sometimes tempted to believe there's nothing for some of these poor folk but to pray for death" (*Plays*, 362). The play ends in the paradoxical situation of Mrs Megan's arrest for attempted suicide, to which Wellwyn, the protagonist, exclaims desperately: "Well! God in heaven! Of all the d—d topsy-turvy—! Not a soul in the world wants her alive—and now she's to be prosecuted for trying to be where everyone wishes her" (*Plays*, 370).

Galsworthy was increasingly concerned about the social circumstances of the poor and actively tried to champion the cause of the poor and the destitute. Thus in 1912 he sent in a paper to the *Daily Mail* entitled "On Social Unrest", in which he claims, among other things, that the divide between the haves and the have-nots is caused by the public-school system: "The public school presents a practically solid phalanx of the fortunate, insulated against real knowledge of, or sympathy with the less fortunate," and he adds that religious bodies too have failed to instil real humanitarian feelings in people. "The religious bodies, let us say, have tried their best, but since our last state is worse than our first, they must be considered to have failed" (*Sheaf*, 152, 156). This is another statement of Galsworthy's on the Church's role in the alleviation of poverty. However, although he criticises the Church, he does not give up hope and argues: "I prefer to think that all is not yet lost; that we are still capable of expressing in the form of a faith the aspiration towards Perfection that does, that must, lie inarticulate within us." He thus replaces Christianity inspired by the Church by compassionate humanitarianism, or, in his own words, by "latent good-will which is implicit within the nation" (*Another Sheaf*, 159). Six years earlier Galsworthy expressed a similar idea in a letter to "My dear C.": "I believe the true reform lies through a new national religious wave (with the present d—d sectarian rot buried)" (*Glimpses*, 133).

Another issue that Galsworthy explores repeatedly is that of prostitution. It is clear from his treatment that he felt pity for prostitutes and that he blamed society for the situation these women found themselves in. In the short story *The First and the Last* (1914), for example, Galsworthy clearly brings about a link between prostitution and the Church when the protagonist says: "Let *them* taste horror—those glib citizens! Let them live as that girl had

care of Providence; whose business (so said the Grace, to effect) it clearly was to look after them" (*Chuzzlewit*, 145).

lived, as millions lived all the world over, under their canting dogmas!” (Caravan, 875). It is a similar spirit that we find in Guy de Maupassant. His sympathy for poor and oppressed women appears from the story “Yvette”, which was translated by Ada Galsworthy. It is the story about the courtesan, Mme Obardi, the “Marquise”, mother of Yvette, who says of herself: “I’m a courtesan! And I’m proud of it! I’m worth a dozen of your ‘honest women!’”¹¹ Maupassant underscores the hopelessness of the situation of these women when Mme Obardi says: “Women can’t make their fortunes by jobbery and swindling. We’ve nothing but our bodies—nothing but our bodies!” (Yvette, 104).^{12 13}

In Galsworthy’s work we also come across the theme of contraception and abortion in relation to the Church’s views on these two moral issues. In the short story “LATE—299” (1923) there is the story of Dr Philip Raider, who was just released from prison after having been incarcerated for three years, for having performed an illegal operation on a woman who “was going to the devil.” On the train home he sits face-to-face to the prison chaplain, who finds it “distressing to see a man who had received this great lesson still so stiff-necked” (Caravan, 690, 685). It is a picture of the Church, unappreciative of the doctor’s dilemma and adamantly refusing to discuss the abortion and contraception issue. In *Windows* Galsworthy shows us Mr Bly’s daughter Faith, who had been imprisoned for having “smothered” her baby. Bly tells Mr March that at seventeen she was “in trouble” and to prevent her baby from being made a ward of court, she killed it two days after it was born. “What can a workin’ girl do with a baby born under the rose, as they call it?” (Plays, 694). This is Galsworthy’s way of drawing attention to the birth-control and abortion issues. Galsworthy’s interest in these issues may also be traced to the works of his literary friends, most notably Edward Garnett’s *The Breaking Point* (1907) and Harley Granville-Barker’s *Waste* (1907). Both plays were banned by the censors because of their overt references to abortion. Galsworthy himself contributed to a private reading of Granville-Barker’s play, which goes to show how much he was involved (MacDonald 1986, 84, 80).

¹¹ Guy de Maupassant, “Yvette” in *Yvette*, London, Duckworth, 1904, p. 104.

¹² Another example of Maupassant’s sympathy for prostitutes may be found in *Boule de Suif*, another of Galsworthy’s favourite Maupassant stories.

¹³ In the short story “Sekhet: A Dream,” published in *The Little Man* (1915), Galsworthy even goes one step further. He gives us a picture of “the Five Judges of the dead” and of Sekhet, who devours the evil souls in the underworld. The judges see a number of dead people that have committed cardinal sins. One of them is a prostitute, whose circumstances rouse the judges’ sympathy resulting in the votes equally divided on her judgment. The chairman has a casting vote and reviews the case. He realises that “the heart of our creed is sympathy and compassion,” but as “the arbiters of morality,” he still feels compelled to condemn her. It is the position of the Church that is at stake here, and it is this position that has to be guaranteed at all cost. Galsworthy takes revenge in this story when in the end Sekhet, instead of devouring the condemned prostitute, turns on the judges. (John Galsworthy, “Sekhet: A Dream”, in *The Little Man*, 1915, London, Heinemann, 1925, pp. 227-228).

In sharp contrast to the prison chaplain in “LATE-299” and Edward Pierson¹⁴ in *Saint’s Progress* stands the Rev. Hilary Charwell, vicar of St. Augustine’s-in-the Meads in London (Swan Song, 1928). His views on prostitution and birth control show us how different a priest he is. In this novel he gives evidence for the defence in the case of Millicent Pole, a young woman who was arrested for soliciting. Hilary does his utmost to show her in the best possible light, even enlisting Fleur’s services in giving the girl a good reference from the Rest House that the former was running in Dorking. To his niece’s question whether he really believes the girl was not soliciting, he replies that “to convict her was the surest way to send her to hell” (Maid in Waiting, 38). Clearly, Hilary was the example of the new role Galsworthy saw for the Church, a role of service to mankind and geared to the needs of the poor and the destitute. What Hilary Charwell does in defence of a prostitute in *Swan Song*, and says about birth control in *Maid in Waiting* (1931), is meant as an example to the Church and to many of Galsworthy’s readers.

As for our Christian principles; being patriots, we didn’t apply the Christian principle ‘Thou shalt not kill’ during the war, so, being patriots, we can’t logically apply the Christian principle ‘Thou shalt not limit’ now. Birth control is essential for the slums anyway (Maid in Waiting, 233).

Hilary is prepared to adjust his Christian principles to circumstances and new ideas. This is what Galsworthy wishes to point out here, showing the reader the only position of the Church he considers worthwhile.

The Church and the Great War

In the passage just quoted from *Maid in Waiting* Galsworthy links the Christian principle ‘Thou shalt not kill’ to warfare and hints at their incompatibility. To Galsworthy the mere fact that the First World War broke out among Christian nations, all worshipping the same God, meant the bankruptcy of the traditional Church. As such the war marked a turning point in the history of religion, as, to many people, the horrors of warfare were no longer compatible with belief in Christ and God and what religion stood for. Many people, especially in the cultured classes, lost their faiths as a result. On 4 August 1914, the day the war broke out, Galsworthy wrote in his diary: “If this war is not the death of Christianity, it will be odd. We need a creed that really applies humanism to life, instead of talking of it. God in the mouths of all those potentates—the word does not beseem them” (GD, 4 August 1914). To Galsworthy it was the confirmation of his own anti-religious feelings, which he had had from the outset of his career

¹⁴ Abortion, and its rejection, also crops up in *Saint’s Progress*, where the Rev. Edward Pierson’s daughter falls pregnant without being married. Edward’s brother Robert hints at the possibility of abortion when he says to Edward: “I suppose you’ve—no, I suppose you haven’t—”, resulting in “a peculiar smile” that had come on Edward’s face (*Saint’s Progress*, 187).

as a writer. Clearly, his ideas had been reinforced, for example, by Tolstoy, who in his *War and Peace* also points to this incompatibility of religion and warfare. Tolstoy, like Galsworthy, wonders how they could kill and maim and then “offer thanksgiving services for having slain such vast numbers.”¹⁵ The cruelty of the Napoleonic wars, as depicted in *War and Peace*, actually results in Pierre’s loss of faith. “Though he did not realise it, his faith in the right ordering of the universe, in humanity, in his own self and in God had been destroyed” (*War and Peace*, 1146). It is not only Tolstoy, however, whom Galsworthy uses as a resource in this respect. Anatole France too speaks out against warfare by saying that “It is true . . . that in civilised nations, the glory of massacre is the greatest glory known.”¹⁶ Even Thackeray’s Barry Lyndon says: “What a number of items of human crime, misery, slavery, go to form that sum-total of glory!”¹⁷ And it is Thackeray’s Lieutenant Henry Esmond who says that he was “ashamed of [his] trade when [he] saw those horrors perpetrated.”¹⁸

Research by Robbins shows, that at the time the Church of England was so closely enmeshed in the existing social and political structure that its leaders, even if they had wanted to, could not have led the Church as a body to take a stance on international issues such as the war threat posed by the German Kaiser. This would have been at variance with the nation as a whole. Indeed, as Robbins ironically states, “there was in these circumstances no reason why the Archbishop of Canterbury’s wife should not have been an entirely appropriate person to launch a battleship—as she did in 1911.”¹⁹ Robbins also demonstrates that the Prime Minister reproached the Churches for their lack of activity in preventing the war. However, as he suggests, the problem was that the Churches were supported by “capitalists and warmongers” (Read 1982, 124). Wilkinson indicates, however, that contrary to what the Prime Minister observed at the time, there had been attempts to prevent war through all kinds of international Christian initiatives. Anglican bishops had actually visited Germany and, indeed, even as late as 1914 mutual friendship among Christians in Europe was what the leadership of the Churches in Britain and Germany had been seeking to promote with a view to preventing war.²⁰

When the war actually broke out there was initially a strong atmosphere of fellowship in society in general. As Rose indicates, all the warring parties, from Liberals to militant suffragettes, which “had been tearing Edwardian society apart,” suddenly closed ranks at the

¹⁵ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 1864-1869, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 922.

¹⁶ Anatole France, *The Wicker-work Woman*, (*Le Mannequin d’Osier*, 1897), London, The Bodley Head, 1924, p. 169.

¹⁷ William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon Esq.*, 1844, Penguin Books, 1975, p. 80.

¹⁸ William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond*, 1852, Edgar F. Harden (ed.), New York and London, Garland Publishing Inc., 1989, p. 211.

¹⁹ Keith Robbins, “The Churches in Edwardian Society” in Donald Read (ed.), *Edwardian England*, London, The Historical Association, 1982, p. 124.

²⁰ Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War*, London, SPCK, 1978, pp 22-23.

declaration of war.²¹ This was the temperament in which Rupert Brooke wrote his patriotic war poems.

The actual outbreak of war also caused a radical change of attitude among the Church leaders. As Wilkinson suggests, “the invasion of Belgium had particularly shocked and united Christian opinion in England. It seemed a flagrant violation of the principles of international law.” Wilkinson quotes Lang, Archbishop of York, as saying: “I hate war, I detest it. It is the bankruptcy of Christian principle.” However, Lang believed the war to be “righteous”, and that Britain was “bound in honour” to enter it (Wilkinson 1978, 16). Although Archbishop Davidson of Canterbury refused Lord Derby’s request to appeal for recruits from the pulpits, he communicated that “no one was exempt from offering some form of service to the nation,” although he defended the non-combatant status of the clergy (Wilkinson 1978, 33). The Archbishop of York was more forthright when he stated: “The country calls for the service of its sons. I envy the man who is able to meet the call; I pity the man who at such a time makes the great refusal” (Wilkinson 1978, 33). Still, because of this change of attitude the Churches were not infrequently accused of hypocrisy and insincerity and this resulted in a renewed questioning of the essential nature and status of Christianity itself (Read 1982, 124). This, then, is the context within which Galsworthy’s writings must be analysed and it will not come as a surprise that the loyalty between Church and State and the relationship between religion and warfare permeates his novels and plays during and after the war.

We come across this theme of the loyalty between Church and State in Galsworthy’s *The Mob* (1914), for instance. Although the play was first produced in March 1914, only four months before Britain’s declaration of war, the theme seems to have more bearing on the Boer War, or any other colonial dispute, than on the looming Great War. Galsworthy says of this play that his “main motif is the duty of man to stick to his guns in the face of popular disapproval” (Marrot 1936, 390). What he shows in this play is that he expected the Church to adhere to its inherent pacifist philosophy. In flagrant violation of its own religious principles, however, the Church sides with the state on the war issue. The opening words of this play are spoken by the Dean of Stour to his son-in-law, Stephen Moore, Under-Secretary of State. He says that he entirely disagrees with him on the war issue. Anti-imperialist Stephen objects to Britain going to war in what is probably an African, non-Christian country, characterised by the Dean as “a wild lawless race”, which has proved itself “faithless.” It is Galsworthy’s picture of the staunch Churchman and defender of the “national honour”, as opposed to Moore, who wants to follow his conscience. The Dean insists that they “have the right to chastise,” and is convinced that Britain’s “rule will bring blessing” (Plays, 375-377). Moore takes the opposing view, most akin to Galsworthy’s own pacifist outlook and states: “I deny the fantastic superstition that our rule can benefit a people like this, a nation of one race, as different from ourselves as dark from light—in colour, religion, every mortal thing” (Plays,

²¹ Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament*, Athens, Ohio, London, Ohio University Press, 1986, p. 66.

376). The Dean replies: “That to me is an unintelligible point of view.” He feels that when a political issue has become a question of national honour, “there surely comes a point where the individual conscience must resign itself to the country’s feeling.” But Moore remains unprepared to “deny [his] faith”, because “general sentiment’s against [him]” (Plays, 378). Moore then prepares his public speech in which he intends to declare that, “In the name of Justice and Civilization we pursue this policy; but by Justice we hereafter shall be judged, and by Civilization—condemned” (Plays, 380). In this conflict between true and false patriotism, Galsworthy sides with those who have conscientious objections, thereby challenging the Church for its unchristian stance. In spite of Galsworthy’s pacifist ideas as expressed in *The Mob*, on the outbreak of the First World War these feelings were to give way to sentiments of deep hatred of the Germans and a sense of brotherhood with the European nations at war with the Germans. This is not to say, however, that he did not reject the war as such and the weak role the Church played in trying to prevent this war.

In his article “First Thoughts on this War” (1914), Galsworthy lashes out against traditional Christianity and its role in the war. Clearly, the outbreak of the war acted as a catalyst of Galsworthy’s hitherto less outspoken feelings on religion. He poses a very fundamental question: “Three hundred thousand church spires raised to the glory of Christ! Three hundred million human creatures baptised into His service! And—War to the death of them all!” (Sheaf, 175). He wonders how it could be that the people in Europe, all believing in the same God, from whom they derive their inspiration and whose blessing they invoke, were fighting each other. He wonders how it was that “twenty-two million servants of Christ may receive from God the blessed strength to tear and blow each other to pieces, to ravage and burn, to wrench husbands from wives, [and] fathers from their children!” (Sheaf, 176). This failure of religion is explored repeatedly in his wartime writings. In the poem “Wonder”, for example, he is particularly critical of the deity, and wonders why he was supposed to kill his enemy: “If it were true we were born for this—Merciless God, goodbye!”²² Galsworthy could see no justification in a God whose name was invoked equally on both sides of the battle field and who had given his only Son to bring on earth peace and goodwill toward men: “No supernatural creed—in these days when two and two are put together—can stand against such reeling subversion.”²³

In *Saint’s Progress* (1919) Galsworthy employs the Great War as the historical backdrop to the story. He exposes the absence of the Church in the war debate, as if the Church was not part of the contemporary world. In Galsworthy’s own words, Pierson is a “symbol of the English Church left somewhat high and dry by the receding waters of orthodox faith” (Manaton XII, xii). A Belgian painter says to Pierson: “Ah! *monsieur le curé*. . . it is difficult for a good man to see the evil around him. There are those whom the world’s march leaves

²² John Galsworthy, *Collected Poems*, London, Heinemann, 1934, pp. 63-64.

²³ John Galsworthy, “First Thoughts on this War”, in *A Sheaf*, London, Heinemann, 1916, p. 176.

apart, and really cannot touch. They walk with God, and the bestialities of us animals are fantastic to them” (Saint’s Progress, 157-158). Later in the novel the painter says to Noel that her father’s true tragedy is “to be alive, and not living enough to feel reality” (Saint’s Progress, 209). He then goes on to ask her if she knows Anatole France’s description of an old woman: “*Elle vivait, mais si peu,*” and asks her if that would not be well said of the Church in these days (Saint’s Progress, 209).

Six years later, in 1925, Galsworthy still expresses his anger with “those who trade in words, principles, theories and all manner of fanatical idiocy to be worked out in the blood and sweat of other men.” These are the words of Wilfred Desert, a friend of Fleur’s in *The White Monkey* (1924). Desert had seen so much of the war, that “No religion and no philosophy” would satisfy him, “—words, all words” (White Monkey, 45).²⁴

Nonconformism and Roman Catholicism

This section examines Galsworthy’s views on Nonconformism and Roman Catholicism. In 1982 Fréchet indicated that Galsworthy’s attacks were aimed only at the Church of England. “Nonconformists are more or less excluded from [Galsworthy’s] picture of English society” (Fréchet 1982, 190). The following analysis aims to demonstrate that Galsworthy does present us with a picture of Nonconformism, which, in a way, is even more critical than that of the Church of England. Galsworthy’s remarks about Roman Catholicism are different again from those on the Church of England or Nonconformism, and in line with his observations on Roman Catholic church buildings, cathedrals and the French clergy.

“Protestant Non-conformism is a multifarious thing and in nineteenth-century Britain that variety was at its greatest—socially, theologically, politically, organisationally and architecturally” (Brooks 1995, 82). As McLeod points out, the religious census of 1851 already indicated that Nonconformists made up a majority of the churchgoing population in most of the larger towns, and by the 1880s and 1890s this predominance was even more marked. The 1851 census also showed that Church was far ahead in most of southern England, whereas in Cornwall, and in the North, Chapel was dominant. Chapel people were divided into numerous denominations, of which four attracted congregations totalling over 100,000 in 1851. These big four were the Wesleyan Methodists, the Independents or

²⁴ Another example of this alleged failure of religion is perceptible in *Defeat* (1917), to which Galsworthy gave the subtitle “a tiny drama”. In this play there are two characters: a young British army officer and a German girl who works as a prostitute and pretends to be Russian in order to avoid arrest. The girl is greatly embittered because of the atrocities of the war and says that she despises both the British and the Germans: “I believe no more in anything. What is there to believe in? Is there a God? No!” (Plays, 958). Speaking to the officer about the concept of “love”, she maintains: “[A]ll that about love is umbog. We love ourselves, noting more.” To which the officer replies, “[with an outburst] No; we don’t only love ourselves; there *is* more. I can’t explain, but there’s something great; there’s kindness—and—and” (Plays, 961). This girl’s words, however, make it clear, how the horror of war, with its huge loss of innocent lives, caused many people to lose their faiths, and that Galsworthy’s own hope of “love” and “kindness” would be to most people merely empty phrases.

Congregationalists, the Baptists and the Primitive Methodists. One other major denomination emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, namely General Booth's Salvation Army. It grew out of the East London Mission, as portrayed for example in Shaw's *Major Barbara*. By 1900 it had risen to a membership of 100,000. The Congregationalists and Baptists had a significant presence in nearly all large towns, the Congregationalists being the predominant form of Dissent in London. The Wesleyans were not only the largest, but also the most widely spread of the Nonconformist bodies, being by far the strongest form of Dissent north of the Trent. The Primitive Methodists were to be found mainly in agricultural and mining areas (McLeod 1996, 27-36). Around 1906 the major Nonconformist denominations in England and Wales began to experience a noticeable numerical decline in membership (Machin 1998, 3). In Edwardian England the gulf between the Church of England and Nonconformism remained very apparent, though individuals looked at each other with "slightly less suspicion and slightly more knowledge". Clergy and ministers were still drawn from substantially different social backgrounds, had different educational experience and enjoyed, or at least expected, a different social status (Read 1982, 118).

McLeod also draws attention to such writers as Arnold Bennett and William Hale White, who, in their novels *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902) and the 'Mark Rutherford' novels (1881 and 1885), describe the Nonconformist milieu in "fairly unsympathetic terms" (McLeod 1996, 36). In Margaret Drabble's biography of Arnold Bennett she argues that what Bennett most resented about Methodism "was its effect on social life and its contribution to the peculiar joylessness of provincial towns in his day."²⁵ Galsworthy, who became friends with Bennett a few years before the First World War, sympathised with what Bennett wrote. In general he appreciated him for being a "realist with a realistic technique" (Marrot 1936, 308), though Bennett was not very appreciative of Galsworthy's work.

Galsworthy himself had little first-hand experience of Nonconformist services and churchgoers, although he was aware of the dogmas Nonconformist ministers preached. Still, it is rather the picture that Charles Dickens draws of hypocritical Nonconformist ministers, like Mr Stiggins, and the story of Mr Pickwick's servant, Mr Weller, whose wife "had been getting rather in the Methodistical order lately" (Pickwick, 281), which have coloured Galsworthy's descriptions of ministers and churchgoers. Also, it may have been Hawthorne's description of the early Puritans in New England that contributed to his mindset. Hawthorne describes them as "stern and black-browed Puritans" (*Scarlet Letter*, 41) and as "bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats" (*Scarlet Letter*, 75). All that contrasts sharply with Hester Prynne, whose dark and abundant hair was so glossy that "it threw off the sunshine with a gleam." Hawthorne is very critical of the early Puritans and indeed strikes the same note as Bennett, when he says:

²⁵ Margaret Drabble, *Arnold Bennett*, London, Weidenfelt and Nicolson, 1974, p. 19.

Their immediate posterity, the generation next to the early emigrants, wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all the subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to learn again the forgotten art of gayety (Scarlet Letter 246).

Galsworthy's reading of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* also influenced Galsworthy in this respect. Arnold criticises the Dissenters for having introduced fanaticism into religion. He would have liked them to give up "their fetish of separatism"²⁶ and blames them for their "narrow and inadequate" idea of human perfection (Culture, 19). He advises them to look to culture as a remedy:

It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best what has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely,—nourished and not bound by them (Culture, 31).

Arnold introduces the two concepts of "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" to illustrate the concepts of religion and culture. Thus he finds with Hebraism the uppermost idea is "conduct and obedience", whereas this formed the very obstacle for Hellenism. He says that "the governing idea of Hellenism is *spontaneity of consciousness*, that of Hebraism, *strictness of conscience*," and "to get rid of one's ignorance, to see things as they are, to see them in their beauty, is the simple and attractive ideal which Hellenism holds out before human nature." There is something that thwarts us in our quest for perfect intellectual vision and that is "sin", Arnold maintains. "The space which sin fills in Hebraism, as compared with Hellenism, is indeed prodigious." Arnold, however, does not say it is a matter of either the one or the other. "Hebraism and Hellenism are, neither of them, the *law* of human development; they are each of them, *contributions* to human development" (Culture 91-98).

The first references to Nonconformism in Galsworthy's own work focus on the relationship between Nonconformism and socialism. An early example is from "Danaë" (1905-1906), in which one of the characters, a staunch member of the Church of England, says: "It's my duty to extend peace and goodwill to all men; but as to these Socialists and Labour fellows—a set of ruffians—nonconformists to a man—I draw the line at them, that's flat" (Pendycyes, 17-18). Galsworthy also hints at the big theological divide between the Church of England and the Nonconformist denominations. This appears from one of his early short stories, "A Fisher of Men" (1908), in which the narrator says about the rector: "He knew

²⁶ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 1869, Smith, London, Elder and Co., 1889, preface p. xxxiii.

that he had preached no narrow doctrines cursed with the bigotry which he recognised in the Romish and Nonconformist faiths” (Caravan, 773). However, nowhere in his writings does Galsworthy enter into the theological differences between these denominations. What he does, however, is to expose the extremism in the teachings of the Nonconformist churches. Thus, in “About Censorship” (1909), Galsworthy wonders why there is censorship of drama and not of sermons: “Thousands of men are licensed to proclaim from their pulpits Sunday after Sunday, their individual beliefs, quite regardless of the settled convictions of the masses of their congregations” (Inn of Tranquillity, 248). Still, he is prepared to accept that these clergymen mostly express feelings “harmonious with the feeling of the average citizen” (Inn of Tranquillity, 248), but he has no doubt about the harmful influence of Nonconformists: “Yet it can hardly be denied that there spring up at times men—like John Wesley or General Booth—of such incurable temperament as to be capable of abusing their freedom by the promulgation of doctrine or procedure, divergent from the current traditions of religion” (Inn of Tranquillity, 248).

In Galsworthy’s work there are a number of instances about the rivalry between Church and Chapel. We have already come across an example in *The Man of Property* (1906), in which there is a description of the church in the village in Dorsetshire, where the roots of the Forsytes are: “two old farms . . . a little grey church with a buttressed outer wall, and a smaller and greyer chapel” (Man of Property, 24). It is no coincidence that the chapel in comparison with the church is described as even “smaller and greyer.” Another instance is from *Over the River* (1933), in which Dinny wonders how her father and mother can continue to go to church every Sunday, “hoping—she supposed—for the best; or was it because if they didn’t the village wouldn’t, and the church would fall into disuse, or at least behind the chapel?” (Over the River, 616).²⁷

Frequently Galsworthy uses the difference between Church and Chapel to indicate class difference. In the following instance his sympathy, by way of exception, lay with the chapel-goer. In *Justice* (1910) Cokeson, a managing clerk, pleads with the prison governor and the prison chaplain to make Falder’s life more bearable in prison. From the very outset of their conversation it is clear that Cokeson does not stand a chance. He tells the chaplain that he has taken an interest in Falder, because they “go to the same chapel”, to which the Chaplain says a little later, “He’s a young man with rather peculiar eyes, isn’t he? Not Church of England, I think?” (Plays, 252). This seems to determine his fate. Galsworthy intended the play as a

²⁷ Here is another example of the Church-Chapel controversy from the story “Manna” (1916), in which the rector of the village of Trover is accused of stealing a loaf of bread from the baker’s cart. The petty sessions court where his case would be heard was crowded both with people from his church and the village chapel. With tongue in cheek the narrator comments that “the occasion was in a sense unique, and its piquancy strengthened by that rivalry which is the essence of religion” (Caravan, 781-782).

critical exposure of the lack of justice, and the lack of humanitarianism in the Church of England.

Another example of Galsworthy's use of the Church-Chapel difference to denote class difference comes from *The Skin Game* (1920), the story of the animosity between the old squire with the telling name of "Hillcrist" and the newly-rich industrialist "Hornblower". The Hillcristes do not want to associate with the Hornblowers, which has greatly infuriated Hornblower: "I'm new, and ye're an old family. Ye don't like me. Ye think I'm a pushin' man. I go to chapel, an' ye don't like that. . . . Well, I don't like you, and I'm not going to put up with your attitude" (Plays, 525). Like all of Galsworthy's Nonconformists, he speaks with an accent. He blames the Hillcristes for being hypocrites: "You talk about good form and all that sort o' thing. It's just the comfortable doctrine of the man in the saddle; sentimental varnish. Ye're every bit as hard as I am underneath" (Plays, 526). He justifies his behaviour by saying that, "God helps those who 'elp themselves, that's at the bottom of all religion" (Plays, 526), as if this were a saying from the Bible.^{28 29 30}

Of all of Galsworthy's literary friends Hudson was most outspoken about Nonconformism, which had a tremendous impact on Galsworthy. Galsworthy's feelings as expressed in his work have been inspired by the atmosphere that Hudson creates when dealing with this subject. In *Shepherd's Life*, for instance, Hudson quotes one of the local residents as saying: "We always say that the chapel ministers are good men: some say they be better than the parsons; but all I've knowed—all them that have talked to me—have said bad things of the Church, and that's not true religion: I say that the Bible teaches different" (Shepherd's Life, 349). This also confirms the rivalry aspect in Galsworthy's novels and plays. In *The Land's End* Hudson calls "the loud and hearty singing in the chapels . . . rather distressing." With reference to the singing of the hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers", he was "almost deafened by the way in which the congregation bellowed out the lines—Hell's foundations tremble at our shout of praise." Hudson adds ironically: "And small wonder I thought, if any sense of

²⁸ This is in fact Aesop's legend of Hercules and the Waggoner, rather than a story from the Bible.

²⁹ Class awareness and snobbery also play an important part in the character of the Nonconformist Mr Wagge in *Beyond* (1917). Mr Wagge is the father of Daisy, a dancer. The narrator describes him as: "short, thick, in a black frock coat and trousers, and a greyish beard. . . . He looked what he was, an English chapel-goer, nourished on sherry and mutton, who could and did make his own way in the world." (John Galsworthy, *Beyond*, 1917, London, Heron Books, 1970, p. 161). Later in the novel Galsworthy blames Mr Wagge for his snobbery. Mr and Mrs Wagge, who have done well financially, have retired to Tunbridge Wells. Mrs Wagge says of her husband that he has always been chapel, "but there's something in a place like this that makes church seem more suitable" (Beyond, 325). However, their behaviour as chapel-goers and later churchgoers stands in sharp contrast to their behaviour in everyday life. It is in this way that Galsworthy tries to expose the hypocrisy of the Nonconformists as a class.

³⁰ A final example of the association of the lower class with Nonconformism and the upper middle class with free thought is to be found in *Windows* (1922). The scene is laid in the house of Mr and Mrs March. Cook speaks to their new maid, Faith, who has just been released from prison after serving time for having smothered her newly-born baby. When Cook asks Faith whether they kept Sundays in prison, Faith tells her smilingly, "Yes, longer chapel", to which Cook replies: "It'll be a nice change for you here. They don't go to Church; they're agnosticals" (Plays, 703).

harmony survives down there.”³¹ Hudson does not blame the Cornish Methodists, as most of them did not share their preachers’ “malignant hatred of the Church” (Land’s End, 112). On the contrary, he finds it a usual thing for chapel-goers to go occasionally to Church as well. Hudson understands why the Cornish people were converted wholesale to Methodism: “It suited them exactly at the time it came to them—a dull and stagnant period in their history when the Church was indifferent” (Land’s End, 197). Referring to sermons in which the ministers preached hell and damnation Hudson says: “Dreadful as this was, and horrible and loathsome to witness by any person of a decent or reverent mind, it was yet a joy to them and gave them what they wanted—a glorious emotional feast” (Land’s End, 198). About John Wesley himself Hudson is ambivalent. On the one hand he refers to him as “a very great man, the greatest of all the sons of the Anglican Church.” On the other hand he says that Wesley “did not know that he was inflicting a deadly injury on the Church which he loved above all things and clung to all his life long, and, finally, that in the end it would all make for ugliness” (Land’s End, 200). This, Hudson feels, is the chief cause of the “repulsion with which Methodism and [Nonconformism] in general was regarded by those who have the sense of beauty, whose hearts echo the poet’s cry—‘Beauty is truth, truth is beauty: that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know’” (Land’s End, 201). Of the actual chapel service in Cornwall Hudson is very critical: “I have found nothing so unutterably repellent as the services here.” He wonders what the effect of such a service would be on a child’s mind: “the intolerable sermon, the rude singing, the prayers of the man who with ‘odious familiarity’ buttonholes the Deity and repeats his ‘And now, O Lord’ at every second sentence—the whole squalid symbolism!” To clinch the matter Hudson says: “If any imagination, any sense of beauty, any feeling of wonder and reverence at the mystery of life and nature had survived in their young minds it must inevitably perish in such an atmosphere” (Land’s End, 203).

Galsworthy’s treatment of Roman Catholicism differs from the way in which he deals with the Church of England faith and Nonconformism. Partly this may be explained by the fact that Roman Catholicism in Britain was only a marginal religion compared with that of the Church of England or the Nonconformist denominations taken collectively. What is also likely, however, is that he sympathised with Roman Catholicism because of his aversion to dogmatic and didactic Protestantism with its sense of moral supremacy.

The 1851 census shows that only four per cent of the population were members of the Roman Catholic Church. As McLeod indicates most of this small group of Roman Catholics were descendents from Irish immigrants and increasingly in the second half of the nineteenth century they were converts from Protestantism, amongst whom were many clergy. The most prominent examples of these were John Henry Newman and Henry Manning, who went on to become Roman Catholic Cardinals (McLeod 1996, 39).

³¹ W.H. Hudson, *The Land’s End*, Hutchinson, London, 1908, p. 109.

In Galsworthy's work there are two examples in which he hints at his views of the Roman Catholic faith. He speaks relatively appreciatively of the Roman Catholic faith in his article "France, 1916-1917" (1917): "Consider how clever and comparatively warm is that cold thing 'religion' in France" (Another Sheaf, 57), which may be explained by his positive experiences with the French clergy during the war. A second example, in seeming contrast to the first, concerns Galsworthy's comment on monastic life, as expressed in "Salta Pro Nobis" (1922). The scene is laid in a Spanish convent where a gypsy dancer, accused of spying, awaits her death sentence. In an attempt to offer her some distraction the Mother Superior asks her to dance for the sisters. The dance calls up memories with the Mother Superior of "that long-ago time . . . when her lover was killed in the Franco-Prussian war, and she entered religion." Galsworthy could not have made the contrast clearer: "This supple figure from the heathen world, the red flower in the black hair, the whitened face, the sweetened eyes, stirred up remembrance, sweet and yearning, of her own gay pulses, before they had seemed to die, and she brought them to the Church to bury them" (Caravan, 496). The Mother Superior recognises similar feelings in a young nun, Marie, and she is not surprised when the next day she receives a letter saying, "Forgive me, my Mother. I have gone back to life." In reaction to this the Mother Superior sits quite still, a picture described by Galsworthy as "life in death" (Caravan, 498). It is a fine psychological sketch depicting the inner struggle between life and "life in death." It is therefore more than a rejection of monastic life, it is rather a rejection of extremism in religion. As such, it is not criticism of the Roman Catholic Church itself, but rather criticism of institutionalised religion and the restrictive doctrines of the orthodox Church. That Galsworthy's sympathies lay more with the Roman Catholic Church than with the Anglican Church is also clear from Rupert Croft-Cooke's article "Grove Lodge", in which he quotes Galsworthy as saying that "although not a Christian, he would, if he were one, be a Roman Catholic, to 'swallow it whole or not at all,'"³² thereby implicitly stating Galsworthy's view that the Church of England faith is a compromise religion.

Conclusion

Galsworthy firmly criticises institutionalised religion as he saw it embodied in a Church that tried to "command rather than to serve," a Church that stood aloof from real life, and whose social involvement he found too meagre. He satirises the upper middle classes for their outward show in relation to religion and their narrow moral values. He blames the Church for siding with the State on the war issue and for not making a firmer pacifist stand. He blames the Church for allowing nations with the same belief to fight one another, and consequently looks upon this failure to prevent this, as the bankruptcy of Christianity. He clearly rejects Nonconformism as the embodiment of orthodoxy. His stock description of a chapel-goer is that of a working-class man speaking with an accent, and if we do find Nonconformists as

³² Rupert Croft-Cooke, "Grove Lodge", London, *Cornhill Magazine*, Autumn 1962.

members of the middle class, Galsworthy depicts them as unscrupulous hypocrites. It is here that we recognise parallels in the works of Charles Dickens. When referring to the religious views of chapel-goers, Galsworthy takes aim at the blind acceptance of their fate. Galsworthy refers to the rivalry between Church and Chapel a number of times, but in his work we always find 'Church' coming out victorious. His rejection of men like John Wesley and General Booth, which he shared with Hudson, must, however, be taken as a more serious indication of Galsworthy's unequivocal rejection of Nonconformism in general, a rejection that had its roots in the works of Dickens, Hawthorne, Matthew Arnold and W.H. Hudson. Although it is also in the Roman Catholic religion that Galsworthy points to forms of extremism, such as monastic life, his treatment of the Roman Catholic faith, its churches, cathedrals and churchgoers, reveals a great deal more sympathy towards Roman Catholicism than to the Protestant religion in all its varieties and manifestations.

5. The Christian and the Good Samaritan

This chapter focuses on Galsworthy's rejection of Christianity in the religious sense and his appeal for a renewed Christianity from a truly compassionate and humanitarian spirit. This was a theme that Galsworthy was preoccupied with already early in his career. Indeed, the first time that Galsworthy points to the gap between Christianity and its realisation in contemporary life is in *The Island Pharisees* (1904), in which the narrator wonders how different "the spirit of Christ was from [its concretions in] Church dogmas" (*Island Pharisees*, 105). Galsworthy returns to the subject later in the novel where he states: "All the world is Christian, but Christian and Good Samaritan are not quite the same" (*Island Pharisees*, 11). It is the same theme that Butler raises in *The Way of All Flesh*, in which his hero, Ernest Pontifex, states: "I cannot call the visible Church Christian till its fruits are Christian, that is, until the fruits of the members of the Church of England are in conformity or something like conformity, with her teaching" (*Way of All Flesh*, 200-201). *The Way of All Flesh* was published posthumously in 1903, one year before the publication of Galsworthy's *The Island Pharisees*. What an analysis of Galsworthy's work brings to light is that his appeal for humanitarianism was a dominant theme throughout his life. It also reveals that there were a number of political and literary influences in Galsworthy's life that contributed to these humanitarian ideas.

Christianity and socialism

An early reference to the theme of Christianity comes from *Danaë* (1905-1906), Galsworthy's unfinished novel, which was later to serve as a basis for *The Country House*. Young Jolyon, who figures in *The Man of Property* as well as in this novel, refers to its protagonist, Danaë Bellew, as "the best Pagan" he has ever seen, and to her brother Solomon as the "best Christian". The narrator adds in comment, that this is "a diagnosis the truth of which suffers in reflecting that, as a matter of common knowledge, Solomon never went to church and held almost Socialistic views" (*Pendycyes*, 46). Galsworthy's implied message is that to him the best Christian is a socialist in the humanitarian sense. Galsworthy's irony becomes even clearer when Young Jolyon argues that contemporary British society is very much like "the spiritual condition of the society at whom Christ preached," and that if Christ were to appear again "we should crucify him." He concludes: "We're not Christians a bit; we're humbugs; and only humbugs in words. At heart we are more Pagan than any other people than the Americans" (*Pendycyes*, 75). Galsworthy pointed to the incompatibility of Christianity with contemporary poverty, social abuse and the divide between the classes. Consequently he sympathised with rising socialism as described by Turgenev, Tolstoy and Maupassant.

Turgenev, like Galsworthy, opposes the world of the aristocracy and it is his focal character, Litvinov, in *Smoke*, who refers to the aristocrats as “despicable vulgar creatures.”¹ It is Turgenev who accuses the aristocracy of “lack of understanding of all on which human life is built, all by which life is made beautiful” (*Smoke*, 213). Turgenev paints a very negative picture of the Russian upper class, and criticises the emptiness of those belonging to it, but especially their conservatism, their rejection of land reform and their refusal to abolish serfdom. Galsworthy says of “Mumu”, one of Turgenev’s short stories, that “no more stirring protest against tyrannical cruelty was ever penned in terms of art”² (*Candelabra*, 139). Many of Turgenev’s *Sketches from a Hunter’s Album*³ contain examples of the gross injustice committed towards the peasants. Stories such as “Bailiff”, “Two Landowners” and “Pyotre Petrovich Karataev” bear some resemblance to Galsworthy’s *The Freelanders* and *The Country House*.⁴ Turgenev’s last novel, *Virgin Soil* (1877), translated by Edward Garnett’s wife Constance, sums up Turgenev’s ideas on the subject of revolt against the ruling classes, and almost seems to forecast such an uprising. At the end of *Virgin Soil*, on Nezhdanov’s death, we also get a glimpse of Turgenev’s misgivings, however. He no longer really believes in “the cause,”⁵ but realises at the same time that what Russia needs are characters like Solomin: “They’re not heroes . . . they are sturdy, rough, dull men of the people. But they’re what’s wanted now” (*Virgin Soil*, 353). It is the type of hero that Galsworthy depicts in *Strike* in the character of Roberts, the strike leader, and there is the obvious link to Solomon, in *Danaë*. Galsworthy felt great sympathy for the movement he read about in Turgenev’s works in which he saw so many parallels to the situation in Britain only twenty years after the publication of *Virgin Soil*.

In Tolstoy’s work Galsworthy came across the same social themes that Turgenev had addressed: the gap between the haves and have-nots, land reform, the abolition of serfdom and emancipation. It is especially in *The Kingdom of God is Within You* that Galsworthy felt a deep kinship with Tolstoy, particularly as far as the latter’s humanitarian ideas are concerned. Tolstoy says, for instance, that everybody knows that in essence all men are equal. “Yet at the same time everyone sees all round him the division of men into two castes—the one, labouring, oppressed, poor, and suffering, the other idle, oppressing, luxurious, and profligate.” He points to “the toiling masses, the immense majority of mankind who are suffering under the incessant, meaningless, and hopeless toil and privation in which their

¹ Ivan Turgenev, *Smoke*, 1867, in *The Best Known Works of Ivan Turgenev*, New York, Literary Classics, p. 184.

² Also indicated by Richard Freeborn in his “Introduction” to Ivan Turgenev, *First Love and Other Stories*, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 14.

³ Ivan Turgenev, *Sketches from a Hunter’s Album*, Richard Freeborn (tr.), Penguin Books, 1990.

⁴ Particularly on the subject of land reform and serfdom.

⁵ Ivan Turgenev, *Virgin Soil*, 1877, Constance Garnett (tr.), New York, New York Review Books, 2000, p. 343.

whole life is swallowed up,” and says that they are “condemned to privation and darkness to minister to the lusts of the minority who keep them down.”⁶

Galsworthy’s other favourite writer, Guy de Maupassant, also overtly articulates his sympathy for the oppressed and he too is outspoken in his disparagement of bourgeois values. Thus he describes six travellers in *Boule de Suif* as “honest and established people who had both religion and principles.”⁷ In the French text that Galsworthy read the use of capitals accentuates Maupassant’s irony even better: “*des honnêtes gens autorisés qui ont de la Religion et des Principes.*”⁸ In the story they are exposed as hypocrites for their virtuous pretences. Maupassant shows a genuine interest in common folk. He needs only few words to paint the picture of real poverty. Of a peasant family he says: “The whole crew existed frugally on soup, potatoes, and fresh air.”⁹ Again he exposes the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie when a gentleman and a young lady pass by, saying: “Oh! Henry, look at that lot of children! Aren’t they lovely, grubbing in the dust like that!” (Yvette, 297).

Similarly in Maupassant’s *Pierre et Jean* there is the contrast between the “luxurious opulence” in which the rich travelled to the United States and the dire circumstances of the steerage passengers. When the protagonist enters the steerage deck he is hit by a “nauseous smell of poor and unclean humanity, a stench of bare flesh more sickening than that of the pelt or wool of animals.” Maupassant describes these desperate people as a “sordid, ragged crowd, this crowd of wretches defeated by life, exhausted, crushed, setting out with emaciated wives and sickly children for an unknown country where they hoped, perhaps, not to die of hunger.”¹⁰

Not only did Galsworthy become familiar with the theme of class distinctions and the gap between the classes in terms of wealth and poverty through writers such as Dickens, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Maupassant, he also read about this in contemporary literature, particularly in the plays of late Victorian and early twentieth-century dramatists. James Barrie, St John Hankin and Shaw had thematised this in a number of their plays, written and staged before and during the period when Galsworthy was writing and rewriting his first satirical work, *The Island Pharisees* (1903-1908), and before Galsworthy wrote his own plays. Barrie, for example, puts the social phenomenon of class divisions under a magnifying glass in *The Admirable Crichton* (1902). One of his characters contends that “our divisions into classes are artificial,” whilst another states that the divisions into classes “are the natural

⁶ Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, translation by Constance Garnett, New York, 1894 <http://www.kingdomnow.org/withinyou.html>, 2002, chapter IV, and alternative translation by A. Delano, London 1894, p. 120.

⁷ Guy de Maupassant, “Ball of Fat”, 1880, in *The Complete Short Stories*, New York, Walter J. Black Inc., 1903, p. 6.

⁸ Guy de Maupassant, *Boule de Suife*, 1880, Paris, Pocket Classiques, 1998, p. 37.

⁹ Guy de Maupassant, “In the Country” in *Yvette*, London, Duckworth, 1904, p. 296.

¹⁰ Guy de Maupassant, *Pierre et Jean*, 1888, Oxford, Oxford World’s Classics, 2001, p. 125.

outcome of a civilised society.”¹¹ In this way Barrie demonstrates the two extremes in this debate.

There are also significant parallels between St John Hankin and Galsworthy in this respect. Much of the social criticism expressed by St John Hankin is mirrored in Galsworthy’s *The Country House*, *The Patrician*, *The Freeland*s, *The Silver Box*, *Joy* and *The Feud*. In Hankin’s play, *The Return of the Prodigal* (1904), Lady Farlingford, representing the landed gentry, admits that class stratification at the time was mainly theoretical and emotional, but, would never say this openly: “I don’t like this pernicious modern jargon about shopkeepers and gentlefolk being much the same. There’s far too much truth in it to be agreeable.” Hankin goes one step further in his irony when Lady Farlingford adds: “No, no . . . rank and birth and the peerage *may* be all nonsense, but it isn’t our business to say so.”¹² Hankin especially ridicules the life style of the landed gentry in *The Cassilis Engagement*. Mrs Cassilis tries to convince Lady Remenham that her son Geoffrey does more than horse-riding and partridge shooting: “Geoffrey’s at the Bar, you know.” To which Lady Remenham replies, shocked, and undoubtedly to the amusement of the audience: “It’s this vulgar Radical notion that people ought to *do* things that is ruining English Society” (Hankin Vol II., 126). This emptiness is one of the themes Galsworthy explores in *The Country House*, *The Patrician* and *The Silver Box*. The same goes for the poverty issue with respect to farm labourers. Here too we see a clear resemblance between Hankin’s plays and Galsworthy’s *The Country House*, *The Patrician*, *The Freeland*s, *The Silver Box* and *The Feud*. It is Lady Farlingford in Hankin’s *The Last of the De Mullins* who expresses her amazement that a Parliamentary candidate for their constituency has pointed to the dismal living conditions of farm labourers: “Mr Ling declared the cottage was damp, and not fit for any one to live in. So ridiculous of him! As if *all* cottages were not damp” (Hankin Vol. I. 177-178). Her daughter sets the right example by saying: “I think it’s dreadful there should be damp cottages anywhere” (Hankin, Vol I, 183). Besides Barrie and St John Hankin, Shaw too, as a true Fabian, exposes, what he calls “middle-class respectability and younger son gentility fattening on the poverty of the slum as flies fatten on filth” (Plays Unpleasant, 26). He says so with reference to his *Widowers’ Houses*, a play that was produced in 1892 and was staged for the sole purpose of convincing voters of the need of drastic political and social reform.

This demand for political and social reform was particularly strong in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. Thus, it was in 1884 that the Fabian Society was founded, a society “committed to gradual rather than revolutionary social reform,”¹³ and meant originally as a counter force to Marxism. Prominent early members were G.B. Shaw, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Emmeline Pankhurst and H.G. Wells.

¹¹ J.M. Barrie, *The Plays of J.M. Barrie*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1933, p. 172.

¹² St John Hankin, *The Dramatic Works of St John Hankin*, Vol. I, London, Martin Secker, 1912, p. 163.

¹³ <http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/About/history.asp>.

Together with the Trades Union Congress, the Fabian Society participated in the founding conference of the Labour Party in February 1900. It took another six years, until the elections of 1906, for Labour to gain its first 50 seats. In these elections, however, it was the Liberal Party that won a landslide victory over the Conservatives with a net gain of 273 seats.¹⁴ Trevelyan notes that “A new generation had arisen, wanting new things, and caring more about ‘social reform’ at home than about ‘imperialism’ in Ireland, South Africa, or anywhere else” (Trevelyan 527). It was not until the split in the Liberal Party in 1916, however, that Labour became a serious alternative to the Liberal Party, and it was only in 1924 that the first Labour government was formed.

Galsworthy sympathised with the Fabians because of their contribution to a new religion, a “new national religious wave,” which he qualifies as a “public spirit and general regard for your neighbour all around.” What was needed for that was “far-sighted individual action and sacrifice of the individual” (Glimpses, 133). Galsworthy advised the Fabians to devote themselves “to this branch of the business and not to this plus the political.” It confirms that Galsworthy’s involvement in humanitarianism is not rooted in politics. In fact, in spite of all humanitarian causes that he championed, he was basically apolitical. He separated his humanitarianism from politics: “Let the politicians take care of themselves, and let everyone work at inspiring and fanning the glow—then the politicians of the future will find their work easy” (Glimpses, 133).

Ethic Christianity

Galsworthy’s treatment of the theme of Christianity and its contemporary realisation, and his plea for a more socially just society, is prevalent in his work until the end of his life. This is also a reflection of the debate that was taking place from the 1880s onwards about the proper role of the Church and that of individual Christians. It is one of the central thematic concerns in Galsworthy’s *The Pigeon* (1912), for example. One of the characters in this play, Ferrand, the French vagabond who also appeared in *The Island Pharisees* eight years earlier, is grateful for the hospitality that Wellwyn offers him. He realises that this is not customary and that the world would reproach Wellwyn for his kindness. Ferrand asks him what would happen “if HE Himself were on earth now.” He feels sure that Jesus would be denounced in the papers as “a sloppee sentimentalist!” He adds that those who would do so “would all be most strong Christians.” Ferrand tells Wellwyn that he does not rank him among these fake Christians: “I saw well from the first that you are no Christian. You have so kind a face,” he says (Plays, 337). As Weales (1961) also indicates, this idea of Galsworthy’s, that Christ might not have

¹⁴ G.M. Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, Penguin, 1971, p. 527.

been “socially acceptable in the contemporary world,” is more fully developed in *The Little Man* (1913).^{15 16}

The outbreak of the First World War proved to Galsworthy the failure of orthodox religion as embodied in the established Church. His conclusion was: “Whatever else be the outcome of this business, let us at least realise the truth: It is the death of dogmatic Christianity!” However, what Galsworthy adds to this is his belief in a demystified faith, a statement fundamental to his thinking and increasingly permeating his work: “Let us will that it will be the birth of a God within us, and an ethic Christianity that men really practise!” As such this is a direct link with Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. When Galsworthy envisages such a new form of ethic Christianity, he is sure that it would be “far more Christian than the so-called Christianity which has brought us to these present ends.” He feels that man could be saved “not by a far-away despotic God . . . but by the divine element in Man, the God within the human soul” (Sheaf, 176-177).

Galsworthy returns to the subject in *A Bit o’ Love* (1915), in which Michael Strangway, the curate, is teaching a Bible class to his young parishioners Ivy, Gladys, Conny and Mercy. He speaks to them about Christianity, saying that it is not enough to love people because they are good to you, or because in some way or other you get something by it. “We have to love because we love loving” (Plays, 420). When Strangway asks the girls what they mean by “a Christian”, they tell him, “Tis a man whü goes to church”, and another: “He ‘as to be baptised—and confirmed; and—and buried” (Plays, 420). Strangway tells them that St Francis of Assisi to him was the best Christian: “everything to him was brother or sister—the sun and the moon, and all that was poor and weak and sad, and animals and birds” (Plays, 421).

Galsworthy also expresses this idea of goodness for goodness’ sake in *The Apple Tree* (1916). Stella is worried about Ashurst’s religious ideas and particularly his rejection of life after death and the divinity of Christ. Ashurst tries to explain to her what his objections are to orthodox religion: “At the back of orthodox religion, so far as I can see, there’s always the idea of reward—what you can get for being good.” In a truly Galsworthian fashion Ashurst says: “I believe in being good because to be good is good in itself” (Caravan, 384-385).

A similar debate takes place in *Saint’s Progress* (1919), in which Edward Pierson, the rector, speaks to his daughter, who has just lost her fiancé in the war. She asks her father,

¹⁵ Gerald Weales, *Religion in Modern English Drama*, Westport, Connecticut, 1976, p. 16, reprint of the edition published by University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1961.

¹⁶ In this play an American, a German and the Little Man are waiting in a railway station café. To pass the time they discuss such issues as democracy, brotherhood and equality. It is the American’s firm belief that they are on the eve of the Kingdom of Christ: “We are mighty near to universal brotherhood,” he says. But the Little Man expresses some doubt about this and comments: “I wonder. One wants to, but somehow—” and shakes his head. What follows in the play is the unchristian behaviour of all but the Little Man, when, on the arrival of the train, a young mother with a baby and a good deal of luggage cries for help: “Herr Jesu! Hilfe!” (Plays, 929). It is the Little Man who is the only one who comes to her assistance and little remains of the American and the German’s empty phrases of brotherhood.

whether he is sure “we’re really Christians.” She adds that she thinks “that Christianity is what you do, not what you think or say.” Her father’s patronising reply, “Don’t get such ideas into your head my child. There’s a lot of rebellious talk and writing in these days” (Saint’s Progress, 147), does not satisfy her at all.¹⁷

In fact Galsworthy already reaches the conclusion that Christianity is what you do, not what you think or say, in 1904 in *The Island Pharisees* and re-states this in a letter in July 1909 to an unrecorded correspondent, who asks him about “the road leading away from the morass of un-fraternity.” Galsworthy tells her that there is no definite road and that there is only “a feeling in the heart.” He adds: “Everyone knows what that feeling is or ought to be—it’s the commonplace of Christianity, which religion, if dead (and I think rightly dead) in its dogmas, is living enough (perhaps never more so) in its essence” (Reynolds 1936, 78).

Galsworthy’s censure of orthodox Christianity and the alternative he offers in humanism, was not received with equal appreciation everywhere, which also goes to show how Galsworthy, together with others, both contemporaries and earlier writers, was breaking new ground. For example, the authoritative American magazine *The Nation*, which discussed *The Island Pharisees* on its first publication in 1904, refers to it as a “lengthy diatribe at what the author calls Conventions and most people call Morality.” The critic blames Galsworthy for being “facetiously sarcastic over the lack of true Christianity in marriage, class distinctions, patriotism, organised philanthropy,” and even labels Galsworthy’s criticism as “purely destructive.”¹⁸ This negative piece of criticism from New York stands in sharp contrast to what a British critic says at the time in *Athenaeum*, referring to this novel as “subtle, sincere and occasionally humorous satire.”¹⁹

To conclude this analysis of what Galsworthy writes about Christianity in its practical concretions, I now turn to what he says in *Speculations*, an address he held in 1918, in which he is very outspoken about his views on modern man and his religion, summing up his ideas as he had had them for fifteen years. Again he rejects traditional religion in this address and prefers it replaced by a new faith of “unselfish humanity”, in which “God is the helping of man by man”:

Modern man has cut loose from leading strings; he stands on his own feet. His religion is to take what comes without flinching or complaint, as part of the day’s work, which an Unknowable God, Providence, Creative Principle, or whatever it shall be called, has appointed. Observation tells me that modern man at large, far from inclining towards the new personal elder-brotherly God of Mr Wells, has turned his face the other way. He confronts life and death alone. By courage and kindness modern man

¹⁷ A similar statement about the hypocrisy of present-day Christianity is made in *A Family Man* (1920), in which Maud says to her father, that “there’s only one thing wrong with Christians—they aren’t” (Plays, 606).

¹⁸ “Eight Novels,” *Nation*, New York, Volume LXXXIII (23 June 1904) p. 501.

¹⁹ “New Novels,” *The Island Pharisees*, *Athenaeum*, No. 3987 (26 March 1904), p. 394.

exists, warmed by the glow of the great human fellowship. He has re-discovered the old Greek saying: 'God is the helping of man by man'; has found out in his unselfconscious way that if he does not help himself, and help his fellows, he cannot reach that inner peace which satisfies. To do his bit, and to be kind! It is by that creed, rather than by any mysticism that he finds the salvation of his soul. . . . Modern man, take him in the large, does not believe in salvation to beat of drum; or that, by leaning up against another person, however idolised and mystical, he can gain support (Another Sheaf, 128-129).

Now that we have gained an insight into Galsworthy's philosophy of life, his basic concept of humanism, what he calls "unselfish humanity", in which "God is the helping of man by man," I now turn to the question who it was that influenced Galsworthy in developing this philosophy.

Starting out with those writers that Galsworthy mentions himself as the writers he feels he was influenced by, it is Cervantes, to begin with, in whom Galsworthy found a kindred spirit. Don Quixote effectively summarises his mission in life as follows: "In giants we must kill pride and arrogance: but our greatest foes, and whom we must chiefly combat, are within."²⁰ Also Sancho's maxim "He preaches well that lives well . . . that is all the divinity that I understand" (Don Quixote, 472), must have appealed to Galsworthy.

Of all writers it was Charles Dickens who affected Galsworthy most in the development of his humanist ideas. It is in his "Introduction to *Bleak House*" that Galsworthy refers to Dickens as a "generous heart, a heart that hated meanness and hated cruelty—those twin and only real vices of mankind." He particularly appreciated Dickens for his "long crusade against all shams, and cruel stupidities" (Pendyces, 320, 323). Calder, in his "Introduction" to Dickens' *Bleak House*, states that Esther Summerson and John Jarndyce were the chief examples in *Bleak House* of Dickens' commitment to "Christian humanism compounded of belief in 'the natural feelings of the heart, in unselfish engagement in duty and industrious work, in spontaneous charity toward those immediately within one's circle.'"²¹ Galsworthy, who referred to *Bleak House* as his "favourite Dickens" (Pendyces, 319), wholeheartedly embraced Dickens' concept of Christian humanism. Another clear example of the benevolence in Dickens' characters that Galsworthy was inspired by was that of Mr Pickwick in *The Pickwick Papers*. If there is anyone belonging to the category of one giving "spontaneous charity toward those immediately within one's circle," surely it is Mr Pickwick. To put it in Mr Pickwick's own words: "If I have done but little good, I trust I have done less harm" (Pickwick, 738). A similar example from *David Copperfield* is Mr Micawber, whom

²⁰ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, 1605/1615, P.A. Motteux (tr.), Wordsworth Classics, 2000, p. 407.

²¹ J.Hillis Miller, "Introduction to *Bleak House*," in Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, Penguin Books, 1977, pp. 30-31.

Dickens describes as a “thoroughly good-natured man, and as active a creature about everything but his own affairs as ever existed, and never so happy as when he was about something that could never be of any profit to him” (Copperfield, 148). Also there is Mr Peggotty whose actions Dickens describes as “disinterested and good” (Copperfield, 624). Finally it is Little Emily, penitent after being left by Steerforth, who says to Ham Peggotty: “When I find what you are, and what uncle is, I think what God must be, and can cry to him” (Copperfield, 668). This is also where Dickens brings about an almost religious dimension to humanism, a dimension which Galsworthy was to translate into “ethic Christianity”.

This “ethic Christianity” stands in sharp contrast to fake Christianity, and this is a theme in which Galsworthy also felt a deep kinship with Mark Twain. One of the central themes in both *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the hypocrisy of so-called Christians and provincial morality.²²

Galsworthy also came across the theme of fake Christianity in Tolstoy’s novel *Anna Karenina*, in which Tolstoy exposes Karenin’s hypocrisy. Karenin’s dogmatic faith is put to the test when he is asked to forgive Anna for her adultery. His reply “I hate her with all the strength of my soul, and I cannot even forgive her, because I hate her so much for all the evil she has done to me!” testifies to his basically unchristian attitude. When reminded by Darya Alexandrovna of “Love those who hate you”, he could only smile contemptuously saying that that did not apply to his case (Karenina, 394-395). Even when Anna dies in childbirth at the end of the novel Karenin says that her death was “the death of a vile, irreligious woman” (Karenina, 778). In marked contrast to this so-called Christian, Karenin, stands the righteous humanist Levin. In spite of his unbelief, Kitty “was firmly convinced that he was as good a Christian as she was, or even better” (Karenina, 498). Thinking of Levin’s unbelief she says: “what kind of unbeliever is he? With his heart, with that fear of upsetting anyone, even a child! Everything for others, nothing for himself” (Karenina, 785).

Tolstoy writes in his preface to *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893), which Galsworthy read when he was in his late twenties, why he did not believe the Church’s doctrine, “which is usually called Christianity.” Tolstoy claims that one of the major points in which this doctrine falls short of the doctrine of Christ was the absence of any commandment of non-resistance to evil by force. He adds that “the perversion of Christ’s teaching by the teaching of the Church is more clearly apparent in this than in any other point of difference” (Kingdom of God, pref.). This also becomes manifest in *War and Peace*, where Tolstoy, through Prince Andreï, expresses his plea for real Christianity from truly altruistic motives:

²² A good illustration of this is given by Mark Twain in *Huckleberry Finn* when Huck describes how he goes to church with the Grangerfords, armed with shotguns because of their feud with the Shepherdsons. It contrasts sharply with the minister’s sermon, which is described by Huck as “all about brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness” (Huck Finn, 251).

Yes—love But not that love which loves for something, to gain something or because of something, but the love I knew for the first time when, dying I saw my enemy and yet loved him. I experienced the love which is the very essence of the soul, the love which requires no object. . . . To love one's neighbour, to love one's enemies, to love everything—to love God in all his manifestations. Human love serves to love those dear to us but to love one's enemies we need divine love (War and Peace, 1090).

Pierre too is looking for “tranquillity of mind” and “inner harmony”. He sought it in “philanthropy, in Freemasonry, in the dissipation of society life, in wine, in heroic feats of self-sacrifice, in romantic love for Natasha.” He also sought it by intellectual reasoning, but, as the narrator comments, all these efforts and experiments failed him. “And now, without any thought on his part, he had found that peace and that inner harmony simply through the horrors of death, through privation and what he had seen in Karatayev” (War and Peace, 1198). This is not unlike Galsworthy himself, who, after his experiences in World War I, seemed to have found the answers to the questions he still had when he was writing *The Inn of Tranquillity*. Pierre, like the older Galsworthy, had lost some of his sarcasm and accepted that other people thought differently. He recognised “the impossibility of altering man's convictions by words.” Pierre felt that “this legitimate individuality of every man's views, which in the old days used to trouble and irritate [him], now formed the basis of the sympathy he felt for and the interest he took in other people” (War and Peace, 1312). Pierre too thus became a true humanist: “Love filled his heart to overflowing and in loving his fellow-men without cause he never failed to discover incontestable reasons that made them worth loving” (War and Peace, 1333). As such Galsworthy resembles Pierre and Levin in *Anna Karenina*, but Tolstoy's humanism, as he sees it in 1893 in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, is firmly rooted in Christ's teachings, and is therefore essentially different from Galsworthy's. Tolstoy himself firmly states: “And here the advocates of the Positivist, Communistic, Socialistic fraternity propose to draw upon Christian love to make up the default of this bankrupt human love; but Christian love only in its results, not in its foundations. They propose love for humanity alone, apart from love for God” (Kingdom of God, Ch. IV 4; 110). He says of plain humanism: “But such a love cannot exist. There is no motive to produce it. Christian love is the result only of the Christian conception of life, in which the aim of life is to love and serve God” (Kingdom of God, Ch.IV 4; 111).

Tolstoy's ideas seem to blend with Anatole France's in the latter's *At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque* (1893). On his deathbed Maître Jérôme Coignard says to Jaques Tournebroche:

Be humble in heart and mind. God grants a clearer intelligence to the simple-minded than the learned can ever instil. He is the Giver of all knowledge my son. Do not listen to those who, like myself, subtilise over good and evil. Do not allow yourself to be

touched by the beauty and the nicety of their talk. For the Kingdom of God lies not in words but in virtue.²³

It is in Tolstoy and France's appreciation of the Sermon on the Mount, their criticism of the dogmatic Church and their emphasis on virtue and compassionate humanism that Galsworthy felt a deep kinship.

Finally, there is one more example from a contemporary dramatist, Harley Granville-Barker, a close friend of Galsworthy's, who, in his censored play, *Waste* (1907), states: "The tradition of self-sacrifice and fellowship in service for its own sake . . . that's the spirit we've to capture and keep."²⁴ All this shows how Galsworthy's ethic Christianity was deeply rooted in earlier literature and that it was also a dominant notion in the literary circle in which he moved.

Social and humanitarian issues

Galsworthy did not restrict his trenchant criticism of society to his novels and plays. He also actively wrote pamphlets, contributed to newspapers and magazines and sent in letters to the editor of *The Times*. Thus, in March 1914 Galsworthy wrote to *The Times* declaring that he was moved to speak out about what he was sure many were feeling: "We are a so-called civilized country; we have a so-called Christian religion; we profess humanity . . . and yet we sit and suffer such barbarities and mean cruelties to go on amongst us as must dry the heart of God" (Sheaf, 77-78). Subsequently he lists the barbarities and cruelties he is referring to: sweating of women workers, insufficient feeding of children, employment of boys, foul housing, consignment of paupers to lunatic asylums, mutilation of horses by docking and caging of wild animals. In this section I go into Galsworthy's treatment of a number of these issues. Scattered through his work there are references to his love of animals, children and nature and the cruelty done to each of them, but also references to prisoners' rights, women's rights and poverty. It is especially also the living conditions of the poor and destitute that receive his unstinting attention.

The penal system

The earliest example of Galsworthy's humanitarian spirit in his work comes from his very first book, written at the age of thirty: *From the Four Winds* (1897). In this volume of short stories Galsworthy quotes Adam Lindsay Gordon's little rhyme as the motto to the story "According to his Lights":

²³ Anatole France, *At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque*, London, The Bodley Head, 1925, p. 259.

²⁴ Harley Granville-Barker, *Three Plays*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1909, p. 248.

Life is mostly froth and bubble;
Two things stand like stone:
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own (Four Winds, 206).

It is also Galsworthy's earliest publication in which he inveighs against the British prison system. He opens the story by stating that "Prevention is better than cure", and then poses the question about the system of imprisonment: "whoever knew anyone cured by it?" (Four Winds, 207). It is remarkable that Galsworthy, at such an early stage in his career, devoid of any real personal experience, should express these views on the prison system. His preoccupation with this theme was such that we find examples of this well into the 1920s. Another early example of Galsworthy's criticism of the penal system is from *The Island Pharisees* (1904). The protagonist, Shelton, is on a walking tour through the country and finds himself looking at the walls of Princetown Prison. He says to himself: "the more Christian the nation, the less it has to do with the Christian spirit" (Island Pharisees, 129). In 1909 Galsworthy wrote an Open Letter to the Home Secretary, Herbert John Gladstone, in which he gave his opinion on solitary confinement, urging on him the "complete abandonment of this *closed-cell* confinement, save where it is necessary by the conduct of the convict or prisoner after his arrival in prison" (Sheaf, 96). Galsworthy actually visited a number of prisons at the time and interviewed dozens of convicts to find out exactly what the conditions of solitary confinement were like. These interviews strengthened him in his conviction that "solitary confinement was a most pernicious thing" (Over the Hills, 249). Eventually Gladstone invited him for a personal interview and told him that it was the authorities' intention to reduce the terms of solitary confinement to a maximum of three months (Marrot 1936, 250). Although Galsworthy considered this a major step forward, the plight of prisoners and especially those in solitary confinement, urged him to write about these issues in "The Prisoner" in *A Motley*²⁵ (1910), *Justice* (1910) and the short story "LATE—299" (1923), besides several other short stories and plays. It gave Galsworthy a great deal of satisfaction when Winston Churchill, the Home Secretary in 1910, after seeing *Justice*, carried out further reforms regarding solitary confinement (Mottram 1956, 132).

Galsworthy's anti-prison feelings were intimately tied up with those of Dickens, Hawthorne, Dostoyevsky and Anatole France. To begin with, it is Dickens who in *The Pickwick Papers* gives us his criticism of the prison system. He tells us that in those days "it was no figure of speech that debtors rotted in prison with no hope of release and no prospect of liberty!" To which he adds that "this atrocity in its full extent no longer exists, but there is enough of it left to give rise to occurrences that make the heart bleed" (Pickwick, 270). When Pickwick is arrested for not paying his penalty in the breach of promise trial, he is sent to

²⁵ John Galsworthy, *A Motley*, 1910, London, Heinemann, 1925, pp. 49-58.

debtors' prison and naively asks: "You don't really mean to say that human beings live down in those wretched dungeons?" (Pickwick, 534). The narrator adds: "Not a week passes over our heads, but, in every one of our prisons for debt, some of these men must inevitably expire in the slow agonies of want, if they were not relieved by their fellow prisoners" (Pickwick, 554-555).²⁶

Hawthorne too writes about life in prison. He refers to the prison in Boston as "the black flower of civilized society" and contrasts it with "a wild rose bush" growing on one side of the portal" (Scarlet Letter, 103). Galsworthy qualifies Dostoyevsky's *The Dead House*²⁷ as "splendid" because of the latter's treatment of such issues as imprisonment and forced labour. Dostoyevsky returns to the theme in *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Father Zossima says: "All these sentences to exile with hard labour, and formerly with flogging also, reform no one, and what's more, deter hardly a single criminal, and the number of crimes does not diminish but is continually on the increase."²⁸

Also in the works of Anatole France there are examples of criticism of solitary confinement: "It is true . . . that the system of solitary confinement has not produced all the happy results that were expected from it in the reformation of prisoners" (Wicker-work, 154). He also criticises capital punishment, arguing that "many European nations have now abolished the death penalty, and in such countries crime is no more common than in the nations where this base custom yet exists" (Wicker-work, 163). He adds through his protagonist, M. Bergeret: "It's an ancient prejudice . . . to believe in the necessity of punishment and to fancy that the severer the punishment the more efficacious it is" (Wicker-work, 166). France returns to this in *The Gods are Athirst* (1912), in which the protagonist Évariste Gamelin says: "Republicans . . . are humane and full of feeling. It is only despots hold the death penalty to be a necessary attribute of authority" (God's Athirst, 62).

Galsworthy was not alone in Britain in his fight for penal reform. Joseph Conrad refers to the harsh prison regime in *The Secret Agent* (1907), in which the anarchist Michaelis, who just served a prison sentence, remembers how he was regularly "disturbed for the odious purpose of taking exercise according to the tyrannical regulations of his old home in the penitentiary."²⁹ John Masefield too is outspoken in his censure of prison conditions and capital punishment. In a letter to Galsworthy he praises him for *Justice*. "It may have a great, perhaps an immense, result upon our national attitude to crime . . . I've lain awake practically the whole night thinking of that poor boy in the cell going round the wall with his finger" (Marrot

²⁶ In *David Copperfield* Dickens criticises the system of solitary confinement and this is where Galsworthy found his inspiration for this theme. Mr Creakle had invited Traddles to visit Middlesex Prison to show him, in operation, the "only true system of prison discipline; the only unchallengeable way of making sincere and lasting converts and penitents—which, you know, is by solitary confinement" (Copperfield, 720).

²⁷ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Aantekeningen uit een Dodenhuis (Zapiski iz myortvogo doma, 1861-1862)*, Marko Fondse (tr.), Amsterdam, Contact, 1974.

²⁸ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, London & Toronto, William Heinemann Ltd, 1945, p. 60.

²⁹ Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, London, Methuen & Co, 1907, p. 170.

1936, 257). Similarly, there is an example in Masfield's *The Widow in the Bye Street* of the debate that was going on about penal reform at the time. Those against say that "This sentimental talk is rotten, rotten / The law's the law and not half strict enough." Whereas those in favour of reform maintain: "A week in quod has ruined lots of chaps."³⁰ A final example of a miscarriage of justice is to be found in Masfield's *The Tragedy of Nan*, in which he shows how a death sentence is irreversible. Nan is offered fifty pounds after it turns out that her father was hanged by mistake. The officer calls it "a sad miscarriage of justice", and he adds in justification: "Very well then. While we support the laws, we must be content to suffer from their occasional misapplication."³¹

Poverty and the slums

Although some literary critics suggest that Galsworthy had no eye for the world outside his own class, it will be clear from the following that he felt a deep sympathy for the poor, and actively advocated better living conditions through slum-clearing schemes.

Rowntree's authoritative survey of the city of York in 1899 gives us some idea of what the living conditions of the poor must have been like at the turn of the century. Rowntree's estimate is that a total of 27.8 per cent of the population lived in poverty, of which approximately ten percent in "primary poverty".³² Families falling under this heading had total earnings that were insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities "for the maintenance of minimal physical efficiency." This type of poverty was, for the greater part, attributed to low wages, large families or broken families. Rowntree also mentions the outcomes of Charles Booth's survey in the latter's *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Booth estimated that 30.7 per cent of the London population lived below the poverty line (Rowntree 1903, 296-299). Gazeley argues that Rowntree's data show a considerable upward bias concerning the numbers experiencing primary poverty. He suggests it was six per cent, rather than Rowntree's ten per cent.³³ Vinson signals that in the 1890s the general feeling was that poverty arising from sickness, unemployment or old age "was a matter for personal thrift, voluntary philanthropy for 'the deserving', and a deterrent Poor Law for the 'undeserving', while poverty arising from low wages was a concern of the family alone."³⁴ It was not until 1914 that Britain saw the advent of "bulwarks against social contingencies" in the form of pensions and social insurance, which marked the initiation of a social service state (Read 1982, 89).

³⁰ John Masfield, *The Widow in the Bye Street*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd, 1912, p. 84.

³¹ John Masfield, *The Tragedy of Nan and Other Plays*, 1908, London, Grant Richards, 1909, p. 60.

³² B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, London, Macmillan, 1903, p. 117.

³³ Ian Gazeley, *Poverty in Britain 1900-1965*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 32.

³⁴ Adrian Vinson, "Edwardians and Poverty: Towards a Minimum Wage?" in Donald Read (ed), *Edwardian England*, London and Canberra, Croom Helm, 1982, p. 89.

As far as living conditions were concerned the situation was dramatic in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Roebuck suggests, the “poor could only afford to live where no one else wanted to live.”³⁵ These were the least desirable parts of any town, in the most decrepit houses, surrounded by smelling courtyards and alleyways covered with stagnating puddles and rotting refuse. She also indicates that overcrowding added a further blight to these miserable slums. Rowntree also expresses, from personal observation, his concern that the “impossibility of maintaining the decencies of life in these overcrowded houses is a factor which cannot fail to affect the morals of their inhabitants” (Rowntree 1903, 302). In these poor districts sanitary facilities did not exist; there were no water taps or dustbins and few privies. “The poor lived, and generally quickly died, amidst their own refuse” (Roebuck 1973, 27). In the 1890s conditions were slightly improving as a result of slum clearing and improvement schemes. Sanitary authorities managed to lift the standard of living a little by setting and maintaining minimum sanitary standards (Roebuck 1973, 52). However, in 1911 a medical officer of the London County Council still estimated that nearly 20,000 houses were in such bad repair that they were unfit to live in.³⁶ Moreover, it took until 1925 that the “broad outlines of a new housing policy” were determined (Yelling 1992, 27). Indeed, Galsworthy’s novels clearly show that even in the 1930s the worst was not over yet.

In nineteenth-century literature it was especially Charles Dickens who denounced poverty and social abuse, and as such he was an important source of inspiration to Galsworthy. A good example of Dickens’ description of poverty and his severe condemnation of the government comes from *Bleak House*, in which the narrator describes the living conditions of Jo, the crossing sweeper:

Jo lives—that is to say, Jo has not yet died—in a ruinous place, known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone’s. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people. . . . Now these tumbling tenements contain, by night a swarm of misery. As on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever, and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years—though born expressly to do it (*Bleak House*, 272-273).

³⁵ Janet Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, p. 27.

³⁶ J.A. Yelling, *Slums and Redevelopment*, London, University College London, 1992, p. 9.

Galsworthy was particularly struck by Dickens' portrayal of Jo, the crossing sweeper, and elaborately refers to this in his "Introduction to *Bleak House*." Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* is another outcry against the social conditions of the poor and the complacency of the middle classes.³⁷ In his postscript to *Our Mutual Friend* Dickens tries to make a public statement about the Poor Law, by claiming that there has been in England, since the days of the Stuarts, no law "so often infamously administered, no law so often openly violated, no law habitually so ill supervised" (*Mutual Friend*, 777).

Dickens also signals how charity offered by the Church is ineffective. In *Our Mutual Friend*, for example, he shows how wary the poor were of the "parish". Old Betty Higden had "a horror of falling into the hands of Charity." Dickens' criticism of the Church is obvious when he comments that it was "a remarkable Christian improvement to have made a pursuing Fury of the Good Samaritan" (*Mutual Friend*, 479). Dickens also criticises the government for not adequately dealing with such social problems as child labour and slum housing. In *Bleak House*, for example, John Jarndyce says: "The children of the poor are not brought up, but dragged up" (*Bleak House*, 117). *Bleak House* also contains another telling description of the living conditions of the poor. Mrs Pardiggle and Esther Summerson visit the family of a brickmaker who tells them: "An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty—it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally onwholesome; and we've five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides" (*Bleak House*, 158).

Apart from Dickens' work, which greatly contributed to Galsworthy's humanitarian interest, there was also the social debate in the literary circles in which Galsworthy himself moved, and which, no doubt, also contributed to his thinking. Of his literary friends, Hudson and Cunninghame Graham should be mentioned in particular in this connection. Hudson, for example, clearly sides with the peasants and poor labourers, and denounces the poverty which they lived in, and the insolence and injustice that they suffered from the landlords and gamekeepers. However, he equally criticises the "sedition-mongers, the Socialists, the furious denouncers of landlords, [whose] words . . . are sinking into the hearts of the agricultural labourers of the new generation" (*Shepherd's Life*, 112-113). Cunninghame Graham's socialist and humanitarian ideas met with Galsworthy's sympathy too. Watts indicates that many of the causes Cunninghame Graham championed so zealously were eventually to succeed. They included the eight-hour working day, improved living conditions of the poor, the end of sweated labour, the emergence of the Scottish Labour Party, free education, women's emancipation and divorce law and his concern for the oppressed racial minorities. Galsworthy corresponded with Cunninghame Graham from 1909 until his own death in 1933.

³⁷ For instance, Dickens describes a dinner party in which someone mentions that "some half-dozen people had lately died in the streets of starvation," to which Mr Podsnap replies that he considers such a remark "ill-timed after dinner" (*Mutual Friend*, 132).

Galsworthy himself writes passionately about poverty from the beginning of his career to the very end. Note his reference to living conditions in “A Commentary” (1908), for example: “See the way the poor live—like pigs, crowded all together; to any one who knows, it’s awful!” (Satires, 196). Another example is from the short story “Demos” (1908), in which there is a conversation between the narrator and a working-class man, whose battered wife has run away with the children. The man speaks about his legal rights to his wife and children, the reason why he drinks and the fact that he cannot get a proper job. In the comment that the narrator gives, we see Galsworthy’s preoccupation with the poor, so characteristic of his early work. Behind the figure of this man he “seemed to see the countless masses of his fellows filing out of their dark streets, out of their alleys and foul lodgings, in a never-ending river of half-human flesh, with their faces set one way” (Satires, 214).

We know that Galsworthy saw the London slums from nearby when he collected the rents for his father, who owned some houses in London. The description in *Fraternity* (1909), in which he describes Hilary Dallison’s first visit to Hound Street, was based on that experience: “Nearly all their doors were open, and on the doorsteps babes and children were enjoying Easter holidays. . . . Nearly all were dirty; some had whole boots, some half boots and two or three had none” (Fraternity, 34). When he first enters the room of the model whom he has hired, he is overcome by nausea: “There came on him a sickness, a sort of spiritual revolt. To live here, to pass up these stairs, between these dingy, bilious walls, on this dirty carpet, with this—ugh!” (Fraternity, 35). He then realises that there is an unbridgeable gap between himself and the class he represents, and their ‘shadows’ in the slums. They see their ‘shadows’ in the streets, in factories as people doing odd-jobs for them, but do not see them as “human beings possessing the same faculties and passions.” According to the narrator, they simply do not and cannot know the poor. The reason for this was a matter of the senses. “They knew that whatever money they might give, or time devote, their hearts could never open, unless—unless they closed their ears, and eyes and noses” (Fraternity, 91). As Galsworthy says in *The Island Pharisees*, “man lacked feelers, a loss that was suffered by plants which no longer had a need for using them” (Island Pharisees, 32).

The theme of poverty and slum housing is explored until Galsworthy’s last novels in the final Forsyte Trilogy. This is where he portrays the Rev. Hilary Charwell as a slum priest, the only appropriate role he saw for the clergy at the time. Galsworthy himself was blamed for not really knowing the poor, not really giving a life-like portrayal of working-class characters, in spite of all the good causes he supported, the money he donated and the satires and articles he wrote on these subjects. Indeed, he was even accused of “Eton Socialism.”³⁸

³⁸ Carneades Jnr., “Letters to Certain Eminent Authors”, *Academy*, 87, August 22, 1914, p. 230.

Emancipation

Another issue Galsworthy writes about is that of women's emancipation. In "Gentles, Let Us Rest" (1910), for example, Galsworthy pleads for the full emancipation of women by arguing that it "would be one more step in the march of our civilisation—a sign that this nation was still serving humanity, still trying to be gentle and just" (Sheaf, 138). The theme of women's emancipation was not new to Galsworthy. Galsworthy's sister Lillian published a poem in 1903, by way of protest, called *Women's Highest Plea for Suffrage*, in which she says: "We ask, but only this: to live / Freed from a state-imposed disparity." She finishes the poem pleading with the government:

By your integrity and ours, who plead,
We claim enfranchisement to bear our part,
The part of larger Motherhood!³⁹

It clearly shows how Lillian Galsworthy, who exerted such a decisive influence on her brother's intellectual growth, also contributed to Galsworthy's ideas on emancipation. Galsworthy rejected the rise of militant suffragism, as he felt that a "victory of justice over force" would be much more significant (Sheaf, 140). This is a clear comment by Galsworthy on this historically important social development in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Major initiators of women's emancipation were the various "Married Women's Property Acts", which were passed from the 1870s onwards, and through which married women acquired more legal control over their own property and, by implication, over their own destiny (Roebuck 1973, 59). Romein argues that it was also the Boer War that initiated the emancipation movement, as many women found employment outside the home, replacing the men who were enlisted for the war.⁴⁰ Some women, however, felt that increasing social freedom was not enough and began to campaign vigorously for legal equality too. Thus, the Women's Social and Political Union was founded in 1903 with the aim of securing this legal equality, especially the franchise, for women. After 1909 the campaign of the suffragettes became more serious and more violent. Women as convinced and determined as Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst were even prepared to undergo pain, suffering and even death in the interest of their cause (Roebuck 1973, 81). By 1914, however, they had lost most of the influence again which their earlier non-violent militancy had won for them (Read 1982, 23). Female emancipation made considerable practical advances in the First World War, mainly as a result of the expanded demand for labour. The war also changed some of the social roles of women by expanding the range of jobs in which they were accepted. Thus, the number of

³⁹ Lillian Sauter, *Women's Highest Plea for Suffrage*, London, Women's Printing Society Ltd, Birmingham University Library, "The Galsworthy Papers" (JG 10/3/3).

⁴⁰ Jan Romein, *Op het Breukvlak van Twee Eeuwen*, Leiden/Amsterdam, Brill/Querido, 1967, p 351.

women employed in commercial activities almost doubled between 1914 and 1918, as did the number in government and education (Roebuck 1973, 97-98). With the return of the soldiers and the ending of wartime production, female employment contracted and many of the trends of the war years were reversed as women moved back into domestic service and other traditional female occupations, although there was not a complete reversal to the old situation. Wartime developments had made permanent changes in the attitudes of respectable people to female employment. The expansion of the legal rights and responsibilities of women continued in the twenties and thirties. In 1919 the Sex Disqualification Removal Act abolished many of the legal barriers which had previously prevented women from entering certain occupations; the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923 allowed women as well as men to claim adultery as grounds for divorce. A further extension of the franchise in 1928 finally gave women the vote on equal terms with men (Roebuck 1973, 132-133).

The emancipation of women was also reflected in the nineteenth-century literature that Galsworthy was familiar with. Many novels and plays are centred round strong women fighting for their independence and openly challenging morality and tradition. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, for example, it is Hester Prynne's firm belief that "at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it . . . a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (*Scarlet Letter*, 275). Another strong female character is Lyndall in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, who says that she is "not in so great a hurry to put [her] neck beneath any man's foot and [that she does] not so greatly admire the crying of babies" (*African Farm*, 184). It is Lyndall who does not accept men's denial to women's desire to become "doctors, law-makers, anything but ill-paid drudges" (*African Farm*, 190). In Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) the central character, Nora, wants to leave her husband and says: "I must take steps to educate myself." When her husband reminds her that first and foremost she is a wife and mother, she says: "that I don't believe any more. I believe that first and foremost I am an individual."⁴¹ Similarly in Ibsen's *Ghosts* (1881) Mrs Alving states: "I'm not putting up with it any longer, all these ties and restrictions. I can't stand it! I must work myself free."⁴² In Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* Madame Hohlakov sets her hopes on the girl of the future: "That will be a modern girl, a girl of education and advanced ideas" (*Karamazov*, 405). Guy de Maupassant too clearly makes a stand for the position of women. In the short story "Useless Beauty", Gabrielle de Mascaret says to her husband: "We are women who belong to the civilized world, Monsieur, and we are no longer, and we refuse to be, mere females who restock the earth" (*Short Stories*, 120). But that a working woman in the better social circles was not yet an accepted phenomenon at the beginning of the twentieth century, is also clear from James Barrie's *Quality Street* (1902). Its protagonist, Phoebe,

⁴¹ Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, 1879, in *Four Major Plays*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 82.

⁴² Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts*, 1881, in *Four Major Plays*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p.124.

complains about her being pitied for the fact that she tries to earn a decent living by starting a school. She says to her absent lover, Valentine Browne, as if he were there: “Oh, sir, how dare you look so pityingly at me? Because I have had to work so hard—is it a crime when a woman works? Because I have tried to be courageous . . . ?” (Barrie, 117). St John Hankin too deals with the aspect of women and their right to decide on their own futures. One of the themes of *The Last of the De Mullins* is the need for independence of women as felt by the younger generation, as opposed to established views that “the only form of independence that is possible or desirable for a woman is that she shall be dependent upon her husband” (Hankin Vol. III, 70). In this play we find clear parallels with the more important female characters in Galsworthy’s novels and plays, for example, Irene in *The Man of Property*, Mrs Molly Gwynn in *Joy*, Helen Bellew in *The Country House*, Mrs Audrey Noel in *The Patrician*, Noel in *Saint’s Progress*, and Clare and Dinny Charwell in the final *Forsyte Trilogy*, all deciding on their own destinies, or endeavouring to do so, in defiance of what morality dictates.

Equally strong female characters appear in the early plays of Bernard Shaw, such as Mrs Warren in *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, and Mrs Clandon in *You Never Can Tell*. Both women had to raise their children on their own and independently of the fathers. Mrs Clandon is an interesting character as she represents everything the age stands for. She has raised three children on her own, after she ran away from her bullying husband eighteen years previously, though she admits her own mistake in having married him without loving him. At the time of her separation she wanted to be an independent woman of advanced ideas. Thinking back to those days her solicitor, Mr M’Comas, asks her if she is still ready to make speeches, in spite of her sex; if she still insists on a married woman’s right to her own separate property; if she still champions Darwin’s view of the origin of species and John Mill’s essay on Liberty; and if she still reads Huxley, Tyndall and George Eliot; whether she still demands university degrees for women, the opening of the professions and the parliamentary franchise for women as well as men. She confirms that she has not gone back one inch on her ideas (Plays Pleasant, 240). Finally, it is Shaw’s statement in *Man and Superman* that perhaps best sums up the ideas prevalent in progressive circles at the time: “Home is the girl’s prison and the woman’s workhouse” (Superman, 262). These are the novels Galsworthy read and the plays that he saw. These are the writers whom Galsworthy either admired, or counted among his friends. It is therefore not surprising that many of the views that these writers express on the theme of emancipation return in Galsworthy’s own work.

The theme of emancipation of women remained significant in Galsworthy’s work until well into the 1920s and even early 1930s. Two examples suffice to illustrate this point, one from 1915 and one from 1924. In the short story “The Housewife” (1915), Galsworthy gives us a satirical portrait of the housewife, the pillar of stable family life and domesticity. The portrait that Galsworthy paints is the situation as he found it in 1915, a situation which apparently had not changed much since the mid-nineteenth century when women were

expected to run their homes and supervise their servants and children (Roebuck 1973, 31). The 'housewife' is speaking to her daughters: "'The place of woman,' she says, 'is in the home. The whole home, and nothing but the home. . . . The place of woman is by the side of man, counselling, supporting, ruling, but never competing with him'" (Satires, 90). To mock her even further, the narrator tells us that, "as a religious woman, she rarely missed the morning, and seldom went to evening, service, feeling that in daylight she could best set an example to her neighbours" (Satires, 95).

To confirm that not much had changed over the years Galsworthy shows a conversation between Michael Mont and Fleur in *The White Monkey* (1924). Michael talks to Fleur about emancipation and what changes it has brought about. In his opinion there is not ten per cent difference over the last thirty years. He does not only refer to the emancipation of women, but also to that of the working classes. To prove his point he claims that five thousand out of forty-two million people may have heard of Beethoven. "How's that for emancipation?" It is here that Galsworthy exposes Fleur's superficiality, so truly representative of her times, when she replies: "'I was thinking Michael that I should like to change my bedroom curtains to blue. . . . The present curtains really are too jazzy.'" Michael looks at her and thinks to himself: 'Emancipated! Phew!'" (White Monkey, 215).

Slavery and discrimination

In the Interlude "A Silent Wooing" (1927), linking *The White Monkey* to *The Silver Spoon*, Galsworthy presents us with a social problem not seen before in any of his works and not heard of any more later on: slavery and discrimination. The example, therefore, is all the more interesting, as it is one of the few times that Galsworthy expresses his opinion on this issue. The year is 1924 and Jon Forsythe meets Francis Wilmot in the United States. They speak about the lynching of a "negro" and Jon says, "I can't see why negroes shouldn't be tried the same as white men. . . . I don't see how you can defend mob law." Francis Wilmot replies: "we'd sooner do without an innocent darkie now and again than risk our women" (Modern Comedy, 336). Galsworthy's narrator leaves it to the reader himself to draw his conclusions and to reject this gross injustice. Still, it is odd, however, that Francis Wilmot's reply only yields Jon's non-committal response: "Well, every country to its own fashions."⁴³ Ada Galsworthy comments on the phenomenon of discrimination in the United States in the book that she wrote after Galsworthy's death, *Over the Hills and Far Away*, about her travels with "Himself". This comment clearly shows how Ada and her husband apparently preferred to stay out of this debate: "It's not an outsider's business, and perhaps should not even be commented on by me," Ada says (Over the Hills, 153).

Galsworthy had been put on the track of slavery and discrimination through Mark Twain, Dickens, Nevinson and Conrad. Of course Galsworthy had read about the slavery issue in the

⁴³ John Galsworthy, "A Silent Wooing", in *A Modern Comedy*, 1929, p. 336.

Adventures of Tom Sawyer and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In these novels Mark Twain exposes American middle-class hypocrisy on this subject. A good illustration may be found in Mrs Phelps' reaction to Huck's story of the steamboat that got delayed because of an explosion. To her question whether anybody got hurt in the explosion, Huck tells her that "a nigger" was killed, to which Mrs Phelps' replies: "Well it's lucky, because sometimes people do get hurt" (Huck Finn, 336).

As with so many other social issues, Galsworthy was also inspired by Dickens on the slavery and discrimination issue. Dickens was confronted with both issues on his travels in the United States and strongly condemns in his novels what he observed. Thus in *Martin Chuzzlewit* there is a description of a train consisting of a special "car for negroes: the latter painted black, as an appropriate compliment to its company" (Chuzzlewit, 332). He also refers to anti-abolitionist sympathisers who felt that it was "incalculably more criminal and dangerous to teach a negro to read and write than to roast him alive in a public city." All this results in Dickens' disgust of the United States and what it stood for, which is clear from Martin Chuzzlewit's statement: "You're a gay flag in the distance. But let a man be near enough to get the light upon the other side and see through you; and you are but sorry fustian!" (Chuzzlewit, 352).

Of contemporary writers it was especially Nevinson who, with his *A Modern Slavery* (1906), impressed Galsworthy "tremendously". Galsworthy admired Nevinson for being "so direct, so genuine, so insightful and ironical" (Garnett 1934, 160). In *A Modern Slavery* Nevinson describes his travels in Angola, in 1904 and 1905, which he made to investigate contemporary forms of the slave trade. His book bespeaks a trenchant moral critique of European and British politics for continuing to hold territories in Africa merely for the sake of the trade of such products as mahogany, cotton, palm-oil and kernels. "Ultimately it is all a question of soap and candles," Nevinson says.⁴⁴ What Nevinson maintains in his book is that slavery in the formal sense was abolished, whereas in practice nothing has changed. He admits that the "old-fashioned export of human beings as a reputable and stable industry" (Slavery, 13) has indeed disappeared, but new forms have developed, also in British possessions.

Galsworthy's close friend, Joseph Conrad, focuses on the degraded position of black people in nearly all of his early novels. In the following passage from *Almayer's Folly* Conrad contrasts the purity of the savage population with the hypocrisy of the Europeans. Almayer's wife feels that "the savage and uncompromising sincerity of purpose shown by her Malay kinsmen seemed at last preferable to the sleek hypocrisy, to the polite disguises, to the virtuous pretences of such white people as she had had the misfortune to come in contact with" (Almayer's Folly, 43). Conrad could perhaps not be clearer in his rejection of the white man's behaviour in South East Asia, when Mrs Almayer refers to them as "the white men that

⁴⁴ Henry W. Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery*, London and New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1906, p. 10.

come to us to trade, with prayers on their lips and loaded guns in their hands” (Almayer’s Folly, 153). In *An Outcast of the Islands* Conrad shows how deep the hatred between black and white had grown: “Hate filled the world, filled the space between them—the hate of race, the hate of hopeless diversity, the hate of blood.”⁴⁵ It is on the basis of the works of Mark Twain, Dickens, Nevinson and Conrad that Galsworthy developed his own ideas on the equality between the races, discrimination and slave traffic. Although Galsworthy travelled in Africa and Australia in his twenties, he does not write about these travels and his experiences with other cultures in any of his novels, as, for example, Conrad and Hudson did. Marrot too realised that Galsworthy remained relatively non-committal as far as the race issue is concerned. He remarks that around 1911 Galsworthy was interested in the issue of slave traffic, but that he did so “unobtrusively, and without making any public gesture” (Marrot 1936, 320).

Cruelty to animals

Another example of Galsworthy’s loving kindness is his love of animals, which induced him to actively champion the movement against cruelty to animals. Galsworthy shared these feelings with contemporary writers such as Hudson, France, Cunninghame Graham and Ralph Hodgson. Hudson’s love of animals and his sympathy for vegetarianism is clear from his remark in *Green Mansions* (1904): “All flesh, clean and unclean, should be, and is, equally abhorrent to me, and killing animals is a kind of murder.”⁴⁶ Anatole France argues in *At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque* (1893), that “an honest man cannot without disgust eat the flesh of animals, and nations cannot call themselves civilised as long as slaughterhouses and butchers’ shops are to be found in their towns” (Reine Pédauque, 59).

That Galsworthy shared this interest with Cunninghame Graham is clear from the fact that in 1913 Galsworthy spoke at a meeting, chaired by Cunninghame Graham, and held in protest against the cruelty of performing animals (Marrot 1936, 385). The poem “The Bells of Heaven” (1917) of Galsworthy’s friend Ralph Hodgson’s is another example of how this theme was high on their agendas:

‘T would ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal for years,
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs,
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers

⁴⁵ Joseph Conrad, *An Outcast of the Islands*, London, Fisher Unwin, 1896, pp. 381-382.

⁴⁶ W.H. Hudson, *Green Mansions*, 1904, New York, Illustrated Modern Library, 1944, p. 202.

And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit ponies,
And little hunted hares.⁴⁷

All this shows how contemporary writers contributed to Galsworthy's own development in this respect and, indeed, to his change of attitude, especially if one recalls that as a young man Galsworthy was a follower of Whyte-Melville's Digby Grand and the Honourable Crasher, and equally relished their pastime of grouse shooting and fox hunting.

Galsworthy himself wrote many pamphlets and made many speeches against all forms of cruelty to animals. In *A Sheaf* (1916), for instance, he speaks out against animal shows, the caging of birds, vivisection of dogs, the use of horses in mines and the docking of horses' tails. He says that these "furred and feathered creatures" are helpless and in a way "sacred." This is where his love of animals almost takes religious proportions: "in them we watch and through them we understand, those greatest blessings of the earth—Beauty and Freedom" (Sheaf, 26). Much later in Galsworthy's life we come across similar feelings in "A Talk on Playing the Game with Birds and Animals" (1926), in which he writes about the unnecessary cruelty done to animals, especially performing animals, caged animals, animals in zoos and animals killed for fur. He ends this talk by saying that if we have any religious sense at all, we must feel that every species, as well as our own, is "a fulfilment of the underlying Creative Purpose, and we should have the same sort of regard for, and sympathy with, other forms of life that we have for our own" (Glimpses, 12).

Social policy after the war

Time and again we notice in Galsworthy's work how the war heralds a new age in social and cultural terms, but also how it marks a new phase in Galsworthy's thinking. He himself regarded the war as a turning point that should bring improvement to the world. This becomes clear from a series of articles devoted to the aftermath of the war, *And-After?* (1916). In these articles he points to a number of national problems before the war, which after the war should demand "the most immediate, sustained, and resolute attention" (Sheaf, 276). He particularly mentions slum housing and infant mortality, but adds: "But there is little use in saving babies if you are not going to feed them decently when they are out of the swaddling clothes" (Sheaf, 277). He therefore urges the passing of laws on the feeding and education of children, the control of drink, the furtherance of the minimum wage, reform of the Poor Law and the Divorce Law, and provisions for the blind. In the short story, "A Green Hill Far Away", written immediately after the war, Galsworthy wonders if wars would ever cease to exist. It is for questions like these that many of his readers found Galsworthy a pessimist.

⁴⁷ Ralph Hodgson, "The Bells of Heaven" in *Collected Poems*, London, New York, Macmillan, 1961.

Look in men's faces, read their writings, and beneath masks and hypocrisies note the restless creeping of the tiger spirit. . . . There are not enough lovers of beauty among men. It all comes back to that. Not enough who want the green hill far away—who naturally hate disharmony and the greed, ugliness, restlessness, cruelty, which are its parents and its children (Tatterdemalion 204).

In fact, however, at heart, Galsworthy remained optimistic, forever believing in “the green hill far away”, which becomes clear from his later writings.

Conclusion

What I have established in this chapter is Galsworthy's appeal for a renewed Christianity from a truly humanitarian spirit, his plea for being “good Samaritans” rather than Christians in the traditional sense. He sympathises with the poor and the oppressed and feels that the answers from socialist quarters would solve the social problems best. Galsworthy's involvement in humanitarianism is not rooted in politics though. Although he sympathised with the Fabian principles, he was basically apolitical. It is clear that he was inspired on this issue by such writers as Dickens, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Maupassant, but he also took his inspiration from contemporary playwrights, such as James Barrie, St John Hankin and Bernard Shaw. Galsworthy no longer believed in the dogmatic Christianity of the orthodox church, but believed in a “demystified faith”, a new faith of “unselfish humanity,” in which “God is the helping of man by man,” and which he was eventually to label as “ethic Christianity.” It was especially the works of Dickens and Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which had a lasting influence on Galsworthy in this respect.

I have also established how Galsworthy tried to practise what he preached. He actively championed such causes as prisoner's rights, women's rights, the fight against poverty and slum clearance, and after the war he even set up a hospice for war victims. He did so from the true feeling that if we “profess humanity” we cannot sit and suffer “such barbarities and mean cruelties to go on amongst us as must dry the heart of God.” Galsworthy was also successful in his penal reform campaign. On the emancipation issue there was his sister Lillian's influence on him, but also that of Hawthorne, Olive Schreiner, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg and Bernard Shaw. On the slavery and discrimination issue Galsworthy may have been more reticent than Mark Twain, Dickens, Nevinson and Conrad, but he does give us a picture of where he stands in this debate. A final aspect of Galsworthy's loving kindness is his love of animals, and his utter abhorrence of cruelty to animals. There was not a cause against the cruelty to animals that he did not support. This time it was Hudson, France, Cunninghame Graham and Ralph Hodgson that inspired him most.

If this should leave a picture of John Galsworthy as a dedicated crusader against social problems and cruelty to animals, then this is true only in part. He was very well able to put his

own humanitarianism in perspective, and even showed that he could poke fun at this. He does so, for example, through Lord Dennis in *The Patrician* (1911). To Lord Dennis “there was something queer about humanitarians. . . . they were always looking out for cruelty and injustice; seemed delighted when they found it—swelled up, as it were when they scented it, and since there was a good deal about, were never quite of normal size” (*Patrician*, 164-165).

6. Marriage

The main theme in Galsworthy's work is, indisputably, the plight of women locked in the cage of an unhappy marriage. It is the central theme of Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles* and a major theme in his earlier novels and plays. Clearly, this theme found its origin in Galsworthy's private life, his love for Ada Cooper, who was married to Galsworthy's cousin Major Arthur Galsworthy. It was her ten-year struggle to escape from a loveless marriage and John Galsworthy's ten years of self-sacrifice which energised his creative talents for the first thirteen years of his career as a writer. In this chapter I focus on 'marriage' and related themes that Galsworthy addresses, such as upper-middle-class society's double standards regarding pre-marital sex, unintended pregnancy, sex and prostitution, the loveless marriage, relations out of wedlock, the sacredness of marriage, and, finally, divorce. Galsworthy exposes these double standards, and accentuates the fate of women caught in loveless marriages and their struggle to escape from such marriages in defiance of morality. This moral rectitude was firmly rooted in Christian dogma and anchored in the Christian wedding service, which underlined the sacredness of marriage, the indissoluble character of this bond and the resulting impossibility of divorce. Galsworthy tries to fight a political and legal battle through his novels and plays to make divorce a more just and socially acceptable phenomenon, even though he was convinced that the marriage bond was an important contract between two people, primarily entered into for life and requiring loyalty, care and compromise.

The question is also to what extent it was only Ada's experiences in her first marriage that induced Galsworthy to focus so strongly on such themes as the loveless marriage, morality, Church dogma and divorce law in nearly all of his works, or whether there was also a marked influence of other writers on these issues.

Double standards

Galsworthy exposes the hypocrisy of the upper middle classes with respect to pre-marital relations and sex in a number of his works. In *The Country House* (1907), for example, Galsworthy points to the double standards that are frequently applied to the behaviour of young men who are "sowing their wild oats", especially if contrasted with what is expected from young ladies. The narrator of *The Country House* says of Mr Pendyce, George's father, that it was "legendary in his class that young men's peccadilloes must be accepted with a certain indulgence," and he adds that "they must . . . sow their wild oats" (*Country House*, 136). There is a similar situation in *The Silver Box* (1909), in which Mr and Mrs Barthwick try to hush up the fact that their son Jack spent the evening with "a woman" (*Plays*, 31), but due to his drunkenness could not remember a thing. They were all too eager to apply their morality to others, but found it difficult to apply it to themselves. Nineteen years later the

subject was still relevant to Galsworthy, as it recurs in *The Silver Spoon* (1926). In this novel Marjorie Ferrar stands trial in a libel suit and is asked to express her opinion on the current moral issue that women should not have “liaisons” before they were married, and should not have them after, “and that men should at least not have them after.” Marjorie replies that she feels that nowadays many people would not find fault with men or women having liaisons before or after marriage. “I think many people think it’s all right who don’t say it, yet,”¹ she says. The narrator comments: “It was the old business—men expecting more from women than they could give them. Inequality of the sexes” (*Silver Spoon*, 514-515). This was also one of the central themes of Galsworthy’s favourite Hardy novel, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891). In this novel Angel Clare, a clergyman’s son, cannot forgive Tess for having been seduced by Alec D’Urberville, whereas he expects her to forgive him for his “eight-and-forty hours’ dissipation with a stranger.”² Similarly, in Ibsen’s *Ghosts* (1881) Pastor Mandors is of the opinion that Mrs Alving has to forgive her husband for his “youthful indiscretions . . . those irregularities . . . excesses if you like.” He adds: “you call that a debauched life!” (*Ghosts* 116).

Morality was even more at stake where undesired pregnancies were concerned. In *The Eldest Son* (1912) Galsworthy exposes the double standards of Sir William and Lady Cheshire. They want to force the village youth, Young Dunning, to marry his pregnant girlfriend Rose: “I can’t have a keeper of mine playing fast and loose in the village like this,” Sir William states (*Plays*, 166). However, when he hears that his wife’s lady’s maid, Freda Studdenham, is pregnant by their eldest son, he applies different standards and says to his wife: “I say it *would* be a tragedy; for you, and me, and all of us. . . . [*Suddenly*] It shan’t go on.” Sir William’s double standards become very apparent, however, when he is reminded of the parallel between the two situations, and nevertheless indicates that he does not “see the connection.” He simply cannot envisage his son marrying below his station, with the title having to go to his younger son Harold. Regarding the unborn child his morals prove to be very lax indeed: “As to that other matter—it’s soon forgotten—constantly happening—Why my own grandfather—!” (*Plays*, 193).

Galsworthy does not write very openly about sex and even denounces D.H. Lawrence’s writings as “indecent”, and blaming Lawrence for “revelling in sex emotions”, which he looks upon as “anaemic” (Garnett 1934, 218). One mainly comes across allusions to sex with a negative connotation, especially in relation to rape and prostitution, for example Soames’ rape of Irene in *The Man of Property*. Galsworthy describes this scene in a veiled and ironic manner saying that Soames had done “his best to sustain the sanctity of marriage,” and by referring to Irene as “this woman who was his lawful and solemnly constituted helpmate” (*Man of Property*, 264). In both instances it refers to the marriage bond entered into in church,

¹ John Galsworthy, *The Silver Spoon*, 1926, in *A Modern Comedy*, Penguin Books, 1980, p. 505.

² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, 1891, London, Pan Books, 1978, p. 249.

including the implied subordination of the bride. This is one of the few instances in which we see something of Soames' sexual impulses. Galsworthy lifts another veil in the sequel to *The Man of Property*, *In Chancery* (1920), in which the narrator says that Soames "had tasted of the sordid side of sex during those long years of forced celibacy, secretly, and always with disgust, for he was fastidious, and his sense of law and order innate" (*Chancery*, 16). Galsworthy thus very subtly characterises Soames. Indeed, this behaviour is to be expected from a man who considers his wife his property and looks upon love as a commodity. Galsworthy returns to the subject of Soames' sexual interest once more in *Swan Song* (1928), giving us an idea how the Forsyte men thought and behaved:

Like all his family, except perhaps his cousin George and his uncle Swithin, he was secretive in matters of sex; no Forsyte talked sex, or liked to hear others talk it; and when they felt its call, they gave no outward sign. Not the Puritan spirit, but a certain refinement in them forbade the subject, and where they got it from they did not know (*Swan Song*, 645).

Galsworthy strongly speaks out against the hypocrisy that he observes among middle-class men with respect to prostitution, and refers to them sarcastically as "these paragons of virtue." He did so as early as 1904 in *The Island Pharisees*. Ferrand, one of the characters in this novel, adds to this: "This is the beat . . . where nightly the shadows of hypocrites and women fall" (*Island Pharisees*, 91).³

The loveless marriage

Galsworthy was inspired to write about the theme of the loveless marriage through his wife Ada's experiences in her earlier, unhappy marriage to Major Arthur Galsworthy from 1891 to 1904. Ada was a friend of Mabel Galsworthy's and, as such, a friend of the family. Over time John and Ada became close friends and she admitted being in love with John when spending a vacation with him in Monte Carlo in 1895. Not until the death of John Galsworthy's father in 1904 did John and Ada openly admit their relationship, which in the end resulted in Arthur Galsworthy's filing for a divorce and John and Ada's marriage in 1905. It is therefore not surprising that as early as 1897, in Galsworthy's very first publication, published two years after his relationship with Ada started, we find the first traces of this theme. For instance, in "Dick Denver's Idea", a short story in *From the Four Winds* (1897), Dick Denver says to Major Massinger: "Four years ago you married the present Mrs Massinger; and I guess you've led her the life of a dog. . . . You've never struck or kicked her . . . but by God, in

³ In the short story "Sport" (1908) Galsworthy emphasises the hypocrisy involved by giving us another picture of a prostitute who, together with other prostitutes, is "herded together like hunted vermin" and driven to court, thinking: "Why do you bring me here, when you don't bring yourselves!" (*Satires*, 244).

every other way you've been a brute to her, and I reckon you've spoilt her life" (*Four Winds*, 48). This is perhaps the closest we can get to the emotions that Galsworthy felt at the time of Ada's marriage to Arthur Galsworthy. Galsworthy elaborates on this theme in another short story from *From the Four Winds*, "The Demi-Gods," in which he portrays two English lovers meeting each other secretly in Italy. The young woman has to return to her husband the following day and thinks: "*But* another twenty-four hours, and then back to prison—to prison—to prison." The narrator comments that the next day would bring "the ending of all life and light, bringing with it for her a separation from the true self, a return . . . to a caged existence, a loathed companionship, a weary, weary beating of the breast against the bars." Again Galsworthy shows us what it must have been like for Ada, but this time he also adds what it meant for him. It would bring him "a legion of mind-devils, torturing, twisting, lying in wait at every turn and corner of life, ever alert and ever cruel, and a dreary, craving ache" (*Four Winds*, 230-231). All Galsworthy's later writings are rooted in this episode in his life and the feelings involved over a period of ten years of longing, as expressed in *From the Four Winds*. Eight years later, in the short story "The Meeting" (1905), published in the year of his marriage to Ada, Galsworthy still feels compelled to tell the reader what feelings are involved in such an illicit love affair: "the hours of waiting with his heart in his mouth, tortured by not knowing whether she would come, or why she did not come." He also thinks of "the journeys past her house after dark to see the lights in the windows, to judge from them what was going on; and the cold perspirations and furies of jealousy and terror" (Motley, 75).

The theme of the loveless marriage was also the main theme of Galsworthy's debut novel, *Jocelyn* (1898). This novel describes the unhappy marriage of Giles Legard and his sickly wife Irma. This is in fact the mirror image of Ada and Arthur Galsworthy's marriage, as in *Jocelyn* it is the man who wants to escape from the unhappy marriage in which he feels himself caught. The reason for their unhappiness is that "Irma ha[s] never loved him," and for the first time Galsworthy raises the issue of the marriage of convenience: "She . . . married him for one or other of the unnumbered reasons for which women marry men, any one of which is good enough till after the event" (*Jocelyn*, 12). Their marriage has resulted in unhappiness for both of them, both leading separate lives and taking things with mock indifference. Irma, too, often thinks about her marriage and frequently "the day of her wedding [comes] back to her, a day of indifferent obedience to her parents" (*Jocelyn*, 54).

The best-known example in Galsworthy's work of an unhappy marriage, however, is that in *The Man of Property* (1906), the marriage of Soames Forsyte and Irene. Soames wonders what she finds wrong with him: "It was not as if he drank! Did he run into debt or gamble, or swear; was he violent; were his friends rackety; did he stay out at night?" And what he remains puzzled by is "the profound subdued aversion which he [feels] in his wife." However, Soames gives himself away when he says to himself: "That she had made a mistake, and did not love him, had tried to love him and could not love him, was obviously no reason" (*Man of*

Property, 58). Galsworthy subsequently uses Young Jolyon, who himself “tasted to the dregs the bitterness of an unhappy marriage” (*Man of Property*, 205), to show things from a different perspective, Galsworthy’s own perspective, so close to his own experience:

An unhappy marriage! No ill-treatment—only that indefinable malaise, that terrible blight which killed all sweetness under Heaven; and so from day to day, from night to night, from week to week, from year to year, till death should end it (*Man of Property*, 204-205).

In 1920 in *In Chancery* Galsworthy partly unveils the reasons for this “indefinable malaise.” Although Soames and Irene have been separated for twelve years, Soames decides to visit her on her birthday and offer her a brooch, which she rejects. He then blames her for only thinking of herself, to which Irene replies: “Do you ever think that I found out my mistake—my hopeless, terrible mistake—the very first week of our marriage; that I went on trying three years—you know I went on trying? Was it for myself?” (*Chancery*, 134). Soames then says to her that he has never understood her, and will never understand her, and asks her what is the matter with him: “I’m not lame, I’m not loathsome, I’m not a boor, I’m not a fool. What is it?” (*Chancery*, 134). She only replies with a sigh. One year after Galsworthy’s *The Man of Property* Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1907) deals with a familiar Galsworthian theme. The novel describes the unhappy marriage of Mr and Mrs Verloc. It is only after she has killed her husband and met Comrade Ossipon that she confesses the unhappiness of her marriage: “He cheated me out of seven years of my life. . . . Seven years. Seven years a wife to him . . . Do you know what he was? . . . He was a devil!” (*Secret Agent*, 292-293). The two writers and friends, Conrad and Galsworthy, were never closer to one another than in that particular dialogue.

It takes until 1921, however, fifteen years after the publication of the *Man of Property*, for Galsworthy to reveal completely what really was behind Soames and Irene’s tragedy. According to Young Jolyon the difference between Soames and Irene was basically of a sexual nature. He says to his son Jon: “In a vast number of marriages—and your mother’s was one—girls are not and *cannot* be certain whether they love the man they marry or not; they do not know until after the act of union which makes the reality of marriage” (*To Let*, 188).

Throughout his writing career the theme of the loveless marriage remains foremost in Galsworthy’s mind. A chronological analysis of his work shows the consistency in which he writes about this theme. In the novel that he was writing when finishing *The Man of Property*, *Danaë* (1905-1906), Galsworthy describes the marriage of Danaë Bellew to Jasper Bellew: “Their marital relations were now of a most anomalous order. They were not divorced, nor separated, but they did not live together” and, more graphically, “their relations were neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring” (*Pendyces*, 22). In *Fraternity* (1909) there is the

marital relationship between Hilary and Bianca Dallison that is central to the story. Early in the novel the narrator says the following about their relationship: “After ten o’clock at night their lives became as separate as though they lived in different houses” (Fraternity, 29). Later in the novel he adds that “beneath all manner of kindness and consideration for each other . . . this tragedy of a woman, who wanted to be loved, slowly killing the power of loving her in the man, had gone on year after year” (Fraternity, 101).

In his novel *The Dark Flower* (1913) Galsworthy shows us Anna Stormer unhappily married to an Oxford don: “What funny thing was married life—to have lived all these years with him, and never known what was at the bottom of his heart!” (Dark Flower, 27).⁴ In *The Freelands* (1915) Kirsteen Freeland warns her daughter Nedda against a loveless marriage by saying: “The worst kind of prison in the world is a mistaken marriage” (Freelands, 253).

It is not only in Galsworthy’s novels that the theme crops up, it is also a central element in his plays.⁵ In *The Fugitive* (1913), for instance, Galsworthy describes the situation of a woman unhappily married in unmistakable terms. Clare, the character around whom the plot revolves, says: “I oughtn’t to have married him, if I wasn’t going to be happy. You see I’m not a bit misunderstood or ill-treated. It’s only—” (Plays, 283-284). When Clare’s brother tries to persuade her to return to her husband, she tries to make him understand her situation by holding a mirror up to him and saying, “get married, and find out after a year that she’s the wrong person; so wrong that you can’t exchange a single real thought that your blood runs cold when she kisses you—then you’ll know.” She compares an unhappy marriage to “being underground in a damp cell.” When Clare explains to her husband why she wishes to leave him, she sticks to the prison metaphor and says, “five years, and four of them like this! I’m sure we’ve served our time” (Plays, 285-288).

Towards the end of Galsworthy’s career, in *Swan Song* (1928), June, Young Jolyon’s daughter from his first marriage, and Michael Mont, Fleur’s husband, meet one day and discuss Irene and Soames’ unhappy marriage. June tries to make Michael understand why Irene wanted a divorce. Referring to Soames’ possessiveness and attempted rape she says: “Fancy forcing yourself on a woman who didn’t want you!” (Swan Song, 638). Michael does not say much as he realises that his own marriage is not much different. June goes on to say

⁴ In the same novel there is the story of Olive Cramier’s marriage. “It was no good pretending that she was happy. . . . There was such a thing as incompatibility” (Dark Flower, 116).

⁵ In *A Family Man* (1920) Galsworthy portrays the unhappy marriage of John Builder and his wife Julia. Their daughter Athene says to her father: “Mother’s forty-one, and twenty-three years of that she’s been your wife. It’s a long time father. Don’t you ever look at her face?” (Plays, 590-591). In the opening scene of *The Show* (1925), there is the suicide of Colin Morecombe. His wife Anne finds him and immediately phones her lover, Geoffrey Darrel. The situation is clear from the beginning when Anne says: “Us . . . No, no! He didn’t know—I’m sure not. And if he had, he wouldn’t have cared. You know he wouldn’t” (Plays, 853). Galsworthy does not need any more words to put the audience into the picture. Anne also confesses to her father, Colonel Roland: “I’ve never bothered you, dad, with our affairs, but Colin and I had been strangers for a long time. . . . The whole thing was a mistake, I’m afraid. . . . I tell you, Dad, I know no more of Colin than he knew of me” (Plays, 863).

that “people in the eighties and the nineties didn’t understand how disgusting it was. Thank goodness, they do now” (Swan Song, 638).

In Galsworthy’s final novel, but one, *Flowering Wilderness* (1932), he once more returns to the unhappy marriage of a modern young woman, Dinny’s sister Clare, again with a man from the military, Sir Gerald (Jerry) Corven. The publication of this novel took place more than forty years after Ada married Major Arthur Galsworthy, proving how the theme preoccupied Galsworthy all his life.

In 1932, shortly before Galsworthy’s death, John and Ada Galsworthy published their translation of Bizet’s opera *Carmen* (1875), based on the story of Prosper Mérimée (1857). *Carmen* had always been special to Galsworthy, and he refers to it as “this great, this most dramatic and melodious opera.”⁶ The question is what attracted John Galsworthy to *Carmen* as a character. He admires her for being “a triumph, untameable, seductive, faithful to herself alone” and feels that she stands for “a whole slice of human nature. In her is sublimated, as it were, the Cat Force in human life” (*Carmen*, viii). In a number of Galsworthy’s female protagonists we can find traces of *Carmen*’s character and fate: Irene, Annette, and Fleur in *The Forsyte Saga* and Anna and Nell in *The Dark Flower*, and all other female characters caught in loveless marriages. The “Dark Flower” itself is reminiscent of the rose that plays such a dominant role in *Carmen*. In spite of the passionate beginning of their relationship, *Carmen* soon tires of José and tells him, “It would be better to make your adieux, and away!” (*Carmen*, 54). As with Soames in *The Forsyte Saga*, who does his utmost to win Irene’s heart, José implores her to come back to him. *Carmen* is adamant, however, and says to him, “what you ask of me is hopeless” and “For you, José, my love is dead” (*Carmen*, 75). Earlier in the story José indicated that she was chained to him “till bitter death”, and said that he was “fettered to her” (*Carmen*, 66), and that to him she would be “bound” (*Carmen*, 79), reminiscent of the ties between Soames and Irene and Ada and Arthur Galsworthy. All this culminates in *Carmen*’s “My love is dead, I’ve nought to give! Free will I die, if free I may not live” (*Carmen*, 77). Ada seems to have been slightly less enthusiastic about the opera than John was, given what she writes in one of her letters: “I don’t know that I think it was worth while, but it has been great fun” (Marrot 1936, 633). Neither did their work prove to be a commercial success. Marrot indicates that *Carmen* appeared in a limited edition of 650 of which 50 were intended for presentation purposes. “Not all the copies were sold, and, with characteristic generosity, Galsworthy bought up all the unsold copies to avoid any possibility of loss to the publishers” (Marrot 1936, 641). Galsworthy shared his love of *Carmen* with Joseph Conrad with whom on one occasion he went to a performance at Covent Garden Opera. “It was already his [i.e. Conrad’s] fourteenth time of seeing that really dramatic opera” (Castles, 81-82).

⁶ John and Ada Galsworthy (translators), *Carmen, an Opera in Four Acts*, London, Elkin Mathews and Marrot, 1932, p. v..

The loveless marriage in the works of other writers

Although the influence of Whyte-Melville on Galsworthy is usually described in terms of ‘dandyism’ and their shared interest in gentlemen’s sports, closer analysis shows that Whyte-Melville raised other issues as well that contributed to John Galsworthy’s development as an author. One of these issues is the loveless marriage. In *Digby Grand*, for example, Digby’s friend, Hillingdon, warns Digby against marriages of convenience: “What an unnatural state has this world arrived at, when such unholy alliances are made every day and, called, forsooth, marriages of necessity.” Hillingdon even refers to these marriages as “the deliberate prostitution of the heart.” He advises Digby to discontinue the relationship with the girl he did not love: “Better to behave badly now than for a lifetime” (Digby, 238). This statement of Whyte-Melville’s is not unlike Olive Schreiner’s in *The Story of an African Farm*. Lyndall, Schreiner’s female protagonist, states: “Marriage for love is the beautifullest external symbol of the union of souls; marriage without it is the uncleanliest traffic that defiles the world” (African Farm, 190). The theme is adopted by Galsworthy in his *The Island Pharisees* (1904) in which Shelton breaks off his engagement to Antonia when he realises that she does not love him.

Parents’ interference in the marriage of their children is one of the central questions in Howells’ *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885). It is Mr Corey who says that he refuses to interfere in his son’s plans to marry beneath his station. His motto is “Hands off altogether.”⁷ Howells repeats this advice through the Reverend Mr Sewell, who says: “You know what marriage is! And what it must be without love on both sides” (Silas Lapham, 242).

Many of the writers that Galsworthy appreciated for their views on religion and their belief in humanism, also expressed ideas on marriage and related themes, which only reinforced Galsworthy’s own ideas.⁸ He read the novels and plays of most of these writers in the period between 1888 and 1905, and one can well imagine how he identified himself with the characters these writers portrayed and the issues they discussed. Time and again these novelists and dramatists confirm to him the inhumanity of the loveless marriage and the moral burden society placed on couples trapped in such a relationship.

Indeed, Soames and Irene’s marriage in *The Forsyte Saga*, has many precursors in literature. Galsworthy came across the loveless marriage in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, in which Hester Prynne frankly admits to her husband Roger Chillingworth: “Thou knowest that I was frank with thee, I felt no love, nor feigned any.” Indeed she marvels “how she could ever have been wrought upon to marry him!” (Scarlet Letter, 100, 194). In one of

⁷ William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, (1885), Penguin Books, 1986, p. 97.

⁸ Also in Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* we come across the theme of the marriage of convenience. In the story of the “beautiful Marcella” a curate advises parents that they “are not to bestow their children where they bear no liking” (Don Quixote, 64). Similarly there is the story of Leandra, whose father leaves her free to choose between the two suitors vying for her hand. Don Quixote calls this an “example worthy of being imitated by all parents” (Don Quixote, 348).

Galsworthy's best-loved Dickens novels, *Bleak House*, there is the unhappy marriage of Mr and Mrs Jellyby, of which their daughter Caddy says: "How dearly Pa hoped, I dare say, to be happy with Ma. What a disappointed life!" (*Bleak House*, 477). It may be a hint at Dickens' own unhappy marriage, foreshadowing his separation in 1858.⁹ The two Russian novelists, Turgenev and Tolstoy, particularly appealed to Galsworthy in their treatment of the marriage theme. In Turgenev's *Smoke*, for example, the protagonist Litvinov informs his fiancée Tatyana that he is in love with Irina (note the link with Galsworthy's Irene), his former girlfriend whom he has met again in Baden-Baden after many years, and who is unhappily married to General Ratmirov, again a man from the military. In response to this news Tatyana says to Litvinov that "without mutual love there can be no happiness, mutual esteem is not enough" (*Smoke* 245). That this is an element that Galsworthy picked up from Turgenev becomes clear in his *Flowering Wilderness* (1932), in which Fleur and Michael Mont discuss Dinny Charwell's unhappy love affair with Wilfred Desert. Michael reminds Fleur of the passage in one of Turgenev's novels "where Litvinov watches the train smoke curling away over the fields." Fleur says in reply: "Yes . . . but the fire will burn out" (*Flowering Wilderness*, 519-520). In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* the comparison between Irene and Soames, Ada Galsworthy and Major Arthur Galsworthy on the one hand, and Anna and Karenin on the other, becomes clear from the following passage:

They say he's a religious, moral, honest, intelligent man; but they don't see what I've seen. They don't know how he has been stifling my life for eight years, stifling everything that was alive in me, that he never once even thought that I was a living woman who needed love (*Karenina*, 292).

There are also the French novelists, Balzac, Flaubert and Maupassant, who clearly left their mark on Galsworthy in respect of the theme of the loveless marriage. In Galsworthy's favourite Balzac novel, *Père Goriot* (1834), it is Goriot's daughter Delphine who says: "my marriage has been the most appalling disillusionment,"¹⁰ realising that her husband had married her for her money only. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* recounts the story of the unhappy marriage of Emma to the country doctor, Charles Bovary. Emma soon realises that she has made a mistake in marrying him. "Before marriage she thought herself in love; but the happiness that should have followed this love not having come, she must, she thought, have been mistaken" (*Bovary*, 27). Gradually Emma's life becomes "as cold as a garret that looks to the north" (*Bovary*, 34), and she "was eaten up with desires, with rage, with hate" (*Bovary*, 82). When finally she commits adultery with Rodolphe, "she taste[s] it without remorse,

⁹ A similarly unhappy marriage is to be found in *Our Mutual Friend*, where Dickens gives us the marriage of Mr and Mrs Wilfer. Mrs Wilfer describes her married bliss as "I'm silently contented with my lot" (*Mutual Friend*, 428).

¹⁰ Honoré de Balzac, *Père Goriot*, Henry Reed (tr), Penguin Books, Signet Classics, 2004, pp. 148-149.

without anxiety, without trouble” (Bovary, 124). The more she gives up herself to the one, the more she loathes the other. “Never had Charles seemed to her so disagreeable” (Bovary, 143). Galsworthy was also very appreciative of Maupassant’s *Pierre et Jean* (1878), in which Maupassant stresses the emptiness of the marriage of another unfortunate couple. After Pierre finds out about his brother Jean’s being an illegitimate child, his mother, Madame Roland, confesses to him: “Without the two of you it would be empty, black and empty as the night” (Pierre & Jean, 104). She does not have any religious scruples in having had a relationship out of wedlock: “For more than ten years I was his wife, as he was my husband in the eyes of God who had made us for each other” (Pierre & Jean, 104). As so many of Galsworthy’s characters, she says: “It’s so awful for a young girl to marry a husband like mine!” (Pierre & Jean, 113). As Lethbridge indicates in his introduction to *Pierre et Jean*, marriage and adultery were subjects to which Maupassant frequently returns in his journalism of 1881-1884, presaging their treatment in *Pierre et Jean*. He feels that Maupassant’s “invariable conclusion is that marriage is an ‘unnatural’ state, admitting that his sympathy for infidelity was deeply subversive.”¹¹ Clearly this is also the theme in Maupassant’s short story “Useless Beauty”, which relates the story of countess Gabrielle de Mascaret. She is 30, has been married for eleven years and has had seven children. She blames her husband for having robbed her of the best years of her life, simply because of his jealous nature. The story again reminds us of Soames and Irene. Like Irene, Gabrielle blames her husband for his horrifying possessiveness, and like Irene she tells her husband: “I have always felt an antipathy for you and I have always let you see it, for I have never lied, Monsieur” (Short Stories, 111). Reminiscent of Soames’ forced entry into Irene’s bedroom, Gabrielle tells her husband: “Remember our struggles, doors smashed in, and locks forced!” (Short Stories, 111). We can actually hear Soames when Mascaret replies: “I am master—your master. I can exact from you what I like—and I have the law on my side!” (Short Stories, 112).

In Maupassant’s *Bel-ami* there is another example of an independent woman, Madeleine Forestier, who marries George Duroy after her first husband’s death. Before her marriage to Duroy, however, she tells him: “*Comprenez-moi bien. Le mariage pour moi n’est pas une chaîne, mais une association. J’entends être libre, tout à fait libre de mes actes, de mes démarches, de mes sorties, toujours. Je ne pourrais tolérer ni contrôle, ni jalousie, ni discussion sur ma conduite.*” She also promises never to blemish his name, but in return demands that he would not treat her as “*une inférieure ni une épouse obéissante et soumise*” (Bel-Ami, 208-209), stressing that she would never be a submissive and obedient housewife.¹²

¹¹ Robert Lethbridge, “Introduction” in Guy de Maupassant, *Pierre et Jean*, Oxford, Oxford World’s Classics, 2001, p. xliii.

¹² A final example of the same phenomenon is from *Une Vie* where we are told about the unhappy marriage of Jeanne and Julien. At the end of the novel, when Jeanne looks back on her life, she says to her maid Rosaly: “*La fatalité s’est acharnée sur ma vie.*” To which Rosaly answers: “*Faut pas dire ça, Madame . . . Vous avez mal été mariée, v’loi tout. On n’sé marie pas comme ça aussi, sans seulement connaître son prétendu*” (Une Vie, 197), emphasising once more that it was her own fault in marrying a man she hardly knew.

The theme of the loveless marriage is also central in many contemporary plays, and in particular those plays that Galsworthy appreciated, for example Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*, *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. In all plays we see the female characters' futile attempts to escape from or avoid an unhappy marriage. The same goes for Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. In *A Doll's House* it is Nora who says to her husband, Helmer, whom she no longer loves: "Eight whole years . . . and never have we exchanged one serious word about serious things" (*Doll's House*, 79). In *Ghosts* Mrs Alving admits that after nineteen years of marriage her now dead husband, Captain Alving, was just as debauched as he had been before he married her. In fact, their entire married life was "nothing but a façade" (*Ghosts* 116-117). We find similar unhappy marriages in August Strindberg's *The Father* (1878) and *The Dance of Death* (1900). The latter play recounts the story of the unhappy marriage of Captain Edgar and his wife Alice, referred to as "twenty-five years of misery."¹³ Strindberg uses terms like "locked up", "welded" and the "shackles" of marriage to indicate the permanence of the marriage bond (*Five Plays*, 130 and 158). It is noteworthy that both Ibsen and Strindberg use men from the military as players in the loveless marriage. There are similar examples in Turgenev and Tolstoy's works, but it is especially Galsworthy who has a predilection for captains and majors acting as cruel husbands: Massinger in *From the Four Winds*, Jasper Bellew in *The Country House* and Gerald Corven in *Flowering Wilderness*. Clearly this is a direct link to Major Arthur Galsworthy, Ada's first husband.

It is particularly Ibsen's influence that is also clearly noticeable through the works of G.B. Shaw. Shaw's references to Ibsen's views on marriage and the position of women in *The Philanderer* come very close to Galsworthy's views in *The Man of Property*. The following line might in fact have been said by many a Galsworthy character, but was said by Grace in *The Philanderer* (1898):

Grace: No woman is the property of a man. A woman belongs to herself and nobody else.

Charteris: Quite right. Ibsen for ever! (*Plays Pleasant*, 103)

This passage stands in stark contrast to Soames' remark in *In Chancery*: "A wife! Somebody to talk things over with. One had a right! Damn it! One had a right!" (*Chancery*, 218).

In *Plays Unpleasant* and *Plays Pleasant* Shaw thematises the way strong-minded, independent women seek to prevent an unhappy marriage, start a new life after an unhappy marriage, or reach independence within traditional marriage. These women are Grace in *The Philanderer*, Mrs Warren in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Mrs Morell in *Candida* and Mrs

¹³ August Strindberg, *Five Plays*, Harry G. Carlson (tr.), Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1983, p. 115.

Clandon in *You Never Can Tell*. In his *Plays Unpleasant* Shaw is particularly critical of marriage and its alleged sacred character. The first example of this is from *The Philanderer*, in which Shaw satirises the legal concept of marriage: “to some a political necessity . . . to some a divine ordinance, to some a romantic ideal, to some a domestic profession for women, and to some that worst of blundering abominations, an institution which society has outgrown but not modified and which ‘advanced’ individuals are therefore forced to evade” (*Plays Unpleasant*, 26). In *Candida* Shaw presents another strong female character, Candida, resembling Grace in *The Philanderer*. Candida says that her husband, the Rev. James Morell, has taught her to think for herself and never to hold back out of fear what other people might think of her, and she adds: “It works out beautifully as long as I think the same things as he does” (*Plays Pleasant*, 136). Morell does not see the shallowness of his own marriage. He says to Eugene Marchbanks: “I should like you to see for yourself what a happy thing it is to be married as I am.” Eugene replies in astonishment: “Happy! Your marriage! You think that! You believe that!” (*Plays Pleasant* 113). Later in the play Eugene adds to this: “Is it like this for her here always? A woman, with a great soul, craving for reality, truth, freedom; and being fed on metaphors, sermons, stale perorations, mere rhetoric. Do you think a woman’s soul can live on your talent for preaching?” (*Plays Pleasant* 116-117).

Mrs Warren in *Mrs Warren’s Profession* points to the hypocrisy of society, and regards marriage as legalised prostitution:

What is any respectable girl brought up to do but to catch some rich man’s fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him? —as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing! Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick! (*Plays Unpleasant*, 249)

In Shaw’s *Man and Superman* Don Juan says something similar: “Marriage is the most licentious of human institutions” (*Superman*, 156). Another statement of Shaw’s in this connection is: “The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other single error” (*Superman*, 156). The final example of an assertive and independent woman in Shaw’s plays is Mrs Clandon in *You Never Can Tell*. Mrs Clandon, who left her husband eighteen years before, tells her children which two concepts of marriage and family life exist. The first is the concept she adheres to: “The sort you know is based on mutual respect, on recognition of the right of every member of the household to independence and privacy in their personal concerns” (*Plays Pleasant*, 223). The other concept is the one she abhors: “A life in which . . . duty, obedience, affection, home, morality and religion are detestable tyrannies, and life is a vulgar round of punishment and lies, coercion and rebellion, jealousy, suspicion, recrimination” (*Plays Pleasant*, 223).

Morality

What Galsworthy tries to demonstrate in his novels and plays is what role morality plays in the continuation of unhappy marriages. It is for this reason that in *The Island Pharisees* (1904) Shelton raises the question: “Why in the name of decency do they go on living together?” The reply that follows, says it all: “Is there anything in this poor world but the good opinion of Society?” (*Island Pharisees*, 39). In fact, married couples were under the constant threat of society that punished those who did not observe its strict rules: “You have to think of Society, your children, house, money arrangements, a thousand things” (*Island Pharisees*, 44). In *The Island Pharisees* Shelton is about to marry Antonia until he realises that she does not really love him, but cannot bring herself to breaking her promise. “She was ready without love to marry him, as a sacrifice of her ideal what she ought to be!” It infuriates Shelton that “she was going to sacrifice herself and—him!” (*Island Pharisees*, 289). Galsworthy realises only too well what a loveless marriage would mean and through Shelton he tries to break the taboo on this issue. A chronological analysis of Galsworthy’s work shows how he continued to satirise this social phenomenon until the very end of his career.

In *The Man of Property* it is property and the good opinion of Society that are the driving forces of the Forsytes’ behaviour. It is for this reason that, when James Forsyte, Soames’ father, hears about the rumour of Irene’s affair with Bosinney, the first thing he thinks of, is “A scandal! A possible scandal!” At the same time there is James Forsyte’s utter lack of understanding that “there were any one who would run risks for the sake of anything so recondite, so figurative, as passion” (*Man of Property*, 138). Many years later, after twelve years of separation, Soames finally expresses a desire to divorce Irene. Young Jolyon realises what dilemma Soames is facing now and that in order to overcome that dilemma he should look beyond “the unpleasant gossip, sneers and tattle that followed on such separations . . . beyond the grave disapproval of the worthy” (*Man of Property*, 205). In the end it is Young Jolyon himself and Irene, like John and Ada, who defy society and force Soames’ divorce from Irene. In Soames’ eyes they were “twice exiled by morality—[and were] making a boast, as it were, of love and laxity!” (*Chancery*, 269).

Soames’ marriage to Annette was another loveless marriage and at a given moment she starts an affair with Monsieur Profond. Eventually Soames finds out about this affair and wants her to give up this relationship. Annette, however, is an assertive woman and tells him: “When two people have married, and lived like us, Soames, they had better be quiet about each other. There are things one does not drag up into the light for people to laugh at” (*To Let*, 149). It is another example of how people stayed together for morality’s sake. Soames finally accepts her reasoning. He has known all along that this would happen and he realised the consequences when he married her. He deplores this looseness in marriage and the prevalent moral laxity, and when he considers all the changes that were taking place in society, especially where it concerns morals, “it seemed to him, fantastically, as he looked

back, that all this modern relaxation of marriage—though its forms and laws were the same as when he married her—that all this modern looseness had come out of her revolt” (To Let, 178-179).

The Dallisons in *Fraternity* (1909) are a similar couple. They too drifted apart and “abandoned the more old-fashioned views of marriage” (Fraternity, 187). Still, the narrator comments: “there were not too many people in London who, in their situation, would have behaved with such seemliness—not too many so civilised as they!” (Fraternity, 210). Galsworthy, however, shows the reader how Hilary Dallison finally escapes from his unsatisfying marriage: “My married life having become a mockery, I shall not return to it” (Fraternity, 229), thereby at least informally separating from his wife, against the dictates of morality.¹⁴ Finally, in *In Chancery*, (1920) Galsworthy shows one more unhappy marriage in the Forsyte family, Soames’ sister Winifred’s. After years of gambling and drinking Soames’ brother-in-law Dartie decides to leave England and settle in South America. Winifred informs her son Val of this news and that in due course this will mean a divorce. Val’s reaction is indicative of all the social consequences a divorce will have.

‘It won’t be public, will it?’ So vividly before him had come recollection of his own eyes glued to the unsavoury details of many a divorce suit in the public Press. ‘Can’t it be done quietly somehow? It’s so disgusting for—mother, and—everybody’ (Chancery, 77).

Runaway wives

Galsworthy’s preoccupation with the loveless marriage and morality forbidding the dissolution of such a marriage is also reflected in his descriptions of the fate of runaway wives. Galsworthy shows these women’s struggles within their marriages and the condemnation by society for running away, which was such that they sometimes saw no alternative but to return to their husbands. Again it is mainly Ada’s personal experience that triggered Galsworthy’s writing about this issue. It is therefore particularly significant how he dealt with this during his illicit relationship with Ada from 1895 to 1904, when she was still formally married to Arthur Galsworthy, and how he wrote about this shortly after his own marriage to Ada in 1905.

In *Villa Rubein* (1900), Galsworthy gives us a first glimpse of how society reacts to women running away from their husbands. In the story four men discuss a piece of local scandal about a woman who has recently left her husband, and the narrator gives us the opposing views in this controversy. On the one hand Herr Paul observes: “There are family ties . . .

¹⁴ We see the mirror image of this story in *The Family Man* (1920), where it is Mrs Builder who indicates that she wants to leave her husband. Mr Builder responds to this: “It is not right, it’s immoral. . . . You’ll make us the laughing stock of the whole town” (Plays, 609-610).

there is society, there is decency; a wife should be with her husband.” However, there is the opposing view of Mr Treffry, clearly voicing Galsworthy’s own opinion: “Make a woman live with you, if she don’t want to? I call it low . . . I don’t give a tinker’s damn for men who talk about their rights in such matters” (Villa Rubein, 49-51).¹⁵

Galsworthy’s best-known runaway spouse is, of course, Irene in *The Forsyte Saga*. On receiving the news that she has run away Soames’ mother, Emily, says: “Soames will do all he can to get her back. We won’t talk of it. It’ll all come right, I dare say” (Man of Property, 229), and, indeed, *The Man of Property* ends with Irene’s return. Galsworthy discussed this ending endlessly with Edward Garnett, who felt that the novel should end with Irene running away with Bosinney, with Soames as the loser. In any case, Garnett felt that Galsworthy should leave out Bosinney’s alleged suicide. Galsworthy believed that it would be more gratifying if Irene returned, because the reader would condemn Soames and everything he stood for even more. That is what Galsworthy finally chose: “She had come back then of her own accord, to the cage she had pined to be free of. . . . They sat in silence. And Soames thought: ‘Why is all this? Why should I suffer so? What have I done? It’s not my fault!’” (Man of Property, 312).

This type of ending, with the unhappy lady returning to her husband, recurs in, for instance, *A Family Man* (1920), in which Mrs Builder eventually returns to her husband, and in *The Country House*, where it is Mrs Pendyce who returns. In this novel Mrs Pendyce is fighting a personal war against her authoritarian husband. One day she says to him, referring to their estate in the country, “Do you think I like living here? D’you think I’ve ever liked it? D’you think I’ve ever—.” But she does not finish the sentence: “D’you think I’ve ever loved you?” (Country House, 213). For the first time in her marriage she makes a definite stand and threatens to leave her husband. “It was not, ‘I will not be overridden’ that her spirit felt, but ‘I must not be overridden, for if I am overridden, I, and in me something beyond me, more important than myself, is all undone.’” The narrator adds that this “something” was her country’s “civilisation, its very soul, the meaning of it all—gentleness, balance” (Country House, 220). However, after a few days in London she realises that she “[has] lived too long in the soil that she [has] hated; and [is] too old to be transplanted. The custom of the country—that weighty, wingless creature born of time and of the earth—ha[s] its wings fast twined around her” (Country House, 228).

Another runaway wife is Michael Strangway’s wife, Beatrice, in *A Bit o’Love* (1915). Strangway, the curate, is faced with the problem of Beatrice having run away with Dr Desart, the man she loved before her marriage. She tells Strangway that she has never loved him and that she has never stopped loving Desart. She visits him to beg him to have mercy and not to

¹⁵ In a short story from the same period, “A Knight” (1900), Galsworthy raises the subject again. One of the characters says: “There are people to be found who object to vivisectioning animals; but the vivisection of a woman, who minds that?” (Caravan, 527).

divorce her, as this would ruin Desart's career. Strangway asks her: "You ask me to help you live in sin"? (Plays, 432). He then sees the little bird cage from which he freed a little skylark that same afternoon. "Never cage any wild thing" (Plays, 422) was his motto, and he decides to forgive her. This cage imagery recurs in a number of places in Galsworthy's work. In the same way as he allowed the bird to escape from its cage, he now allows his wife the freedom she is seeking. Not long after her visit, though, village rumour has it that the curate has sent off his wife: "Taint no very Christian nüse, neither. He's sent 'er off to th' doctor. . . . If 'er'd a-been mine, I'd 'a tuk the whip to 'er. . . . Christian, indeed! That's brave Christianity" (Plays, 436). This causes the farmers to comment that "if that's parson talk, 'tes funny work goin' to church" (Plays, 437). The rector's wife, Mrs Bradmere, therefore reminds Strangway, that "a son of the Church can't act as if for himself alone. The eyes of everyone are on him.... It's a priest's business to guide the people's lives" (Plays, 453). Strangway's words, "Have you ever been in hell? For months and months—burned and longed; hoped against hope; killed a man in thought day by day?" (Plays, 453), invariably reminds one of Soames' futile attempts in *The Forsyte Saga* to try to cage his bird Irene in his new house on 'Robin' Hill. Strangway's dilemma also finds its roots in the Bible, in the Sermon on the Mount (St. Matthew 5: 31-32), where Jesus says: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of his divorcement. But I say unto you, that Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

Galsworthy may have drawn on Ibsen's *A Doll's House* for this cage imagery. Not only is Nora referred to by her husband, Helmer, as a "singing bird" or a "skylark" time and again, comparing their home with a refuge in which he would hold her "like a hunted dove", but like many of Galsworthy's female characters she wants to escape the doll's house in which she has merely been a "doll wife" to her husband, never having been happy with him and blaming him that she has never made anything of her life. When Helmer reminds her that she is betraying her most sacred duty as a mother and a wife, she tells him that she has another duty, equally sacred: "my duty to myself" (*Doll's House*, 79-81). This reminds us of Mrs Pendyce in *The Country House*, who feels that she must not be overridden, because something beyond her, even more important than herself, would be undone.

Adultery

Relations out of wedlock and adultery were under no circumstance morally acceptable. This is where Victorian morality was rooted in religion, and this is where Galsworthy feels orthodox religion deviates from true Christianity.¹⁶ Galsworthy feels that it is no one's business to pass

¹⁶ In *Justice* (1910) Galsworthy presents the dichotomy between Christian morality and justice. Falder, a clerk, has forged a cheque to pay for his own and Ruth Honeywill's voyage to South America. Ruth is unhappily married to a man who abuses and terrorises her. During Falder's trial the judge represents conventional morality when he states that he is unable to justify to his conscience "a plea for mercy which has a basis inimical to

judgment on other people's lives,¹⁷ and in a number of plays Galsworthy's lovers are prepared to defy morality, religion and society to obtain the happiness they are seeking. The first example concerns Lord Miltoun, the eponymous hero of *The Patrician* (1911), a man of high, religious principles, and Mrs Lees Noel, who is separated from her husband, the Rev. Stephen Lees Noel. Lord Miltoun's grandmother, Lady Casterley, will not accept such a liaison. She tells her granddaughter Barbara: "It's the greatest nonsense to suppose that people in our caste are free to do as they please" (*Patrician*, 96). Mrs Noel is not afraid at all of what people may say of her friendship with Miltoun, nor does she feel at all "that her indissoluble marriage [forbids] her loving him" (*Patrician*, 120). She realises that as long as she is not divorced, she cannot marry again, but "she could and did love," and if that love "was to starve and die away, it would not be because of any moral scruples" (*Patrician*, 121).

Another example of a protagonist acting in defiance of religion and morality is from the episode "Summer" in *The Dark Flower* (1913). In this episode Mark Lennon has fallen in love with an unhappily married woman, Olive Cramier. When her husband indicates that he means "to keep" her, she decides to run away with Mark. Mark discusses this with his guardian, Gordy and states: "I am not a bit afraid of conscience. If God is Universal Truth, He cannot look hardly upon us for being true to ourselves. And as to people we shall just hold up our heads" (*Dark Flower*, 197). This reminds us of Nora's attitude in *A Doll's House*, defying her "sacred duty" as a mother and a wife, because of an "equally sacred" duty to herself. It is this element of adultery in *The Dark Flower* that the influential literary critic Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch finds fault with in his review in *The Daily Mail* in 1913, blaming Galsworthy for seeking refuge in "sentimentality, 'free love' and philandering", and referring to the novel as "pretty fatuous and pretty sordid." What he objects to most of all is Galsworthy making light of the sacredness of marriage: "a love which shirks the vow, the obligation . . . strikes me as indistinguishable from loose indulgence" (Marrot 1936, 380). Even nine years later, in 1922, Galsworthy is criticised in the *North American Review* for his alleged sordidness. Lacy Lockert writes: "As for the 'love' which Mr Galsworthy celebrates, a demonic thing which is

morality" (*Plays*, 248), namely Falder's running away with a married woman, no matter whether she has been abused, or not. What Galsworthy exposes here, is how the Christian virtue of mercy and justice is outweighed by established Christian morality.

¹⁷ In *Joy* Colonel Hope, speaks to his niece, Mrs Gwynn, about her relationship with a man called Lever. Her husband, whom she does not love any more, is abroad and their daughter Joy dislikes Lever. The Colonel says to Mrs Gwynn: "I can't tell your feelings, my dear, and I don't want to; but a man about town'll compromise a woman as soon as he'll look at her, and [*softly shaking his head*] I don't like that, Molly. It's not the thing!" (*Plays*, 63-64). He clearly finds it socially unacceptable that she has a relationship out of wedlock. Mrs Gwynn's daughter Joy agrees with the Colonel. She says to her friend Dick about her mother's relationship and the possibility of a divorce: "It's the—it's the disgrace—" (*Plays*, 95). In a conversation between the Colonel and Miss Beech, Mrs Gwynn's old nanny, the Colonel says that he is not going to discuss this with his wife, "dashed if I do anything to make the trouble worse!" To which Miss Beech wisely replies in the closing statement of the play and thereby clearly underlining Galsworthy's ideas: "there's suffering enough, without adding to it with our trumpety judgments" (*Plays*, 97).

said to seize and enslave (but can be shaken off by vigorous exercise!), there is another name for it—a word of identical length and with the same first letter—that is more precise.”¹⁸

By the end of Galsworthy’s life religious views towards adultery had gradually changed. This becomes evident, from, for instance, *Maid in Waiting* (1931), in which, on his deathbed, Cuthbert Charwell, the Bishop of Porthminster, warns his nephew Adrian against his “infatuation for a lady”, who is not in a position to marry him. He refers to Adrian’s friendship to Diana Ferse, whose husband is in a mental hospital. He tells him that although judgments have changed since his young days, “there is still a halo around marriage.” He adds, however, that that is something for his own conscience. What he is more worried about is that he would be sorry to be leaving this life knowing that their family name “was likely to be taken in vain by the Press, or bandied about” (*Maid in Waiting*, 8-9). The idea that a bishop, on his deathbed, should be worried about reactions in the press, accentuates the social pressures still involved, whereas religious pressures have been reduced to a matter of one’s own conscience, for which, apparently, one is no longer castigated.¹⁹

A final example of adultery and the delicate moral and religious question involved comes from *Over the River* (1933), Galsworthy’s last novel finished shortly before his death. Clare Charwell, who has been married to Gerald Corven for seventeen months and has lived with him in Ceylon, has left him and returns to England, alone. On board she has frequently been seen, however, in the company of a young man, Tony Croom, who has fallen in love with her. The narrator ironically comments:

A young man . . . conscious for the first time of the mysterious magnetism which radiates from what the vulgar call ‘a grass widow,’ and withheld from her by scruples or conventions, is to be pitied. . . . Maxims such as ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’, ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife’, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart’, become singularly academic. Young Croom had been brought up to the tinkling of the school bell: ‘Play the game!’ He now perceived its strange inadequacy. What *was* the game? (*Over the River*, 580).

Writers such as Tolstoy, Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant and Anatole France provided Galsworthy with numerous examples of adulterous relationships. Unhappy marriage and adultery feature prominently in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and Guy de Maupassant’s *Bel-Ami*, *Pierre et Jean* and his short stories. One can imagine how

¹⁸ Lacy Lockert, “Some of Mr Galsworthy’s Heroines”, *North American Review*, 215, 1922: (Jan/June), p. 264

¹⁹ Another sign of the changed times may be seen in Sir Lawrence’s comment to Dinny on Fleur and Michael’s marriage: “Eight years since we saw them married. Take it all round, they haven’t done so badly . . . Fleur has fluttered their dovecot once or twice; since her father’s death, however, she’s been exemplary” (*Maid in Waiting*, 164). In spite of Fleur’s adulterous behaviour Sir Lawrence’s feels, “they haven’t done so badly,” and he seems to be happy how things stand between his son and his daughter-in-law.

Galsworthy was fascinated by this theme during the period from 1895 until 1905. It was particularly in Anatole France's *The Wicker-work Woman* (*Le Mannequin d'Osier*, 1897) that Galsworthy found the confirmation of his own idea that adultery in the circumstance of a loveless marriage should be above moral judgment. France completely deflates the moral issue involved in adultery. It is M. Bergeret who says to himself: "Adultery! . . . Suddenly he saw a picture of all this word implied, its associations—commonplace, domestic, absurd, clumsily tragic, sordidly comic, ridiculous, uncouth; even in his misery he chuckled" (*Wicker-work*, 92-93).

Yet, the theme of adultery haunted Galsworthy until the end of his life for another reason as well. In 1910, five years after his marriage to Ada, he met a nineteen-year-old dancer, Margaret Morris, with whom he became infatuated to such a degree that at a given moment his marriage was at stake. It is in "Autumn", the final episode of *The Dark Flower*, that we see how Galsworthy struggled with the dilemma that he was facing:

I, who believe in bravery and kindness; I, who hate cruelty—if I do this cruel thing, what shall I have to live for; how shall I work; how bear myself? If I do it, I am lost—an outcast from my own faith—a renegade from all that I believe in (*Dark Flower*, 299).

In February 1912 he decided to give up Margaret Morris for Ada's sake, whose health was deteriorating rapidly. He realised she would only get better if he broke off his relationship with Margaret altogether. He wrote to her: "But in very, very, truth there is and can be no better for her unless all ends between us" (Morris 1968, 129). It is for this reason that he writes in *The Dark Flower* (1913): "Over—the long struggle over at last! Youth with youth, summer to summer, falling leaf with falling leaf" (*Dark Flower*, 299). Galsworthy in no way refers to this dark episode in his life in the retrospective "Preface" to *The Dark Flower* in his *Complete Works* in the Manaton Edition (1923). Neither does he make a single remark about this dramatic period in his life in his diary. He does not mention his farewell letter in February 1912, nor does he mention the letter Ada sent to Margaret a fortnight earlier. Neither Marrot, nor Mottram pay any attention to these events in their biographies of Galsworthy. Barker (1963) points to Marrot's veiled remark that although "he loved his wife as few men love theirs, that did not mean that he could feel the charm of no other woman" (Barker 1970, 157). Barker himself only looks upon the "Autumn" section of *The Dark Flower* as "one of the few oblique admissions Galsworthy makes that his marriage to Ada was not, after all, entirely the fulfilment of his sexual life" (Barker 1970, 157). However, it was not until Margaret Morris' publication of *My Galsworthy Story* in 1967, in which she published Galsworthy's letters to her, that we get a glimpse of the true nature of John and Margaret's relationship.

The Sacredness of Marriage

This section analyses the way Galsworthy writes about church weddings and the sacredness of the marriage bond, especially in relation to divorce. The only autobiographical detail about church weddings is from 1902 when Galsworthy writes to Edward Garnett, that church weddings always gave him “the squirms”, referring to them as an “abomination” (Garnett 1934, 35). Analysis will show what earlier works of literature reinforced these feelings on church weddings, what it was in particular in his life that evoked these feelings, and to what extent this is reflected in his work.

The Wedding Ceremony

If we look at the literary works that Galsworthy read before 1900, it is again Dickens, Flaubert, Maupassant, Turgenev and Tolstoy that profoundly influenced his thinking with respect to the wedding ceremony. Apart from Tolstoy, these writers hardly pay any attention to the wedding service as such. In fact, they ignore it to such a degree that this cannot be coincidental. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

Dickens only rarely mentions church weddings and the few details that he gives and the rare descriptions of church weddings that he offers, nearly all betray his feelings. In *David Copperfield*, for instance, the first wedding is that of Miss Peggotty and Barkis. Their wedding is described in very sober terms: “In a word, they were married, and had gone into the church for no other purpose” (Copperfield, 129). Short as the statement may be, there is a clear ambiguity in “for no other purpose.” When David marries Dora Spenlow he gets a marriage licence, and ridicules the Archbishop of Canterbury’s blessing in print, “doing it as cheap as could possibly be expected.” David goes through the actual wedding ceremony as an “incoherent dream . . . the service beginning in a deep voice and all our being very attentive... the service being got through quietly and gravely . . . and our signing the register all around” (Copperfield, 537). Dickens, however, could not leave out a bit of sarcasm, when David wonders “why pew-openers must always be the most disagreeable females procurable, and whether there is any religious dread of a disastrous infection of good humour which renders it indispensable to set those vessels of vinegar upon the road to Heaven” (Copperfield, 537). David’s second wedding, this time to Agnes Wickfield, is again described in prosaic terms: “We were married within a fortnight. Traddles and Sophy, and Doctor and Mrs Strong, were the only guests at our quiet wedding” (Copperfield, 734).

In *Our Mutual Friend* Dickens takes one step further in his irony. He refers to the wedding of Alfred Lammle and Sophronia by saying that “the Reverend Blank Blank, assisted by the Reverend Dash Dash united [them] in the bonds of matrimony . . .” The only other reference to the event was: “ceremony performed, register signed” (Mutual Friend, 110, 112). Dickens

describes the wedding of Bella and John in similar terms: “John and Bella have consented together in holy wedlock; you may (in short) consider it done” (Mutual Friend, 629).²⁰

Flaubert and Maupassant do not elaborate on wedding ceremonies either. Emma and Charles Bovary’s wedding is merely referred to as “the ceremony in the church” (Bovary, 21). Madeleine Forestier and George Duroy in *Bel-Ami* decide to leave out the church ceremony altogether: “*les nouveaux époux, ayant jugé inutiles les cérémonies religieuses*” (Bel-Ami, 219).²¹ The narrator in *Une Vie* says nothing about the wedding ceremony of Jeanne and Julien and simply states: “*La cérémonie finissait*” (Une Vie, 67).

In Ivan Turgenev’s work the formal church wedding is conspicuously absent. In *Virgin Soil* we even come across the acceptance of people living in “free grace”, that is to say, cohabitation without formal marriage. “Where there’s God’s blessing, one may live in peace! And there’s no need of the priest for that” (Virgin Soil, 242).

In describing Levin and Kitty’s wedding in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy highlights the subordinate position of women as advocated by the Church: “God had created woman out of Adam’s rib. . . . By thee is woman joined unto the man as a helpmeet and for the procreation of the human race; . . . The wife sees that she reverence her husband” (Karenina, 455-457). Tolstoy’s Stepan Arkadyich comments on the traditional elements in the Russian Orthodox marriage service by saying: “It’s so stupid this old custom of marching in a circle, ‘Rejoice, O Isaiah,’ which nobody believes in and which hinders people’s happiness” (Karenina, 695).²²

The first time that Galsworthy himself elaborates on the wedding ceremony is in *The Island Pharisees* (1904), in which the protagonist, Shelton, is present at a church wedding and listens to the words of the Marriage Service from the *Book of Common Prayer*: “For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health—” (Island Pharisees, 68). It reminds the reader of another well-known phrase from the same Marriage Service: “Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.” It is this phrase that indicates that the marriage bond is a sacred one, not to be broken by man himself, and it is this religious burden, in addition to the moral burden, that prevented people from having a divorce when the marriage proved unhappy. While the organ plays the “Wedding March” Shelton realises

²⁰ Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn’s wedding is described as follows: “Mr Milvey did his office in suitable simplicity,” and Dickens refers to this wedding simply as “the ceremony” (Mutual Friend, 712). Already on the outset of his career, in *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens shows how insignificant the church wedding was to him. Of Bella and Trundle’s wedding he simply states: “Let us briefly say, then, that the ceremony was performed by the old clergyman, in the parish church of Dingley Dell” (Pickwick, 360).

²¹ Later in the story, when Duroy has divorced Madeleine, he marries Susanna Walter, but this time in church. Apparently his first marriage did not count as such. The wedding ceremony is described in familiar terms: the priest asks the customary questions, exchanges the rings, “*prononça les par qui lient comme des chaînes . . . Il parla de fidélité, longuement, en termes pompeux*” (Bel-Ami, 368).

²² In *The Kingdom of God is Within You* Tolstoy describes this ritual in even greater detail: “Moreover, men are told that if a man and a woman desire to have their sexual relation sanctified they must come to church, put crowns of metal upon their heads, swallow some wine, walk three times round a table, accompanied by the sound of singing, and this will make their sexual relation holy and entirely different from any others” (Kingdom of God, 76).

that all this would soon be happening to himself and looking around him, seeing the weeping and the smiling, he thinks: “Carnival of second-hand emotions!” (*Island Pharisees*, 69), with which Galsworthy satirises what most people felt to be a sacrament. Shelton’s remark in *The Island Pharisees* from 1904 is consistent with Galsworthy’s remark to Garnett in 1902, referring to the church wedding as an “abomination”.

Nine years later, in 1913, Galsworthy describes a wedding ceremony in *The Dark Flower*. Mark Lennan’s sister Cys is getting married and Mark reads the Marriage Service. In places it seems just fine to him, but he worries about certain phrases, “about obeying for instance.” He feels that it would be impossible to speak of “obeying” in marriage and that obeying and love were mutually exclusive. He adds that “it would simply be too disgusting for anything to go on living with a person you didn’t love or who didn’t love you” (*Dark Flower*, 61). In this passage Galsworthy refers to that particular part of the marriage service in which the minister says to the bride: “Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?”²³ What Galsworthy shows here, is that this is the basis for women’s inferior position in marriage, because it is only the woman who promises to obey, whereas the man only promises to “love her and comfort her.” It also bears a resemblance to the discussion that Galsworthy read in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1882), in which one of the characters says: “I don’t believe in a man who can’t make a woman obey him” (*African Farm*, 207), and in Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1847/1848), in which Lady Jane says to her husband, Sir Pitt Crawley, “that righteous obedience has its limits.”²⁴ These examples clearly show how this was part of Victorian debate on relations within matrimony.

Galsworthy’s aversion to the church wedding continued unabated until the end of his life. He refers to it in “Grotesques” (1917-1918), for example, in which the Angel Æthereal discusses the marriage ceremony as it was performed in the year 1947, a projection of thirty years ahead in time. Dragoman tells him that it is no longer treated as a sacrament and that it is now “purely a civil, or uncivil, contract as the case may be” (*Satires*, 173). Galsworthy’s irony in the word “uncivil” is obvious here. Three years later in *To Let* (1921) Galsworthy again accentuates the hypocrisy of church weddings. It concerns Fleur’s wedding to Michael Mont, seen through the eyes of Holly, Young Jolyon’s daughter. Galsworthy’s description is again highly ironic: “The church with white flowers and something blue in the middle of the East window looked extremely chaste, as though endeavouring to counteract the somewhat lurid phraseology of a Service calculated to keep the thoughts of all on puppies” (*To Let*, 237). The “lurid phraseology” that Galsworthy refers to concerns those lines from the Marriage Service in which the minister mentions to the bride and bridegroom the causes for

²³ “The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony” in *The Book of Common Prayer and the Administration of the Sacraments*, London, Cambridge University Press, ca. 1940.

²⁴ William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 638.

which matrimony was ordained: “First, it was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.” The second reason for marriage was that it served as a “remedy against sin” and that it helped to “avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ’s body” (from: “The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony”). Galsworthy’s friend, Cunninghame Graham, comments on this aspect of sacramental marriage too, by saying that “the church degrade[s] both sexes,” and that the Church has thus become the “universal brothel-keeper of mankind”. Shaw too hints at this when he states that marriage is “the most licentious of human institutions” (Superman, 156).

Holly wonders if Fleur’s marriage, not being a love match, would turn out to be a happy one. Her own marriage was a love-match and has been successful, but Fleur’s is “clearly a toss-up; and to consecrate a toss-up in this fashion with manufactured unction before a crowd of fashionable free-thinkers . . . seem[s] to her as near a sin as one could find in an age which ha[s] abolished them” (To Let, 238). Fleur and Michael’s wedding contains a traditional sermon, in which the minister warns them of the dangerous times they lived in, and the “awful conduct of the House of Lords in connection with divorce.” Once more the rector reminds them that the purpose of marriage is children, “not mere sinful happiness” (To Let, 238). As the years of Fleur and Michael’s marriage pass by, years in which she still secretly longs for Jon Forsyte, Galsworthy seems, increasingly, to side with Michael and with conventional morality. As Barker indicates, there was “no more flouting the world and going where the heart calls” (Barker 1970, 206).

In Galsworthy’s final trilogy in the early 1930s, there are two more weddings that stress the words of the Marriage Service. First, in *Maid in Waiting* (1931), there is the wedding of Jean Tasburgh and Hubert Charwell. Dinny, the central character in all three novels of this trilogy, is surprised about this service conducted by her uncle Hilary. “She waited for the word ‘obey’—it did not come; she waited for the sexual allusions—they were omitted.” The ring is put on Jean’s finger, prayers are said, followed by the Lord’s Prayer, “how strangely short” (*Maid in Waiting*, 164). That this service was different from others is also clear from the narrator’s remark that Dinny listened to the clergyman “contrary to her habit in church” (*Maid in Waiting*, 164). Characteristically, Hilary Charwell skipped the obligatory parts of the Marriage Service as he no longer felt them suitable. In stark contrast stands the second example, this time from *Flowering Wilderness* (1932), which describes the wedding of Dinny’s sister Clare with Sir Gerald (Jerry) Corven. What follows is a traditional wedding service: “The ring was on, the fateful words said, the exhortations over” (*Flowering Wilderness*, 344).

It is in this way that Galsworthy, in thirty years of writing, characterises the wedding ceremony, especially the formal part of the Marriage Service. There is no single example of a positive or neutral statement, with the exception of the wedding service conducted by Hilary

Charwell. The descriptions of all other weddings were in line with Galsworthy's critical remark in *The Island Pharisees* in 1904: "Carnival of second-hand emotions!"

The Marriage Bond

Galsworthy denounces the religious stance that the marriage bond is an indissoluble bond. This is one of the themes that suffuse his work and as such one of the deeper motives behind his unequivocal rejection of the Church and his sceptical treatment of religion. It is in *The Man of Property* that Galsworthy elaborates on the traditional views on marriage as he came across them in the circles in which he moved. Young Jolyon looks at Soames and Irene's marriage and indicates that he feels that most people would consider such a marriage fairly successful. He adds, ironically, that there is no reason why they should not continue to live together "even if they hated each other. . . . as long as the decencies were observed—the sanctity of the marriage tie, of the common home, respected." He adds that half the marriages of the upper classes are conducted on these lines. It is not so much the real sacredness of marriage in its religious context at stake here, but rather the "susceptibilities of the Church" as an institution which influenced morality (*Man of Property*, 206). At the end of the novel Irene returns to Soames, as she has nowhere to go after Bosinney's death. Soames and Irene both sit by the fire when Soames hears the bells of the church where he and Irene were married, "pealing in 'practice' for the advent of Christ" (*Man of Property*, 313). It is Galsworthy's subtle reminder of the futility of their church wedding and its connection with the doctrines of the church forbidding divorce, preferring loveless marriages to a desecration of the marriage bond. In Galsworthy's second novel of *The Forsyte Saga, In Chancery* (1920), Soames visits Irene in Paris to try to persuade her once more to return to him. For the first time Soames refers to the sacredness of the marriage vow, but, coming from his mouth, this does not sound very sincere: "You gave me a sacred vow. . . . You broke that vow without cause." Irene continues in this religious vein by saying: "God made me as I am . . . wicked if you like—but not so wicked that I'll give myself again to a man I hate" (*Chancery*, 223). Irene too refers to the sanctity of marriage by calling herself "wicked", but reinforces the idea that upholding an unhappy marriage may indeed be even more wicked. What all this reveals is that fifteen years after Galsworthy's own marriage to Ada he still spoke about the subject with the same verve as he did in 1906.

The marriage bond remained an important theme throughout Galsworthy's life. Shortly after *The Man of Property*, he published *The Country House*, in which he juxtaposes two contemporary moral views on divorce. There is Gregory Vigil, who says: "I regard marriage as sacred, and when, which God forbid, it proves unsacred, it is horrible to think of these formalities," clearly siding with those who find divorce acceptable when a marriage fails (*Country House*, 75). Later in the same novel the Rev. Hussell Barter represents the views of the orthodox Church and speaks out against divorce: "My conviction is that there's far too

much divorce nowadays.” Referring to Helen Bellew, who has left her husband, he remarks: “Let this woman go back to her husband and let him show her where she’s to blame . . . then let them forgive each other like Christians” (Country House, 176). Hussell Barter’s stance is not unlike that of Pastor Manders in Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts* (1881), who says to Mrs Alving, now a widow after an unhappy marriage of nineteen years: “What right have people to happiness? No, we have our duty to do, Mrs Alving! And your duty was to stand by the man you had chosen, and to whom you were bound by sacred ties” (*Ghosts* 113).

In Galsworthy’s *Joy* (1909) Dick Merton, refers to a writer that he knows, and he quotes this writer’s views on the divorce issue: “He says that if marriage is a failure people ought to be perfectly free” (Plays, 95). In fact Galsworthy could not have been more outspoken. He confirms this two years later in the novel, *The Patrician* (1911), through the socialist, Mr Courtier, who states that the Church’s attitude towards marriage and divorce is “as remote from the realities of life as the attitude of the believer in Free Love, and not more likely to catch on” (*Patrician*, 25). In the same novel Miltoun’s orthodox sister Agatha is worried about her brother having fallen in love with a woman who is separated from her husband. She worries about him from a social point of view, but also from a religious point of view, “for she share[s] the High Church views of the indissolubility of marriage” (*Patrician*, 68). Miltoun actually resembles his sister in this respect. “All divorce was against his convictions, but in a blurred way he admitted that there were cases where release was unavoidable” (*Patrician*, 76). It is obvious that Miltoun is tossed between his morals and religious principles and his love for Mrs Noel. When his father, Lord Valleys, says to him, “I thought you took the Church’s view on that subject,” Miltoun cannot but reply in Mrs Noel’s defence, that “she has not done wrong” (*Patrician*, 86), and was therefore not to blame. But what then was he to do, is the question that Miltoun asks himself. In Mrs Noel’s husband’s view (he is a vicar) under no circumstance is marriage dissoluble. Miltoun himself feels that he and she are guilty, and that “for the guilty there could be no marriage” (*Patrician*, 269). The question drives Miltoun almost to loss of faith. In his desperation he says to himself, “If there were no more coherence in God’s scheme than this, let him too be incoherent! Let him hold authority and let him live outside authority!” He wonders, “why stifle his powers for the sake of a coherence which did not exist” (*Patrician*, 271). Again it is Mr Courtier who voices Galsworthy’s own opinions when he says to Miltoun: “When this law, by enforcing spiritual adultery on those who have come to hate their mates, destroys the sanctity of the married state—the very sanctity it professes to uphold, you must expect to have it broken by reasoning men and women without their losing self-respect” (*Patrician*, 313). The “spiritual adultery” that Galsworthy refers to is reminiscent of Whyte-Melville’s epithet of the marriage of convenience in *Digby Grand* as “the deliberate prostitution of the heart.”

In “A Christian” (1911), a sketch from *The Inn of Tranquillity*, Galsworthy struggles with the Church’s dogmatic reasoning on divorce and tries to expose this type of reasoning as

morally wrong. The first-person narrator in the story meets an old college friend, who has become a parson, and they discuss church dogma on the subject of marriage. The narrator asks his friend whether women who, “in spite of all their efforts . . . have no spiritual affinity with their husbands,” and continue to live the married life “with dreadful feelings of spiritual revolt,” act in accordance with the spirit of Christ’s teachings. His friend’s dogmatic answer is that “what a poor woman in such a case must suffer makes for the salvation of her spirit.” He even goes one step further when he says that “a woman who crucifies her flesh with a cheerful spirit in obedience to God’s law, stands higher in the eyes of God than one who undergoes no such sacrifice in her married life.” To the question whether this would not make the husband very unchristian, the parson answers that “the husband must abstain.” Their discussion comes full circle with the narrator’s conclusion, that as they would no longer be one flesh, “the marriage, of course has become no marriage.” His friend’s reply only reinforces his aversion to the Church’s dogmatism: “We are not permitted to know the way of this, we must have faith” (Inn of Tranquillity, 64-68). This is one of the most cynical passages in Galsworthy’s work. Galsworthy wrote “A Christian” in the summer of 1911, a week after he had finished reading the Gospel of St. Matthew “all the way up”, in which he noticed “a curious divergence” in the Sermon on the Mount from what the prophets say in the Old Testament (GD, 18 July 1911). That Galsworthy was preoccupied with the idea of the sanctity of marriage at the time is also clear from the fact that he read Cecil Chapman’s *Marriage and Divorce; Some Needed Reforms in Church and State*²⁵ in May of that year (GD, 6 May 1911). What also contributed to his mindset in the spring of 1911 is his re-reading of *Anna Karenina* from 4 to 8 March 1911, as his diary reveals (GD, 1911). In this novel Tolstoy observes that among Liberal-Party members a debate about marriage was going on, in which it was argued that “marriage was an obsolete institution and was in need of reform” (*Karenina*, 7). When Anna Karenina wants a divorce from Karenin the latter says: “Our lives are bound together, and bound not by men, but by God. Only a crime can break this bond, and a crime of that sort draws down a heavy punishment” (*Karenina*, 147). Karenin tells her: “I do not consider myself justified in breaking the bonds by which a higher power has united us” (*Karenina*, 282). In striking contrast to the phrases from the Sermon on the Mount, which Tolstoy quotes abundantly in *Anna Karenina*, stands the motto of this novel, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” (Deut: 32:35). This motto refers to God’s vengeance on Anna for her adultery and her decision to leave her husband and child, to Karenin’s vengeance for the social harm that she has done him, and to society’s vengeance on one who has tried to defy the moral codes of marriage.

Galsworthy found a confirmation of his own feelings in *Anna Karenina* and its echoes reverberate in “A Christian”. In a letter to an unrecorded correspondent Galsworthy refers to

²⁵ Cecil Maurice Chapman, *Marriage and Divorce; Some needed Reforms in Church and State*, London, David Nutt, 1911.

this sketch, saying: “I have so often found that the upholders of the unhappy marriage have no leg to stand on the moment they get away from a fundamental belief in the value of martyrdom” (Reynolds 1936, 81).

In *The Fugitive* (1913) the theme recurs as the central idea around which the plot revolves. The play shows us the unhappy marriage of Clare and George Dedmond. The latter does not seem to be much impressed by the fact that his wife does not love him and tells her that they are married “for better or for worse,” reminding her of the marriage bond concluded between them and that “it’s suicide” for her and “folly” for him in his position to ignore that, thereby especially stressing the social damage they would incur. He says he would understand if he “drank, or knocked [her] about town, or expected too much of [her]” (Plays, 289), almost Soames’ words to Irene: “It was not as if he drank! Did he run into debt or gamble, or swear; was he violent; were his friends rackets; did he stay out at night?” Dedmond represents the upper middle classes in their moral outlook when he says: “do you think we’re the only couple who’ve found things aren’t what they thought, and have to put up with each other and make the best of it?” He wants his wife to be sorry, to which she responds: “I don’t feel very Christian” (Plays, 289-290). Her parents-in-law try their best to persuade her to go back to her husband and remind her of the sacredness of their marriage: “Clare you must know this is all a fit of spleen; your duty and your interest—marriage is sacred Clare!” Clare replies to this in a bitter tone: “My marriage has become the reconciliation—of two animals—one of them unwilling. That’s all the sanctity there is about it” (Plays, 298). Lady Dedmond, her mother-in-law, once more asks her whether she does not have “any religious sense at all”, to which Clare replies: “None, if it is religion to live as we do” (Plays, 298). Galsworthy could not have expressed his rejection of the views of the orthodox Church in relation to marriage and divorce more clearly.

In *Saint’s Progress* (1919), written during the war, we see the first indications of changes taking place in society pertaining to the sanctity of the marriage bond. Although Edward Pierson, the rector, whose wife died fifteen years before, never remarried, as he “had always felt it would be sacrilege” (Saint’s Progress, 6), his daughter Noel has more liberal views. She has fallen in love with Young Morland, who has been called up for active service in France. They have known each other for six weeks and want to become man and wife, if not legally, then at least physically. Noel says to Morland: “Daddy won’t like our not being married in a Church; but I don’t care.” As usual Galsworthy is very careful with sexual allusions, almost prudish from a modern point of view. He leaves it to the imagination of the reader and does not go any further than allowing Young Morland to think: “My God! I’m in heaven” (Saint’s Progress, 20). Galsworthy here alludes to the concept of ‘marriage in the eyes of the Lord’, which in their eyes was equally sacred.

In Galsworthy’s final trilogy, written in the last few years of his life, he draws a picture of the early thirties, in which the sanctity of marriage is no longer the real issue, but morality

still is. In *Over the River* (1933) Clare Charwell's father advises her to return to the husband she has left: "The old idea about marriage may have gone, but after all, you both took certain vows—but leaving that aside—." The sacredness of marriage, as such, is touched upon, almost as an afterthought, but is no longer used as the main argument. The real argument is morality: "You can't have a divorce—there's your name and his position, and—after only eighteen months" (*Over the River*, 617-618).

An important theme of this final trilogy is Dinny Charwell's struggles with the concepts of love, marriage and divorce. She feels that everyone in her environment is pressing her to marry Dornford, a member of Parliament and as such an excellent suitor. She wonders what it is that causes this pressure:

'For the procreation of children,' went the words of the old order. The world had to be carried on! Why had the world to be carried on? Everybody used the word 'hell' in connection with it nowadays. Nothing to look forward to than Brave New World! 'Or the Catholic Church,' she thought, 'and I don't believe in either' (*Over the River*, 736).

Her thought of the 'Catholic Church' had come about because of Dornford's being a Roman Catholic. But what about Dornford himself? What were his intentions?

Rising forty! This overmastering wish of his—for its fulfilment it was now or never with him! If he were not to become set in the groove of a 'getter-on,' he must marry and have children. Life had become a half-baked thing without Dinny to give it meaning and savour (*Over the River*, 787).

Dinny too, standing by the "sundial where the shadow was an hour behind its time", realises that she has no time to spare (*Over the River*, 791). Dornford invites her to join him in going to mass in Oxford the next day, but during their drive to Oxford he thinks better of it and invites her to a boat trip. That same evening he proposes to her and they get married in an Anglican church. But what sort of marriage is this and why does she marry in church?

Dinny's uncle Adrian is present at the wedding and writes a letter to his wife Diana about it:

Ever since the engagement, I've wondered what she is really feeling. Love as she gave Desert it certainly is not, but I don't believe there's any physical reluctance. When yesterday I said to her: 'In good heart?' her answer was: 'No half heart, anyway.' . . . If she hasn't what hopeful youth calls 'a crush on' Dornford, she admires and respects him (*Over the River*, 801).

Thus Galsworthy ends with another marriage based on respect only, of which, over the years, he described so many, and so many of which were doomed to failure from the outset. The remark, “I don’t believe there’s any physical reluctance,” and “no half heart, anyway” cannot, perhaps, be surpassed for irony. In spite of Dinny’s former religious scruples, she marries in their village church, conforming to everything she rejected in the history of the three novels that formed *The End of the Chapter*, and indeed conforming to everything Galsworthy rejected as of 1898 with the publication of *Jocelyn*, Galsworthy’s first public statement on the fate of women caught in loveless marriages. Galsworthy’s description of Dinny early in the trilogy, when she was attending a service in an Early-English church, “without belief to speak of” (*Maid in Waiting*, 17), stands in sharp contrast to her conventional decision. Thus, the protagonist of his final trilogy and in many ways the one asking critical questions, looking through people, exposing hypocrisy, somebody who would be the last to marry without love, finally adapts to the forces of society. Galsworthy seems to have come full circle.

Divorce law

From the beginning until the end of his career as a writer Galsworthy sought to influence public opinion with his message that current divorce laws were outdated. In developing these feelings he found a kindred spirit in Charles Dickens, who had separated from his wife in 1858. In Dickens’ *David Copperfield*, for instance, we see David in a discussion with Mr Spenlow about the interpretation of divorce law. Mr Spenlow says: “Look at the world, there was good and evil in that; look at the ecclesiastical law, there was good and evil in *that*” (*Copperfield*, 408). Another example is Dr Strong’s acceptance of his wife Annie’s alleged affair with Mr Maldon. He almost blames himself for having married her, as she is his junior by so many years that she might have been his daughter. One cannot fail to see the similarity between the relationships between Dr Strong and Annie on the one hand, and between Soames and Irene and Soames and Annette, on the other. Especially when Annie blames her mother for her role in this: “You know, mama, how young and inexperienced I was, when you presented him before me, of a sudden, as a lover.” Irene and Annette were both forced upon Soames in a similar manner. Referring to Maldon, her lover during adolescence, Annie says: “There can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind There is nothing that we have in common.” She was thankful to Dr Strong for having saved her “from the mistaken impulse of [her] undisciplined heart” (*Copperfield*, 562-564). David Copperfield, the first-person narrator, repeats these lines a number of times, as if to grasp its meaning fully, and he wonders if this also refers to his own relationship with Dora. Thus, these lines are emphasised to such a degree that they become central to the novel and end in David’s happy marriage to Agnes Wickfield, whom he describes as “the dear presence, without which I were nothing” (*Copperfield*, 744). Not only do these lines say something about Dickens’ own doubts in his own marriage, but they will also have reinforced Galsworthy’s own feelings at the time that

Ada's separation and divorce from Arthur Galsworthy would be justified and how Ada, like Agnes, would be "the dear presence", without which he would be nothing.

Galsworthy's ideas about divorce law, triggered by Ada's divorce in 1904, coincided with changes in the political climate on this issue at the time, especially from 1900 to 1914. As Machin shows in his *Churches and Social Issues in Twentieth-century Britain*, a Society for Promoting Reforms in the Marriage and Divorce Laws of England was founded in 1903, and divorce was thoroughly investigated by a Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, which was appointed in 1909 and produced its report in 1912. This Commission recommended that the legal grounds for divorce in England and Wales be extended to include desertion for at least three years, cruelty, incurable insanity after five years' confinement, habitual drunkenness over a longer period, and imprisonment under a commuted death sentence. In England and Wales the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 had permitted divorce for adultery on the suit of a husband, but for adultery only if it were accompanied by cruelty on the suit of a wife. The 1912 report recommended that men and women should be treated equally through removal of the special condition imposed on the wife. An attempt was immediately made to pass appropriate legislation, but no bill was enacted until 1923 when the conditions for men and women were finally equalised.

Church opinion was divided on questions of divorce reform, reflecting the different interpretations which could be obtained from the Scriptures on the subject. The Roman Catholic Church took the strongest stand by not recognising divorce under civil law and excommunicating those who availed themselves of it. Annulment of marriage was, however, obtainable by papal dispensation. Under the Act of 1857 clergy of the Church of England could refuse to remarry the guilty party in a divorce case. All churches saw marriage as a lifelong union and all sought to discourage divorce. The fact that Churches confirmed their disapproval of divorce by refusing to remarry a divorced person, or debarring him or her from communion, accentuated the growing separation between Church and society (Machin 1998, 10-11, and 100-101). It took until 9 July 2002 for the General Synod of the Church of England in an historic vote to agree on a way forward on the vexed question of subsequent marriage in church after divorce. Although the Church still felt that "marriage should always be undertaken as a 'solemn, public and lifelong covenant between a man and a woman,'" they now recognised that some marriages "regrettably do fail and that the Church's care for couples in that situation should be of paramount importance; and that there are exceptional circumstances in which a divorced person may be married in church during the lifetime of a former spouse."²⁶ In the words of the present Bishop of Winchester, the Rt. Rev. Michael Scott-Joynt: "God's presence among people and their families who want to marry and who have suffered marital breakdown requires us to struggle faithfully with the real tensions

²⁶ The 2002 General Synod Report from the House of Bishops (GS 1449).

involved in witnessing to him there.”²⁷ All this clearly expresses the Church’s struggle with this theme over the past one hundred years and it shows how only relatively recently ecclesiastical law has become less strict on the issue of remarriage after divorce.

All this also shows how in Galsworthy’s lifetime the divorce-law issue, both civil and ecclesiastical, was a dominant theme. Ada Galsworthy’s personal experience, his own parents’ separation, his feelings on the emancipation of women and equal rights, combined with his legal knowledge, turned Galsworthy into a champion of the divorce-reform movement. He was, however, not the only contemporary writer who addressed this issue. Two playwrights were also outspoken on this subject. Shaw stated in 1903 in *Man and Superman*, that with regard to the marriage contract nothing is more certain than “that the progressive modification of the marriage contract will be continued until it is no more onerous nor irrevocable than any ordinary commercial deed of partnership” (*Superman*, 221). St John Hankin too makes a firm statement about the Church and divorce in *The Charity That Began at Home* (1905). He does so in the scene in which Verreker persuades Margery to break off their engagement. He tells her what an unhappy marriage does to a couple: “It makes them peevish and unreasonable. It sours their tempers and ruins their digestions.” He concludes with a direct hit at the Church: “If the parsons cared two straws about morality instead of thinking only of their dogmas, they’d make divorcing one’s wife as easy as dismissing one’s cook. Easier” (Hankin, I, 115). Finally, Cunninghame Graham also refers to the divorce-law controversy. As to the position of women in marriage Cunninghame Graham says that a man’s wife will be his slave “until the marriage laws are changed; divorce . . . made easy and the dual contract made soluble at the will of both or either party to it, instead of being, as it too often is, a lifelong chain” (*Selected Writings*, 71-72).

The first time that Galsworthy himself openly questions divorce law from a legal perspective, not from a doctrinal one, is in *The Country House* (1908). Mr Pendyce and Gregory Vigil discuss Helen’s legal position with Pendyce’s solicitor, Mr Paramor. Paramor informs them about the legal concept of “collusion”: “Two unhappy persons must not seem to agree to be parted. . . . [and] there must be evidence of misconduct.” Gregory Vigil does not understand why they should use “this underhand, roundabout way,” to which the solicitor replies: “For the preservation of morality. What do you suppose?” Then follows Vigil’s remark that comes straight from Galsworthy’s own heart: “Do you call it moral so to imprison people that you drive them to sin in order to free themselves?” Mr Paramor then admits that the system causes a great deal of unnecessary suffering and he agrees that it needs reform: “Most lawyers and almost any thinking man will tell you that it does.” According to Paramor

²⁷ The Bishop of Winchester’s speech to the Synod on 9 July 2002 available on <http://www.win.diocese.org.uk/bmgsyn090702.htm>.

this situation cannot be changed overnight. He maintains that divorce law found its origin in ecclesiastical law, “which held man and wife to be undivorceable” (Country House, 76).

In “Justice”, a story first published in *A Commentary* (1908), Galsworthy’s argument is that “money dictates the measure of justice and its methods” (Satires, 319), and is in itself a reason why people cannot resort to the medium of divorce to end an unhappy marriage. A working-class man simply cannot afford the legal costs to end his marriage. The question is, why this should be so, to which the commentator replies:

If all the clerks and working men, and all those wives of clerks and working men—to whom. . . divorce was due by almost general consent . . . were enabled to obtain it at a price within their means, several thousand more divorces would each year be granted in this country. This would have a disastrous effect on the statistics of the marriage tie. Public Opinion . . . would feel that a backward step was being taken on the path of moral rectitude (Satires, 318).

In other words, it was morality that dictated that matters should remain as they were. It was this moral rectitude of the middle class, of politicians and the gentry, firmly rooted in and supported by the Anglican Church. It is this latter aspect that is the central idea of what Galsworthy says in “Grotesques” (1917-1918), the satire in which the Angel Éthereal pays a visit to the earth, thirty years ahead in time. With his guide he talks about the Divorce Court. The guide explains that although the law is purely the affair of the State now, and has nothing to do with religion any more, “it still secretly believes in the religious maxim: ‘Once married, always married,’ and feels that however much a married person is neglected or ill-treated, she should not desire to be free” (Satires, 159). Again Galsworthy’s favourite subject of ‘collusion’ is discussed. The angel wonders if there could not be a simpler method, “which would not necessitate the perversion of the truth.” To this the dragoman replies that “however unhappy people may be together, our law grudges their separation; it requires them therefore to be immoral, or to lie, or both before they can part.” The Angel does not understand this and replies, “I should dislike living with a wife if I were tired of her.” The guide tells him that most people would agree with him and that British marriage laws should be in a museum. He goes on to say that this is merely a matter of morality: “So long as we do not dissolve a marriage it remains virtuous, honest and happy though the parties to it may be unfaithful, untruthful, and in misery” (Satires, 161-163).

It is particularly in the sequels to *The Man of Property* that Galsworthy elaborates on the divorce issue.²⁸ Soames, twelve years after Bosinney’s death, is contemplating divorce from

²⁸ In *In Chancery* Galsworthy also shows the unhappy marriage of Soames’ sister Winifred. After years of gambling and drinking Soames’ brother-in-law Dartie decides to leave England and settle in South America. After her case has been heard the judge pronounces a decree of restitution. Dartie now has six months to return to avoid a divorce. Contrary to all expectations one day he shows up, and “a word of—horror—in her family

Irene. He does not have a strong case though. He has been separated from Irene for twelve years now, and as such her conduct with Bosinney at the time can be no ground any more for divorcing her. "By doing nothing to secure relief he ha[s] acquiesced" (Chancery, 97). Irene realises that Soames' position is horrible and says: "I'd better give him fresh excuse to get rid of me" (Chancery, 138), which was necessary under contemporary divorce law. It is one of the few moments in the story that there is some feeling of sympathy on Irene's part for Soames' situation. It causes June to exclaim: "Of all undignified beasts and horrible laws!" Young Jolyon too feels that the law "catered for a human nature of which it took a naturally low view" (Chancery, 140). It is clear that this is an echo of the writer's own feelings. Another example of this is when Young Jolyon says that he looks upon himself as a "feminist": "I'm against any woman living with any man whom she definitely dislikes. It appears to me rotten" (Chancery, 203). Young Jolyon also hates the Church's view on women seeking divorce from the husbands they loathe:

Parsons would have it that freedom of soul and body were quite different things! Pernicious doctrine, that! Body and soul could not thus be separated. Free will was the strength of any tie, and not its weakness (Chancery, 204).

Soames subsequently decides to start divorce proceedings against his cousin Jolyon and Irene, which almost mirrors Major Arthur Galsworthy's proceedings against Ada and John. Jolyon is convinced that "she must rejoice at this chance of being free—after seventeen years of death in life!" He decides not to defend the case and "to accept what Soames and the gods had sent!" (Chancery, 243). Reflecting on the Forsytes' possessiveness and wondering if he, as a Forsyte, would not "make a slave of what he adored," he says to himself: "Let me just be her stand-by, her perching place; never—never her cage!" (Chancery, 250). The British magazine, *Lady's Pictorial* (1920), devoted an article to this particular scene in *In Chancery* (1920) and the moral question involved. It gives us some insight into contemporary middle-class thought. Looking at Young Jolyon's offer to Irene of "a perching place" after so many years of unhappiness, this critic asks her readers whether this was "immoral" and answered: "Few of us . . . would condemn the point of view of Jolyon Forsyte as Mr Galsworthy shows it to us in this revealing book."²⁹ It shows, however, how delicate an issue divorce still was and how delicate the balance was between something that was morally right and morally wrong.

escaped her: 'God!'" Note this last ironical detail that the writer adds. Soames and Winifred's father, James, feel that they have been wrong in getting the decree of restitution: "I ought to have paid him an allowance to stay out of England" (Chancery, 213). In this way he might have avoided further scandal. The rest of the novel focuses on Soames, however, and the social consequences of Dartie's return do not seem to have been noteworthy any more.

²⁹ *Lady's Pictorial*, 13 November 1920.

In “Stroke of Lightning” (1921) Galsworthy shows the fundamental, religious question involved in deciding on a divorce. An English public-school master, Frank Weymouth, has fallen in love with H el ene Radolin, who was “walled up with the man she had married” (Caravan, 475). Although Weymouth is prepared to give up his own marriage and his job, she decides against running away with him because of religious scruples: “You see, I’m a Catholic; my religion means much to me.” She adds to this: “I’m afraid of losing my soul, and his. . . . She really did see her lost soul and his whirling entwined through purgatory” (Caravan, 478). Though the narrator sympathises with Weymouth, he does realise that “her scruples were entirely genuine, and, from a certain point of view, quite laudable” (Caravan, 479). This is the first instance in which Galsworthy sympathises with someone having religious scruples in getting a divorce.

In *Glimpses and Reflections* (1937), a posthumous publication of articles and letters not published earlier, there is an article called “Four Cobwebs for New Brooms”, probably written somewhere in the 1920s, dealing with Divorce Law, among other subjects. With respect to Divorce-Law reform Galsworthy claims that “the opposition to reform now comes almost entirely from the Church.” He feels that such delay in reform only accentuates the question why people should marry at all. “If I marry and it turns out wrong, which seems not unlikely, I shall be living a disharmonic and degrading life, which can only be ended by a dishonouring process.” On the other hand, he realises that there was “worldly convenience to be had from marriage—more respectability, less social trouble.” Galsworthy concludes by saying that “If marriage is worth preserving, if it is still considered the best form of companionship between man and woman (as it is by one at least who is not a Churchman) the State had better bestir itself and bring the law in line with opinion” (Glimpses, 72-73). That Galsworthy looks upon divorce law as quite distinct from Christian morality, or religious doctrine, is clear from his parting statement: “All these cobwebs, in sum, defile the good sportsmanship which is now our working creed” (Glimpses, 75).

Conclusion

This analysis of Galsworthy’s work shows Galsworthy’s criticism of contemporary society for its double standards regarding pre-marital sex and prostitution. It also testifies to Galsworthy’s deeply felt involvement in issues such as the loveless marriage, adultery, church weddings, the marriage bond, divorce and divorce law. Galsworthy exposes society’s acceptance of women trapped in loveless marriages, marriages that were concluded for reasons of convenience and were continued for the sake of morality and the Church’s claim that the marriage bond is indissoluble. In Galsworthy’s work in the period from 1913 to 1920 there is a clear emphasis on the Church’s claim of the sanctity of the marriage bond and Galsworthy’s rejection of the traditional Marriage Service in *The Book of Common Prayer*. This Marriage Service accentuates women’s inferior position within matrimony, and stresses

the need for the procreation of children and the indissoluble nature of the bond. In this period Galsworthy poses the question time and again whether continuing a loveless marriage is not just as sinful as divorce. Over the years we observe a gradual shift from his criticism of the Church for putting this religious weight upon people's shoulders to his criticism of morality and divorce law. By the end of Galsworthy's life there are even traces of acceptance of society's moralistic attitude, given the implied criticism directed against Fleur for her licentiousness, the lack of sympathy with Dinny's first boyfriend, Wilfred Desert, Hilary Charwell's criticism of Clare's illicit relationship with Tony Croom, and indeed the acceptance of Dinny Charwell's loveless marriage to Dornford. It is ironic that Dinny, of all people, married for convenience' sake and in church, for it had been Dinny who had said that religion was simply "a sense of an all-pervading spirit, and the ethical creed that seems best to serve it" (*Flowering Wilderness*, 325). Galsworthy's lifelong plea for divorce-law reform to enable women to escape from the cage of an unhappy marriage, tied as they were by the vows pledged in church weddings, seemed to have come full circle. Barker explains this by saying that when writing this book Galsworthy "was already labouring under the weight of what seemed to be a growing weariness, lethargy, fatigue; afterwards it was to become apparent that he had written much of it in the early stages of a mortal illness. He was by then seeing almost nobody, living like a recluse" (Barker 1970, 224). This explanation is not fully justified, however. A chronological analysis of all aspects of religion shows that, as the years passed by, the sarcasm of Galsworthy's early years gave way to irony. Increasingly, however, he showed a tendency to moralise, preaching a belief in traditions and "refinement", a bit like Soames in Winchester Cathedral and Soames in the Interlude "Passers-by", and not unlike Hilary and Adrian Charwell.

7. Man's Place in the Universe

This chapter discusses Galsworthy's reflections on man's position within the grand design of the universe. Basically, Galsworthy debates the question whether there is an authorial God, who "like[s] to play with men, as men [like] to stir an earwig and turn it over and put a foot on it in the end" (*Dark Flower*, 134), or whether it is man himself who determines the course of his life. The philosophical concept of "necessity" or "determinism", as opposed to "free will", is central to this question. Related concepts are those of "Providence", "Nature", and "Fate". A French reviewer in 1913 argues that Galsworthy "believes in determinism and follows the ideas of Spencer, Huxley and Darwin." He also claims that Galsworthy's "sentimental and artistic determinism is something new in England."¹ Fréchet (1982) too holds that "complete acceptance of determinism is to be found in Galsworthy, mainly in his psychological analysis and plots" (Fréchet 1982, 187). Finally, Ould maintains that in *The Man of Property* and *Fraternity* "determinism still colours the author's thought" (Ould 1934, 209). Ould admits, however, that the feeling that there are "pitiless forces governing the destiny of man . . . [becomes] less insistent in later works" (Ould 1934, 210). Ould even sees determinism "softened by the growing pagan mysticism" in Galsworthy's *The Dark Flower* (Ould 1934, 213). My own analysis of Galsworthy's work aims to establish where Galsworthy stands in this debate on determinism and free will, also within the wider context of creation and existence.

Determinism and free will

The term "determinism", or "causal determinism", denotes the philosophical concept that everything is pre-determined universally by natural laws. It represents the idea that "every event is necessitated by antecedent events and conditions together with the laws of nature."² Charles Darwin gave his arguments in favour of biological determinism, also termed Darwinist determinism, which holds that our actions ultimately spring from physiological conditions. "Theological determinism" represents the notion that God, as an omniscient and omnipotent being, is the ultimate cause behind everything and has pre-ordained all that will ever occur. Related to this is the theological idea of "Providence" denoting divine care and

¹ Joseph Aynard, "L'Auberge de Tranquillité", *Le Journal des Débats* (Paris), 15 January 1913, p. 1, quoted in Earl. E. Stevens, *John Galsworthy: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings About Him*, De Kalb, Illinois, Northern Illinois University Press, 1980, p. 67.

² Carl Hoefer, "Causal Determinism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2003, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/determinism-causal>.

protection. Opposed to the concept of determinism is that of “free will”, the “capacity of rational agents to choose a course of action from among various alternatives.”³

The debate in Britain in favour of determinism started with the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, his follower in the eighteenth century David Hume and John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century. One of the central questions in this debate on determinism from the seventeenth century until today has been the claim that responsibility and moral obligation would be meaningless if determinism were true. The same goes for the theological question of the seeming incompatibility of God’s omnipotence with man’s free will.

The notions of determinism and free will and the related concepts of providence, nature, fate are the central philosophical questions in Galsworthy’s work. That he did not believe in ‘providence’ is clear from his novel *Maid in Waiting* (1931), in which he refers to this as “a wash-out”, and of God’s pre-ordination through providence he says: “His plan [is] too remote” (*Maid in Waiting*, 196-198). Scepticism about the concept of providence was something Galsworthy came across in a number of his favourite novels. In Balzac’s *Père Goriot*, for instance, monsieur Goriot says: “Oh God, how badly planned your world is!” (*Goriot*, 236). In *War and Peace* Tolstoy devotes an entire chapter to the subject of providence and determinism. He does so in connection with the Napoleonic wars and wonders to what extent they were the result of the free will of the nation, or the result of the “direct intervention of the Deity in human affairs.” Tolstoy immediately discards the second option by claiming that “the old belief has been shattered” (*War and Peace*, 1411), and that consequently he cannot believe that an authorial god was responsible.

Anatole France too turns the concept of theological determinism to ridicule in his *Revolt of the Angels* (1914), in which he depicts the god of the Christian faith as a naïve deity:

He never sees further than the end of his nose. He did not expect Adam’s disobedience, and so little did he anticipate the wickedness of men that he repented having made them, and drowned them in the waters of the Flood, and all the animals as well, though he had no fault to find with the animals.⁴

What Galsworthy read in earlier and contemporary literature reinforced his conviction that man should rely on himself and his own actions. He saw this conception embodied in a maxim from Aesop’s legend of Hercules and the Waggoner: “The gods help them that help themselves.” This legend tells that “a waggoner whose wheels stuck fast in the mud prayed to

³ Timothy O’Connor, “Free Will”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2005, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freewill>.

⁴ Anatole France, *Revolt of the Angels* (*La Révolt des Anges*, 1914), London, The Bodley Head, 1923, p. 251.

the gods for help; whereupon Hercules advised him to put his own shoulder to the wheel before invoking divine aid.”⁵ ⁶

In spite of his scepticism towards the religious concept of Providence and his conviction early in his career that Fortune seldom fails to assist those that assist themselves, Galsworthy does, however, seriously ponder the question to what extent man's life is, cosmically, pre-ordained. We can find the earliest evidence of a serious interest in this philosophical theme in his first novel, *Jocelyn* (1898), probably also because at the time he recognised the negative aspects of determinism, fatalism, in his wife, Ada. He demonstrates this in his description of Jocelyn Ley's reaction to the death of Giles Legard's wife, Irma. Giles has fallen in love with Jocelyn as a result of his loveless marriage to Irma, a marriage similar to Ada and Arthur Galsworthy's. When Irma dies of an overdose of morphine, Jocelyn feels guilty and depressed. Galsworthy avails himself of this opportunity in the novel to expound on the difference between fatalism and free will, as this becomes visible in the characters of the two protagonists of this novel, but also in Ada's character and his own. Legard recognises in Jocelyn “a dreadful, weary look, of something more than ordinary despair,” and sees in her the expression of that “hopeless taint of inherited fatalism.” He cannot comprehend that and this is where their individualities diverge. “*His* instinct was to fight for his happiness, to fight for it with pain and trouble—*hers* to fold her hands, and let it drift to her or away” (Jocelyn, 103). That this is not a random remark of Galsworthy's, but part of the larger theme of determinism, is clear from the fact that Galsworthy returns to it in the conversation between Jocelyn and Nielsen, another admirer of Jocelyn's. Wondering why “all the birds, and the trees, and the beasts,” have a home and wondering why “everything has its mate and its place,” whereas she is “always in the cold” (Jocelyn, 150), Jocelyn asks Nielsen, out of the blue, if he believes in free will. Nielsen tells her, with a French accent, that there are two sides to this question. From a narrow point of view, he argues, there is free will. “One to another of us, has free will: that is, you know, in our social relations.” However, from a broader point of view, he feels that men and women are “all at the ends of long chains of circumstance. Whatever we do, you know, is only what comes out of that—it is settled before, so that, of course, in that sense there is no free will” (Jocelyn, 150). In Nielsen's Scandinavian name there may be a playful allusion to the name of Henri Bergson (1859-1941), the French philosopher, who published his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* in 1888,

⁵ Norman Page, editor, “Notes”, chapter 13. 2 in Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 957.

⁶ Galsworthy himself uses this maxim facetiously as Mr Hornblower's motto in his play *The Feud*. Hornblower maintains: “God helps those who ‘elp themselves, that's at the bottom of all religion” (Plays, 526). Hornblower, a Nonconformist, mistakes this motto for a saying from the Bible and applies it to justify the exploitation of his workers and his tenants. Galsworthy also came across this saying in Dickens' *Bleak House*, in which John Jarndyce says to Richard Carstone: “Trust in nothing but in Providence and your own efforts. Never separate the two like the heathen waggoner” (*Bleak House*, 232). It was in Whyte-Melville's *Digby Grand* that he read the same concept again. Digby's maxim that “Fortune . . . seldom fails to assist those that assist themselves” (Digby, 331) appealed to Galsworthy strongly and reinforced his own conviction that man cannot rely on Providence, or Fortune alone, but must take pains to determine his own future.

which appeared in English as *Time and Free Will* in 1889, in which he “opposed the determinists who made freedom seem impossible.”⁷

The fact that *Jocelyn* closes with another dialogue on fate proves the importance of this theme to Galsworthy. When Giles Legard and Jocelyn are finally united on board a ship to the Far East after Jocelyn has decided that her “place” is with Giles, he promises her “to make up for the past” (Jocelyn, 166) in an attempt to undo what has been done. Jocelyn replies to this: “‘Yes—if we can.’ Her voice, hushed and uncertain, was like a prayer to Fate, but her hand touched his cheek with soft fingers. ‘Who knows?’” (Jocelyn, 166). It expresses the uncertainty, the hesitancy and fatalism in Jocelyn, and through her in Ada, rather than Galsworthy’s own constant preparedness to challenge fate.⁸

Galsworthy’s own interest in fate corresponds with his appreciation of the great classical tragedies of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles in addition to Shakespeare’s tragedies, such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. In all these tragedies man’s relation to the gods and fate seem to be the main factor determining the characters’ tragic lives. Thus, Prometheus in Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* says: “I must bear the will / of Fate as lightly as I may, and learn / The invincible strength of Necessity.” The chorus ask him “who then is helmsman of Necessity?” Prometheus replies: “The Fates three-formed and the remembering Furies.” Even Zeus himself is less powerful than these. “He could not alter that which is ordained.”⁹ In Aeschylus’ *The Libation Bearers* (*Choephorae*), part two of the *Oresteia* trilogy, but also in Sophocles’ *Electra*, it is both Electra, the “ill-fated one”¹⁰ and her brother Orestes who seem to have been predestined since their youth to avenge their father’s murder by their mother Clytaemnestra and her lover Ægisthus. Orestes (in *The Libation Bearers*) says to his mother: “It is my father’s destiny which determines this death of yours.”¹¹ In Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* it is Oedipus himself who says: “My fate was revealed by Apollo / He said I would lie with my own mother / And stain my hands with my father’s blood.” He realises his fate cannot be avoided because “there is not a man alive / Who can force the will of the gods.” When the mystery is finally unveiled to Oedipus he wonders, “What evil could there ever be /

⁷ Idella J. Gallagher, *Morality in Evolution*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1970, p. 100.

⁸ Twelve years later, in *Strife* (1910), Galsworthy raises the subject of fatalism once more, including the related question, whether one should acquiesce in one’s given station in life, or offer opposition. One of the characters, Henry Thomas, a Nonconformist, declares himself against the strike and seems to have accepted his fate when he says that it is no disgrace to give in to Nature. “For this Nature iss a fery pig thing; it is pigger than what a man is . . . it is fery pat, look you, this coing against Nature . . . when Nature says ‘No further’, then it is no coot snapping your fingers in her face” (Plays, 132). Roberts, the strike leader, is infuriated by Thomas’ words, and he reminds the strikers of how they are being exploited and asks them if they are “lyin’ down an’ trusting’ to the tender mercies of this merciful Nature?” Next, Roberts calls up the men to defy Nature and says, “I tell you, strike your blow in Nature’s face—an’ let it do its worst!” (Plays, 137). Clearly, Galsworthy’s sympathy is with those that never accept their fate and are prepared to fight for the improvement of their lives.

⁹ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, George Thomson (tr.), 1932, Dover Publications, 1995, pp. 6 and 22.

¹⁰ Sophocles, *Electra*, George Young, 1906 (tr.), New York, Dover Publications, 1995, 43.

¹¹ Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, Christopher Collard (tr.), Oxford University Press, 2002, p.77.

That could surpass the fate of Oedipus?"¹² Euripides in his *Medea*, refers to Medea as "a woman fated for evil,"¹³ and in his *The Trojan Women* it is Hecuba, one of the women of "ill-fated Troy" who calls herself "victim to a most unhappy lot," but realises that all this is "necessity's grim law." Finally, in *Hippolytus* it is Aphrodite (Cypris), goddess of erotic love, who decides that "Phædra is to die, an honoured death 'tis true, but still to die." This time it is the chorus that state that there is no "escape from fate and necessity." In the end Hippolytus too falls victim to Aphrodite. Artemis, goddess of chaste love, tells him that "in this death thou dost meet thy destined fate."¹⁴

Galsworthy shows his own preoccupation with fate through his unstinting praise of the opera *Carmen*, which he translated in 1932. He appreciated this opera especially because of its "straight line of Fate" (*Carmen*, vii). References to "fate" abound in *Carmen*, culminating in Carmen's remark: "It is Fate rules our destiny" (*Carmen*, 55). The fatality pervading *Carmen* is also visible in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Maupassant's *Une Vie*, two novels particularly dear to Galsworthy. It is the same fate that determines the life of Peer in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*: "A destiny rules over us,"¹⁵ which echoes the "pitiful and ironic fatalism" and "intense and melancholy emotionalism" (Candelabra, 254) of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard*.¹⁶

The role of fate is also a particularly striking feature of contemporary drama, which was significant for Galsworthy's own development until the First World War. A number of Synge's plays, for instance, are imbued with the powerful role that providence and fate play. Thus, in *Riders to the Sea* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, man's life is completely in the hands of fate and "the great troubles are foretold."¹⁷ In Masfield's *The Widow in the Bye Street* (1912), *The Everlasting Mercy* and *The Tragedy of Nan*, it would seem as if fate cannot be stopped at all. It is what Galsworthy terms "the fate which the life force coils round human lives; the fate which lurks, waiting but for the favouring moment—sometimes mercifully, never reached—to leap out and destroy" (Pendyces, 273).

It is Galsworthy's friend, Gilbert Murray, the classical scholar, who advised Galsworthy in January 1911 to use the old Greek saying by Heraclitus: "ἄθος ἄνθρωπος ἀπὸ δαίμων" as a motto for *The Patrician*. Galsworthy translates this saying in his diary as "To everyman his own character is God" (GD, 6 Jan. 1911), and he also uses it in a dialogue between Lord Dennis and Miltoun: "Each man's nature or character is his fate or God" (*Patrician*, 309). He

¹² Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Peter Meineck (introd.) and Paul Woodruff (tr.), Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 2000, pp. 41, 11, 57.

¹³ Euripides, *Medea*, Rex Warner, 1944, (tr.), New York, Dover Publications, 1993, p. 41..

¹⁴ Euripides, *The Trojan Women* and *Hippolytus*, Edward P. Coleridge (tr.), 1906, New York, 2002, p. 6, 8, 14, 32, 53 and 56.

¹⁵ Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, 1867, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 73.

¹⁶ Anton Chekhov, *Five Plays*, Ronald Hingley (tr.), Oxford University Press, 1998.

¹⁷ Synge, J.M., *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, 1910, in *The Playboy of the Western World and Other Plays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p.156.

even reminds us in the closing sentence of the novel that “Character is Fate”, thereby emphasising once more that man can influence his own destiny.¹⁸ The contemporary dramatist St John Hankin uses the same motto too, and his characters share the desire of Galsworthy’s protagonists to decide on the course of their own lives. Indeed, the dialectic of free will and fate also proves to be one of the major themes underlying St John Hankin’s plays. In addition to St John Hankin, Bernard Shaw too proves to be a champion of free will. In *Mrs Warren’s Profession* he states: “People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can’t find them, make them” (Plays Unpleasant, 246).

Galsworthy extends his profound belief in man’s possibilities of determining his own fate to the level of the nation. This becomes apparent in his article “And-After?”, which he wrote during the First World War, and which was published in *The Observer* in 1916. In this article he wonders how the tragedy of war may in the end lead to a changed and better world, and to which degree man can contribute to and thereby determine his own future. He concludes that it will only be all right after the war, if, “with all the might of a sustained national will, we take care that it is” (Sheaf, 260), convinced as he is, that it can be man himself who can play a decisive role in this. The article shows how Galsworthy is essentially an optimist, although contemporary literary criticism frequently claimed the contrary. Galsworthy starts out by saying that “we shall have to set our foot on Fatalism” as a precondition to turn the calamity of war into a blessing. It is, in fact, the first time that he admits that “there is no real antagonism between the doctrines of Determinism and Free Will.” He realises that when things have happened, “we see that they must have happened as they did,” but at the same time he wonders how this affects “the freedom of our will *before* they happen—before we know which way they will turn out?” The significant answer that Galsworthy gives to this question is: “Men and nations are what they make themselves” (Sheaf, 260). It is a clear statement of Galsworthy’s implying that man can influence his own destiny, although he does seem to allow that man is not entirely in control of it. This is also consistent with what he writes to Thomas Hardy on 27 March 1916, repeating that there “never was any real antagonism between Free Will and Determinism.” To Galsworthy, free will is just a way of saying that “until you have decided [,] you don’t *know* in which way you were going to—were bound to—decide.”

No matter how cosmically rhythmed, rounded, and determined all things are, no man can ever, in the nature of things, be deprived of his privileged ignorance of how he is going to act until he has acted, and so his will shall ever be perfectly free. And the will

¹⁸ Galsworthy explains this saying by referring to it as “the universal truth that all are in bond to their own natures (Patrician, 372).

of a man, who says he is a fatalist is no more fettered than that of the man who abuses him for being one; neither of them knows absolutely whether he will move right hand or left until he has moved (Marrot 1936, 750).

Hardy reacts to this by saying: "Your own ingenious view of Free Will as a man's privileged ignorance of how he is going to act until he has acted would hardly suit the veterans who constitute the Old Guard of Free Will, but it suits me well enough" (Marrot 1936, 751). Galsworthy and Hardy both refer to the debate among philosophers and thinkers on the subject of determinism and free will earlier in the century and in the late nineteenth century. Galsworthy's statement is reminiscent of John Stuart Mill's: "To be conscious of free will must mean to be conscious, before I have decided that I am able to decide either way."¹⁹ The French philosopher Henri Bergson disagrees with this, arguing that "there cannot be any question either of foreseeing the act before it is performed or of reasoning about the possibility of the contrary action once the deed is done."²⁰ This statement confirms Galsworthy's close affinity with Bergson's philosophy. Bergson's significance for modernist literature is emphasised by Robert Wohl in *The Generation of 1914*, in which he suggests that Bergson, among others, has contributed to a new culture, "a culture of Anti-Necessity," or anti-determinism, in which man is not the "executor of natural or historical laws, but the creator of his life with no limits on him but those imposed by lack of imagination and weakness of will."²¹ In Bergson's "Huxley lecture" entitled "Life and Consciousness" (1911), he states that he believes that in the "inanimate world" inert matter reacts "in a determinate way" and "necessity [sits] enthroned," whereas a living being, no matter how simple, is "a reservoir of indetermination and unforeseeability, a reservoir of possible actions, or, in a word, of *choice*." He goes on to claim that they would only appear to be antagonistic forces.

They are antagonistic in this, that matter is theoretically the realm of fatality, while consciousness is essentially that of liberty; and yet life, which is nothing but consciousness using matter for its purposes, succeeds in reconciling them.²²

This is where we also notice a link with Schopenhauer, who also speaks of that "reconciliation of that great contradiction, the union of freedom with necessity." The core of his argument is that "everything is as phenomenon, as object, absolutely necessary: *in itself* it is will, which is perfectly free forever"²³ Schopenhauer and Bergson's statements correspond

¹⁹ John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, London, Longman, 1865, p. 503.

²⁰ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, F.L. Pogson (tr.), 1910, repr. New York and Evanston, Harper & Row, 1960, p. 239.

²¹ Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1980, p. 213.

²² Henri Bergson, "Life and Consciousness" in *The Hibbert Journal* (October 1911), p. 34.

²³ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World As Will and Idea (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 1819), David Berman (ed.), Jill Berman (tr.), London, Everyman, 2004, p. 188.

with what Galsworthy says about this issue: “There never was any real antagonism between Free Will and Determinism” (Marrot 1936, 750).

Galsworthy also read Tolstoy’s ideas on the subject of free will in *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893). In this essay we see a different Tolstoy from the one in *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). The reason for this is that in 1878 Tolstoy converted to Christianity. On the subject of free will Tolstoy maintains, unlike Galsworthy, that man’s power to act independently is limited. He sees that man has only one choice available to him and that is recognising God’s truth revealed to him, or refusing to recognise the truth. This truth, he claims, does not only point out the way along which human life ought to move, but reveals also the only way along which it can move. All men must therefore willingly or unwillingly move along the way of truth, “some spontaneously accomplishing the task set them in life, others submitting involuntarily to the law of life.” Man’s freedom lies in the power of this choice, he argues. Tolstoy then refers to the debate among the determinists and the adherents of the philosophy of free will, by saying that the “determinists consider this amount of freedom so trifling that they do not recognise it at all. Others—the champions of complete free will—keep their eyes fixed on their hypothetical free will and neglect this which seemed to them such a trivial degree of freedom” (Kingdom of God, 358-363).²⁴ He concludes by saying that he realises that one may consider this only a small degree of freedom in comparison with the liberty we should like to have. Still, he feels, “it is the only freedom that really exists, and in it consists the only happiness attainable by man”. We know Galsworthy was familiar with *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and that he considered Tolstoy too much of a preacher and a moralist in this phase of Tolstoy’s life. Still, what Tolstoy basically does, is try to reconcile free will and determinism from a theological point of view, as Galsworthy and Bergson do this from a philosophical point of view.

Also in *Glimpses and Reflections*, a collection of essays and letters published posthumously, Galsworthy speaks of “the fallacy of the old notion that Free Will and Determinism are antagonistic.” He feels that this fallacy lies in the failure to perceive that “however certain it was from the beginning that a man shall act in such a way—it is never known by that man in what way he is going to act until *after* he has acted.” He concludes that consequently “there is absolutely no deadening to the springs of individual action in a philosophic Determinism, which perceives that simple truth of individual free will before the event—Individual free will in accordance with an implanted—often failing—but ever renewing instinct for creation and perfection” (Glimpses, 110). Again we can detect the similarities to the philosophy of Bergson, who sees “in the whole evolution of life on our planet an effort of this essentially creative force to arrive, by traversing matter, at something

²⁴ In order to clarify his point, Tolstoy makes the following comparison: “A horse harnessed with others to a cart is not free to refrain from moving the cart. If he does not move forward the cart will knock him down and go on dragging him with it, whether he will or not. But the horse is free to drag the cart himself or to be dragged with it. And so it is with man” (Kingdom of God, 358-363).

which is only realised in man, and which, moreover, even in man is realised only imperfectly” (Life and Consciousness, 38). Galsworthy, with Bergson, no longer believes in the apparent antagonism between free will and determinism, but remains a believer in man’s free will that acts in accordance with an “ever renewing instinct for creation and perfection.” This is completely in line with Galsworthy’s larger cosmic view expressed in another unpublished text fragment in *Glimpses and Reflections*. In this brief essay Galsworthy writes about the universe, which he refers to as “a creative purpose—a great artist—creating himself.” This, Galsworthy argues, is inspired with “creative instinct”, which is nothing but “a craving for Perfection, for Harmony.” To Galsworthy harmony, or balance, is “the very condition of existence, the breath of life” (Glimpses, 250). From this concept of the universe Galsworthy draws his own concept of free will and determinism and his motive for action: “If it is said that he who believes in this theory of the Universe has no religious motive for action, because willy-nilly he must become what this Circle of Creative Purpose, this great self-running Pottery designs, a spoiled pot or a perfect pot, the answer is that he has just as much religious motive for action as the narrowest superstitionist, with his glorified Man-God.” Galsworthy sees no difference between the traditional believer, whom he qualifies as “the narrowest superstitionist” and the believer in the “creative purpose.” Both, he feels, will be striving for harmony, balance and perfection. In doing so the traditional believer will be looking for “a perpetual identification with what are imagined to be the nature and wishes of that Man-God” (Glimpses, 250-251), whereas, in Bergson’s terminology, the believer in the creative purpose will be seeking “to transcend” himself, seeking to achieve “a higher efficiency” through a “spiritual force” (Life and Consciousness, 40).

Though Galsworthy concurs in the view that there are forces in play that are greater than man, he remains convinced that one should always be prepared to challenge one’s fate in order to reach a higher degree of perfection. In Galsworthy’s own words: “The Philosopher has two things to feel: I will never cease to face my fate, and strive to become perfect.” Concerning the contemporary debate about fate, free will and determinism, he clinches the matter, as far as he is concerned, by saying “*But* what is written is *written*. In these feelings lies all free will, and all Determinism, about which there is such unnecessary palaver” (Glimpses, 233). In this he quotes from Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Black Arrow*, where Dick Shelton remarks: “It was all written, and that which is written is written, willy nilly, cometh still to pass.”²⁵ Galsworthy and Stevenson may both have referred to Pilate’s famous lines from St John 19:22: “But what I have written, I have written”.

²⁵ Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Black Arrow*, 1888, Penguin Books, Signet Classics, 2003, p. 98.

Prayer

In this section I have a closer look at how Galsworthy articulates his disbelief that man can influence his fate through prayer, and how the writers he admired deal with this notion in their works.

I begin with Galsworthy's poem, "The Prayer", published in *Moods, Songs and Doggerels* (1912). In this poem the poet wonders what he would pray if, suddenly, he stood face-to-face with God:

This is the prayer:

O Lord of Courage grave,
O Master of this night of Spring!
Make firm in me a heart too brave
To ask Thee anything! (Moods, 60)

Not only do we witness Galsworthy's absolute rejection of the Christian deity in this poem, but it also shows a repudiation of the phenomenon of prayer as such. This rejection of prayer, in which man asks God to fulfil his wishes, is something that is reminiscent of what Ralph Waldo Emerson says on the subject. In his "Self-Reliance" he inveighs against the traditional view of prayer, referring to it as a "disease of the will" (Emerson, 133), especially when it is meant to achieve a private end. Emerson considers prayer "the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view," and feels that as soon as man is "at one with God, he will not beg" (Emerson, 132).

There are only few instances in Galsworthy's work in which we see his characters taking recourse to prayer in the traditional sense. In a number of instances the praying person is even ridiculed. Thus in Galsworthy's second novel, *Villa Rubein* (1900), we see Herr Paul discussing with Miss Naylor, the governess, the approaching death of Mr Treffry. Herr Paul wonders if there is "nobody, then, who can do good," to which Miss Naylor suggests: "There is only God . . . We—can—all—pray to Him." Herr Paul's reaction, "God?" results in "little spots of colour [coming] into her cheeks" (*Villa Rubein*, 43), which shows Miss Naylor's embarrassment in suggesting this.²⁶

The mockery of prayer is something that Galsworthy shares with a number of writers. Thus in Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, Mr Walter one day finds his wife praying in front of a painting depicting Jesus walking on the waves, about which he says: "*Figurez-vous, dit-il en riant, que j'ai trouvé ma femme hier à genoux devant ce tableau comme dans un chapelle. Elle faisait là*

²⁶ In his play *The First and the Last* (1917), there is another example in which Galsworthy ridicules the person who resorts to prayer. Wanda is praying to the Virgin Mary, asking her for pity, to which her friend, Larry, mockingly says: "Pray for us! Bravo! Pray away!" (*Plays*, 918).

ses devotions. *Ce que j'ai ri!*" (Bel-Ami, 333). This mockery of prayer is also a recurring element in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The writer clearly ridicules prayer as practised by dissenters at home and in church in his own times and exposes its formulaic character, its superficiality and the petty selfishness often involved. One example will suffice to demonstrate Mark Twain's irony:

Then Miss Watson she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it. She told me to pray every day, and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn't so. I tried it. Once I got a fish-line, but no hooks. It warn't any good to me without hooks (Huck Finn, 176).

Prayer hardly plays a role in Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles*. There is one important instance, however, in which we actually see Soames invoking the deity's aid. Fleur is in labour and Soames is desperately worried about her. This is when he calls out: "Let it be over . . . let it be over, God!" (White Monkey, 277). Here is a clear parallel with Levin in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. When Kitty was in labour, Levin in desperation turns to God. "He knew that neither all his doubts, nor the impossibility he knew in himself of believing by means of reason, hindered him in the least from addressing God." But shortly after he realises again that "he was unable to give any place in his life to the state of mind he had been in then" (Karenina, 787). It is all the more striking that with both Soames and Levin invoking God's help at the moment of their greatest desperation, the Rev. Hussell Barter in Galsworthy's *The Country House* cannot find the words to pray when he is at his wits' end after his wife has given birth to their eleventh child. When they tell him what dreadful time she has had he hurries to his study and locks the door. "Then and then only, he kneeled down, and remained there many minutes, thinking of nothing" (Country House, 205). It is in these last three words that Galsworthy exposes him: it is a picture of an outwardly pious and righteous clergyman, who is unable to pray truthfully, when he himself and his wife are in the greatest need of support.

Anna, in Galsworthy's *The Dark Flower* (1913), is another example of a character unable or unwilling to pray. We see her in an Austrian church, kneeling, alone with a black-shawled woman. She is not praying. "Resting there on her knees, she experience[s] only the sore sensation of revolt. Why ha[s] fate flung this feeling into her heart, lighted up her life suddenly, if God refuse[s] her its enjoyment?" As long as she is filled with memories of Mark "prayer [will] never come" (Dark Flower, 23). Anna's situation is completely comparable to Princess Maria's in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. At her father's deathbed Princess Maria is dreaming of a life free of him and the possibility of love and a happy, married life. She tries to fight those temptations thinking it is the devil that puts them into her mind. In Tolstoy's

words: “She put herself into the attitude of prayer, and she tried to pray, gazed at the icons, repeated the words of a prayer, but she could not pray” (War and Peace, 848).

In Galsworthy’s *Saint’s Progress* (1919) Edward Pierson asks his daughter Noel, the day after she was informed that her fiancé was killed in the war, if she has prayed. He exhorts her to try, to which she replies: “It would be ridiculous, Daddy, you don’t know” (*Saint’s Progress*, 110).

There is one instance in which Galsworthy expressly ridicules the Lord’s Prayer. In the Interlude *Awakening*, we see Irene and Jolyon’s son, little Jon, in his childhood years. Little Jon asks Irene not to leave his room when he is saying his prayers. One may look upon this as a touching picture of the childhood of Rudolf Sauter, Galsworthy’s nephew, or indeed that of Galsworthy himself:

Kneeling down and plunging his face into the bed, little Jon hurried up, under his breath, opening one eye now and then, to see her standing perfectly still with a smile on her face. ‘Our Father’—so went his last prayer, ‘which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Mum, thy Kingdom Mum—on Earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily Mum and forgive us our trespasses on earth as it is on heaven and trespass against us, for thine is the evil the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amum’ (*Chancery*, 315).

Touching as it may be, Galsworthy could not stop himself from referring to this prayer as “his last prayer” and adding “for thine is the evil,” to confront the reader once more with his aversion to prayer and everything connected with the church, or religion. In spite of this implied criticism, “*Awakening*” was hailed as one of the best Christmas presents at the time of publication (Bookman, Dec. 1920).

From the examples that this analysis yields, we can deduce that Galsworthy thinks very little of the role of prayer in relation to a person’s fate or destiny. It is Felix Freeland and his daughter Nedda in *The Freelands* (1915) who wonder: “What [does] one pray to? [Is] it not to something in oneself?” They both feel that “it [is] of no use to pray to the great mysterious Force, which [makes] one thing a cabbage and the other a king” (*Freelands*, 295).

It is clear that Galsworthy shares this view with a number of earlier and contemporary writers. Samuel Butler, for example, uses this idea of the futility of prayer in his *The Way of All Flesh*. The narrator is present at family prayers in the Pontifex home, with all the servants attending, and relates his thoughts on that occasion: “Then my thoughts wandered on to those calculations which people make about waste of time and how much one can get done if one gives ten minutes a day to it, and I was thinking what improper suggestion I could make in connection with this and the time spent on family prayers” (*Way of All Flesh*, 82). In Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* the narrator tells us that Waldo one night prayed:

““O God, my beautiful God, my sweet God, once, only once, let me feel you near me tonight!’ [but] he could not feel Him” (African Farm, 125). It is in this way that Schreiner unequivocally demonstrates the pointlessness of prayer and the religious conflict caused in people who believe in an authorial God, who can grant man’s prayers, if He sees fit to do so. Henrik Ibsen shows us the same phenomenon. When Peer in *Peer Gynt* (1867) calls God to his assistance by praying: “Protect me, God! Take care of me, Father, or I shall perish,” he concludes: “He’s not hearing me! Stone deaf, as usual!” (Peer Gynt, 85).

Of contemporary authors belonging to Galsworthy’s literary circle, it is especially W.H. Hudson who inspired Galsworthy most in his views on prayer. Hudson’s ideas expressed in *Green Mansions* in 1904, well before the appearance of the bulk of Galsworthy’s work, show the greatest parallels with Galsworthy’s. Hudson time and again stresses how prayer can be of no avail. On the final page of *Green Mansions*, indicating its relative importance, the narrator once more states: “That is my philosophy . . . : prayers, austerities, good works—they avail nothing, and there is no intercession, and outside of the soul there is no forgiveness in heaven or earth for sin” (Green Mansions, 254).

Following Hudson’s footsteps, Galsworthy says about ‘prayer’ that “the only efficient, the only decent Prayer, is Action. Supplications! They only waste the time of Effort” (Glimpses, 233). This sums up Galsworthy’s view on prayer very clearly, and it explains why there is no single positive reference in his work to prayer, or a person resorting to prayer. Moreover, it is consistent with his views on determinism, namely that man himself is the main determinant for the course of his own life, no matter what external forces there may be.

Existence

In 1911, in his “Huxley Lecture”, Henri Bergson poses, what he deems, the most essential questions of philosophy: “What are we? What are we doing here? Whence do we come and whither do we go?” (Life and Consciousness, 24). This section aims to show how Bergson’s own answers to these existential questions have profoundly influenced Galsworthy and have thoroughly permeated his work.

In a letter to Thomas Hardy in 1916 Galsworthy says about man’s existence:

Existence is a limitless circle—swelling and shrinking, rising and falling, in an endless band of curves—the exact meeting-point of flow and ebb (and of all the other million opposites of life) never discoverable. And whether we are on the flood or on the ebb doesn’t really matter, because the ebb leads into another flood, and we know it. That’s stimulus enough—although we know at the same time that this other flood leads again to another ebb, and so on, *ad infinitum* (Marrot 1936, 752-753).

There is a distinct emphasis on continuity, endlessness and stimulus in what Galsworthy says about existence. In *Saint's Progress* (1918) it is the word "limitless" that we find, connected with the idea of the universe as a creative artist. A Belgian painter, speaking with a French accent and as such, perhaps, an allusion to Bergson, says to Pierson, the protagonist of this novel:

For me the Universe is a limitless artist, *monsieur*, who from all time and to all time is ever expressing himself in differing forms—always trying to make a masterpiece, and generally failing. For me this world, and all the worlds, are—like ourselves, and the flowers and trees—little separate works of art, more or less perfect, whose little lives run their course, and are spilled or powered back into this Creative Artist whence issue ever fresh attempts at art (*Saint's Progress*, 153).

Again there is the element of imperfection in words like "generally failing" and "more or less perfect." This is where Henri Bergson's influence really becomes evident. This is especially noticeable in Galsworthy's more contemplative work from after 1910, three years after the publication of Bergson's best-known work, *L'Evolution créatrice*, from 1907. Gallagher indicates that Bergson shows that human existence, and, indeed, the existence of all things, can be satisfactorily explained only if one admits the existence of a vital and creative cosmic principle working its way through matter toward spirit (Gallagher 1970, 12). Bergson's *L'Evolution créatrice* became one of the most widely discussed books in Europe and America during the pre-war years. The buzzwords in 1910 were 'creativity' and 'intuition', and Bergson's influence may be traced in Yeats, Eliot, Woolf and Joyce.²⁷ Bergson also had a special significance for American writers. Fitzgerald, Eliot, Henry Miller and Faulkner should be mentioned, in particular (Douglass 1986, 2). This movement coincides with what Galsworthy terms the beginning of the philosophical phase in his career. It is in 1910 that he writes in his diary that during a walk with Ada and Murray in the country they discussed "the conception of the universe." Galsworthy writes that he maintained his "pet theory of Balance & Equipoise, of which the spiritual side is Justice and Harmony" (GD, 1910). This phase in his life is also marked by the publication of *The Inn of Tranquillity* (1912). In this series of contemplative studies one can trace numerous examples of Bergsonian concepts. Galsworthy writes, for instance, that he believes in an "underlying Principle that turns and turns on itself" (*Inn of Tranquillity*, 10). In his study entitled "Evolution," he speaks of the "restless force that forever cries: 'On, on!'" (*Inn of Tranquillity*, 40), and in his essay "Vague thoughts on Art" he refers to a new faith, "man's sacred instinct to perfect itself . . . Perfection was desirable . . . a dream motive fastened within the Universe; the very essential Cause of everything. . . ."

²⁷ Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot and American Literature*, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1986, p. 10.

This perfection, cosmically, was nothing but perfect Equanimity and Harmony; and in human relations, nothing but perfect Love and Justice” (Inn of Tranquillity, 262). He adds to this:

This—I thought—is surely what the Western world has dimly been rediscovering. There has crept into our minds once more the feeling that the Universe is all of a piece, Equipoise supreme; and all things equally wonderful, and mysterious, and valuable. We have begun, in fact, to have a glimmering of the artist’s creed . . . that our God, Perfection, is implicit everywhere, and the revelation of Him the business of our Art (Inn of Tranquillity, 262).

Galsworthy’s remarks about the cosmic order remind us of Bergson once more. Galsworthy refers to the universe as “a creative purpose—a great artist—creating himself” and maintains that it is inspired with “creative instinct”, which is nothing but “a craving for Perfection, for Harmony . . . the very condition of existence, the breath of life” (Glimpses, 250). Galsworthy asks: “What are we—ripples on the tides of a birthless, deathless, equipoised Creative Purpose—but little works of Art?” (Inn of Tranquillity, 278).

Now what is it in particular in Bergson’s philosophy that may have influenced Galsworthy? Basically, it is Bergson’s concept of the *élan vital*, the vital impulse, the cosmic bang, with which everything in Bergson begins. Bergson characterises it as a free, creative *act*. The blast of the vital impulse rolls through all things, drawing out of itself always the new (Douglass 1986, 17).

Bergson’s statement that “*pour un être conscient, exister consiste à changer, changer à se mûrir, se mûrir à se créer indéfiniment soi-même*”²⁸ bears a resemblance to Galsworthy’s “only out of stir and change is born new salvation” (Inn of Tranquillity, 265), and Galsworthy’s statement that “[there was] nothing fixed anywhere, unless it were that starlight, and the instinct within all living things which said: ‘Go on!’” (Swan Song, 861). Bergson himself says in *L’Evolution créatrice*:

Notre personnalité pousse, grandit, mûrit sans cesse. Chacun de ses moments est du nouveau qui s’ajoute à ce qui était auparavant. Allons plus loin: ce n’est pas seulement du nouveau, mais de l’imprévisible . . . Mais ce qui n’a jamais été perçu, et ce qui est en même temps simple, est nécessairement imprévisible . . . le prédire eût été le produire avant qu’il fût produit. . . . On a donc raison de dire que ce que nous faisons dépend de ce que nous sommes; mais il faut ajouter que nous sommes, dans une certaine mesure, ce que nous faisons, et que nous nous créons continuellement nous-mêmes (*L’Evolution créatrice*, 7).

²⁸ Henri Bergson, *L’Evolution créatrice*, 1907, Paris, Elix Alcan, 8th edition, 1911, p. 8.

Gallagher says Bergson sees man as the end and apex of the evolutionary process, not in the sense that the rest of nature is for the sake of man, or that he is prefigured in the evolutionary process, but in the sense that in him the greatest measure of freedom has been achieved (Gallagher 1970, 45). Bergson envisages the next stage in the evolution of man, not as the development of a more complex and efficient human organism, but as the creation of a more intuitive, more perfect and spiritual humanity. Any change in man's condition, any progress toward a higher level of moral and religious life, would now be up to man himself (Gallagher 1970, 53). This is another parallel to Galsworthy's new faith, namely, "man's sacred instinct to perfect itself" and that this perfection is, cosmically, nothing but perfect Equanimity and Harmony; and in human relations, nothing but perfect Love and Justice" (*Inn of Tranquillity*, 262).

According to Gallagher, Bergson's books are expressions of discontent and protest. Just as in *Time and Free Will* he opposes the determinists who "made freedom seem impossible", in *L'Evolution créatrice* he protests against the mechanistic interpretation of biological evolution. In *The Two Sources of Morality* he calls attention to a higher morality, which Bergson regards as the complete and absolute morality, and to a mystical experience, which is its ultimate source (Gallagher 1970, 100). This latter book was only published in 1932. Still, already in 1911, during the delivery of his "Huxley Lecture", Bergson declares that in man, and especially the best of mankind, the *élan vital* thrusts into the human body the creative current of the moral life. It is the moral man who is creative in the highest degree, and it is he who opens up to humanity new paths to virtue (Gallagher 1970, 14). In the words of Bergson himself: "The ultimate reason of human life is a creation which . . . can be pursued at every moment and by all men alike; I mean the creation of self by self, the continual enrichment of personality by elements which it does not draw from outside, but causes to spring forth from itself!" (*Life and Consciousness*, 42-43). It is no coincidence that Galsworthy uses a strikingly similar terminology and expresses remarkably similar ideas in "Vague Thoughts on Art" (1911), published in *The Inn of Tranquillity* from 1912, followed by numerous other examples in his letters and essays from 1911 to 1918. To Galsworthy himself *The Inn of Tranquillity* is a document of more than usual significance, as he describes it as the "core of [his] unsatisfactory self" (Marrot 1936, 709).

Conclusion

Through the years, Galsworthy remained a staunch believer in free will, convinced as he was that the Christian concept of Providence does not exist and that one should always try to face one's fate, defy it and strive to perfect oneself. Yet, he did admit that there are forces in play beyond the influence of man. This also explains his interest in fate as worked out in Greek drama, Shakespearean tragedies and the opera *Carmen*. Galsworthy was aware how fate is challenged in the novels of Dickens and Tolstoy and in the plays of Shaw and other modern

playwrights, which reinforced Galsworthy's own idea that "character is fate". Fascinated as he was by the concept of fate and necessity, he remained a believer in free will, although, in the end, he conceded that there was no real antagonism between determinism and free will, which reveals an initial parallel between Galsworthy's views and Bergson's.

Galsworthy's ideas on determinism correspond with his ideas on prayer. It is not through prayer or "supplication" that man should try to influence his fate. Galsworthy maintains that "the only efficient, the only decent Prayer, is Action" (Glimpses, 233). In this matter too he saw examples in the works of his literary predecessors and friends, most notably those of Hudson.

Finally, in the philosophical concept of 'existence', we have come across the clearest example, so far, of the influence of a contemporary philosopher. This is Henri Bergson and his ideas on the *élan vital*, the vital impulse underlying all creation and existence, which had an overriding influence on Galsworthy's thinking in the period 1910-1918. Galsworthy transferred this philosopher's ideas to his own work and completely absorbed them, at least for some years, as his own. It proves that Galsworthy was susceptible to and had a thorough knowledge and understanding of Bergson's philosophy, contrary to what has been stated by some biographers, who claim that "there are very few philosophical works or works with a philosophical bent, that he is known to have read" (Fréchet 1982, 192), or that Galsworthy's philosophy is merely "a not infrequent case of intellectual osmosis, a process by which a non-professional thinker absorbs the ideas of a professional thinker without the exercise of thought" (Connolly 1937, 15).

8. The Mystery of Death

This chapter examines Galsworthy's views on death, life after death and related themes, such as the religious controversy over cremation and the increasing interest in spiritualism. The mystery of death clearly intrigued Galsworthy. At the beginning of his career he merely asked questions, expressed a desire to know and voiced his doubts. In his quest for certainty about death and life after death he passed through various stages, finally to arrive at an almost stoic acceptance of "nothingness".

Life after death

The first time that Galsworthy comments on death is in the short story "The Doldrums", which he wrote between 1895 and 1896. It is one of the short stories in *From the Four Winds* (1897), Galsworthy's literary debut, written at the age of twenty-eight and still published under the pseudonym of "John Sinjohn". In the story we do not only come across Galsworthy himself as the narrator, but we also meet Joseph Conrad as the first mate of the ship on which Galsworthy was sailing back from Australia in 1893, only two years before he started writing "The Doldrums". According to Ada Galsworthy, "the subject of this story was enacted under their eyes, the opium-ridden doctor dying on that voyage and being buried at sea" (Pendyces, viii). One of the ship's crew, Young Raymond, actually sees the doctor's ghost shortly after the latter's death. The first mate says the following to reassure him:

I think you have seen what very few people have seen. I think, there is a time, you know, which comes between life and death. It is perhaps the twilight of the body, you know, and the dawning of the soul—it is that breathless space which these old crafts of our bodies have to go through you know, where there is no life, and not yet death—the Doldrums of our individualities hanging in the wind (*Four Winds*, 121-122).

Young Raymond is happy with this explanation and says he likes the idea of the "dawning of the soul." It is the narrator, however, who says that in the mate's face he saw a "look of wearily gentle cynicism", a feeling enhanced by the mate's words: "Yes? If there is such a thing, you know" (*Four Winds*, 121-122). This passage indicates how early in Galsworthy's career the mystery of death fascinated him. He still poses, "if there is such a thing", questioningly, although we can already sense the implied scepticism. This is one of the few moments in Galsworthy's work in which there is a trace of Schopenhauer's philosophical thought. It had been Schopenhauer who had disagreed with those who felt that death is a "transition into nothingness." Schopenhauer says in his *On the Suffering of the World*: "What dies goes to where all life originates. . . . Death announces itself frankly at the end of the

individual, but in this individual there lies the germ of a new being. . . . That which dies is destroyed; but a germ remains over out of which there proceeds a new being, which then enters into existence without knowing whence it has come nor why it is as it is.”¹ This new existence is what Galsworthy refers to as “the dawning of the soul.”

The story is also significant from a literary-historical point of view, in that it shows us the origin of the friendship between Galsworthy and Conrad. At the time Conrad was working on the manuscript which one year later took shape as the novel *Almayer's Folly*. In this novel Conrad does not associate death with an afterlife in the Christian sense. Instead he stresses the fact that when one has died at least the uncertainty about the nature of death is over. He writes: “The only white man on the east coast was dead, and his soul . . . stood now in the presence of Infinite Wisdom” (*Almayer's Folly*, 208). There is a similar remark in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), in which he offers a description of Kurtz' death, describing it as “that supreme moment of complete knowledge,”² and Marlow realises that “all the wisdom, and all the truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible” (*Heart of Darkness*, 89). This was the time that Conrad appreciated Schopenhauer, and it is therefore not surprising that this interest in death is so clearly visible in Conrad's work at the time, and indeed in Galsworthy's. Similar feelings may also be detected in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, which Galsworthy read during that same voyage on which he met Conrad. On Lyndall's death Schreiner's narrator wonders: “Had she found what she sought for—something to worship? Had she ceased from being? Who shall tell us? There is a veil of terrible mist over the face of the Hereafter” (*African Farm*, 284).

There is another reference to life after death in *From the Four Winds*, in the story “The Demi-Gods”, which mirrors the story of the illicit love of Galsworthy and Ada. The young man says to the young woman with whom he has an illicit love affair: “if there be a future life, darling, it is ours together—body to body, soul to soul” (*Four Winds*, 246). It does not express any certainty, but merely the question “if there be a future life.” It is in fact this “veil of terrible mist over the face of the Hereafter” that is also characteristic of most of Galsworthy's novels until 1912. In one of his earliest novels, *Villa Rubein* (1900), Christian, the protagonist, asks her friend, the painter Alois Harz, portrayed after Georg Sauter, Galsworthy's brother-in-law, whether he believes in a future life. Harz reacts indifferently, saying: “I've never really thought of it—never had the time” (*Villa Rubein*, 42). She indicates that she does not understand his indifferent attitude and says: “There must be a future life, we're so incomplete.” His reaction is: “I don't know. . . I don't much care. All I know is, I've got to work For happiness—the real happiness is fighting—the rest is nothing” (*Villa Rubein*, 42).

¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Suffering of the World*, 1850, Penguin Books, 2004, p. 45.

² Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 1902, London & Sidney, Pan Books, 1972, p. 87.

Ten years later, in the story “A Portrait” (1910), which Galsworthy refers to as “a sketch of my father” (Manaton XV, xi), he describes his eighty-year-old father’s views on death: “No one ever heard him talk with conviction of a future life. He was far too self-reliant to accept what he was told, save by his own inner voice; and that did not speak to him with certainty. In fact, as he grew old, to be uncertain about all such high things was part of his real religion” (Caravan, 155). Time and again, in the first fourteen years of his writing life, Galsworthy emphasises that he simply does not know, and, as with his father, this becomes his philosophy, in fact very much in line with what Huxley expresses in his essay “Agnosticism”. In this essay Huxley states that many theologians “were quite sure they had attained a certain ‘gnosis,’—had, more or less successfully, solved the problem of existence, while [he] was quite sure [he] had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble” (Lectures, 93). Conrad and Schreiner may also have contributed to this sense of uncertainty, the idea that man simply does not have the knowledge of what happens after death.

In Tolstoy’s major works, too, clear parallels are to be found with respect to the mystery of death and the desire to understand. In *Anna Karenina*, for example, the narrator refers to death as “the inevitable end of everything.” However, what this inevitable end is like, Levin does not know. “He not only had never thought of it, but he could not and dared not think of it” (Karenina, 348). In *War and Peace* too we see Pierre wondering about life and death: “‘What is life for, and what am I? What is life? What is death? What is the power that controls it all?’ he ask[s] himself.” There is no answer to any of these questions. “All we know is that we know nothing. And that’s the sum total of human wisdom” (War and Peace, 407-408).

Around 1909 Galsworthy no longer finds it acceptable to even suggest the possibility of an afterlife in the Christian sense of the word. In *Fraternity* (1909) Mr Stone refers to the belief in life after death as the “most irreligious fetish”, and even claims that from the “worship of that fetish had come all the sorrows of the human race” (Fraternity, 5). Another example of Galsworthy’s categorical rejection of an afterlife may be found in the short story “Gone” (1911) in *The Inn of Tranquillity*. The first-person narrator is present at the deathbed of Mrs Herd, a labourer’s wife. Looking into her eyes and seeing the “almost resigned despair and eager appeal,” he wonders what he can say to comfort her and not to give her false hope: “But what else could we do? We could not give her those glib assurances that naïve souls make so easily to others concerning their after state,” and he adds that “[they] felt dreadful that [they] could not console her with the ordinary presumptions” (Inn of Tranquillity, 116).

From 1912 onwards, roughly with the publication of the *Inn of Tranquillity*, we gradually observe a less sceptical and more philosophical and mystic approach to death in Galsworthy. The first mention of the mystery of death is in the allegorical play *The Little Dream* (1911). In this play we see Seelchen, a mountain girl, who in her dream is torn between the natural world of the mountains and the seductions of the town. In the end the peak of the Great Horn calls her with the words:

Thy little generous life is done,
And all its wistful wonderings cease!
Thou traveller to the tideless sea,
Where light and dark, and change and peace,
Are one—Come, little soul to MYSTERY! (Plays, 216)

Seelchen then wakes up rudely and realises that she was dreaming. It is the story of the soul trying to understand the mystery of life and death, to realise in the end that even MYSTERY is just a dream. In October 1912 Galsworthy tries to explain the deeper symbolism of *The Little Dream* by saying: “The ‘little soul’ in my play is passing through this world of conflict . . . on her way to the unknowable, mysterious, and everlasting *reconcilement* or Harmony” (Glimpses, 90-91). The atmosphere Galsworthy calls up is reminiscent of Turgenev’s closing lines in *Fathers and Sons*, in which Turgenev refers to death as the “eternal reconciliation” and “life without end” (Fathers and Sons, 140).

In another study in *The Inn of Tranquillity*, “Winds in the Rocks”, the first-person narrator finds himself near the top of a mountain in the Austrian Alps, where plants no longer grow and all is bare. He realises that the powdery stones that he is resting on were rocks higher up the mountain one day and over time have been ground to nothingness. He realises that “we, too, some day would no longer love, having become part of this monstrous, lovely earth, of that cold, whiffing air.” It seems incredible to him, “to become powder . . . no more to feel the sunlight; to be loved no more.” He feels there is no escape from this feeling, nor is any comfort to be found “so far above incense and the narcotics of set creeds, and the fevered breath of prayers and protestations.” This is Galsworthy’s rejection of the religious concept of an afterlife, called up by, what he refers to as “the narcotics of set creeds.” The narrator, however, finds peace and loses his fear, because to him “Life and Death were exalted into what was neither life nor death, a strange and motionless vibration in which one had been merged, and rested, utterly content, equipoised, divested of desire, endowed with life and death” (Inn of Tranquillity, 74-76). It is this balance and harmony that Galsworthy looks for as the only satisfactory answer to the mystery of death. In this more philosophic vein parallels may be detected between Galsworthy’s, Schopenhauer’s and Bergson’s ideas. In his *The World as Will and Idea* Schopenhauer states that “every individual is transitory only as phenomenon, while as thing in itself everyone is timeless, and therefore endless” (World as Will, 184). In Bergson’s *Introduction à la Métaphysique* (1903), translated into German as *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Bergson argues that we can experience time and duration in two possible ways. Beside duration in the form of real time he sees another form of duration,

“Une durée qui se tend, se resserre, s’intensifie de plus en plus : à la limite serait l’éternité. Non plus l’éternité conceptuelle, qui est une éternité de mort, mais une éternité de vie.

Éternité vivante et par conséquent mouvante encore, où notre durée à nous se retrouverait comme les vibration dans la lumière, et qui serait la concrétion de toute durée comme la matérialité en est l'éparpillement" (Introduction, 25).

As is the case with Schopenhauer, this is basically a belief in immortality, not in accordance with existing religious concepts, but through another concept of time, another 'duration' or 'durance', Bergson's "durée", as expressed also in *L'Évolution créatrice*.

Before Bergson, Tolstoy too offered Galsworthy the ingredients for his cosmic outlook. It is Pierre in *War and Peace* who says to Prince Andrei: "We must live, we must love, we must believe that we have life not only today on this scrap of earth, but that we have lived and shall live for ever, there, in the Whole" (*War and Peace*, 456). In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy shows us man's place in the cosmic order: "In infinite time, in the infinity of matter, in infinite space, a bubble organism separates itself, and that bubble holds out for a while and then bursts, and that bubble is—me" (*Karenina*, 788). These passages remind us also of Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* in which Duroy says after Forestier's death:

Et c'était fini pour lui, fini pour toujours. Une vie ! quelques jours, et puis plus rien!
On naît, on grandit, on est heureux, on attend, puis on meurt. Adieu! homme ou femme, tu ne reviendras point sur la terre! Et pourtant chacun porte en soi le désir fiévreux et irréalisable de l'éternité, chacun est un sorte d'univers dans l'univers (*Bel-Ami*, 203).

Tolstoy and Maupassant's influence on Galsworthy on this issue is clearly noticeable, even as late as 1932. For instance, in Wilfred Desert's letter to Michael Mont in Galsworthy's final novel, *Over the River*, Wilfred says that he is at peace with himself at last, and he has come to realise that "one's alone from birth to death, except for that fine old companion, the Universe – of which one is the microcosm" (*Over the River*, 698).

From 1912 onwards two other parallel feelings are noticeable. It is an emphasis on life, here and now, and Galsworthy's avowed unbelief in a life-hereafter. The emphasis on 'living' and life before death is illustrated by what Galsworthy's character Nedda Freeland says about death in *The Freelands* (1915): "But suppose there *is* nothing after death—would it make me say: 'I'd rather not live!' It would only make me delight more in life of every kind" (*Freelands*, 221). In "Harvest", written during the First World War, Galsworthy states that "to us who dare not know the workings of the Unknowable, and in our heart of hearts cannot tell what, if anything, becomes of us, to us . . . life is valuable, good, worth living out for its natural span" (*Sheaf*, 250). Another example of the emphasis laid on life is from *Saint's Progress* (1919), in which Noel's brother-in-law, George, an avowed atheist, advises her that

“*Life’s* going to be the important thing in the future. . . . not comfort and cloistered virtue and security; but *living*, and pressure to the square inch” (Saint’s Progress, 136).

This emphasis on the here and now is something that Galsworthy also came across in the works of a number of earlier writers. As a young man he read Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” in which Emerson underscores the present time with his analogy of the roses under his windows: “They are for what they are, they exist with God today. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence” (Emerson, 129). Also in “The Oversoul” Emerson admonishes his readers to live in the present and not to worry about the mystery of death: “The only mode of obtaining an answer to these questions of the senses, is, to forego all low curiosity, and accepting the tide of being which floats us in the secret of nature, work and live, work and live. . . .” (Emerson, 169). This reminds us of Alois Harz’ remark in Galsworthy’s *Villa Rubein*: “All I know is, I’ve got to work For happiness—the real happiness is fighting—the rest is nothing” (Villa Rubein, 42). What W.H. Hudson says on the subject was also significant for the development of Galsworthy’s thinking. In *Far Away and Long Ago*, Hudson’s autobiographical novel about his childhood in Argentina, he relates how since his youth he has been thinking about death, triggered by a casual remark of one of his neighbours when the latter was burying his dog: “We die like old Caesar, and are put into the ground and have the earth shovelled over us.”³ Later in life Hudson tries to find a balance between his anti-religious elder brother and his deeply religious younger brother. He looks at them both as “false prophets” and concludes that, barring accidents, he can at least live another forty or fifty years “with their summers, autumns and winters.” That is the life that he desires, “the life the heart can conceive—the earth life” (Far Away, 347).

Parallel to this emphasis on the here and the now, as this developed in Galsworthy from 1912 onwards, we notice his avowed unbelief in life after death. In *A Bit o’ Love* (1915), for example, an old farmer says to the curate, Michael Strangway, after the former’s wife has died: “I don’t believe as there’s a future life, zurr. I think we go to sleep like the beasts” (Plays, 433). We have seen before how this curate himself suffers from religious doubt, and in keeping with Galsworthy’s own thoughts on this issue, he says: “[drawing [the farmer] to the window] Look! To sleep in that! Even if we do, it won’t be so bad, Jack, will it?” (Plays, 433).

There is another example of an expression of doubt in *The Apple Tree* (1916). Stella asks Frank Ashurst whether he believes in a future life, to which he mutters disconcertedly: “I don’t either believe or not believe—I simply don’t know.” Stella says that she could not bear that, for indeed “what would be the use of living?” Voicing Galsworthy’s ideas, Ashurst

³ W.H. Hudson, *Far Away and Long Ago*, 1918, London, 1923, p. 23.

replies: “While one’s alive one naturally wants to go on living for ever; that’s part of being alive. But it probably isn’t anything more” (Caravan, 382).⁴

In his essay “France, 1916-1917” (1917) Galsworthy bluntly states that “not one Englishman in ten now *really* believes that he is going to live again, but his disbelief has not yet reconciled him to making the best of this life, or laid ghosts of the beliefs he has outworn” (Another Sheaf, 51).⁵ These examples show how Galsworthy openly rejects any belief in life after death as suggested by the Christian faith.

Galsworthy’s declared unbelief in life after death is something that has also come about through his reading of Matthew Arnold, Samuel Butler and Ivan Turgenev. Of the Victorian thinkers Matthew Arnold is particularly outspoken on this subject. In *Literature and Dogma* he openly rejects images of heaven with “persons dressed in glorious habits with garlands on their heads,” or pictures of “labour ended, the table spread, goodness all around, the lost ones restored and hymnody incessant.”⁶ He states: “This conception of immortality cannot possibly be true” (Literature, 379). He also argues that Christ’s second advent, the resurrection of the body, the New Jerusalem, must be considered “fairy tales” (Literature, 380). Arnold is prepared to accept, however, that man’s life depends on righteousness and through righteousness man’s life may progress into “something immeasurably stronger.” In this he finds the only basis for all religious aspirations after mortality. He returns to this in *God and the Bible* (1875), in which he states that “the immortality propounded by Jesus must be looked for elsewhere than in the materialistic aspirations of our popular religion.”⁷ Through Jesus’ living in an eternal order the righteous man may be conceived as immortal, and thus “we can rightly . . . aspire to be immortal ourselves” (God and Bible, 375). In *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold also repudiates the general idea that “resurrection” should be taken to mean resurrection after death. He refers to St Paul as having said that resurrection should be taken as a “rising to a new life before the physical death of the body” (Culture, 112). Arnold’s views are not unlike Samuel Butler’s. Butler’s belief in an afterlife is no more than the idea that one lives on in the memories of those one leaves behind. In *Erewhon Revisited* Butler’s protagonist, Mr Higgs, one day comes across an epitaph and was struck by the inscription:

⁴ The same question returns in the opening scene of *The Foundations* (1917), in which little Anne Dromondy, daughter of Lord William Dromondy MP, asks James, the footman: “Is there a future life?” James replies in a non-committal manner, befitting his position, and says: “It’s a belief, in the middle classes” (Plays, 465). Galsworthy could not have been more ironic.

⁵ Another example showing doubt about life after death, may be found in “Grotesques” (1917-1918). The Angel Æthereal pays a visit to the earth in the year 1947 and he asks his guide whether people in Britain still believe in a future life. His guide informs him that “it has been estimated that perhaps one in ten adults now has some semblance of what may be called active belief in a future existence” (Satires, 163).

⁶ Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 1873, in *The Works of Matthew Arnold*, London, 1904, vol. VII, pp. 378-379.

⁷ Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 1875, in *The Works of Matthew Arnold*, London, 1904, vol. VIII, p. 375.

I fall asleep in the full and certain hope
That my slumber shall not be broken;
And that though I be all-forgetting,
Yet shall I not be all-forgotten,
But continue that life in the thoughts and deeds
Of those I loved,
Into which, while the power to strive was yet vouchsafed me,
I fondly strove to enter.

Turgenev too does not hesitate to express his unbelief in life after death. When speaking of funerals he says: “This empty formality, this ceremony. As if anybody believed in it all.”⁸

In addition to these two developments that we may detect in Galsworthy’s work after 1912, there is yet a third, underlying tendency: an increasing sense of realism. For example, when he speaks of the endless debate about an afterlife, he refers to it as “the childishness of fretting over that eternal question” (*Inn of Tranquillity*, 161). The issue has, apparently, become irrelevant to him, although he frequently returns to the subject in his novels and plays until the end of his life. Galsworthy’s conclusion is, in fact, that the whole thing remains unintelligible to him. Instead of being puzzled and intrigued, Galsworthy has gradually come to accept this as something he would simply never understand. It is in 1923 that he writes in the retrospective Preface to the *Inn of Tranquillity* in the Manaton Edition:

I am left to acceptance of whatever it may be. Out of mystery we come, into mystery return . . . world without end is all I can grasp. But in such little certainty I see no cause for gloom. Life for those who still have vital instinct in them is good enough in itself even if it lead to nothing; and we humans only have ourselves to blame, if we, alone among the animals, so live that we lose the love of life itself (*Inn of Tranquillity*, Manaton Edition, XV, xi).

As of 1920 Galsworthy increasingly speaks of death in terms of “nothingness”, “oblivion” and “loneliness”. It seems that the realisation that he too would die and lose everything dear to him, to no small degree fed his preoccupation with death. These two aspects are central to this period as we may deduce from his works from 1920 until his death in 1933. In *To Let* (1921), for instance, Young Jolyon suffers from heart trouble and knows that his end may be there any day. He realises it would mean leaving behind everything and everybody dear to him:

⁸ Ivan Turgenev, “Punin and Baburin” in *The Best Known Works of Ivan Turgenev*, New York, Literary Classics, p. 335.

To leave them for unknown darkness, for the unimaginable state, for such nothingness that he would not even be conscious of wind stirring leaves above his grave, nor of the scent of earth and grass. Of such nothingness that, however hard he might try to conceive it, he never could, and must still hover on the hope that he might see again those he loved! (To Let, 30).

There is still some ambivalence between “nothingness” and his faint hope that “he might see again those he loved.” When death then actually comes to Jolyon, he fell down in his father’s chair. “His hand dropped. . . . So it was like this—was it?. . .There was a great wrench; and darkness. . . .” (To Let, 198).⁹

In his final play, *The Roof* (1929), written four years before his death, Galsworthy still debates the question of “nothingness”. This play is about the widely-acclaimed writer, Lennox, with clear parallels to Galsworthy himself. The scene is laid in a hotel in Paris where Lennox is laid up with heart trouble and is treated by a nurse. Not until the penultimate scene does the audience actually meet him. Lennox asks the nurse about her experience with death, to which she says:

I once saw an old lady die, she was all darkened and drawn, quite unconscious. Suddenly she smiled very faintly, very sweetly, and was gone. Why—why did she smile, if something hadn’t opened to her? It was so happy (Plays, 1135).

Lennox says in reply that it might just be “relief at oblivion”, to which the nurse replies, “Could one smile at nothingness?” It is clear from this last play of Galsworthy’s how the mystery of death still fascinates him, but also how, meanwhile, he has rationalised death to “nothingness” and “oblivion”. The play ends with both the death of Lennox and of one of the other guests, who, trying to save others, suffocates in the smoke. The latter speaks the closing words of the play, and, indeed, of Galsworthy’s last completed play: “Christ! I’m done for! To hell with it all! Up—up—up!” (Plays, 1150). Galsworthy has clearly stated his case in this final play of his career.

The question is whether Galsworthy was unique in his ultimate conviction that death is merely “darkness” and “nothingness”, or whether he was influenced in his thinking by his favourite authors and fellow novelists and dramatists. Galsworthy’s favourite writer,

⁹ The element of darkness recurs in *The Forest* (1924), in which two men, Lockyer and Collie, who have joined an expedition in the African jungle, speak about death. Lockyer asks Collie: “I say, what do you think death really is? . . . Change of trains—or a black-out, eh!” Collie replies: I’m no certain. But it canna be worse than this forest” (Plays, 769). It still is uncertainty that Galsworthy expresses here. This degree of uncertainty recurs in “Passers by”, the second of the *Two Forsyte Interludes* (1927), in which Soames visits the Saint-Gaudens statue in Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington DC. To Soames the “woman has passed beyond grief. She sat in a frozen acceptance deeper than death itself.” He then gently touches the fold in the green bronze, “as if questioning the possibility of everlasting nothingness” (Modern Comedy, 685-686).

Turgenev, shows us Bazarov's death in his *Fathers and Sons*. Just before Bazarov dies he exclaims "Enough", and dropping back on his pillow he says, "Now darkness . . ." In *Spring Torrents* Turgenev depicts death as "the abyss,"¹⁰ which he repeats in *Fathers and Sons* as "the yawning abyss of silence."¹¹ Tolstoy too refers to death in terms of "darkness". Levin says about his fear of death in *Anna Karenina*: "Darkness covered everything for him; but precisely because of this darkness he felt that his undertaking was the only guiding thread in this darkness" (*Karenina*, 352).

It was Arthur Schopenhauer who used terms like "nothingness" and "annihilation" (*Suffering of the World*, 38-39), but to him they were not synonymous with 'death'. He believed in a rebirth, saying that "what dies goes to where all life originates" (*Suffering of the World*, 45). Flaubert uses "nothingness" in *Madame Bovary* (1856), saying: "There is always after the death of anyone a kind of stupefaction, so difficult is it to grasp this advent of nothingness and to resign ourselves to believe in it" (*Bovary*, 251). In Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, Forester calls out on his death bed: "*Je ne veux pas mourir! . . . Oh! Mon Dieu . . . mon Dieu . . . qu'est-ce qui va m'arriver? Je ne verrai plus rien . . . plus rien . . . jamais Oh! Mon Dieu!*" (*Bel-Ami*, 201). A similar picture is painted in "Yvette". Yvette, when contemplating suicide, says to herself: "Dead! Never to speak, never to think; no one to see me any more. And I—I shall never see all this again?" (*Yvette*, 114). August Strindberg's character, the Dean of Theology in *A Dream Play* (1901) says, after renouncing his faith, that "out of nothing comes nothing" (*Five Plays*, 258), and Captain Edgar in *The Dance of Death* (1900) speaks of death in terms of "annihilation" (*Five Plays*, 140). Anatole France says in *Revolt of the Angels* (1914): "They look not for solace in annihilation; it does not even bring them the promise of rest. In their madness they even look upon nothingness with terror" (*Revolt*, 137). W.H. Hudson speaks of "the cursed blackness of death" (*Green Mansions*, 71), and the stranger in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* says to Waldo, when asked if he believes in an afterlife: "I am a man who believes nothing, hopes nothing, fears nothing, feels nothing" (*African Farm*, 159). Joseph Conrad, himself an admirer of Turgenev, Flaubert and Maupassant, refers to Kurtz' death in *Heart of Darkness*, as that which lies behind "the threshold of eternal darkness" (*Heart of Darkness*, 94). In *An Outcast of the Islands* Conrad's protagonist Willems wonders about his approaching death and realises that after his death "he would be stretched upon the warm moisture of the ground, feeling nothing, seeing nothing, knowing nothing" (*Outcast*, 353). Conrad also hints at the idea of "nothingness" in *The Secret Agent* (1907), saying of Mrs Verloc that she entertained no "vain delusions on the subject of the dead. Nothing brings them back, neither love nor hate. They can do nothing to you. They are as nothing" (*Secret Agent*, 379). Finally we must note that Shaw too is very outspoken on

¹⁰ Ivan Turgenev, *Spring Torrents*, 1872, in *Three Short Novels*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1974, p. 154.

¹¹ Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, 1862, in *The Best Known Works of Ivan Turgenev*, New York, Literary Classics, p. 139.

the concept of “nothingness” in relation to death. In *Man and Superman* Shaw gives us a description of hell: “There is nothing, omnipresent nothing. No peaks, no sky, no light, no sound, no time, nor space, utter void” (Superman, 123).

This survey of the references to death in terms of “blackness”, “annihilation” and “nothingness” in the work of earlier writers and contemporary writers, shows unequivocally how Galsworthy modelled his own ideas about death on theirs.

Galsworthy’s own death concludes his lifelong, arduous quest into the mystery of death. We see him in doubt and seeking knowledge in his early years. He rejects an afterlife in the first decade and stresses life in the present rather than life hereafter. He becomes more philosophical in the second decade, with a touch of nostalgia and loss in the early twenties. However, by the end of his life, there is full resignation that death will ultimately mean “oblivion”, “darkness”, and “nothingness”. What remains is Galsworthy’s love of life as a dominant feature throughout his life, which becomes manifest, for example, in his article “Philosophy of Life”, in which he states: “What sane man, what flower, what tree, what bird, what insect, denies the instinct for life, denies that it wants to live, simply for the sake of living?” (Glimpses, 233). Galsworthy’s final words on this matter are from his posthumously published *Over the River* (1933), which he completed shortly before his death. In the final chapter he reaches a conclusion on this issue and says: “We ought to feel: The greater the earth’s beauty . . . the deeper and sweeter our rest in her will be.” However, he adds: “Death may be a good thing, but Life’s a better” (*Over the River*, 805). James Barrie wrote to Ada Galsworthy on 3 October 1933, eight months after Galsworthy’s death, saying: “I’ve been reading *Over the River*, and not at times without a tremor, because though I find it among the loveliest of his books, and indeed expected as much, I seemed to see him writing it and coming daily nearer to his end. There is perhaps a nobler serenity about it than any other of his stories and so there is a summing up of himself in it as well as of Dinny” (GP, JG 7/2/1/1-43).

When at the end of *Swan Song* (1928) Soames has died, Michael Mont is allowed the final comment, voicing Galsworthy’s own feelings on the completion of this sixth Forsyte novel. He looks out over the river, looks at the stars above and ponders about the mood he is in, and thinks:

What a world! The Eternal Mood at work. And if you died, like that old boy, and lay forever beneath a crab-apple tree—well it was the Mood resting a moment in your still shape—no! Not even resting, moving on in the mysterious rhythm that one called Life. Who could arrest the moving Mood—who wanted to? (*Swan Song*, 862).

Again this describes Galsworthy's cosmic order, an "underlying Principle that turns and turns on itself" (Inn of Tranquillity, 10), and is so strongly related to Henri Bergson's philosophy of a vital, and ever-renewing and creative impulse.

Cremations and the rise of spiritualism

This section looks at the historical context of death ritual at the end of the Victorian age and the early twentieth century and at Galsworthy's own references to death and funerals.

In *The Silver Spoon* (1926), for instance, Soames, passes a village church, which reminds him that he too will have to be buried one day.

Nothing flowery! Just his name, 'Soames Forsyte', standing out on rough stone, like that grave he had sat on at Highgate; no need to put 'Here lies'—of course he'd lie! As to a cross, he didn't know. Probably they'd put one, whatever he wished. He'd like to be in a corner, though, away from people (Silver Spoon, 485).

Apart from the fact that it shows us Soames' extreme loneliness once more, this picture emphasises the finality Galsworthy believes in. Consequently, Soames does not really care about a cross. However, it may again be a safeguard, reminiscent of Soames' thoughts about the words spoken at his uncle Timothy's funeral: "He didn't believe a word of it; on the other hand, it was a form of insurance which could not safely be neglected, in case there might be something in it after all" (To Let, 247).

Young Jolyon's death took place years before Soames'. The narrator in *To Let* informs us that Jolyon was cremated: "By his special wish no one attended that ceremony, or wore black for him" (To Let, 213). It foreshadows Galsworthy's own special wish regarding his own cremation: "Scatter my ashes" and "I in no grave be confined." There is something similar in Galsworthy's final play, *The Roof*, in which Lennox says, "I'm all for cremation and one will avoid the service" (Plays, 1139). Lennox makes it explicitly clear that he is against the burial of a dead body: "We catch our deaths burying it—by the way, don't let anybody get pneumonia over me" (Plays, 1134).

From a social and historical perspective it must be noted that death ritual was undergoing change only very slowly around the turn of the century. Cremation, for instance, "was no more than tolerated by 1918, when 0.3 per cent of funerals involved cremation."¹² The main objection to cremation came from the Church. Its arguments were based on the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body, as articulated in "The Order for the Burial of the Dead" in *The Book of Common Prayer*: "We therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life,

¹² Peter C. Jubb and Clare Gittings (ed.), *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 251.

through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body.”¹³

The advocates of cremation, however, opposed this religious view by presenting mainly sanitary and materialist arguments. They claimed that this would end graveyard pollution of air and water, which spread infection and raised death rates. They also argued that cremation was cheaper than burial (Jubb 1999, 249). Support for cremation was strongest among the upper and middle classes, notably among the literary and scientific intelligentsia. An example is Herbert Spencer, who was cremated in 1903 (Jubb 1999, 251). Where the 1890s with its elaborate funeral proceedings had been the “golden age of the Victorian funeral”¹⁴, the greatest influence on the simplification of the English funeral came as a result of the First World War. At such a time of great national suffering and sorrow, individual displays of “funerary pomp and panoply did not sit comfortably on the conscience” (Litten 1991, 171).

There was also an increased interest in spiritualism in the Victorian age and the Edwardian and interwar period, as a direct result of the “crisis of faith.”¹⁵ As organised religion weakened, the spiritualist movement was further “energised by the desperate desire of countless bereaved relatives to contact lost soldier sons and husbands in the spirit world” (Jubb 1999, 251). This interest in spiritualism is also visible in Galsworthy’s work. In *In Chancery* (1920), for example, Young Jolyon “has a moment of communion with his dead father,” to which the narrator adds: “it was rather an atmospheric impact, like a scent, or one of those strong animistic impressions from forms, or effects of light, to which those with the artist’s eye are especially prone” (*Chancery*, 67). In *To Let* Young Jolyon discusses spiritualism and life after death with his daughter Holly. Holly asks him whether he believes in “survival”. He replies to her that he “should like to get something out of death,” but so far has not found anything that “telepathy, sub-consciousness and emanation from the storehouse of this world can’t account for just as well. Wish I could” (*To Let*, 56). John and Ada Galsworthy’s interest in spiritualism also appears from the fact that they had actually been present at a séance, which Galsworthy confessed in 1930 to Hermon Ould, Secretary to the PEN Club (Ould 1934, 236). As early as 1910 Galsworthy also showed an interest in hypnotism, which is clear from his diary entry for 22 September 1910, saying that he read “Bernard Hollander’s book on hypnotism” (GD, 1910). Overall, however, Galsworthy remains sceptical towards spiritualism, as becomes clear from a letter to a Mr D.B. in 1923, in which he states that “the moment we get direct communication between spirit and living

¹³ “The Order for the Burial of the Dead” in *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments*, London, Cambridge University Press, ca. 1940.

¹⁴ Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral since 1450*, London, Robert Hale, 1991, p. 170.

¹⁵ Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society between the Wars*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 4.

person who clearly has not himself the mediumistic gift, we should have a much more convincing testimony to the possibility of survival” (Glimpses, 263).

Conclusion

To conclude my analysis of Galsworthy’s views on death, I now turn to the final page of Galsworthy’s *Saint’s Progress*. The former rector, Edward Pierson, is serving as an army chaplain and we observe him sitting by the bed of a dying young soldier in France. When Pierson tells the young man that he will now go to God, “a flicker of humour, or ironic question, passes over the boy’s lips.” The boy’s reaction moves Pierson terribly. In his smile there is “the whole of stoic doubt and stoic acquiescence. It [meets] him with an unconscious challenge” (Saint’s Progress, 352). It seems as if the boy’s smile is saying: “Waste no breath on me—you cannot help . . . I have no hope, no faith; but I am adventuring. Good-bye!” Pierson is impressed by the young man’s strength and courage: “[he] moved out uncertain, yet undaunted!” Pierson consequently wonders, is “that then the uttermost truth, [is] faith a smaller thing?” (Saint’s Progress, 353). However, he recoils from this idea with horror. This passage shows Galsworthy’s rejection of traditional religious concepts concerning death and the hereafter, which six years earlier in *The Inn of Tranquillity* he refers to as “the ordinary presumptions” (Inn of Tranquillity, 116). It is the “courage” of the dying soldier that he is looking for, as appears from his poem “Courage”:

T’ is the mysterious soul which never yields,
But hales us on and on to breast the rush
Of all the fortunes we shall happen thro’;
And when Death calls across his shadowy fields—
Dying, it answers: “Here! I am not dead!” (Poems, 4)

This is reminiscent of Stephen Crane’s hero, Henry Fleming, in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Looking back on the battle he took part in in the American Civil War, Henry says: “He would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 2003, p. 118.

9. The Bible

Throughout his career as a writer Galsworthy actively used sayings from the Bible, although, increasingly, he turned his back on the Church as an institution, Christian orthodoxy, belief in life after death and belief in God. This chapter aims to analyse first what Galsworthy says of the Bible in general, and how other writers contributed to the development of his thinking in this respect. Second, it focuses on the nature of the sayings which Galsworthy quotes from the Gospel, and the way he applies them. Third, this chapter looks into the context in which Galsworthy was writing, especially that of increased criticism of literal interpretations of the Bible and criticism of the Old Testament, a discussion that had grown into a debate of national dimensions, and had fed religious doubt in the final decade of the nineteenth century. Finally, an analysis follows on Galsworthy's use of "original sin", a concept which he refers to in his work time and again, and a notion that apparently intrigued him.

The Bible

Galsworthy is aware of the paradox in his statement that he "rejects as untenable the actual divinity of Christ", but still "accepts and reverences" a certain proportion of Christ's sayings. In a letter to an unrecorded correspondent in 1912, Galsworthy states that, "where . . . they contradict each other, in spirit if not in actual word, one has to sieve out for oneself an essence that best accords with one's own nature" (Reynolds 1936, 81). He confirms this appreciation of the Gospel in *The Patrician* (1911), where one of his characters, the socialist writer Mr Courtier, expresses what we may assume to be Galsworthy's own opinion. He "had not been inside a church for twenty years, having long felt that he must not enter the mosques of his country without putting off the shoes of freedom, but he read the Bible, considering it a very great poem" (*Patrician*, 112). In "Grotesques" (1917-1918) Galsworthy refers to the Bible as "the old fable" (*Satires*, 187) and in *To Let* (1921) Young Jolyon qualifies it as "the legend" (*To Let*, 197). Finally, in *Windows* (1922), Galsworthy speaks jocularly of the Bible by comparing it to Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905) and Susan Warner's *The Wide Wide World* (1850) and qualifying them all as "inflammatory literature" (*Plays*, 726).

The debate about the literal truth of the Bible commenced in the mid-nineteenth century. On the one hand, there were members of the clergy, like Dean Burgon, who argued that the Church of England had a "Divine Vocation", which justified her "uncompromising strictness in maintaining that the Bible is not other than the word of God." To this statement made during the Lambeth Conference of 1867, the year of Galsworthy's birth, he added that "there ha[d] been no new discovery made,—no, nor will there ever arise any,—to diminish jot or

title of our confidence that the Bible is—(not contains, but is,)—the sure word of God.”¹ On the other hand there were the Victorian thinkers, like Herbert Spencer, who rejected the Bible as “quite old-fashioned and superfluous,” whereas Matthew Arnold still looked upon the Bible as a source of inspiration for man’s conduct. Arnold was convinced that the Bible would give man more “moral force than the writings of Benjamin Franklin . . . or Herbert Spencer could” (*Literature*, 313). In his preface to *Literature and Dogma* (1873) Arnold states that clergymen are “full of lamentations over what they call the spread of scepticism.” In spite of the efforts of the churches he notices an increased rejection of the Bible, and he regrets that, because he finds “the Bible and its religion *all-important*.” He thinks it impossible, however, to “re-enthroned the Bible”, as explained by contemporary theology. He feels that the masses would no longer admit, “as a self-evident axiom, the preliminary assumption with which the Churches start,” namely that there is a “Great Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the Universe.” He also argues that the Bible should be read in its cultural context and that the Bible can only be understood correctly if one understands that “the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed and scientific.” Thus he blames the Dissenters for narrowly interpreting the Bible, but he understands this, because most of these people were simple, unlettered peasants. He says that in consequence they failed to see that “mildness and sweet reasonableness is the one established rule for Christian working and no other rule has it or can it have” (*Literature*, vi-xvii). However, he also blames the established Church and its theologians for outlawing those that hold different views, even calling them “infidels”. He wonders if it would not be just to condemn them by their own rule and cry out: “*The torrent of infidelity which pours every Sunday from our pulpits!*” (*Literature*, 180). He realises, however, that that would hardly be Christian. To Matthew Arnold orthodox theology is a “misunderstanding of the Bible” (*Literature*, 181).

The ambivalence resulting from a narrow interpretation of particularly the Old Testament and Christ’s message, is also visible in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*, whose narrator says of the Bible: “the leaves of that book . . . had taken the brightness out of [Waldo’s] childhood” (*African Farm*, 67), but at the same time she refers to the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, the “Sermon on the Mount”, as “a new gold-mine” (*African Farm*, 139).

Samuel Butler too appreciated the Bible as an important document containing a basic set of values, but not as a set of rules to be applied dogmatically, or as evidence for the existence of God. He says: “Disbelieve as we may the details of the accounts which record the growth of the Christian religion, yet a great part of Christian teaching will remain as true as though we accepted the details” (*Way of All Flesh*, 70).

Finally, it is also William Dean Howells who refers to the Bible in his *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885). Speaking of his mother when he was still young Silas says: “She got time to

¹ John William Burgon, “Sermon Preached at St. Mary-the-Virgin, Oxford”, *The Lambeth Conference and the Encyclical*, Oxford and London, James Parker & Co., 1867 pp. 8 and 13.

go to church, and to teach us to read the Bible, and to misunderstand it in the old way” (Silas Lapham, 6).

The Sermon on the Mount

It is first and foremost Christ’s teachings as embodied in the “Sermon on the Mount” that Galsworthy refers to in his writings. Many of these teachings may be applied universally, whether one is a believer or not. Many of them may easily be interpreted as basically humanist in nature, hence Galsworthy’s sympathy with most of these sayings. Take, for example, Christ’s blessings: “Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the meek; blessed are the merciful,” and finally, “blessed are the peacemakers” (St. Matthew 5 1:9).

We find Christ’s sayings scattered throughout Galsworthy’s work. In *The Island Pharisees* (1904), for instance, Shelton finds himself looking at the walls of Princetown Prison, which reminds him how the Christian maxim of “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (St. John 8:7) is preached, but not practised. He realises that all the ideas and maxims which his “Christian countrymen believed themselves to be fulfilling daily were stultified in every cellule of the social honeycomb” (*Island Pharisees*, 131).

In *Joy* (1909) Galsworthy uses the saying “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (*Plays*, 90), a quote from St. Matthew 6:34. Maurice Lever says this when his mistress, Mrs Molly Gwynn, tells him that she is bringing him nothing but worry. When Molly again faces him with the question how to proceed with their illicit relationship, and rather to “meet trouble” than to wait, he replies: “Let the future take care of itself” (*Plays*, 90), in line with the maxim: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself” (St Matthew 6:34). Galsworthy found these two maxims from St Matthew very appropriate and very much in line with his own interest in life, here and now, and he turns the first into: “Sufficient unto this Earth is the beauty and the meaning thereof” (*Pendycyes*, 332). He also uses this facetiously in “Grotesques”, when the Angel asks the dragoman whether he is satisfied with current virtue, and the dragoman replies: “To tell you the truth, Sir, I do not judge my neighbours, sufficient unto myself is the vice thereof” (*Satires*, 174). The irony is that this is part of a conversation between an angel and his dragoman. The latter’s remark, “I do not judge my neighbours”, refers again to the “Sermon on the Mount” (St Matthew 7:1-2): “Judge not that ye be not judged.” Galsworthy also uses this saying in *The Country House*, ironically enough, as the Rev. Hussell Barter’s motto.

In “The Perfect One,” a satire in “Studies of Extravagance” (1915), Galsworthy presents a caricature of an average English gentleman and his relationship with the Church.

There seemed to be things in the Bible about turning the other cheek, and lilies of the field, about rich men and camels, and the poor in spirit, which did not go altogether

with his religion. Still one remained in the English church, hit things, and hoped for the best (Satires, 107).

All references are from St. Matthew and most are from the “Sermon on the Mount”. “Turning the other cheek” is from St Matthew 5:39: “But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” The reference to the “lilies of the field” is from St Matthew 6:28: “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.” He also mentions the “poor in spirit” as another link with Christ’s blessings. Galsworthy’s reference to “rich men and camels” is not from the “Sermon on the Mount”, though, but from St Matthew 19:24: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” As in the passage about Princetown Prison in *The Island Pharisees*, Galsworthy uses Christ’s sayings, all from St Matthew, mainly to expose fake Christianity.

Galsworthy uses the “camel” and the “needle’s eye” maxim a number of times in his work. In *The Patrician* (1911), for instance, the narrator says: “And the old words came haunting him: ‘Verily I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven’” (Patrician, 112). It recurs in “Grotesques” (1917-1918) as a humorous adaptation of this Biblical reference: “It is probably harder for a man in the limelight to enter virtue than for the virtuous to enter the limelight” (Satires, 174). Galsworthy is not unique in adapting this particular saying from the Bible. Dickens too uses it jocularly in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in which Mrs Gamp, a cockney midwife and nurse, says: “Rich folks may ride on camels, but it ain’t so easy for ‘em to see out of a needle’s eye. That is my comfort and I hope I knows it” (Chuzzlewit, 396).²

² The title of Galsworthy’s play, *The First and the Last* (1917), is taken from St Matthew too: “So the last shall be the first and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen” (St Matthew 20:16). Again it expresses Galsworthy’s humanitarian feelings. In combination with the “camel” and the “needle’s eye” this also shows Galsworthy’s preoccupation with the divide between the rich and the poor and its association with such biblical notions as the “day of reckoning” and “Christ’s Second Coming”. The first reference to this notion, for that matter, may be found in the title of Galsworthy’s first published work *From the Four Winds* (1897), another quote from the Gospel: “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds” (St Matthew 24:31).

In *A Sheaf* (1916) Galsworthy makes use of another biblical maxim to criticise cruelty to animals through animal shows, caging of birds, docking horses’ tails, vivisection of dogs and slaughter for food. To underline his point he states:

Now, ‘Do unto others as you would they should do unto you!’ is not only the first principle of Christianity, but the first principle of all social conduct—the essence of that true gentility which is the only saving grace of men and women in all ranks of life. And I am certain that the word ‘others’ cannot any longer be limited to the human creature (Sheaf, 59).

An earlier example of the use of this same maxim is from “About Censorship”, where Galsworthy applies “that great saying: ‘Do unto others as you would they should do unto you’” (Inn of Tranquillity, 253) to the censors of drama. The reference is again from the “Sermon on the Mount” (St Matthew 7:12).

However critical Galsworthy may have been against the dogmatic teachings of the Church, he appreciated Christ's teachings. This is perhaps best illustrated in *The Apple Tree* (1916), where Ashurst has just told Stella about his doubts about an afterlife. Stella asks him if he does not believe in the Bible at all then, to which he replies: "I believe in the Sermon on the Mount, because it's beautiful and good for all time." However, in reply to her question, "But don't you believe Christ was divine?" Ashurst shook his head (Caravan, 382). This confirms once more that Galsworthy is aware of the paradox involved in his own rejection of the divinity of Christ on the one hand, and his acceptance and, indeed, reverence of many of Christ's sayings, on the other. Galsworthy's interest in the dichotomy between Christ's message and the God of the Old Testament is also clear from an entry in his diary on 18 July 1911: "Read Gospel of St Matthew all the way up. Curious divergence from Sermon on Mount from Old Testament prophet personality" (GD, 18 July 1911). One week later he begins his satire "A Christian", one of his most scathing attacks on orthodox Christianity and the clergy.

We can establish a similar predilection for maxims from the Gospel in, especially, Tolstoy. Examples from *Anna Karenina* are: "I won't cast a stone" (Karenina, 79) and: "Our foothold is love, the love that He left us. His burden is light" (Karenina, 509), referring to St Matthew 11:30: "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Countess Lydia Ivanovna reminds Karenin that "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Karenina, 510), referring to St Luke 14:11. What Tolstoy does here is contrast Christ's message of forgiveness and love with Karenin's harshness and his refusal to forgive his wife for her adultery. It is Karenin who says: "her death was itself the death of an irreligious woman. God forgive me, but I can't help hating her memory" (Karenina, 778), which was so much in contrast with Jesus' "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (St Matthew 5:7). These references from Tolstoy's works show how Galsworthy's reading of Tolstoy reinforced his own feelings that Christian maxims were preached, but were not always practised, a theme underlying *The Island Pharisees*, *The Man of Property*, *The Country House*, *The Freelanders*, *Fraternity*, and his play *The Pigeon*.

The Old Testament and the New

Galsworthy's preference for the Gospel instead of the Old Testament is not unique and originates in a theological controversy in nineteenth-century Britain. The conceptions of unconventional thinkers like Matthew Arnold and Thomas Huxley, coupled to the ideas of writers such as Tolstoy, France, Nevinson and Hudson clearly fed this preference of Galsworthy's.

Matthew Arnold is critical of the Old Testament, although he does not completely reject it. He says the Old Testament contains "the germ of Christianity". To illustrate this point he quotes from the Proverbs: "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul" and: "He that hath

mercy on the poor, happy is he.” Finally he mentions: “Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.” These, he says, are the ingredients of the Sermon on the Mount. However, Arnold admits that it does not come out fully, as it does in the New Testament and argues that the Old Testament makes religion social rather than personal, “an affair of outward duties rather than of inward dispositions”. To Arnold Jesus’ role was bringing back a “fuller idea of righteousness”, and by “reapplying emotion, to disperse the feeling of being amiss and helpless, to give the sense of being right and effective, to restore, in short, to righteousness the sanction of *happiness*” (Literature, 80-84).

As to the miracles that the Old Testament and the New relate, Arnold rejects them as having literary value only. He points to the discrepancies between the various versions of miracles and the “looseness with which the stories of them arise and are propagated.” He even states that with these miracles “we are in wonderland” (Literature, 146). However, he hastens to add:

Let those who desire . . . to do so, if they can . . . go on placing the sanction of the Christian religion in its miracles. Our point is, that the objections to miracles do and more will, without insistence, without attack, without controversy, make their own force felt; and that the sanction of Christianity, if Christianity is not to be lost along with its miracles, must be found elsewhere (Literature, 146).

Arnold feels that the more we convince ourselves that the authors of the New Testament were likely to have made mistakes, “the more we really bring out the greatness and worth of the New Testament” (Literature, 148). He considers Jesus a great spirit, but “the greater he was, the more certain were his disciples to misunderstand him.” Arnold reminds us that it was not Jesus who wrote the New Testament, but he was merely the object of description. He therefore argues that a rationalist treatment of the New Testament, that is to say, an attempt to reduce all the supernatural in it to real events, is futile. In addition he holds that one should bear in mind that, in all probability, from none of these recorders of Christ’s life do we have the original record, and at least for a period of half a century or more these records have passed through oral tradition, with especially the miraculous incidents swelling and growing. In *God and the Bible* (1875) he adds that people in Jesus’ time were as eager to seek for miracles as those living a generation or two later, as are those nowadays that resort to, for example, Lourdes (God and Bible, 368). Arnold states that the belief that Jesus is the Son of God is equal to belief in his “preternatural conception, and birth, his miracles, his descent into hell, his ascent into heaven, and his future triumphant return to judgment” (Literature, 277). This he considers the basis for popular religion, which forms the foundation for what is called the Apostles’ Creed, and which, he says, took five hundred years to mature, and the Nicene Creed, a more theological and abstract, metaphysical approach to Christianity. Gradually this

approach prevailed, resulting in the Athanasian creed, all based on logical assumptions, not resting on observation or experience, but merely, as Arnold argues, “assumed to be given in the Scripture” (Literature, 348), or in other words: “a mis-attribution to the Bible . . . of a science and abstruse metaphysic which is not there” (Literature, 386). Thus the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Athanasian creed, Arnold claims, became the expression of the Christian faith. With this development Arnold also points to an increased, but uncritical use of the Old Testament and of prophecy, and asserts that this has given rise to our “so-called orthodox dogma” (Literature, 286). Arnold therefore maintains that dogmatic theology has its roots in the middle ages. Matthew Arnold’s niece, Mrs Humphrey Ward, explores the same theme in *Robert Elsmere* (1888), in which Squire Endover refers to the Old Testament and the New as “imperfect, half-childish products of the mind of the first century of quite insignificant or indirect value to the historian of fact.” Endover speaks of Christ’s resurrection as “partly invented, partly imagined, partly ideally true—in any case wholly intelligible and natural, as a product of the age” (Elsmere, ch. XXIV).

Thomas Huxley, like Matthew Arnold, highlights that there is no proof that any of the Gospels, as we find them in the Authorised Version of the Bible, existed before the second century, or in other words, sixty or seventy years after the events recorded. “And between that time and the date of the oldest extant manuscripts, of the Gospels, there is no telling what additions or alterations and interpolations may have been made” (Lectures, 87). Thus Huxley also poses the question whether the “Sermon on the Mount” was ever really preached and whether the “Lord’s Prayer” was ever really prayed, given the fact that the second gospel, the nearest extant representative of the oldest tradition, does not contain these two elements (Lectures, 83). Huxley was very critical of the orthodox church. In *Naturalism and Supernaturalism* (1892) he relates his memories of churchgoing. He remembers how the preacher “ignorant alike of literature, of history, of science, and even of theology, outside that patronised by his own narrow school, poured forth from the safe entrenchment of the pulpit, invectives against those who deviated from his notion of orthodoxy.” He adds that thus it was impressed upon his mind “on pain of reprobation in this world and damnation in the next” to accept in the strict and literal sense every statement contained in the Protestant Bible (Lectures, 64). Huxley also refers to the “Controverted Question of the age”, whether the Bible was to be taken literally or not, and especially also its historical truth. In this connection he refers to the “Declaration on the Truth of Holy Scripture” in *The Times* of 18 December, 1891 (Lectures, 64). By this Declaration some thirty-eight churchmen professed and declared “their unfeigned belief in all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as handed down to us by the undivided Church in the original languages.” The reason they gave for sending this Declaration to *The Times*, was that “there were current certain impressions that Holy Scripture has been discovered not to be worthy of unquestioning belief; and the faith of many people is thereby unsettled.” At the time the editor of *The Times* received letters

discussing theological and ecclesiastical issues almost daily. One of these issues was the literal and historical truth of the Bible, which, as the churchmen said, “undermined all faith in the mystery of Christ.”³ In 1891 Galsworthy was 24 years old and this declaration also shows us the seriousness and intensity of the debate about this “Controverted Question” in a period that Galsworthy himself was trying to find his religious bearings.

Tolstoy concurs with Matthew Arnold about the discrepancy between the Sermon on the Mount and the Old Testament, the discrepancy between the “God of Love” and a “wicked and senseless God.” In *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893) Tolstoy writes that one cannot believe in both the Sermon on the Mount and the Creed.

People who believe in a wicked and senseless God—who has cursed the human race and devoted his own Son to sacrifice, and a part of mankind to eternal torment—cannot believe in the God of love. The man who believes in a God, in a Christ coming again in glory to judge and to punish the quick and the dead, cannot believe in the Christ who bade us turn the left cheek, judge not, forgive these that wrong us, and love our enemies. The man who believes in the inspiration of the Old Testament and the sacred character of David, who commanded on his deathbed the murder of an old man who had cursed him, and whom he could not kill himself because he was bound by an oath to him, and the similar atrocities of which the Old Testament is full, cannot believe in the holy love of Christ. The man who believes in the Church's doctrine of the compatibility of warfare and capital punishment with Christianity cannot believe in the brotherhood of all men (*Kingdom of God*, 79).

There is a similar rejection of the God of the Old Testament in Anatole France's *Thaïs*. One of his characters says about the New Testament: “If one may guess at the spirit by the letter, it is filled with truths, and I consider that the Christian books abound in divine revelations.” However, about the books in the Old Testament he says: “They were inspired not, as it was said, by the Spirit of God, but by an evil genius.”⁴ In *The Wicker-work Woman* France repeats this in the words of Monsieur Bergeret: “You ought to know that your God used in Biblical times to show a lively taste for human sacrifices and that He rejoiced in the smell of blood” (*Wicker-work*, 219). However, at this time, France also warns his readers for the dangers that lie in the fervour with which a new religion, based on the Gospel, might be spread, which might be worse than an eroded religion based on the Old Testament. Through Monsieur Bergeret France says that he realises that this cruelty is now “an ancient thing . . . rolled smooth like a pebble with all its points blunted.” He is much more afraid of a new religion

³ The Times, 18 December 1891, p. 5.

⁴ Anatole France, *Thaïs* (*Thaïs*, 1890), London, The Bodley Head, 1924, p. 121.

and prefers “intolerance rubbed smooth, to charity with a fresh edge to it” (Wicker-work, 221).

Two of Galsworthy’s friends, Hudson and Nevinson, refer to the Bible controversy too. Nevinson visited a number of missionaries during his visit to Angola. What surprised him was that the missionaries “kept up the old habit of teaching the early part of the Old Testament as literal facts of history.” He adds: “But if there is anything certain in human knowledge, the Old Testament stories have no connection with the facts of history at all. No one believes they have” (Slavery, 137). Hudson observes in *A Shepherd’s Life*, that the stories in the Old Testament especially appeal to the solitary shepherd, who knows “nothing of the Higher Criticism,” and takes the Bible “literally as the word of God.” He states this without criticism, or without irony and with respect for these old shepherds. However, he is much more critical when he notes that “no doubt the Scripture lessons read in the thousand churches on every Sunday of the year are practically meaningless to the hearers” (Shepherd’s Life, 147).

Original sin

There is one other Biblical reference that is explored repeatedly in Galsworthy’s oeuvre: his allusion to “original sin” and its associations with the “tree of life” and the “tree of knowledge”, the origin of human failure, and the resulting suffering and moral burden. From a religious point of view Galsworthy does not accept the fall of man, but from a psychological point of view he raises the issue of human weakness and human failure.

Already in Galsworthy’s discussions with his sister Lillian in the 1880s, the concept of original sin may have been raised. Lillian herself ponders the question why man is punished for his sins in an essay in one of her notebooks on 21 November 1886, when her brother John was nineteen years old. The essay is called “Thoughts on Atonement”. She thinks about the passage in the Bible, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”, and wonders what kind of death that will be. She arrives at the conclusion that “Life and death existed from eternity in God’s mind as the perfect ideal of humanity, not as a necessary outcome of the sin of man” (GP, JG 10/3/1-3). She consequently rejects the literal interpretation of Genesis and the story of the fall of man, not unlike Schopenhauer, who, in his *On the Suffering of the World*, found it “quite unacceptable” that a “God like *Jehovah* should create this world of want and misery *animi causa* and *de gaieté de cœur*, and then goes so far as to applaud himself for it, saying it is all very good.” To Schopenhauer it was the “grievous sin of the world” that gave rise to the “suffering of the world”. Of the fall of man he says: “The story of the Fall is consequently the only thing that reconciles me to the Old Testament; I even regard it as the sole metaphysical truth contained in that book, even though it does appear clothed in allegory. . . . Our existence resembles nothing so much as the consequence of a misdeed, punishment for a forbidden desire.” Schopenhauer maintains: “Brahma is supposed to have created the world by a kind of fall into sin, or by an error, and has to atone for this sin or error

by remaining in it himself until he has redeemed himself out of it. Very good!” (Suffering of the World, 12-14). This is also where Schopenhauer has influenced August Strindberg. It is Strindberg’s Indra, a demigod, in *A Dream Play*, who says about the earth:

Yes it is fair, as is all Brahmā created . . . but it was fairer still once, in the dawn of time. Then something happened, a disturbance in the orbit, perhaps something else, an act of disobedience followed by crimes, which had to be suppressed (Five Plays, 208).

At the end of the play Strindberg is more explicit when Indra’s daughter says:

In the dawn of time, before the sun shone, Brahman, the divine primal force, allowed itself to be seduced by Māyā, the world mother, into propagating. This contact between divine and earthly substances was heaven’s original sin. And so the world, life and human beings are only an illusion, a phantom, a dream image (Five Plays, 261).

She adds to this: “A dream become reality . . . But to be set free from this earthly substance, Brahman’s descendents seek self-denial and suffering” (Five Plays, 261), indeed, Schopenhauer’s central idea. Also it is the underlying theme of Galsworthy’s *The Little Dream*, in which Seelchen, the little soul, is trying to solve the mystery of life and death, and in doing so has to withstand the seductions of the world. Galsworthy says of this: “The ‘little soul’ in my play is passing through this world of conflict . . . on her way to the unknowable, mysterious, and everlasting *reconciliation* or Harmony” (Glimpses, 90-91).

Galsworthy himself does not refer to “original sin” or the “tree of knowledge” until the publication of *Joy* in 1910. The protagonist, Joy, cannot accept her mother’s (Molly Gwynn’s) illicit relationship and the latter’s desire to divorce her husband. In the final scene Miss Beech, the former nanny, concludes: “They must go their own ways, poor things! [Molly] can’t put herself in the child’s place, and the child can’t put herself in Molly’s. A woman and a girl—there’s the tree of life between them” (Plays, 97). The audience would not need any further explanation to understand the allusion to original sin, the girl’s innocence and the fall of Eve, Molly’s adultery.

Another allusion to the tree of life is to be found in Galsworthy’s short story “The Apple Tree”. It is the story about a young man, Ashurst, who has injured his knee during a walking tour and stays on a farm for a while to recuperate. He falls in love with the country girl, Megan, and they kiss for the first time under an “apple tree”. He promises to take her to London the next day, but he never returns from his trip to Torquay to draw money from the bank, leaving the girl heartbroken, which ultimately induces her to commit suicide. Ashurst is wavering between his sexual desires: “he wanted her again, wanted her kisses, her soft, little,

body, her abandonment, all her quick, warm, pagan emotion” (Caravan, 387), and his reason, which tells him that she does not fit in his life and his social class. The apple tree here stands as a symbol for the tension between sexual desire, human frailty, convention, morality and the resulting tragedy.

Galsworthy also specifically refers to the “tree of knowledge” in “Grotesques” (1917-1918), where the dragoman says to the Angel:

‘It is clear to me,’ he proceeded, ‘that the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the old fable was not, as is hitherto been supposed by a puritanical people, the mere knowledge of sex, but symbolised rather general self-consciousness; for I have little doubt that Adam and Eve sat together under one umbrella long before they discovered they had no clothes on. Not until they became self-conscious about things at large did they become unhappy’ (Satires, 187).

Two friends of Galsworthy’s, Ralph Hodgson and John Masefield, wrote about the Tree of Knowledge too, and focused particularly on Eve’s role in the fall of man. Hodgson’s poem “Eve” (1912) refers to the “blasphemous tree” and blames Eve for her naivety, saying: “Oh had our simple Eve / Seen through the make-believe!” (Widow, 271). John Masefield, on the other hand, warns men for the fatal seductions that women offer: “There is more death in women than we think / There is much danger in the soul adored.”⁵

In *Escape* (1926) Galsworthy mentions “original sin” so frequently that it deserves special attention. In the opening scene of this play, Matt Denant is accosted by a prostitute in Hyde Park and the following dialogues ensue:

Girl: You don’t like women—that’s clear.

Matt: not too much.

Girl: [*Smiling*] You speak your mind anyway.

Matt: If you ask me, they’ve got such a lot of vice about ‘em compared with horses.

Girl: [*With a laugh*] Well, I don’t know. Don’t men put vice into horses?

.....

Matt: Women haven’t the excuse of horses—they’ve been tame ever since Eve gave Adam his tea.

Girl: Um! Garden of Eden! Must have been something like Hyde Park—there was a prize cop there, anyway (Plays, 988).

The “prize cop” that she refers to is a foreshadowing of the plain-clothes policeman who is observing them and is about to arrest her for soliciting. Also, it is an ironical allusion to God

⁵ John Masefield, *The Widow in the Bye Street*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd, 1912, p. 18.

and the Church's judgment of right and wrong. In the following dialogue the girl says to Matt that she feels that he does not like her.

Matt: Oh, don't say that, you're original.

Girl: Original sin

Matt: There are worse things, I guess (Plays, 989).

In this dialogue we see Galsworthy taking a very liberal stance, not condemning the girl for her prostitution, but rather sympathising with her, which is a recurrent picture in his work (cf. the stories of prostitutes in *Defeat*, *Maid in Waiting* and *The First and the Last*), and playing down the seriousness of man's fall. At the end of the prologue of the play, when Matt has accidentally killed the plain-clothes policeman and is arrested by a constable, who asks him: "What was the row about?" Matt answers, "[*putting his hands to his head*] Oh! God knows, Original sin" (Plays, 992).

In Episode V Galsworthy shows us the empty relationship between a "Man" and his "Wife". She says to her husband: "You haven't an ounce of original sin in you. Thank goodness, I have." To his question: "Where? *I've* never—," she replies: "No, I don't keep it for you" (Plays, 1016).

These references to "original sin" are all related to prostitution, adultery and unfulfilled and empty relationships, showing Galsworthy as a more liberal man than Ould suggests, when the latter contends that Galsworthy's "reticence in the matters of sex was so extreme and Victorian that it verged on the furtiveness" (Ould 1934, 149). Galsworthy makes nearly all references with tongue in cheek, but some hint at the moral dilemmas ensuing from "original sin" and echo Schopenhauer's notion that "Our existence resembles nothing so much as the consequence of a misdeed, punishment for a forbidden desire." This may well be connected with Galsworthy's own unfulfilled desires in his relationship with Margaret Morris, and even, as Gindin suggests, with other "protégées" as well, although this remains highly speculative (Gindin 1987, 314).

Conclusion

As a result of Galsworthy's upbringing and his educational background at preparatory school, Harrow and Oxford, he had an active knowledge of the Bible. He respected the Bible as a beautiful work of art, as poetry almost, but it did remain a "fable" and a "legend" to him. Matthew Arnold, Olive Schreiner and Samuel Butler expressed similar ideas, which may have influenced Galsworthy in the formative years of his life. Galsworthy grew up in an age characterised by criticism of the Bible, of both the Old Testament and the New, including the accounts of Christ's miraculous birth, his death and the miracles that he worked. The debate on the literal and historical truth of the Bible took up national dimensions when in 1891

prominent clergymen sent in their “Declaration of the Truth of Holy Scripture” to the editor of *The Times*.

Although Galsworthy rejects the divinity of Christ, he still accepts and appreciates many of Christ’s sayings. It is the “Sermon on the Mount” which has clearly impressed him most, because of its simple, humanitarian and universal truths. The sheer number of references to the Gospel of St Matthew is ample proof of that. When looking for other writers that may have inspired Galsworthy in this respect, it is particularly Tolstoy, who, in his *Anna Karenina* shows a similar predilection for the sayings from the “Sermon on the Mount”.

Galsworthy’s preference for the New Testament was fed by contemporary criticism of the Old Testament. Thinkers like Matthew Arnold and Thomas Huxley, and the writers that preceded him, seem to have instilled into Galsworthy a sense of rejection of the ancient Judaic Scriptures. They call up an image of a relentless God, whom Galsworthy rejects in his poem *A Dream*, and to whom he refers as “Thou art Dissonance and Hatred” (Sauter 1967, 151).

An analysis of Galsworthy’s references to “original sin” from 1910 until 1926 shows that they all have a distinct, sexual colouring, reminiscent of the atmosphere that he creates in *The Dark Flower*, the novel that relates Galsworthy’s affair with Margaret Morris. They seem to point to an aspect of Galsworthy’s character, which, for the greater part, remained hidden to the biographers who knew him personally: his unfulfilled desires on the one hand, and the acceptance of his own weaknesses and perhaps even the moral justification of human frailty, on the other.

10. Belief in God

This chapter analyses the development of Galsworthy's belief in a deity, anthropomorphic or otherwise. Although most biographers and literary critics have not recognised it as such, belief in God is one of the most important themes that Galsworthy addresses in his work. The sheer number of references to this subject throughout his extensive oeuvre indicates that there is virtually no work of Galsworthy's in which he does not, in one way or another, refer to this. This chapter begins with a chronological analysis of Galsworthy's novels, plays, essays and letters, to establish if any development can be detected in Galsworthy's belief in a deity. What follows is an exposition of what a number of nineteenth-century philosophers and thinkers, and nineteenth-century and contemporary writers, have said on the subject. It is their conceptions of divinity that contributed to the development of Galsworthy's ideas about the existence and nature of God.

Belief in God in Galsworthy's work

The first time that Galsworthy mentions "God" is in *A Man of Devon* (1900), an early short story about the country girl, Pasiance, who lives with her grandfather on a remote farm in Devon. She asks the I-narrator whether he believes in God and adds: "Grandfather's God is simply awful. When I'm playing the fiddle I can *feel* God; but grandfather's is such a stuffy God—you know what I mean: the sea, the wind, the trees, colours too—they make one feel" (Caravan, 238). It is the God of Nature that appeals to her and it is the God of her grandfather's Church that she revolts against, saying: "I don't believe that life was meant to be 'good' in. Isn't there anything better than being good? When I'm 'good', I simply feel wicked" (Caravan, 297-298).

In *The Man of Property* (1906), Galsworthy offers us a glimpse of Old Jolyon's belief. Galsworthy intended the character of Old Jolyon as a picture of his own father, a man whom he admired with all his heart. The narrator relates that in the past Old Jolyon was accustomed to spend his holidays among the mountains, and when a wonderful view was disclosed to him after the effort of a climb, "he had doubtless felt the existence of some great dignified principle crowning the chaotic strivings, the petty precipices, and ironic little dark chasms of life". Galsworthy says: "This was as near to religion, perhaps, as his practical spirit had ever gone," and he adds ironically: "But it was many years since he had been to the mountains" (Man of Property, 213).

In 1908, in the satire "Holiday", Galsworthy describes a city dweller on holiday, overwhelmed by Nature, not understanding Nature and therefore hiding from it: "Nature! There is no Nature! For what I cannot understand I cannot face, and what I cannot face I will not think of, and what I will not think of does not exist for me; thus there is nothing that I

cannot face” (Satires, 164). This is an example of Nature having become so overwhelming and beyond understanding that modern man shies away from it. Galsworthy rejects this and allows himself to be overwhelmed by Nature, thereby accepting man’s finite and inferior position in an infinite universe.

In the following stage Galsworthy moves from a Romantic concept of God, as manifested in Nature, to a divine experience in a more cosmic sense. It is in the final version of *The Island Pharisees* (1908) that he refers to God as the “Cosmic Spirit” and the “motive force” responsible for creation. However, he also rejects this cosmic spirit, because after having created men and women “it left them to get along as best as they might” (Island Pharisees, ix). It is the first example of a rejection of a “force” or a “spirit”, although no longer the Christian God, but still endowed with intelligence and reason.

In “A Portrait” (1910) Galsworthy gives us another picture of his father, which underlines how, in 1910, the cosmic sense transcends that of Nature and that of traditional religion.

He was in essence pagan: All was right with his world! His love was absorbed by Nature and his wonder by the Great Starry Scheme he felt all around. This was God to him; for it was ever in the presence of the stars that he was most moved to a sense of divine order. Looking up at those tremulous, cold companions, he seemed more reverent, and awed, than ever he was in the face of creeds or his fellow man. . . . It was then that he really worshipped, adoring the great wonders of Eternity (Caravan, 155-156).

So far we have seen Galsworthy’s belief in a deity move from an almost pantheist sense that God was omnipresent in Nature, through the acceptance of the existence of “some great dignified principle” and a “Cosmic Spirit” to an adoration of “the great wonders of Eternity.” These pantheist feelings are also present in two studies, published in *The Inn of Tranquillity*. The approach is different, however. The pantheist idea that “God and the world are not distinct and that everything in the world is part of God” (Russell 1974, 352) is no longer uniquely seen in terms of the grandeur of Nature, or the “wonders of Eternity”, but is also detected in smaller and more commonplace things. For instance, in the title story, from 1910, the narrator-protagonist watches a centipede and realises that through this insect he was enjoying “the Supreme Mystery” (Inn of Tranquillity, 11). In “Sheep-shearing” the I-narrator sees a dog “fresh from his feast on the decaying flesh of a [buried] lamb,” but he realises that this too was a “manifestation of divinity”, which was no less than the starry sky.

In *The Patrician* (1911) there is even some antagonism noticeable between these opposing manifestations of divinity. The protagonist, Miltoun, almost Puritan in his religious beliefs, was also capable of experiencing God in nature. Walking across the moors and reaching the top of the nearest hill, he found “land and sky transcending even his exaltation. It was like a

symphony of great music; or the nobility of a stupendous mind laid bare; it was God up there, in his many moods” (Patrician, 114). Another character in this novel, Courtier, discusses Milton’s concept of the deity with him and blames his God for being an authoritarian God, “unjust or just, desirable or undesirable, must be implicitly obeyed” and refers to him as “an infallible, fixed power” (Patrician, 312). Courtier adds: “Your God is without this world. Mine within it” (Patrician, 317). Courtier concludes:

When I get up and when I go to bed, when I draw a breath, see a face or a flower, or a tree—if I didn’t feel I was looking on the Deity, I feel I should quit this palace of varieties, from sheer boredom. You, I understand, can’t look on your God, unless you withdraw in some high place. Isn’t it a bit lonely there? (Patrician, 318).

This passage shows Galsworthy’s acceptance of the Deity as realised in a “face or a flower, or a tree,” rather than in unintelligible cosmic phenomena. Through Courtier Galsworthy also abjures traditional religion and makes a bold statement of what he does not believe in:

A God that stood, whip in hand, driving men to obedience. . . . A God of the Old Testament, knowing neither sympathy nor understanding. Strange that he should be alive still: that there should still be thousands who worshipped Him. Yet not so very strange, if, as they said, man made God in his own image! (Patrician, 322)

In March 1912, during his visit to the United States, when looking at the Grand Canyon of Arizona, Galsworthy clearly allows himself to be impressed by the grandeur of Nature once more, and by “a sense of cosmic rhythm”. In his letter to Margaret Morris (26 March 1912) he writes that if one realises that “this stupendous thing before you is the result of the same forces at work in yourself and cause you to live your life and do your work in the way you must and do do it,” you will feel like “you are a midget representation of this inspiring marvel before you and you get a sense of cosmic rhythm and Deity which one is always looking for and so seldom catches” (Morris 1968, 83).

Galsworthy confesses his own struggle with the traditional concept of God in 1912. This public confession may be regarded as one of the most definitive statements of Galsworthy’s with respect to his belief in a deity. It concerns the long poem “The Dream”, included in his first volume of poetry, *Moods, Songs and Doggerels* (1912). In no other literary work of his Galsworthy has been able to portray his own religious struggle so minutely, and it is here that we see Galsworthy coming out victorious and having fully made up his mind. Rudolph Sauter, Galsworthy’s nephew, signals the importance of this moment in Galsworthy’s life. Sauter points to the fact that it is not only the opening poem of *Moods, Songs and Doggerels*, which shows its relative importance, but also that Galsworthy read out this poem at the British

Embassy in Washington in April 1912 at a formal gathering, which, Sauter argues, shows that he attached great importance to this poem “as a record of some intensely personal experience of more than private concern” (Sauter 1967, 133). Galsworthy’s wife Ada, however, did not recognise this or did not appreciate this side of Galsworthy’s philosophy, and consequently did not include the poem in his posthumously published *Collected Poems*.

In “The Dream”, Galsworthy’s longest poem, consisting of thirty-one eight-line stanzas, God beckons him and tells him to confess his faith. What Galsworthy expresses here is that he cannot believe in the creation as presented in the Bible; neither can he believe in an end to the world as predicted in “Revelations”. Death he refers to as “nothingness” and the Judaic God as “dissonance and hatred.”

This then, O God! Is all my creed:
In the beginning there was still
What there is now, no less, no more;
And at the end of all there will
Be just as much. There is no score
Of final judgment. Wonder’s tale
Will never, never all be told.
There will be none without the pale,
No saint elect within the fold.

He goes on to say that he believes in two universal laws, the first of which is “that dynamic force which flows in life—of every birth the cause,” which demonstrates once more how decisive Henri Bergson’s influence was on him in 1912. Galsworthy’s “dynamic force” is an almost literal translation of Bergson’s “*élan vital*”.

The second law is that

Implicit deep in all increase
And stir of living things, there is
A nothingness, a fate of peace,
A night, a death, an ebbing down,
A fading out of life.

And these two laws of life and death, of creativity and nothingness, are combined in that “Sovran Heart” and “That Sovran Heart is Harmony!” And then, through sheer courage he defies God by saying:

Thou art not Him I know! Thou hast
 No part in all my vision. Thou art
 Dissonance and Hatred. Fast
 Is my God throned. No God art Thou!

And he ends the poem by saying:

O magic dream of God revealed
 Of waking sleep, and golden-grey—
 O utter Mystery unsealed! (Moods, 4-18)

Gindin's remark that "The Dream" "provides no coherent or searching religious conviction," and is rather "an earnest and commonplace statement of vague cosmic 'Mystery'" (Gindin 1987, 289), does not do justice to the forcefulness of this very personal confession, at a time, that such an expression of anti-religious feelings was still considered a taboo. The conviction that he expresses is that the traditional God of Christianity is no God to him.

The subject as such and its treatment, however, were not unique at the time. One year earlier Katherine Mansfield, a friend of the Galsworthys, had written a poem called "To God the Father", in which some parallels with "The Dream" are clearly noticeable:

Who is that marionette nodding and
 muttering
 On the all-too-big throne of Heaven?
 Come down from your place, Grey Beard,
 We have had enough of your play-acting!¹
 It is centuries since I believed in you,
 But to-day my need of you has come back.¹

In 1913 Galsworthy returns to the mysticism associated with the grandeur of the universe. In his novel *The Dark Flower* (1913), the protagonist, Mark Lennan, says: "Surely God wasn't half as small as people seemed always making Him—a sort of superior man a little bigger than themselves!" He feels that even "the very most beautiful and wonderful and awful things one could imagine or make, could only be just nothing to a God who had a temple like the night out there" (*Dark Flower*, 70). Galsworthy also points to man's insignificance as compared to the universe in an essay called "The Writer" (1915), a portrait of the writer himself. He relates that before going up to bed, he usually sits and smokes, and looks up at the

¹ Katherine Mansfield, *Poems*, Constable & Co. Ltd. 1930, p. 30.

stars and thinks: “What a worm I am! This wonderful Infinity! I must get more of it—more of it in my work; more of the feeling that the whole is marvellous and great, and man a little clutch of breath and dust, an atom, a straw, a nothing!” (Satires, 32).

In the second year of the Great War, in 1915, Galsworthy published the poem “Valley of the Shadow”, the contents of which is so different in nature from what he had published previously to this and what he was to publish after it.

VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

God, I am travelling out to death’s sea,
I who exulted in sunshine and laughter,
Thought not of dying—death is such waste of me!—
Grant me one comfort: Leave not the hereafter
Of Mankind to war, as though I had died not—
I, who in battle, my comrade’s arm linking,
Shouted and sang—life in my pulses hot
Throbbing and dancing! Let not my sinking
In dark be for naught, my death a vain thing!
God, let me know it the end of man’s fever!
Make my last breath a bugle call, carrying
Peace o’er the valleys and cold hills, for ever! (Sheaf, 169)

This poem, in which he seems to be calling out to the Christian God, was also used for Galsworthy’s memorial service in February 1933. Probably he would not have chosen this poem himself. His sister Mabel Reynolds rightly says that other poems such as “The Prayer” (1912) better describe the “final message of his life” (Reynolds 1936, 50). She explains the difference by the fact that “Valley of the Shadow” was written during the War, “in a passion of regretful grief on behalf of the gallant young lives slain in the cause of world-peace” (Reynolds 1936, 50). It contrasts strongly with the poem “Courage” and it stands in great contrast to “The Dream.” Even though he may have written “Valley of the Shadow” in a “passion of regretful grief”, Galsworthy included it in *A Sheaf*, among his more critical writings. Reynolds is right in saying that “Valley of the Shadow” is a digression from his usual approach to the Christian God. However, the poem is significant in that it is the only example in which Galsworthy actually addresses God in this positive vein.

If we leave this war poem aside and return to Galsworthy’s more philosophical writings of the same period, we see how he speaks of “an Unknowable Creative Purpose, which colloquially we call God” (Sheaf, 210) a number of times. In a letter to a clergyman in the same year, 1915, Galsworthy reinforces this concept by stating boldly, that to him “there is

none save the universe itself that has been for ever and will be for ever.” In a truly Bergsonian spirit he calls the universe “an endless Creative Instinct, a vast Artist expressing himself throughout eternity.” He says: “God is within us, within the trees, the birds and inanimate matter—within everything. And there is no God outside us” (Glimpses, 281-182). It reminds us of Bergson’s “*Dieu . . . n’a rien de tout fait; il est vie incessante, action, liberté. La création . . . n’est pas un mystère; nous l’expérimentons en nous dès que nous agissons librement*” (L’*Evolution créatrice*, 270). Bergson’s philosophy leads to Galsworthy’s statement in “Theism and Humanism”, an essay written in November 1915, in which Galsworthy speaks of an “Impersonal Creative Instinct” that works towards, but “never more than momentarily attains harmony and perfection.” With Bergson he agrees that this instinct “works endlessly through that rise and fall, that ebb and flow which are the very conditions of endlessness” (Glimpses, 283). From Galsworthy’s conclusion that “this impulse to create is itself the Good—the God”, it becomes clear how significant Bergson’s influence was, the more so, perhaps, if we consider how Galsworthy paraphrases Bergson’s key statement here.

What we can establish about Galsworthy’s belief in 1915, is that it is a rare mixture of agnosticism through his emphasis on Spencer’s “unknowable”, Bergson’s philosophy of the *élan vital* and the pantheist concept of “God is within us, within the trees, the birds and inanimate matter—within everything.” He adds to this that “all belief in anthropomorphic Deities dangling the Universe savours of the ludicrous” (Glimpses, 282). Having accepted elements of Agnosticism and Pantheism as his philosophy, he was overtly critical of Mysticism and Theism. Referring to Mysticism, he says that some people claim that there is “some mysterious way of apprehending the Universe and God other than through the mentality and emotions of the human being.” Galsworthy rejects this altogether and argues that somebody who would be dumb, blind and deaf, without feeling, sense of taste or smell, “would perceive nothing whatever either physically, mentally or spiritually.” Galsworthy adds: “Let Mysticism that professes not to require its senses to apprehend its God, ponder that simple thought” (Glimpses, 282). As far as Theism is concerned, he says: “It would appear to require always an anthropomorphic Deity outside the world; a kind of glorified individual Being . . . with human qualities, of course unimaginably intensified, and of whom this world, and presumably, other worlds, are a kind of projection.” Galsworthy argues that this view of things will get us no further, “for we ask at once . . . of whom or what in turn was this Being or God a projection; and so on *ad infinitum*” (Glimpses, 283). He clearly rejects the concept of Theism, if only because of its anthropomorphic nature.

Galsworthy’s novel, *The Freelanders* (1915), is strongly coloured by the discussion about the existence of God. It offers a mixture of the agnostic concept that man simply does not have the knowledge of the existence of God, the Bergsonian belief in self-creation leading to higher stages of perfection, only realised in man, and Tolstoy’s idea of “the Kingdom of God is within you”, which is reminiscent of the Gnostic idea that self-knowledge leads to

knowledge of God and that inner integrity is more valuable than imposed morality. Felix Freeland's daughter Nedda frequently asks herself: "Why when people wrote and talked of God, they seemed to know what He was, and she never did?" (Freelands, 21). This question proves to be the beginning of a series of remarks and discussions on the subject in this novel. Felix Freeland realises that she will never get the answers that she is looking for and it frustrates him "to think that she must come to an end like the rest, having found out almost nothing, having discovered just herself, and the particle of God within her!" (Freelands, 23). One day Nedda asks Mr Cuthcott, an editor, if he believes in God, and he tells her, "Everyone does that—according to their natures. Some call God IT, some HIM, some HER, nowadays—that's all. You might as well ask—do I believe that I'm alive." Nedda does not accept this for an answer, though, and asks him to be more specific. Cuthcott tells her that he sees no reason why one should try to define God to oneself. He says: "I'm content to feel that there is in one some kind of instinct toward perfection that one will still feel, I hope, when the lights are going out; some kind of honour forbidding one to let go and give up. That's all I've got; I really don't know that I want more." Nedda wonders what Cuthcott means by "perfection". Is it, for example, "sacrificing yourself?" Cuthcott tells her then that it is our conscience that must lead us there, and that is "all we have to go by," and he adds: "That's why people devised religions and other ways of having the thing done second-hand" (Freelands, 77-78). We see Galsworthy referring to Bergson's concepts of instinct and intuition here and man's aiming for perfection. Added to this is Galsworthy's feeling that God is "within us" and that hence it is our conscience that should lead us, rather than institutionalised religion.

In the essay *Soldier-Workman* (1917) Galsworthy returns to the concept that God is within us, and for the first time he actively uses the word "agnosticism", which gives us a clear indication where he stands: "[B]elief of the future will be belief in the God within; and a frank agnosticism concerning the great 'Why' of things. Religion will become the exaltation of self-respect, of what we call the divine in man. 'The Kingdom of God' is within you" (Another Sheaf, 22). Galsworthy repeats this in *Beyond* (1917) where Gyp's father, Winton, says: "What they call God. . . . after all, what is it?" Winton himself provides an answer to this question: "Just the very best you can get out of yourself—so far as I can see. You can't imagine anything more than you can imagine" (Beyond, 329).

Saint's Progress, written in the final stages of the Great War, is strongly coloured by scepticism about the existence of God. Gratian says to her father: "There is no God, Dad. . . . No God who can *help* us. . . . If there were any God who could take part in our lives, alter anything without our will, knew or cared what we did—he wouldn't let the world go on as it does." Her father's answer that God's "purposes are inscrutable" and that man cannot "fathom to what ends He is working," is not a satisfying answer to her. She subsequently presents him with the age-old religious dilemma: "if there's a God who can help, it's a wicked shame when babies die, and all these millions of poor boys. I would rather think there is no God than a

helpless or a wicked God—” (Saint’s Progress, 36-37). Gratian’s husband George, an unbeliever, expresses what we may assume to be Galsworthy’s own view. He admits that “Christ . . . if he existed, which some people, as you know, doubt, was a very beautiful character; there have been others.” However, he could not believe in Christ’s “supernaturalness or divinity”, because believing that “at this time of day is to ask us to walk through the world blindfold” (Saint’s Progress, 64).

The Forsyte Chronicles, commenced in 1906 and completed in 1932, are a reflection of the changes taking place, also with respect to belief in God, in British society in the last decade of the Victorian age and the first two decades of the twentieth century. The older Forsytes of the Victorian era were “in the natural course of things members of the Church of England, and caused their wives and children to attend with some regularity the more fashionable churches in the Metropolis” (Man of Property, 24). Old Jolyon did not feel more than “the existence of some great dignified principle.” Soames and Young Jolyon as children of the Victorian age liberated themselves from the Victorian concepts of religion, but it is not until the next generation, that of Holly and Fleur, that we recognise the truly liberated, but superficial spirit of the twenties. In *The White Monkey* (1924), the first novel of the second trilogy, *A Modern Comedy*, Fleur and Holly talk about religion. Fleur tells her that she is not one of the “Pan-joys”, nor of the “New Faithfuls”, and explains to Holly that this is “some sort of faith-healing done on oneself.” In reply to this, Holly says to Fleur, “I dare say. I don’t believe in them—I don’t believe in anyone or anything—much. How can one?” (White Monkey, 151).

In *The White Monkey* we also find several references to spiritualism, almost a form of entertainment to fill the gap of “nothingness”, and even Michael Mont, though speaking in jest, says, “Suppose I ought to look into spiritualism” (White Monkey, 222), which corresponds with Galsworthy’s own interest in spiritualism at the time.

To find out how Galsworthy writes about the deity at the end of his own life, and, indeed, nearly always with a capital “D”, we turn to the final trilogy of *The Forsyte Chronicles*, *The End of the Chapter*. In these three novels, from 1931, 1932 and 1933, we observe the protagonist, Dinny, contemplating such issues as belief in God and life after death. One night Dinny speaks to Allan Tasburgh, the son of their local rector, and a cousin of hers. Looking at the sky, Allan says: “This is the sort of night . . . you can see the Scheme a bit.” He asks her whether she too finds it “impossible to think of God except in the open and alone.” He speaks of “infinite invention going on in infinite stillness” and refers to “perpetual motion and perpetual quiet at the same time.” By the end of his life, however, Galsworthy has developed a more rational outlook. In the words of Dinny: “If perpetual motion in perpetual quiet were God, he was not of much immediate use to mortals” (Maid in Waiting, 82, 84). When she speaks to her uncle Adrian on this subject, the latter says to her: “God is the helping of men by men, somebody once said; at all events that’s all the working version we can make of

Him” (Maid in Waiting, 131). In the final chapter of *Maid in Waiting* (1931) Galsworthy, through Dinny, arrives at a conclusion:

She stood and tried hard not to believe in God. It seemed mean and petty to have more belief in God when things were going well than when they were instinct with tragedy. . . . But after all God was eternal mind that you couldn’t understand; God was not a loving father that you could. The less she thought about all that the better. She was home like a ship after storm (Maid in Waiting, 297).

In a way Galsworthy too was “home like a ship after storm” with his conclusion that “God was eternal mind that you couldn’t understand,” and, as Galsworthy indicates, “perhaps the less one thought about all that, the better.”

Other writers and belief in God

Galsworthy’s views on religion and philosophy were influenced by the great thinkers of the nineteenth century, such as Emerson, Arnold, Spencer and Huxley. These were the thinkers whose books were read in the Galsworthy family, and it was especially Galsworthy’s elder sister Lillian who showed a lively interest in their writings. Her diaries for March and April 1891, for instance, show how she was reading Thomas Carlyle and Henry Sidgwick, both thinkers who are characterised as “espousers of agnosticism.”² There were also the nineteenth-century British, Russian and French novelists, whose ideas complied with and were sometimes based on those philosophies. These were the writers that Galsworthy read during his formative years as a student, his first days as a solicitor and as a budding author. These were the books that he discussed with his friends and his mentor Edward Garnett. The Garnetts acted as the champions of Russian literature in Britain, with Constance Garnett translating a number of Tolstoy’s works. In addition there were contemporary writers such as France, Conrad and Hudson who inspired him or confirmed him in his thinking. They too derived much of their inspiration from the same nineteenth-century thinkers and writers. Finally, there is the French philosopher Henri Bergson who influenced Galsworthy significantly from 1910 to 1918. The following section shows to what extent a number of these thinkers and writers contributed to the development of Galsworthy’s concept of the Deity. As such it constitutes the philosophical and literary background against which Galsworthy’s work should be read.

² Bernard Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, p. 14.

Victorian thinkers

Galsworthy admired Emerson and read him as an undergraduate student and in his early twenties. Together with the writings of Arnold and Huxley, Emerson's speeches, sermons and essays instilled the first unorthodox notions about religion into Galsworthy. Emerson speaks of God in entirely novel terms, of man being part of God. Thus in "An Address" he argues that "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God; the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God do enter into that man with justice" (Emerson, 70). In "Nature" too he indicates how man is part of the "Universal Being": "Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes, I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God" (Emerson, 29). Finally, in "The Over-Soul", he completes his view of the Deity, the power which lies behind all religions: "We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One" (Emerson, 164). This is what Emerson calls the "Over-Soul" (Emerson, 173-174). There are many parallels between the views of Emerson and Galsworthy. When Emerson says: "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God," there is an obvious parallel to Galsworthy's "God is within you". Emerson's pantheistic notion of "I am nothing . . . I am part or particle of God" reminds us of Galsworthy's feeling that man is "a little clutch of breath and dust, an atom, a straw, a nothing!", and that man's search for the deity will eventually lead to only finding oneself and "the particle of God" (Freelands, 23) within you. This in itself is again related to Emerson's "within man is the soul of the whole." There is also Emerson's "the wise silence" and Galsworthy's "infinite stillness" and "perpetual quiet." Finally, we may point to Emerson's "infinite space", as closely linked to Galsworthy's "wonderful Infinity."

Matthew Arnold looks upon the term "God" as a literary term, and he says "mankind means different things by it as their consciousness differs" (Literature, 12). Arnold argues in *Literature and Dogma* (1873) that at the time of Moses people began to name God "The Eternal", and he claims that God being considered a "creator" was simply the result of Israel's gratitude for righteousness. "The *not ourselves [i.e. God]*, which by bringing forth for us righteousness makes our happiness . . . brings forth this glorious world to be righteous in." Arnold argues that wisdom and understanding meant, for Israel, the love of order, of righteousness. "Righteousness, order, conduct is for Israel at once the source of all man's happiness, and at the same time the very essence of *The Eternal*" (Literature, 34). Arnold looks upon the creation therefore as the establishment of order. In terms of definitions of "God", Arnold prefers the "scientific" definition, "the stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being," to an unverifiable definition of a "Great Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the Universe" (Literature, ix). According to Arnold, to

serve God, therefore is to “follow a law of things which is found in conscience, and is an indication, irrespective of our arbitrary wish and fancy, of what we ought to do” (Literature, 43). Arnold asks his readers not to apply more science to the word “the Eternal” or the word “God” than Israel did. Thus he arrives at: “the enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness.” In this way Arnold deviates from the established Church of England interpretation of the Bible, which looks upon God as the moral and intelligent governor of the universe. Arnold claims that this approach of the Church has resulted in a great deal of scepticism from the masses. In *God and the Bible* (1875) Arnold states once more that the “God of popular religion is a legend, a fairy-tale; learned theology has simply taken this fairy-tale and dressed it metaphysically” (God and Bible, 11). Galsworthy was impressed by Matthew Arnold’s iconoclastic ideas and sympathised with the notion of “the enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness,” which signified a complete rejection of the concept of an anthropomorphic God.

There are also similarities between Galsworthy and Herbert Spencer’s ideas. Looking from the perspective of creation, Spencer rejects atheism, pantheism and theism. He feels that atheism implies the “self-existence of the universe” and as such he looks upon it as a notion “of that which has no beginning.” “Pantheism”, or “self-creation”, is also inconceivable to Spencer, because it implies “potential existence passing into actual existence by some inherent necessity.” Finally, Spencer rejects theism, or “creation by an external agency”, because it “cannot be justified by reason” (Lightman 1987, 83). Galsworthy agrees with Spencer where theism is concerned. Neither of them believe in an anthropomorphic God responsible for creation. Galsworthy, like Spencer, does not believe in atheism, given the fact that throughout his writing life he accepts “divinity” as manifested in Nature and man himself. However, where Spencer rejects pantheism in relation to creation, we see that Galsworthy deviates from him and is attracted by Bergson’s evolutionary philosophy of the “*élan vital*”: “*Dieu . . . il est vie incessante, action, liberté,*” and about creation: “*La creation... nous l’experimentons en nous dès que nous agissons librement.*” It is also Herbert Spencer who, with reference to God, coins the term the “Unknowable” in the 1860s, but in essence he does not question the existence of a deity. Lightman says that this view “did not gain the complete approval of all agnostics.” Still, the latter maintains that the concept was embraced by, for example, Tyndall, who speaks of the “Unknowable God,” the “infinite unknown,” and the “Incomprehensible.” Spencer and Tyndall’s approach was rejected by other agnostics such as Leslie Stephen and Clifford. Lightman also points out that Huxley at first felt comfortable with Spencer’s term “the Unknowable” and that Huxley, like Spencer, “talked of the unknowable behind nature in terms of awe and reverence.” It is because of these indications of agreement between Spencer and Huxley during the 1860s “that their views of agnosticism were routinely conflated.” There are, however, also strong indications that by the end of the sixties “Huxley could no longer subscribe to Spencer’s worship of the

Unknowable, and that for Huxley one of the reasons for coining the term *agnosticism* was to distance himself from Spencer” (Lightman 1987, 135-137). That Galsworthy combines the two concepts of Spencer and Bergson, becomes clear from his reference to “an Unknowable Creative Purpose, which colloquially we call God” (Sheaf, 210) and it is the same concept that lies at the basis of the conclusion that Galsworthy finally arrives at about the deity: “God was eternal mind that you couldn’t understand” (Maid in Waiting, 297).

In “Agnosticism” (1889) Thomas Huxley gives us an insight in the debate that was going on in the late 1880s and early 1890s about the rise of agnosticism, to which Huxley himself contributed actively until his death in 1895. Huxley quotes Dr Wace, the Principal of King’s College, speaking at the Church Congress held at Manchester in October 1888. Wace says about those who call themselves agnostics: “He may prefer to call himself an agnostic; but his real name is an older one—he is an infidel; that is to say, an unbeliever.”³ Huxley reacts by stating that he is not aware that there is any sect of Agnostics, and he adds that if there were, he was not “its acknowledged prophet or pope” (Lectures, 83). To Huxley, questions like “Are we to accept the Jesus of the second or the Jesus of the fourth Gospel, as the true Jesus?” have remained unanswered. He declares that “unless and until they are satisfactorily answered, I say of agnosticism in this matter, ‘*J’y suis, et j’y reste*’” (Lectures, 90). Galsworthy found a kindred spirit in Huxley when the latter said of himself: “When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist or a pantheist; a materialist or an idealist; a Christian or a freethinker; I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready was the answer; until at last I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last” (Lectures, 93).

This nineteenth-century philosophical discussion about atheism, pantheism, theism, mysticism and agnosticism shows us the background against which Galsworthy grew up both at home and at university, and provides insights into the worldview of many intellectuals by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

Nineteenth-century writers

The writers that preceded Galsworthy and contemporary writers equally contributed to the debate about the nature of divinity. Thackeray ironically refers to God as “the Maker of All”, “the Father of All” (Vanity Fair, 384, 461), and “the Awful Dispenser of Death and Life” (Henry Esmond), without entering into belief in God as such. Charles Dickens, turned to Nature, rather than to the God of the Christian religion. Thus, in *David Copperfield*, shortly after Dora Spenslow’s death, we see David in Switzerland, overwhelmed by its natural beauty: “All at once, in this serenity, Great Nature spoke to me; and soothed me to lay down my weary head upon the grass, and weep as I had not wept yet, since Dora died” (Copperfield,

³ *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Manchester*, October 1888, pp. 253, 254 quoted in Thomas Henry Huxley, “Agnosticism” in *Lectures and Essays*, London, Macmillan, 1910, p. 83.

693). Dickens does not openly discuss his belief or unbelief in a deity in any of the five novels examined. When speaking of God he merely uses terms like “the Builder” (*Mutual Friend*, 477), and “Omniscience” (*Mutual Friend*, 313). Also there is Little Emily who writes to Ham: “When I find what you are, and what uncle is, I think what God must be, and can cry to him” (*Copperfield*, 668). This is Dickens’ version of Galsworthy’s notion of “God is within you.”

Samuel Butler too philosophises about the concept of God. In *Erewhon*, for example, there is a discussion between the narrator and Arowhena, his host’s daughter and his future wife. They discuss whether the narrator’s God, the Christian God, is a personification of goodness, justice and wisdom, or whether he is a personal God. Arowhena claims that the narrator’s God “was but man’s way of expressing his sense of the Divine” and that “they would never truly love him till they saw him thus” (*Erewhon*, 169). Although the narrator does not at first accept this, a little later he admits that her remarks have made an impression on him and that he has become keenly aware of the fact that he has “since met with very many godly people who have had a great knowledge of divinity, but no sense of the divine” (*Erewhon*, 171). Butler’s remarks on such a conception of God shocked his readers, and it is even said to have caused his mother’s premature death. It is the concept of God as man’s conception of goodness that Butler elaborates on in *God the Known and God the Unknown* (1909), originally published in *The Examiner* in serial form in 1879. In these essays Butler claims that men, animals and plants are but cells of a larger inconceivable body. This is what Butler means by “God the Known.” Galsworthy indicates to Frank Lucas in his letter of 27 November 1910 (Marrot 1936, 688) that he disagrees with Butler as to this conception of God. He looks upon this notion as another attempt to regard God as a hero, instead of “simply Mystery.” Hence, Galsworthy classifies Butler’s God of “all life as we can conceive it” a “false ingenious hare.” Galsworthy blames Butler for being really only concerned with overturning the “theologian’s God”, Butler’s mind being “saturated for generations with theology” and being “sick of it, and desiring to free himself.” What Galsworthy likes in Butler, however, is that “his God is purely ethical, and very sound in that sense.” In spite of Butler’s agnostic leanings, he is critical of agnosticism and rejects it eventually “as a rationalist orthodoxy as rigorous and restrictive as its theological counterpart” (Lightman 1987, 161). The question that Butler has about his “God the Unknown”, like Spencer’s and Galsworthy’s “Unknowable” God, is that if men, animals and plants are but cells of a larger body, is God then not himself only a cell of again a larger entity, the prime force behind Life? Galsworthy feels that Butler in this theory “simply goes for another larger person, and leaves out Mystery again.” This shows how Galsworthy himself is involved in the discussion about the deity and how Butler’s ideas trigger his criticism. Butler believes that it is through mankind that God’s moral government is exercised over this world. He adds “God helps those

who help themselves, because in “helping themselves they are helping Him.”⁴ This closely resembles again Galsworthy’s statement in 1918: God is the helping of man by man” (Another Sheaf, 128-129). Galsworthy agrees with Butler, which is clear from what he writes to Franc Lucas in 1910: “*Ethically* I am quite with him.” Galsworthy also indicates that he appreciates Butler’s *God the Known and God the Unknown*, by referring to this book as “very interesting and well written” (Marrot 1936, 687-688).

In Turgenev’s major works most protagonists are nihilists, freethinkers or atheists. Examples of these are Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons*, Litvinov in *Smoke* and Nezhdanov in *Virgin Soil*. Given Galsworthy’s admiration for Turgenev, these three characters and their ideas have made a lasting impression on him. In fact, there are obvious parallels in Galsworthy’s free-thinking Shelton in *The Island Pharisees*, Young Jolyon in *The Forsyte Chronicles*, Courtier in *The Patrician*, Mark Lennon in *The Dark Flower*, Felix Freeland in *The Freelands*, Hilary Dallison in *Fraternity*, Noel in *Saint’s Progress*, Wilfred Desert and Dinny in *Over the River*, and finally the writer Lennox, in Galsworthy’s final play *The Roof*. They are all free spirits trying to free themselves from the constraints of a basically conservative society and a morality rooted in orthodox religion.

Galsworthy derives the same inspiration from Tolstoy’s characters. Tolstoy introduces Pierre in *War and Peace*, as an unbeliever. Levin too in *Anna Karenina*, characterises himself as an “unbeliever” (Karenina, 406). However, Tolstoy also says of Levin: “He could not believe, yet at the same time he was not firmly convinced that it was all incorrect” (Karenina, 439). During a confession Levin confesses to the priest that he doubts everything: “I sometimes even doubt the existence of God” (Karenina, 440). Looking at his dying brother Nikolai, Levin realises that his brother’s unbelief has not come about “because it was easier for him to live without faith, but because his beliefs had been supplanted step by step by modern scientific explanations of the phenomena of the world” (Karenina, 499). At the end of the novel Levin begins to realise “that there was not a single belief in the Church that violated the main thing—faith in God, in the good, as the sole purpose of man” (Karenina, 799). This is the conclusion that Tolstoy, through Levin, arrives at. In the final sentence of the novel Levin says: “My life now, my whole life, regardless of all that may happen to me, every minute of it, is not only not meaningless, as it was before, but has the unquestionable meaning of the good, which it is in my power to put into it” (Karenina, 817). Galsworthy, in his “Preface to *Anna Karenina*”, says that the preacher in Tolstoy, “who took such charge in his later years, was already casting a shadow over the artist-writer of *Anna Karenina*.” Galsworthy feels that there is “even an indication of the moralist in the last part of that tremendous novel.” Still, in 1926 Galsworthy refers to the two novels as “two supreme pictures” of Russia and the past (Pendyces, 325-331). In *The Kingdom of God is Within You*,

⁴ Samuel Butler, *God the Known and God the Unknown*, 1879, London, 1909, pp. 81-82.

which Galsworthy refers to as early as 1898, Tolstoy shows us that he does not believe in the traditional concept of God:

Men of the present day can repeat these words with their lips, but believe them they cannot. For such sentences as that God lives in heaven, that the heavens opened and a voice from somewhere said something, that Christ rose again, and ascended somewhere in heaven, and again will come from somewhere on the clouds, and so on, have no meaning for us (Kingdom of God, 83).

The question of the existence of God was also a major issue of discussion among the characters in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1880). Thus, Alyosha's father, Fyodor Pavlovitch, one day says to his son: "To think what faith, what force of all kinds, man has lavished for nothing on that dream and for how many thousand years" (Karamazov, 135). Alyosha's brother Ivan claims that it was man himself who invented God and wonders how "such an idea, the idea of the necessity of God, could enter the head of such a savage, vicious beast as man" (Karamazov, 240). Finally, there is Alyosha's brother Dimitri who asks: "What if he doesn't exist? . . . that it's an idea made up by men? Then, if he doesn't exist, man is the child of the earth, of the universe. Magnificent! Only how is he going to be good without God? That's the question" (Karamazov, 626-627). It is in 1911 that Galsworthy says: "no more deeply fantastic writer can I conceive than Dostoyevsky" (Inn of Tranquillity, 272), indicating to what extent Dostoyevsky's ideas appealed to him at the time.

The French writers, Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant and Anatole France, contributed to Galsworthy's concept of the deity, too. In *Madame Bovary* (1856), for instance, it is especially Monsieur Homais, the chemist, notorious for being "an infidel", who says that he believes in a "Supreme Being, in a Creator, whatever He may be," but he cannot believe in "an old boy of a God . . . who lodges His friends in the belly of whales, dies uttering a cry, and rises again at the end of three days; things absurd in themselves, and completely opposed, moreover, to all physical laws, which proves to us, by the way, that priests have always wallowed in black ignorance, in which they would fain engulf the people with them" (Bovary, 59). After Emma Bovary's death Charles Bovary too renounced religion. He burst out into blasphemies, saying to the priest: "'I hate your God' and he raised to heaven looks of malediction, but not so much as a leaf stirred" (Bovary, 253).

Maupassant's concept of the deity appears from the descriptions of his protagonists in *Une Vie*. He describes Jeanne's father, Baron Simon-Jacques Le Perthuis des Vauds as a "*philosophe par tempérament et libéral par éducation*" (Une Vie, 1). A little later he specifies this and says that his "*religion panthéiste le laissait indifférent aux dogmes*" (Une Vie, 49). Later in the novel he elaborates on this again by saying that he belongs to "*la race des vieux philosophes adoreurs de la nature . . . à genoux devant une espèce de Dieu panthéiste et*

hérissé devant la conception catholique d'un Dieu à intentions bourgeoises, à colères jésuitiques et à vengeances de tyran" (Une Vie, 169). The baron also objects to his grandson's first communion by stating that it is not necessary for becoming a good human being and refers to the communion as "*niaiserie*" and "*ce symbole puéril*" (Une Vie, 182). Jeanne agrees with her father and one day asks the local priest: "*Mais ne peut-on croire à Dieu sans fréquenter les églises?*" (Une Vie, 183). Even at the rare moments that Maupassant's characters do undergo a religious experience, it is not more than a "*vague divinité*" (Une Vie, 165).

Anatole France too was quite outspoken about his concept of the deity and almost cynically critical. In *At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque* Monsieur D'Astarac says: "The idea of a God at one and the same time a creator and perfect is but a barbarous fancy, a barbarism fit for a Celt or a Saxon" (Reine Pédauque, 50). There are two very prominent statements in *Thaïs* (1890): "Preposterous God, if thou knewest how I laugh at Thy Hell!" (Thaïs, 235), and "God, heaven—all that is nothing. There is nothing true but this worldly life, and the love of human beings" (Thaïs, 242). Arcade in *Revolt of the Angels* (1914) says: "I have delved deep into Oriental antiquities and also into those of Greece and Rome. I have devoured the works of the theologians, philosophers, physicists, geologists and naturalists. I have learnt. I have thought. I have lost my faith" (Revolt, 85). Finally, it is Eucritius in *Thaïs* who says: "The true God is in the heart of the wise man" (Thaïs, 143), which bears a resemblance to Galsworthy's "[B]elief of the future will be belief in the God within" (Another Sheaf, 22) and Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is Within You."

Olive Schreiner shows us two sides of belief in God in the nineteenth century. There is Waldo's father, a firm believer, who says: "If we begin to question everything—proof, proof, proof, what will we have to believe left?" (African Farm, 62). Schreiner here refers to the scientific approach to religion, God and the Bible, which caused great doubt among believers at the time. On the other hand, there is Waldo himself, who says to Lyndall: "There is no God! . . . no God; not anywhere!" (African Farm, 102).

With the exception of France's *Revolt of the Angels*, Galsworthy read these novels from roughly 1890, when he was 23 years old to 1900 when he was 33. Indeed, he reread many of them throughout his life.

Finally there is Galsworthy's close friend W.H. Hudson, with whom Galsworthy sympathised so deeply. Hudson refers to himself, through the narrator of *Green Mansions* as "unregenerate" and an "enlightened" and "creedless man" (Green Mansions, 145). Hudson also refers to God as "the unknown being, personal or not, that is behind nature, in whose existence I believed" (Green Mansions, 226). In *The Land's End* Hudson states: "There is one God; but the gods which men worship are innumerable as the stars in heaven and as the sands on the seashore, and they vary in character even as their worshippers do" (Land's End, 201).

Conclusion

We have seen Galsworthy's belief in a deity develop from the pantheist idea that God was omnipresent in Nature, through the acceptance of the existence of "some great dignified principle" and a "Cosmic Spirit" to an adoration of "the great wonders of Eternity." Never does he believe in the anthropomorphic God of the Christian faith, but even in an insect can he see "a manifestation of divinity," and does he accept the existence of an all pervading and harmonising principle. Time and again he rejects the authoritarian God of the Hebraic Scriptures, most clearly so perhaps in the poem "The Dream" (1912), revealing the true nature of the God of the Old Testament, who knows neither sympathy nor understanding. During the First World War he seems to yield for a moment to the Christian God in his poem "Valley of the Shadow" (1915), but discards this digression and immediately returns to the Bergsonian idea of "an endless Creative Instinct" and the Spencerian and Bergsonian concept of "an Unknowable Creative Purpose which colloquially we call God," or the "Impersonal Creative Instinct", which is in itself "the Good—the God." Galsworthy believes that "God is within us, within the trees, the birds and inanimate matter—within everything. And there is no God outside us." He rejects mysticism and theism, and believes that our conscience is all we have to go by.

My analysis of nineteenth-century thinkers and writers has shown the influence on Galsworthy's view on a deity by such thinkers as Emerson, Arnold, Spencer and Huxley, whom he read in the period of his own intellectual growth, roughly from 1887 to 1900. Parallel to this is Galsworthy's increased interest in literature and the literary masters in England and abroad, whose ideas were an extension and a translation of those expressed by the nineteenth-century philosophers. The most important influence on Galsworthy as a mature writer, came, no doubt, from Henri Bergson, who in combination with Bergson's predecessor, Spencer, formed the basis for Galsworthy's "Unknowable Creative Purpose which colloquially we call God."

Galsworthy's own words in *Maid in Waiting* in 1931 may serve as the best proof of where he stood by the end of his life: "But after all God was eternal mind that you couldn't understand; God was not a loving father that you could" (*Maid in Waiting*, 297). Galsworthy's religion was the "exaltation of self-respect, of what we call the divine in man," and "the Kingdom of God is within you." To Galsworthy, God was the "helping of man by man." All his life he tried to live up to his own creed, a creed, which has all the characteristics of humanism and Confucianism.

11. Galsworthy's faith

This final chapter focuses first on the role and development of religion from the Victorian era to the 1930s, a period that witnessed the rise of atheism and agnosticism and a general decline in belief. Then follows an analysis of Galsworthy's own faith, what he believed in, or from what he derived his moral inspiration. The final section of this chapter examines some reactions in literary criticism to Galsworthy's faith by the end of his life and shortly after his death, which give us some idea of the reception of his work in the late-twenties and thirties.

Religion

Galsworthy realised that he himself, like his father, "was pre-eminently the son of a time between two ages—a past age of old, unquestioning faith in authority; a future age of new faith, already born but not yet grown" (Caravan, 157). What he says about his father in "A Portrait" (1910), gives us an indication of the position of religion by the end of the Victorian era: "when 'religion', disturbed to its foundations, began to die, and people all round him were just becoming religious enough to renounce the beliefs they no longer held." Galsworthy says that his father, however, was too old to change, "and continued to employ the mechanism of a creed which had never really been vital to him" (Caravan, 155-156). Indeed, Galsworthy calls the Victorian era "an era without real faith" (Caravan, 157) and the Edwardian period "an age that is rapidly shedding all its superstitions" (Morris 1968, 78). Galsworthy's aversion to religion clearly shows from Young Jolyon's reflections when the latter says that the "country laboured in the early—and as yet unconscious—attempt to disgorge a religion . . . against whose fundamental flavour every fibre of the national stomach had ever revolted" (Pendycyes, 62-63).

Galsworthy's literary predecessors also bear witness to this change. Their views reflect the fundamental changes that were taking place in religious thinking in the United States, Europe and Britain from the mid-nineteenth century until the First World War and make up the literary and cultural background against which Galsworthy developed as a writer. Emerson's views on religion disturbed traditional religion to its foundations. In "Nature" (1849), for example, he poses the question why his generation should accept religion as it has come down to that generation through the ages. He asks, "why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe?" This subsequently leads him to the question, "why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?" (Emerson, 27). In "Self-Reliance" he returns to this idea and advises that it is better to believe one's own thoughts and to be "nonconformist". He argues that "a man should learn to detect that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the

firmament of bards and sages” (Emerson, 121), which is a direct rejection of the early Christian interpretation of the Bible and that of Church doctrine based on that interpretation.

Charles Dickens seems to shun the subject of religion in the five novels that Galsworthy enjoyed most. The following two examples show how studiously noncommittal he is. In *David Copperfield*, for instance, when David informs Mrs Steerforth of the death of her son, he tries to console her by saying: “I hope Time will be good to all of us. Dear Mrs Steerforth, we must all trust to that, in our heaviest misfortunes” (Copperfield, 667). In the closing lines of the same novel, David, now happily married to Agnes Wickfield, says to himself: “O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!” (Copperfield, 745). In these two examples he does not directly refer to God, or trust in him and only vaguely hints at heaven or a future life.

To Matthew Arnold “conduct or ‘righteousness’ . . . is the object of religion” (Literature, 18), and to the question what then distinguishes religion from ethics and morality, Arnold answers that religion is “ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling” (Literature, 20), or in other words: “religion is morality touched by emotion” (Literature, 20).¹ He stresses the importance of religion as an instrument to achieve “ethics heightened”, the type of ethics and morality derived from the Sermon on the Mount, not from dogmatic religion.

Anatole France disagrees with Arnold on the morality issue and wonders, “in what essential respect does [one’s] morality as a freethinker differ from the morality of those good people who . . . go to mass?” (Wicker-work, 252). Galsworthy agrees with Arnold in his emphasis on conduct and righteousness, but concurs with France in his rejection of religion as an instrument to achieve “ethics heightened”. This also appears from what Galsworthy writes in his diary in 1910 after reading a book on Japanese education: “Extraordinary emphasis they lay on [the] teaching of morals & conduct compared with our stupid anachronistic dry-as-dust formal religious stuffing” (GD, 28 April 1910).

Another important writer in the second half of the nineteenth century who contributed to the change in thinking among intellectuals was Ivan Turgenev. He was an agnostic and as such his novels had a major impact on Galsworthy. His protagonist, Bazarov, in *Fathers and Sons*, one day refers to religion as “the grossest superstition” (Fathers and Sons, 35), a term that Galsworthy also frequently applies. Bazarov’s rejection of religion is also clear from his statement: “I never gaze up to heaven except when I want to sneeze” (Fathers and Sons, 91). This becomes even clearer from the scene in which he is given the last sacrament: “It seemed as though at the sight of the priest in his vestments, the smoking censers, the light before the

¹ Arnold gives a number of examples to explain what he means. Thus, he regards the Greek maxim “We all want to live honestly, but cannot” as an example of morality, and “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew V: 8), as an example of religion.

image, something like a shudder of horror passed over the death-stricken face” (Fathers and Sons, 140).

Tolstoy, too, strongly criticises the hypocrisy of traditional religion. This criticism is not only found in widely read novels such as *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*, but also in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Pierre and Levin’s religious doubts and Karenin’s hypocrisy are reflections of this theme in these two novels. Tolstoy’s criticism of the church is strongest, however, in *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893). He criticises the Church, because it claims it was founded by Christ: “Nowhere nor in anything . . . can we find that God or Christ founded anything like what Churchmen understand by the Church” (Kingdom of God, 60-61). Tolstoy even accuses the Church of “instilling by every conceivable means into the mass of one hundred millions of the Russian people those extinct relics of beliefs for which there is nowadays no kind of justification, in which scarcely anyone now believes, and often not even those whose duty it is to diffuse these false beliefs” (Kingdom of God, 73-74).² Tolstoy admits that he does not believe “that God created the world in six days, and light before the sun; that Noah shut up all the animals in his ark, and so on.” Tolstoy argues that in the fourth century these concepts had a certain meaning for men of that time, “but for men of to-day they have no meaning whatever” (Kingdom of God, 83). All this had a tremendous impact on the young Galsworthy. Here was a Russian writer endeavouring to prove the falseness of the Church, a concept Galsworthy readily embraced.

Maupassant clearly rejects religion too, which the following two passages from *Bel-Ami* illustrate. When contemplating death the old poet, Norbert de Varenne, says that “*toutes les religions sont stupides avec leur morale puérile et leurs promesses égoïstes, monstrueusement bêtes*” (Bel-Ami, 163). George Duroy, alone in church, echoes this when looking at an old woman in prayer. He says to himself that at least the paupers believe that “up there” they were concerned with them. He wonders, “*là-haut—où donc?*” Maupassant adds that Duroy condemns the entire creation by whispering to himself, “*comme c’est bête tout ça*” (Bel-Ami, 272).

Henrik Ibsen questions religion through his protagonist Nora, in *A Doll’s House* (1879). On her departure she says to her husband: “I don’t really know what religion is. All I know is what Pastor Hansen said when I was confirmed. He said religion was this, that and the other. . . . I want to find out what Pastor Hansen told me was right—or at least whether it’s right for me” (Doll’s House, 82). It is this type of questioning, this rejection of conformity and self-assertion that Galsworthy appreciated in this play.

² He then extends his criticism to include other denominations as well: “And is not the same thing done in Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and every denomination of Protestantism which has been formed into a church? There is the same duty laid on their congregations to believe in the dogmas expressed in the fourth century, which have lost all meaning for men of our times, and the same duty of idolatrous worship, if not of relics and icons, then of the Sabbath Day and the letter of the Bible” (Kingdom of God, 82).

Samuel Butler's work too is a reflection of the changing views on the Christian faith in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his preface to *Erewhon Revisited* Butler indicates where he stands as far as religion is concerned. He characterises himself as a member of the more advanced wing of the English Broad Church. "When I converse with advanced Broad Churchmen," he says, "I find myself in substantial harmony with them" (*Erewhon Rev.*, vi-vii). Mr Higgs, the protagonist of *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited* explains the Christian religion to the Erewhonians, telling them that his religion sets before the people an ideal that most people accept, but it also tells them of miracles, which most of them reject. Higgs says: "Our best teachers insist on the ideal, and keep the marvels in the background" (*Erewhon Rev.*, 279). Butler does not hesitate to profess his unbelief. In *The Way of All Flesh* we see how Ernest Pontifex' doubt finally turns to disbelief: "whatever else might be true, the story that Christ had died, come to life again, and been carried from earth through clouds into the heavens, could not now be accepted by unbiased people" (*Way of All Flesh*, 231). By saying so Ernest was shaking the foundations of the Christian faith. "If there was no truth in the miraculous accounts of Christ's death and resurrection, the whole of the religion founded upon the historic truth of those events tumbled to the ground" (*Way of All Flesh*, 253-236), Butler argues.

Butler and Galsworthy concur on the idea that the downfall of traditional religion was well-nigh complete, because in the opinion of Butler's narrator "fully ninety percent of the population of the metropolis looks upon these banks [i.e. the church] with something not far removed from contempt," and he feels that mankind is on the eve of the beginning of a new religion "that will be more in harmony with both the heads and hearts of the people" (*Erewhon*, 160). Butler's "fully ninety percent of the population" matches Galsworthy's estimate in 1933 of the percentage of unbelievers of "ten to fifteen per cent of the adults, perhaps".

Butler had "lost his faith in Christianity, but his faith in something – he knew not what, but that there was a something as yet but darkly known which made right right and wrong wrong – his faith in this grew stronger and stronger daily" (*Way of All Flesh*, 247). Butler sees the ideal Christian in the perfect gentleman: "Practically the Church of Rome, the Church of England, and the freethinker have the same ideal standard and meet in the gentleman; for he is the most perfect saint who is the most perfect gentleman" (*Way of All Flesh*, 248). In this Galsworthy resembles Butler. In Galsworthy's "For Love of Beasts", for example, the narrator is asked if he believes in "the instincts of a gentleman," by which he means "to be ready to do things for others, to be chary of asking others to do things for you, and grateful when they do them" (*Sheaf*, 19). Butler's statements were quite revolutionary for the 1870s and provided another ingredient for Galsworthy's development twenty years later.

When in April 1893 Galsworthy reread Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, her views on traditional religion met with his sympathy. Schreiner's protagonist, Waldo,

meets a stranger with whom he discusses religion. The stranger warns him that “he who sets out for Truth must leave these valleys of superstition for ever, taking with him not one shred that has belonged to them” (African Farm, 162). The word “superstition” had become a label for nineteenth-century writers to qualify contemporary religion, and Galsworthy, too, readily adopted the term. Schreiner adds: “We have proved the religion our mothers have fed us on to be a delusion” (African Farm, 171). She also presents the humanist alternative and the idea of the “Kingdom of God is within you.” It is Lyndall who says to Waldo, “the lifting up of the hands brings no salvation; redemption is from within, and neither from God nor man: it is wrought out by the soul itself, with suffering and through time” (African Farm, 242).

All these writers, in varying degrees, instilled into Galsworthy and in many of his contemporaries a new way of thinking, a new approach to religion and a fundamental rejection of established religion. Galsworthy realised that he was part of a great movement, an upheaval of traditional belief based on a literary interpretation of the Bible, an upheaval that was occasioned by scientific discoveries, historical research into the origin of the Bible and new philosophies. In 1912 he sent in a paper to the Daily Mail entitled “On Social Unrest”, in which he states: “We are still breathless and uncertain after that long and tremendous struggle within us between Science and Orthodox Religion, which has torn the wings of both” (Sheaf, 156). Richard Ellmann, in his analysis of Edwardian writers, feels that most of them “outlived their revolt” and concludes that although writers such as Joyce and Yeats were not religious, they were “not ostentatiously irreligious,” and he adds that “in the Victorian period people had fumed and left the churches; in the Edwardian period, becalmed, they published memoirs or novels describing how strongly they had *once* felt about the subject.”³ Although Galsworthy’s revolt against the Church was rooted in the past, he continued his crusade for a new faith until his death.

In “Vague Thoughts on Art” (1911), for instance, Galsworthy looks at his times as the “age of the Third Renaissance”, because what he calls “worn-out Pagan orthodoxy” and an “inbred Christian creed” has been replaced by a new philosophy, characterised by a “love of Perfection, not for hope of reward, not for fear of punishment, but for Perfection’s sake” (Inn of Tranquillity, 260). Galsworthy then asks himself how this has come about. He feels that man, in spite of having lost his certainty of an afterlife, has not lost his love of life. Man “slowly perceived that there was inborn within it, a passionate instinct of which it had hardly till then been conscious—a sacred instinct to perfect itself, now, as well as in a possible hereafter.” Man began to realise that “this Perfection cosmically was nothing but perfect Equanimity and Harmony; and in human relations, nothing but perfect Love and Justice” (Inn of Tranquillity, 262). In a letter to Margaret Morris in March 1912, Galsworthy elaborates on the idea of “perfection”. In this letter he refers to a lecture that he gave in New York, in which he professed that he believed in “Perfection for the sake of Perfection and without hope and

³ Richard Ellmann, *Golden Codgers*, New York and London, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 116.

desire of material gain . . . [as] . . . the only possible religion” (Morris 1968, 78). Again it is the Bergsonian concepts of “instinct” and “perfection” that crop up. To Galsworthy, orthodox religion, which he denotes as “the cut and dried Gods”, was dead, and belief in anthropomorphic deities “ludicrous”. He feels that “they never were in reality anything but the ready-reckoner forms of expressing this ideal of Perfection, which in its turn is but another way of expressing man’s belief in his own self-respect and Courage.” It is the Bergsonian idea of man’s growth towards a state of higher perfection, in the full knowledge that true perfection can never be attained. Galsworthy says: “I do not see why it should not take the place of God—become God—that is, the hoped for, the mysterious and unattainable” (Morris 1968, 78).

How did the Church and the establishment react to the rise of this “new faith”? If we look at Galsworthy’s protagonist in *Fraternity* (1909), Hilary Dallison, a writer in the first decade of the past century, we realise what Galsworthy’s position, as a freethinker, must have been in contemporary society. To begin with, the narrator says of Dallison that “in the eyes of the majority he was probably an immoral and irreligious man; but in fact his morals and religion were those of his special section of society—the cultivated classes” (*Fraternity*, 57). In “The Preceptor” (1915), Galsworthy describes what orthodox believers thought of “atheists” or “agnostics”, two terms that in varying degrees and at varying stages in his life might be applicable to Galsworthy himself, and to many of his class. An “atheist” was to orthodox believers “beneath contempt”, an “agnostic” was looked upon as “a poor and foolish creature.” The orthodox church asked: what do they “contribute to the morals and the elevation of the world. . . . What have they got to make up for what is behind that door? Where are their symbols? How shall they move and lead the people?” (*Satires*, 74). Galsworthy says the orthodox believer never wonders about the truth, because that question does not arise if one believes. “What one believe[s], what one [is] told to believe, [*is*] the truth” (*Satires*, 77). He also claims that the orthodox believer looks upon “a mere creed that good must be done, so to speak, just out of a present love of dignity . . . [as] vague, futile, devoid of glamour, and contrary to human nature” (*Satires*, 75).

In “Grotesques” (1917-1918) Galsworthy comments on the Church’s abhorrence of atheism and agnosticism. The Angel *Æthereal* asks his guide what the position is of “the good” in 1947, the year they visit the earth. The dragoman informs him that there are “those chiefly characterised by an almost perfect intolerance of those whose views do not coincide with their own,” and he adds that these people are “somewhat out of touch with science, such as it is, and are regarded by the community at large rather with curiosity than anything else.” This was meant as a sharp rebut of the criticism from orthodox quarters. Galsworthy offers an alternative to traditional religion, predicting that there would be another category of people, “who have a secret belief of their own, old as the Greeks, that good fellowship is all that matters.” In the dragoman’s opinion, “taking ‘the good’ in its limited sense . . . is an

admirable creed" (Satires, 176-179), a clear statement of Galsworthy's of his firm belief in humanism.

We now turn to a discussion of Sir Lawrence and Dinny in *Flowering Wilderness* (1932), to establish the position of religion through Galsworthy's eyes by the end of his life, in the early thirties. Dinny asks Sir Lawrence what proportion of people he thinks really has a religion. He answers: "in this country ten to fifteen per cent of the adults, perhaps. In France and southern countries, where there's a peasantry, more, at least on the surface" (*Flowering Wilderness*, 347). This, then, is the picture that Galsworthy gives us of belief in the year before he dies, a picture that is confirmed by the steady decline in church attendance after the First World War.

Galsworthy's faith

As early as September 1894 Galsworthy writes to Monica Sanderson, with whom he frequently discussed poetry and philosophical matters: "It seems to me that Faith is a very little thing compared to Courage . . . and unless one conscientiously believes, it is childish to make oneself do so" (Marrot, 1936, 96). In another letter to Monica in the same month he writes:

What you say about a soul, *i.e.* beauty and goodness, or, I should rather call it, eternal fitness, underlying everything, is absolutely true, I think, and just leads up to what my real creed is, and I don't want you to think that it is a low one, because I really think it is a loftier and a more complete one than your own, and I mean to set it down some day soon, and if you read it you will perhaps twig my ideas, which I don't think you do at present (Marrot 1936, 98).

From this it is clear that already in 1894 Galsworthy no longer accepted the Church of England faith as his religion. Already he speaks in terms of "courage" and "eternal fitness". However, it is not until 1909 that he professes his own creed as a "new faith" for the first time. Galsworthy does so through Hilary Dallison, the central character in *Fraternity* (1909):

I disbelieve in all Church dogmas, and do not go to church; I have no definite ideas about a future state, and do not want to have; but in a private way I try to identify myself as much as possible with what I see about me, feeling that if I could ever be at one with the world I live in I should be happy (*Fraternity*, 57-58).

It is still relatively noncommittal, but it may very well be taken to be Galsworthy's own faith as it was around 1909. In 1912 Galsworthy becomes more explicit. In a letter to an anonymous correspondent he argues that ordinary man is no longer in need of the traditional symbols such as "that Christ died for us, that Christ was the son of God, that Mary his mother is in the Company of Heaven, that we may eat of the body and blood of our Redeemer, and so forth." What he feels man wants are the "attributes of Unity—justice, love, and courage." He is convinced that "this can and does emotionalise men and stir in them the real religious feeling—the other, if it ever did, no longer does" (Glimpses, 256). In 1914, shortly after the Great War had broken out, he wrote "Credo", published in the *Neutral Press*, his confession of faith and another statement of Galsworthy's belief in basic, humanist principles:

To love peace with all one's heart. To feel that war is a black stain on the humanity and fame of man. To hate militarism. To go any length to avoid war for material interests, war that involves no great principle, distrusting profoundly the common meaning of the phrase 'national honour'—all this is my belief (Sheaf, 169).

A year later, in *The Freeland*s, Galsworthy's character, Felix Freeland, a writer, when reading a book on Eastern philosophy, concludes that nothing can be said with any degree of certainty about man's life and death, and he wonders if faith ever had any body and substance of its own. "Could anything be said with truth, save that we knew nothing?" He realises that all this has never stopped man from "working, fighting, loving, dying like a hero if need were," and he wonders if faith has not simply been "embroidery to an instinctive heroism" (Freeland, 164). Five years later, in an address entitled "Castles in Spain" (1920), Galsworthy refers to religion as the "contemplation of beautiful visions, emotions, thoughts and dreams expressed beautifully in words, stone, metal, paint, and music." According to Galsworthy this has "slowly, generation by generation, uplifted man," but to him the rest of religion is "only superstition" (Castles, 7-8). He concludes by saying that "in these unsuperstitious days no other ideal seems worthy of us, or indeed possible to us, save beauty—or call it, if you will, the dignity of human life" (Castles, 15). He expresses the hope that "one hundred and fifty years, perhaps, from now human life may really be dignified and beautiful, not just a breathless, grudging, visionless scramble from birth to death, of a night with no star alight" (Castles, 18).

Two years before that he concluded that the fostering of "higher ideals of conduct, learning, manners and taste" (Another Sheaf, 120) could only be done through education, not through religion: "Education as I want to see it would take over the control of social ethics, and learning, but make no attempt to usurp the emotional functions of religion" (Another Sheaf, 121). In his essay, "Where we stand" (1920), he confirms that in his opinion the answer lies in a "humanistic religion of service for the common weal" (Castles, 27).

In 1924, when speaking of the writers in whom he had found an inspiration, he said that what he felt they had in common was humanism. In this essay he explains what he means by the term and shows the significance of these writers in the development of this new faith.

Humanism is the creed of those that believe that, within the circle of the enwrapping mystery, men's fate is in their own hands, for better for worse; and these . . . novelists, by their natural absorption in all things human, and their great powers of expression, have furthered a faith which is becoming for modern man—perhaps—the only possible faith (Castles, 171).

In 1926, when Galsworthy was almost sixty, and seven years before his death, he confesses his faith in "Faith of a Novelist":

At the back of all work, even a novelist's, lies some sort of philosophy. And if this novelist may for a moment let fall the veil from the face of his own, he will confess: That human realisation of a First Cause is to him inconceivable. He is left to acceptance of what is. Out of Mystery we came, into Mystery return. Life and death, ebb and flow, day and night, world without beginning and without end is all that he can grasp. But in such little certainty he sees no cause for gloom. Life for those who still have vital instinct in them is good enough in itself, even if it lead to nothing further; and we humans have only ourselves to blame if we alone, among the animals, so live that we lose the love of life for itself. And as for the parts we play, courage and kindness seem the elemental virtues, for between them they include all that is real in any of the others, alone make human life worth while and bring an inner happiness (Castles, 188).

In 1930 in "Literature and Life" Galsworthy rephrases his faith in the following manner:

The best of all faiths is belief in the will towards Perfection operating in all that has ever been, is now, and ever shall be. Anyone who has that faith, wants to take part in the process of Perfection. Capable of seeing beauty, he feels he must try and contribute beauty; having a sense of proportion he feels he must order his own goings in accordance with that sense. And where beauty and proportion guide us, the whole of human society benefits; moving ever further away from the quagmires into which greed and violence lead (Candelabra, 283).

This shows us that even as late as 1930 Bergson's notions about "perfection" are still noticeable in Galsworthy.

In his final novel but one, *Flowering Wilderness* (1932), written and published one year before his death, Galsworthy expresses his philosophy through the characters of Dinny Cherrell and Wilfred Desert, a poet. Desert asks her whether she “can swallow the dogmas of any religious creed,” and if she believes “one legend more true than another.” Dinny tells him that to her, religion was simply “a sense of an all-pervading spirit, and the ethical creed that seems best to serve it” (*Flowering Wilderness*, 325). In the same novel Galsworthy makes a final statement of where the country stands as far as religious belief is concerned, and once more sums up what it is that he believes in. Dinny asks Sir Lawrence, Michael Mont’s father, whether he is a Christian. He tells her that, if anything, he is a Confucian, “who as you know was simply an ethical philosopher”. He goes on to say:

Most of our caste in this country, if they only knew it, are Confucian rather than Christian. Belief in ancestors, and tradition, respect for parents, honesty, moderation of conduct, kind treatment of animals and dependants, absence of self-obtrusion, and stoicism in [the] face of pain and death (*Flowering Wilderness*, 348).

Reactions in literary criticism to Galsworthy’s faith

Galsworthy’s novels appealed to many readers and his popularity was not limited to the British Isles or the United States. Many of his novels and plays were translated into a wide range of foreign languages and it is not surprising, therefore, that literary criticism of Galsworthy’s work was not limited to English speaking countries. However, it was only rarely that the religious elements in Galsworthy’s work generated literary debate. If they did, this happened mainly by the end of his life or shortly after his death. The reason for this may well be that it was only since 1926 that Galsworthy became very explicit about his faith, for example in *Castles in Spain* and particularly in his final trilogy, *The End of the Chapter*. It was especially in these three final novels that he reached the wider reading public, whereas his more philosophical *The Inn of Tranquillity*, written in 1912, had clearly been intended for a much smaller readership.

In 1929, the German critic, Klara M. Fassbinder, discusses the role of religion in Galsworthy’s play *Escape* in the journal, *Mädchenbildung auf Christlicher Grundlage*. She assumes that her readers might find fault with the way Galsworthy shows how a parson is undergoing a crisis of faith without providing the theatregoer with a happy ending, or at least an explicit moral of the play. Fassbinder appreciates Galsworthy’s approach, however, and states: “Wer aber vom Dichter die künstlerisch geformte Wiedergabe des wahren Lebens, nicht seine Verbiegung und Schönfärbung verlangt, wird gerade darin das sicherste

Kennzeichen erblicken, dass Galsworthy wirklich einer der Berufenen ist, die uns das Leben verstehen und deuten helfen sollen.”⁴

In 1933 it is Natalie Croman who contrasts the younger Galsworthy, who, as she argues, wrote *The Man of Property* “out of . . . indignation”, with the “more mature and hopeful philosopher” that Galsworthy was by the end of his life. “To do his bit and be kind! It is by that creed, rather than by any mysticism, that he finds the salvation of his soul.”⁵

However, other critics are less appreciative. Thus, the literary critic, J.H. Bodgener, says in the *London Quarterly Review* in 1929 that “a belief so nebulous as that adumbrated in the writings of Mr Galsworthy can hardly be credited with having a definite Christian basis.” He adds: “Whatever our author’s faith may be, it does not glow, nor convict.”⁶

A Dutch critic, Jeanne de Bruyn, blames Galsworthy in 1932 for his “sentimental agnosticism”. She feels that “he drops a veil over his deepest soul, never touching the core where the choice between good and evil becomes necessary.” She argues that as long as Galsworthy shies away from these secrets, “it will never lead to the deepest struggle that can offer the only true liberation.”⁷

Even as late as 1961 we see how the literary critic, Joan Harding, argues that Galsworthy in his final novel *Over the River* “turns to Catholicism” as Dinny eventually married Dornford, a Roman Catholic. Harding mistakenly looks upon this as Galsworthy’s confirmation that “without some sort of faith man is doomed.”⁸

Finally, in 1967 Cyril Downes published a critical review of Galsworthy’s faith in *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, describing Galsworthy as a “prophet of social righteousness” and more or less understanding his “rejection of orthodox Christianity” grown out of bitterness over the pain that he and Ada suffered through Ada’s divorce. He ends his analysis of Galsworthy’s work by saying that it is “sad that [Galsworthy] never realised that God is himself a God who suffers just because he cares. Sad that he never knew the Christ of compassion and seeking, redeeming love—the Christ of the Cross.” However, Downes’ sympathy for Galsworthy is such that he ends his review by stating: “Yet this man’s integrity and courage, his compassion and concern, his quest for the unutterable beauty must surely rejoice the heart of God, the God he but dimly saw and imperfectly comprehended.”⁹

⁴ Klara, M. Fassbinder, “Das Weltbild des Dramatikers John Galsworthy“, *Mädchenbildung auf Christlicher Grundlage*, Paderborn, XXV (1929), pp. 519-523.

⁵ Natalie Croman, *John Galsworthy: a Study in Continuity and Contrast*, Cambridge-Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1933, pp. 51-52.

⁶ J.H. Bodgener, “John Galsworthy looks at Life”, *London Quarterly Review*, 1929, p. 81.

⁷ Jeanne de Bruyn, “John Galsworthy”, *Hilversum en Antwerpen, Dietsche Warande en Belfort*, XXXII, 2, 1932, p. 83.

⁸ Joan N. Harding, “John Galsworthy and the Just Man” in *Contemporary Review*, 199:1143, April 1961, p. 203.

⁹ Downes, J. Cyril, “The Religion of John Galsworthy”, *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, July 1967, pp. 237-242.

Conclusion

To the modern reader John Galsworthy's reputation is primarily based on his trilogies, *The Forsyte Saga* (1922), *A Modern Comedy* (1929) and *The End of the Chapter* (1934), collectively called *The Forsyte Chronicles*. The novels that are less well-known today, such as *The Country House* (1907), *Fraternity* (1909), *The Patrician* (1911), *The Dark Flower* (1913) and *Saint's Progress* (1919) were widely read and well-received in his own times, though, and solidly confirmed the name that he had made for himself. In the first two decades of the twentieth century Galsworthy also made his mark as a successful playwright and contributed to a new movement in modern drama, together with Bernard Shaw, J.M. Synge, James Barrie, St John Hankin and Harley Granville-Barker. In addition Galsworthy gained appreciation through his short stories, his essays and his lecture tours.

Galsworthy's readers also knew him as an activist taking stands and speaking out throughout his life on controversial issues, from solitary confinement, slum clearance, divorce law, to censorship and cruelty to animals. As such, he lobbied with politicians and used his reputation as a writer to gain access to the highest political circles. As Chairman of the International PEN Club he also gained international repute, and was respected for his leadership and vision in the furtherance of international understanding through personal friendliness and hospitality among writers all over the world.

Literary criticism and scholarly publications on Galsworthy's oeuvre mainly focus on such themes as the changing times, social abuse, middle-class hypocrisy, morality, unhappy marriage, adultery and divorce law, the Great War and land reform. There is one theme, however, the theme of religion and philosophy that most of his biographers and literary critics have largely ignored. My aim for this book, therefore, was to fill this gap by analysing the religious aspects in Galsworthy's work and his religious and philosophical development.

Galsworthy's life was marked by a number of events that influenced his thinking: his discussions with his elder sister Lillian; his meeting with Joseph Conrad in 1893, which marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship; his illicit love affair with Ada, his cousin Arthur Galsworthy's wife; Ada's divorce in 1904, their marriage in 1905; the literary guidance he received from Edward and Constance Garnett, who both actively championed the interest in Russian literature and introduced Galsworthy to the works of Turgenev and Tolstoy; and, finally, his friendship with Bernard Shaw, who welcomed him to the British stage. These were the main ingredients for the start of Galsworthy's career as a novelist and a dramatist, but they also determined much of his philosophical and religious ideas at the beginning of his career.

There was a clear turning-point in his career after 1910. Not only is his work less satirically tinted from then on, but there is also a shift in emphasis from the satirical to the

philosophical. *The Inn of Tranquillity* bears witness to this change and marks the beginning of an in-depth probe into the philosophical ideas that remained central to his character throughout his life. The Great War proved to be another landmark in his career. Although he was an avowed pacifist, he agreed with the nation that Germany's violation of basic human rights justified this war. Unfit for active service, Galsworthy did his bit by serving as a masseur in France for the Red Cross, and by setting up a hostel for disabled soldiers in London. He always tried to practise what he preached. His literary output was affected by his war efforts, however, which clearly harmed his reputation. His novels *Beyond* (1917) and *The Burning Spear*¹ (1919) are examples of his less-appreciated literary work from those years, and, indeed, they strike a discordant note. Also his diaries for 1917 and 1918 show how preoccupied he was with matters outside the literary domain. In the 1920s he worked on his second and third Forsyte trilogies, which re-established his position as an acclaimed novelist. His plays, however, no longer matched the success he had with his novels at the time, as his tendency to moralise and satirise no longer seemed to suit the taste of the audience in the 1920s.

In this book I have tried to establish what influence other writers and philosophers had on Galsworthy's development. Galsworthy himself says that it was "the spirit of Dickens" that inspired a passion in him, "the first serious and most abiding passion of [his] imaginative life". Dickens' influence on Galsworthy makes itself especially felt in such themes as the church and hypocrisy, social injustice and humanitarianism, marriage and divorce. Galsworthy also appreciated Samuel Butler for his scathing criticism of the Church and the clergy and his controversial views on death and belief in God.

Galsworthy admitted that the Russian novelists Turgenev, Tolstoy and the French novelists Flaubert, Maupassant and France were sources of inspiration to him, too. It is Turgenev's freethinking heroes, Bazarov and Litvinov, and Tolstoy's Pierre and Levin that serve as models to many of Galsworthy's male characters. It is Turgenev's Irina and Tolstoy's Anna Karenina that inspired Galsworthy to create Irene in *The Man of Property* (1906). In Irene, for that matter, there are also echoes from Henry James' Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). Flaubert and Maupassant's novels of unhappy marriages and adultery, and Anatole France's brazenly outspoken criticism of contemporary French society and the Church, complete the picture of writers from whom Galsworthy felt he had taken much of his inspiration. Finally, however, there is also Olive Schreiner's influence on his development, which has so far been ignored in studies of Galsworthy's work. What these writers had in common was their rejection of traditional religion and their humanism, but also their ideas on the position of women caught in the chains of unhappy marriage, and of established morality concerning adultery, separation and divorce. These were the ingredients Galsworthy was

¹ John Galsworthy, *The Burning Spear*, 1919, London, Heinemann, 1927.

looking for in the works of his literary predecessors, as these were the central questions in his life from 1895 to 1905.

Although Galsworthy never accepted that Ibsen had influenced his work, on a number of thematic issues, clear parallels are noticeable, though, mainly in the themes of unhappy marriage and divorce, the emancipation of women (the rise of the “new woman”), and the role of the Church. Similar parallels may be traced in the work of August Strindberg. Galsworthy’s close friendship with contemporary playwrights, such as Shaw and Barrie, but also with contemporary novelists such as Conrad and Hudson, and the classical scholar Gilbert Murray, created the cultural and intellectual background from which Galsworthy’s creative work originated. First and foremost, it is agnosticism, humanism and feelings of anti-orthodoxy, anti-clericalism, anti-hypocrisy and humanitarianism, which all these writers have in common.

I have shown that Galsworthy’s remark to Hardy that he was “miserably read in Philosophy”, was indeed an understatement. Judging from his references to Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, he had actively read the German philosophers. Although he appreciated Nietzsche’s tongue-in-cheek, Galsworthy rejected Nietzsche’s views on the individual versus the state and joined Shaw in his repudiation of Nietzsche’s concept of the “noble man”. He distrusted the German philosophers in general, because it was in their philosophies that he recognised the portents of future war, and, indeed, it was the Great War which would prove him right. Through Conrad Galsworthy had also become aware of Schopenhauer’s thought, and traces of these are noticeable in Galsworthy’s work, especially concerning such themes as determinism and free will, Judaism, life and death, and original sin.

Galsworthy was familiar with Spencer’s and Huxley’s philosophies concerning agnosticism. He had also actively studied Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and *Literature and Dogma* (1873), both works providing him with novel insights into the Bible, the Church, concepts of death and the Deity. Finally, he was well-versed in Bergson’s major works: *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Introduction à la métaphysique* (1903), and *L’Evolution créatrice* (1907), especially where such concepts as “instinct” and “intuition”, “free will” and “determinism”, “creation” and “the universe” were concerned.

In marked contrast to what some biographers have claimed, through the years Galsworthy remained a believer in free will, convinced as he was that the Christian concept of “providence” did not exist, and that one should always try to face one’s fate, defy it and strive to perfect oneself. Galsworthy’s motto is “character is fate”, but at the same time he admits that there are forces in play beyond the influence of man. Eventually he concedes that there is no real antagonism between determinism and free will, which brings to light a first, major parallel between Galsworthy’s views and those of the French philosopher, Henri Bergson. Galsworthy also rejects ‘prayer’ as a means to influence fate. He maintains that “the only efficient, the only decent Prayer, is Action.” In this matter too he was inspired by earlier

writers, most notably W.H. Hudson. Also in Galsworthy's philosophical concept of 'existence' Bergson's influence becomes visible again. The latter's ideas on the *élan vital*, the vital impulse underlying all creation and existence, exerted an overriding influence on Galsworthy's thinking in the period 1910-1918. Galsworthy transfers Bergson's ideas to his own work and completely absorbs them, at least for some years, as his own. As late as the 1930s, however, traces of Bergson's notions are still visible, particularly the concept of "perfection". This also proves that Galsworthy was susceptible to and had a thorough knowledge and understanding of Bergson's philosophy, the echoes of which reverberate throughout Galsworthy work, but which has not been noted before by Galsworthy's biographers and literary critics.

Galsworthy's aversion to institutionalised religion becomes clear from his descriptions of churches and churchgoers. There is not a single village church, nor a single churchgoer that escapes his biting pen. Galsworthy contrasts these cold and dark churches, and the dark-clothed churchgoers, with the bright sunlight outside, reinforcing the negative feelings associated with the church, almost turning this contrast into one between life and death. Galsworthy models this imagery on what he read in Dickens, Maupassant and Schreiner. However, he takes a slightly different approach where Roman Catholic churches are concerned. The reason for these comparatively positive descriptions lies in his own favourable experiences with the French clergy during the Great War. Galsworthy's descriptions of cathedrals are greatly different from those of village churches and Roman Catholic churches. He seems to have been more appreciative of cathedrals by the end of his life, seeing them as works of art, remnants of Britain's past, which offered him a "sense of escape", harmony and equilibrium.

One might look for Galsworthy's aversion to the church and churchgoing in his past. Galsworthy himself observes, however, that churchgoing and prayer, though a matter of course of his childhood, "were never pressed to the point of fatigue or tyranny" (Marrot 1936, 56). Irene's remark about churchgoing in *Awakening* (1920), may offer us a clue to the contrary, however: "We both of us went when we were little. Perhaps we went when we were too little." Galsworthy describes his churchgoers in depressing tones, modelled on the examples of his literary predecessors. He also frequently points to the scantiness of the congregations, and also shows how people experience a sense of relief when the church service is over. His main object in this is the exposure of middle-class hypocrisy and the gap between the churchgoers and their spiritual guides.

The picture that Galsworthy draws of the clergy is partly based on the clergy's social position by the end of the nineteenth century, with only a small minority of clergy that could be regarded as better-off and as the social equals of the landed gentry. Incomes of vicars and rectors varied greatly depending on the size of the parish and the revenues with which the living provided them. Curates were exploited and frequently they had to rely on charitable

organisations for the support of their families, which explains the origin of Galsworthy's caricature of the "anaemic" curates in many of his early novels and plays. Galsworthy also observed the clergy from close by in the persons of his uncle Lionel, whom Galsworthy's father described as a "dogmatic chap," and his uncle Robert, "a man of means, of which he disposed very quickly." Galsworthy recalls that his uncle Robert had twelve children, and, indeed, in his novels Galsworthy seizes every opportunity to point to the sheer size of clergymen's families. According to Galsworthy, parson's wives and parson's families were not to be envied.

Galsworthy goes to great lengths to expose clergymen's double standards, modelled after examples from earlier writers, Dickens and Butler in particular. Over the years, however, some sympathy towards the clergy began to develop as Galsworthy realised what psychological struggle some of them were going through in reality, and what role some of them played in the trenches during the Great War and in slum-relief projects. It is this very struggle with religious doubt, their transparency about this and their increased humanitarianism, which finally softened Galsworthy's anti-clericalism. In Edward Pierson, the protagonist of *Saint's Progress* (1919), Galsworthy portrays the stereotypical High Churchman, modelled, perhaps, on Jim's father in Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), and James Morell in Shaw's *Candida* (1898), a play that John and Ada Galsworthy attended in October 1910. The true role model for the clergy that Galsworthy created was Hilary Cherell, the 'slum priest' who devoted his life to work in an urban, working-class parish, trying to identify himself totally with the life of his parishioners, a picture Galsworthy may have based on the clergyman in Shaw's *Widower's Houses* (1892).

Galsworthy inveighs against institutionalised religion as embodied in a Church that tried to "command rather than to serve", a Church that stood aloof from what really happened in life, and whose social involvement he found too meagre. He also satirises the upper middle classes for their hypocrisy in relation to religion and their narrow moral values. He blames the Church for not making a firmer pacifist stand, and allowing nations with the same belief to fight one another. Galsworthy looks upon the Church's failure to prevent war as the bankruptcy of Christianity. He also rejects Nonconformism as the embodiment of orthodoxy, and when referring to the religious views of Nonconformists, Galsworthy criticises their blind acceptance of their faith. He utterly rejects men like John Wesley and General Booth, a rejection that found its roots in the works of Dickens, Hawthorne and Matthew Arnold, and was reinforced by W.H. Hudson and G.B. Shaw's *Major Barbara* (1905-1907).

Galsworthy appeals for a renewed and secularised Christianity from a truly humanitarian spirit. He sympathised with the poor and the oppressed, and felt that socialism provided the best guarantee for a solution to contemporary social problems. His fervent humanitarianism is not rooted in politics though. Although he sympathised with the Fabian principles of gradual reform, he was basically apolitical. On issues such as slum housing and sweated labour he felt

great kinship with such authors as Dickens and Maupassant, but was also led by examples in the works of contemporary playwrights. Galsworthy no longer believed in the dogmatic Christianity of the established Church, but believed in a “demystified faith”, a new faith of “unselfish humanity,” in which “God is the helping of man by man,” which he eventually labels as an “ethic Christianity.” Especially Dickens’ novels and Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You* had a lasting influence on Galsworthy in this respect. Galsworthy himself was an active champion of a number of good causes and did so from the true feeling that if we “profess humanity” we cannot sit and suffer “such barbarities and mean cruelties to go on amongst us as must dry the heart of God.”

I have also shown Galsworthy’s criticism of society for its double standards regarding pre-marital sex, adultery, divorce and prostitution. Galsworthy’s creativity was kindled by such issues as the loveless marriage, adultery, church weddings, the marriage bond, divorce and divorce law. He frequently points out the social evil of the marriage of ‘convenience’, which is only continued for the sake of morality and for the Church’s claim that the marriage bond is indissoluble. Galsworthy repudiates the sanctity of marriage as articulated in the traditional “Marriage Service” in *The Book of Common Prayer*. He does so especially because it underlines women’s inferior position within matrimony, stresses the need for the procreation of children, and because it claims the indissoluble nature of this bond. Time and again Galsworthy poses the question whether continuing a loveless marriage was not just as sinful as divorce. Over the years there is a gradual shift in his work from his criticism of the Church to his criticism of divorce law, showing that the Church had gradually lost its hold on such matters and that it was rather established morality that held on to what Galsworthy deemed to be antiquated laws.

Throughout his writing life Galsworthy ponders the question of life after death. In his early years he questions and mainly searches for answers. As a maturer writer he rejects an afterlife in the Christian sense and stresses life in the present, rather than life hereafter. He becomes more philosophical in the second decade, albeit with a distinct touch of nostalgia and a sense of loss. Towards his own death in 1933 there is full resignation that death will ultimately mean “oblivion”, “darkness”, and “nothingness”. What remains is Galsworthy’s love of life as a guiding principle. Galsworthy’s remark in *Over the River* that “Death may be a good thing, but Life’s a better,” sums up, in the best possible way, the concept of death that he arrives at by the end of his life. Again it is the works of earlier writers that laid the foundations for Galsworthy’s outlook on death and life after death.

Galsworthy respected the Bible as a beautiful work of art, but frequently refers to it as a “fable” and a “legend”. He was familiar with Spencer and Huxley’s denial of the literal truth of the Bible and Arnold’s reference to orthodox theology as a “misinterpretation of the Bible”. The early 1890s were characterised by criticism of the Bible, of both the Old Testament and the New. The debate on the literal and historical truth of the Bible culminated

when in 1891 prominent clergymen sent in their “Declaration of the Truth of Holy Scripture” to the editor of *The Times*. Clearly, England was moving from an age of religious certainties to one of uncertainty and doubt. Even thirteen years later, in 1904, there was a correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph*, entitled “Do we Believe?”, to which several thousand readers contributed, showing how Christian orthodoxies were still under widespread challenge (McLeod 1996, 176).

Galsworthy rejected the divinity of Christ, but still accepted and appreciated many of Christ’s sayings as laid down in the “Sermon on the Mount”, especially because of their humanitarian and universal truths. Galsworthy also frequently refers to the notion of “original sin”, and analysis shows that all these references have a distinct sexual colouring. They seem to point to a less familiar aspect of Galsworthy’s character: his unfulfilled desires and his ultimate acceptance of his own and human frailty.

Never in his writing life did Galsworthy believe in the anthropomorphic God of the Christian faith. Galsworthy’s belief in a deity developed from the pantheist idea that God was omnipresent in Nature, through the acceptance of the existence of “some great dignified principle” and a “Cosmic Spirit”, to an adoration of “the great wonders of Eternity.” However, also in an insect did he eventually see “a manifestation of divinity”, and did he accept the existence of an all-pervading and harmonising principle. He openly rejects the authoritarian God of the Hebraic Scriptures in his poem “The Dream” (1912), exposing the God of the Old Testament as devoid of sympathy and understanding. After the Great War Galsworthy embraces the Bergsonian idea of God as “an endless Creative Instinct”, and combines Herbert Spencer’s and Henri Bergson’s notions of the deity to “an Unknowable Creative Purpose, which colloquially we call God.” Galsworthy believes that “God is within us, within the trees, the birds and inanimate matter—within everything. And there is no God outside us.” Galsworthy rejects mysticism and theism, and believes that our conscience is all we have to go by.

American and English nineteenth-century thinkers influenced Galsworthy’s intellectual growth from roughly 1887 to 1900. Parallel to this is his increased interest in literature and the literary masters in England and abroad. The ideas of these writers were an extension and a translation of those expressed by the nineteenth-century philosophers and acted as a catalyst to Galsworthy’s own thinking. Henri Bergson, in combination with Herbert Spencer, was of overriding importance in the development of Galsworthy’s concept of the deity, and formed the foundation for Galsworthy’s own concept of the “Unknowable Creative Purpose which colloquially we call God.” In 1931 Galsworthy arrives at: “But after all God was eternal mind that you couldn’t understand; God was not a loving father that you could.” Basically, God was to Galsworthy the “helping of man by man,” a creed, which he tried to live up to all his life. Galsworthy realised how he was “pre-eminently the son of a time between two ages—a past age of old, unquestioning faith in authority; a future age of new faith, already born but

not yet grown.” He realised that in the Victorian era people were part of the “long and tremendous struggle . . . between Science and Orthodox Religion,” and he calls the Victorian era, “an era without real faith.” Galsworthy’s literary predecessors openly struggled with their religious doubt and thereby accelerated among intellectuals the process of growing doubt, agnosticism, unbelief, atheism, ultimately leading to humanism. It is in humanism that Galsworthy feels a deep kinship with Charles Dickens, the Russian writers Turgenev and Tolstoy, and with the French novelists Flaubert, Maupassant and France. He feels the same kinship with his friend W.H. Hudson, whom he refers to as the “standard bearer of new faith.” Galsworthy terms the period around 1912 a “Third Renaissance”, as it witnessed the birth of a “new philosophy”, a philosophy, which he qualifies as “the only possible religion” that aims at “love of Perfection, not for hope of reward, not for fear of punishment, but for Perfection’s sake.” Galsworthy signals the steady decline of church attendance after World War I and predicts that orthodox believers in the coming generations will constitute a minority. In fact, he estimates the number of true believers in the early thirties at only “ten to fifteen per cent”.

John Galsworthy was profoundly influenced by Spencerian agnosticism, having derived the concept of the “Unknowable God” from Spencer’s philosophy. He calls himself an agnostic where it concerns the “great Why” of things, as he refers to this himself. However, he is more of a Spencerian agnostic than a Huxleyan one, for like Spencer, Galsworthy believes in a divine force as represented in nature or in man, in a pantheist sense, not in the Christian sense. With Bergson he believes in God and the universe as an eternal, creative force, referring to it as the “Impersonal Creative Instinct”, and he looks upon this impulse to create as “the Good—the God.” With Tolstoy he regards “faith in God, in the good, as the sole purpose of man” and, with Tolstoy, Galsworthy is convinced that “the Kingdom of God is within you”. Galsworthy’s God is “Eternal mind that you couldn’t understand,” and not unlike Emerson’s “Oversoul”. Basically, Galsworthy’s faith is “a sense of an all-pervading spirit, and the ethical creed that seems best to serve it,” or, in other words, “a mere creed that good must be done . . . just out of a present love of dignity.” Still, as late as 1930, we see Bergson’s influence when Galsworthy says that “the best of faiths is the will towards Perfection operating in all that has ever been, is now, and ever shall be.” Above all, and especially by the end of his life, Galsworthy was a believer in life, a believer in man, Confucian and Humanist, rather than Christian, regarding justice, love and courage as elemental virtues and our conscience as the instrument to lead us to perfection. According to Galsworthy, this in itself makes human life “worth while” and may bring “an inner happiness”. What Galsworthy propagated was the Confucian principle of “belief in ancestors, and tradition, respect for parents, honesty, moderation of conduct, kind treatment of animals and dependants, absence of self-obtrusion, and stoicism in [the] face of pain and death.”

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Samenvatting

Religie in het Werk van John Galsworthy

De meeste lezers kennen de Engelse schrijver, John Galsworthy (1867-1933), van zijn *The Forsyte Saga* (1922) en *A Modern Comedy* (1929). Beide trilogieën werden verfilmd door de BBC in 1967 en 2002, hetgeen zeker aan Galsworthy's huidige bekendheid heeft bijgedragen. Minder bekend tegenwoordig zijn Galsworthy's romans *The Country House* (1907), *Fraternity* (1909), *The Patrician* (1911), *The Dark Flower* (1913) en *Saint's Progress* (1919), waarmee hij voortbouwde op het succes van *The Forsyte Saga* en zijn reputatie blijvend vestigde. Galsworthy stond in zijn eigen tijd tevens bekend als succesvol toneelschrijver en stond samen met Bernard Shaw, J.M. Synge, James Barrie, St John Hankin en Harley Granville-Barker aan de wieg van een blijvende vernieuwing van het Britse toneel. Galsworthy schreef daarnaast een groot aantal korte verhalen, gedichten en een aanzienlijk aantal essays. Voorts schreef Galsworthy pamfletten en voerde hij campagnes tegen een reeks misstanden: het plaatsen van gevangenen in isoleercellen, de woonomstandigheden in de Londense krottenwijken, de verouderde huwelijks- en echtscheidingswetgeving, literaire censuur en dierenmishandeling. Zijn naam als gevestigd Engels schrijver gaf hem toegang tot de hoogste politieke kringen, waarin hij gehoor vond voor zijn denkbeelden. Eveneens genoot hij als voorzitter van de International Pen Club internationaal veel aanzien. In 1932 ontving hij voor zijn totale oeuvre de Nobel Prijs voor de Literatuur.

Literaire kritieken en wetenschappelijke publicaties over het werk van Galsworthy richten zich met name op thema's als de sociale misstanden, de hypocrisie en de moraal van de gegoede burgerij, het huwelijk en echtscheiding, de Eerste Wereldoorlog en de veranderende tijdgeest. Literaire critici en biografen hebben echter minder oog gehad voor Galsworthy's religieuze ontwikkeling en zijn filosofische denkbeelden. Dit proefschrift beoogt dan ook in die leemte te voorzien.

In Galsworthy's leven vond een aantal gebeurtenissen plaats dat van invloed was op zijn ontwikkeling en zijn denken. Dit betreft onder andere de gesprekken met zijn oudere zus Lillian tijdens zijn jeugd; de ontmoeting in 1893 met Joseph Conrad en de blijvende vriendschap die daaruit voortvloeyde; zijn liefdesrelatie met Ada Cooper, de echtgenote van zijn neef Arthur Galsworthy; haar echtscheiding in 1904 en het daaropvolgende huwelijk met John in 1905; de literaire coaching die hij kreeg van Edward Garnett en zijn vrouw Constance, die hem hebben ingewijd in de Russische literatuur; en, tenslotte, zijn vriendschap met Bernard Shaw die voor hem de deuren opende naar de wereld van het Britse toneel.

Rond 1910 vond een duidelijk keerpunt plaats in Galsworthy's leven. Niet alleen krijgt zijn werk vanaf dat moment een minder satirisch karakter, maar tevens wordt een duidelijke

belangstelling waarneembaar voor thema's van meer filosofische aard. Het boek *The Inn of Tranquillity* (1912) markeert het begin van een filosofische en religieuze zoektocht die tot aan het einde van Galsworthy's leven zou duren.

Een ander belangrijk moment in zijn leven was het uitbreken van de Eerste Wereldoorlog. Hoewel hij overtuigd pacifist was, zag hij in de Duitse schending van fundamentele menselijke waarden voldoende rechtvaardiging voor Britse deelname aan deze oorlog. Ofschoon hij zelf niet geschikt was om nog als soldaat een actieve rol te spelen, werkte hij wel enkele maanden als masseur voor het Rode Kruis in Frankrijk, en richtte hij in Londen een opvangcentrum op voor gewonde Engelse soldaten. Zijn inspanningen gingen echter ten koste van de literaire kwaliteit. Romans als *Beyond* (1917) en *The Burning Spear* (1919) vallen duidelijk uit de toon als we ze vergelijken met zijn vooroorlogse romans.

In de jaren twintig pakte Galsworthy de draad weer op van de familiegeschiedenis van de Forsytes en schreef hij zijn tweede en derde Forsyte-trilogie, waardoor zijn reputatie herstelde. Zijn toneelstukken genoten echter minder populariteit. Blijkbaar kostte het hem in toenemende mate moeite om de veranderende tijdgeest te vertalen in zijn werk en sloeg zijn satirische en moraliserende toon minder aan bij het theaterpubliek, dat na de Eerste Wereldoorlog toch vooral uit was op entertainment.

In dit proefschrift heb ik getracht vast te stellen welke invloed andere schrijvers hebben gehad op Galsworthy's geestelijke ontwikkeling. Galsworthy geeft zelf aan dat hij zich vooral geïnspireerd voelt door de geest die uit het werk van Charles Dickens spreekt. De invloed van Dickens is met name waarneembaar in thema's zoals: de kerk, hypocrisie, sociale misstanden, humaniteit, huwelijk en echtscheiding. Galsworthy waardeerde ook Samuel Butler voor zijn vlijmscherpe kritiek op de kerk en de geestelijken, maar tevens vanwege zijn controversiële visie op de dood en het geloof in God.

Andere schrijvers die voor Galsworthy een belangrijke inspiratiebron vormden waren de Russische schrijvers Ivan Turgenev en Leo Tolstoy, en de Franse schrijvers Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant en Anatole France. De vrijdenkers van Turgenev, Bazarov en Litvinov, en Tolstoys Pierre en Levin fungeerden als voorbeeld voor menig karakter in Galsworthy's romans. Daarnaast zijn het Turgenevs Irina en Tolstoys Anna Karenina die model stonden voor Galsworthy's Irene. Galsworthy putte tevens inspiratie uit de romans en korte verhalen van Balzac, Flaubert en Maupassant, met name ten aanzien van ongelukkige huwelijken en overspel. Tevens liet hij zich inspireren door Anatole Frances scherpe kritiek op de Franse bourgeoisie en de kerk. Ook Olive Schreiner is met haar roman, *The Story of an African Farm*, van invloed geweest op de ontwikkeling van de jonge Galsworthy. Wat deze schrijvers in hun leven en werk gemeen hadden, waren hun ideeën omtrent de positie van de vrouw en de gevestigde moraal ten aanzien van huwelijk, overspel en echtscheiding, maar tevens hun humanisme en hun verwerping van de traditionele godsdienst. Juist omdat dit de centrale

vragen waren in het leven van Galsworthy van 1895 tot 1905, waren dit de schrijvers bij wie hij de antwoorden vond.

Hoewel Galsworthy nooit heeft toegegeven dat zijn werk beïnvloed was door Henrik Ibsen, kunnen we vaststellen dat er thematisch een groot aantal overeenkomsten bestaat tussen het werk van Ibsen en dat van Galsworthy. Wederom betreft het hier het huwelijk en echtscheiding, de emancipatie van de vrouw en de positie van de kerk. Overigens zijn deze thema's ook waarneembaar in het werk van August Strindberg, waarmee Galsworthy bekend was. Galsworthy's vriendschap met toneelschrijvers als Bernard Shaw en James Barrie, maar ook met contemporaine romanschrijvers als Thomas Hardy en W.H. Hudson, alsmede de classicus Gilbert Murray, bepaalde het culturele en intellectuele klimaat van waaruit zijn werk ontstond. Bovenal is het hun agnosticisme, hun humanisme, hun verwerping van orthodoxe godsdienst en de kerk, alsmede hun sociaal engagement, wat hen met elkaar verbond.

In dit proefschrift toon ik aan hoe Galsworthy's opmerking dat hij "niet erg belezen was op het gebied van filosofie" een understatement was. In zijn werk refereert hij veelvuldig aan Kant, Hegel en Nietzsche. Hij wantrouwt deze Duitse filosofen en ziet in hun werk de voortekenen van een oorlog. Ondanks dat hij Nietzsches ironie in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-1892) wel kan waarderen, verwerpt hij Nietzsches ideeën rond zijn "Übermensch", zoals ook Shaw dat deed. Galsworthy moet ook bekend zijn geweest met Schopenhauer, al was het maar via zijn gesprekken met Conrad. Elementen van Schopenhauers filosofie zijn dan ook zichtbaar in Galsworthy's werk, met name waar het thema's betreft als determinisme en vrije wil, leven en dood, Judaïsme en de erfzonde.

Galsworthy was tevens bekend met de denkbeelden van de Engelse denkers Herbert Spencer en Thomas Huxley ten aanzien van het agnosticisme. *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) en *Literature and Dogma* (1873) van Matthew Arnold gaven Galsworthy een geheel nieuwe kijk op de Bijbel, de kerk, de dood en het bestaan van God. Ten slotte had Galsworthy zich ook de denkbeelden van de Franse filosoof, Henri Bergson, eigengemaakt. Het was met name Bergsons *L'Evolution créatrice* (1907) dat Galsworthy's eigen filosofische ontwikkeling en visie op thema's zoals determinisme versus vrije wil, de schepping en de plaats van de mens in het universum blijvend zou beïnvloeden.

Galsworthy werd door enkele biografen een aanhanger van het determinisme genoemd. We kunnen echter vaststellen dat Galsworthy gedurende zijn gehele leven geloof heeft gehouden in de vrije wil van de mens, en wel in de volle overtuiging dat de christelijke "Voorzienigheid" niet bestaat. Hij gelooft erin dat de mens altijd zijn lot zelf in de hand heeft en zich daar niet naar hoeft te voegen. Het streven van de mens moet gericht zijn op verbetering, een streven naar perfectie. Galsworthy's motto is "je karakter bepaalt je lot", maar tegelijkertijd geeft hij toe dat er krachten zijn die niet beïnvloedbaar zijn door de mens. Daarmee geeft hij aan dat er eigenlijk geen verschil bestaat tussen het determinisme en de vrije wil, hetgeen een eerste, duidelijke overeenkomst aantoont tussen de denkbeelden van

Galsworthy en die van Henri Bergson. Ook Galsworthy's visie op het menselijk bestaan vertoont een grote overeenkomst met die van Bergson. Bergsons "*élan vital*", de scheppende kracht als fundament van ons bestaan, oefende op Galsworthy een onmiskenbare invloed uit, met name in de periode 1910 tot 1918. Hij nam Bergsons denkbeelden over en vertaalde deze naar zijn eigen werk. Tot in 1930 zijn de sporen van Bergsons filosofie te vinden in het werk van Galsworthy.

Galsworthy had een diepe weerzin tegen de kerk als institutie. Dit blijkt onder andere uit zijn beschrijving van kerken en kerkgangers, waarvan er niet een aan zijn cynisme ontsnapt. Telkenmale plaatst hij de kille en donkere kerken, alsmede de donkergeklede kerkgangers, tegenover het heldere en warme zonlicht buiten, een contrast bijna tussen leven en dood. Galsworthy ontleende deze beelden, onder andere, aan de romans van Charles Dickens en Guy de Maupassant. Overigens valt op dat zijn kritiek op katholieke kerken milder is. De oorzaak hiervoor ligt waarschijnlijk in zijn betrekkelijk positieve ervaringen met de katholieke kerk tijdens zijn verblijf in Frankrijk in de Eerste Wereldoorlog, waarbij hij vaststelde dat priesters zich daadwerkelijk inzetten om het leed van de soldaten te verzachten. Opmerkelijk is ook dat naarmate Galsworthy ouder werd zijn waardering voor kathedralen toenam. Hij beschrijft ze als kunstwerken, overblijfselen van een roemrucht verleden, die hem rust geven en hem ruimte bieden voor bezinning.

De vraag dringt zich dan ook op waar Galsworthy's weerzin tegen de kerk vandaan komt. Galsworthy zegt hierover zelf dat de wekelijkse kerkgang en het gebed hem nooit zodanig zijn opgedrongen, dat dit voor hem een traumatische ervaring was. Toch is de opmerking van Irene in *Awakening* (1920) over haar en Young Jolyons kerkbezoek tijdens hun jeugd veelbetekend: "Wij beiden gingen toen we klein waren. Misschien gingen wij wel toen we te klein waren."

Evenals een aantal van zijn literaire voorgangers beschrijft Galsworthy zijn kerkgangers in sombere kleuren. Hij wijst veelvuldig op het geringe aantal mensen dat 's zondags ter kerke ging. Daarnaast stelt hij de hypocrisie van de gegoede burgerij aan de kaak en toont hij de kloof die bestond tussen de dagelijkse werkelijkheid van de kerkgangers en de verheven woorden van hun geestelijk leiders. Het beeld dat Galsworthy van de dominees schetst is gedeeltelijk gebaseerd op de positie die zij aan het eind van de negentiende eeuw bekleedden. Er waren maar weinigen die in goeden doen waren en hun inkomen hing af van de omvang van hun parochie. "Curates" hadden het zo mogelijk nog zwaarder en moesten regelmatig gebruik maken van liefdadige instellingen om hun gezin te kunnen onderhouden. Ook binnen de eigen familiekring had Galsworthy kennis gemaakt met geestelijken: zijn oom Lionel, die door Galsworthy's vader als "dogmatisch" werd bestempeld, en zijn oom Robert, die een gezin had van twaalf kinderen. Zij beiden stonden dan ook model voor de vele dominees in Galsworthy's werk.

Het is vooral de dubbele moraal van de geestelijken die Galsworthy aan de kaak stelt. Desalniettemin zien we in de loop der jaren een toenemende sympathie ontstaan voor deze vertegenwoordigers van de kerk. Galsworthy beseft welk een psychologische worsteling sommigen van hen ondergingen, en wat voor rol sommigen van hen speelden in de sloppenwijken van Londen of in de loopgraven tijdens de oorlog. Het is hun twijfel over het bestaan van God en hun vragen naar het wezen van de mens, gevoegd bij de keuze om zich in te zetten voor het welzijn van de medemens, die Galsworthy's cynisme en antiklerikale gevoelens geleidelijk doen verzachten. Het rolmodel dat hij daarvoor ontwikkelt is Hilary Cherell, de "slum priester", die Galsworthy in de laatste drie Forsyte romans ten tonele voert.

Galsworthy's kritiek op de kerk als institutie wordt voornamelijk ingegeven door haar gebrek aan dienstbaarheid, een te grote afstandelijkheid van het echte leven en een te geringe betrokkenheid bij de grote maatschappelijke vraagstukken. Hij wijst op de afhankelijkheid van de kerk van de "upper middle class" en op de bekrompen moraal die door beide in stand wordt gehouden, omdat dit ook in het voordeel van beide partijen is. Galsworthy vraagt zich af waarom de kerk zich niet krachtiger verzet heeft tegen een naderende oorlog, daar waar pacifisme het kenmerk van het christendom zou moeten zijn. Het uitbreken van de Eerste Wereldoorlog kenmerkt hij dan ook als het "bankroet van het christendom". Galsworthy heeft niets op met de orthodoxe geloofsbeleving van de "Nonconformists" en verwerpt hun geestelijk leiders, zoals John Wesley en William Booth. Ook deze afkeer ontleent hij in grote mate aan zijn literaire voorgangers.

In zijn werk roept Galsworthy op te komen tot een vernieuwd en gesecculariseerd christendom vanuit oprechte humanitaire gevoelens. Hij sympathiseerde met de armen en onderdrukten en vond dat het socialisme de beste oplossing bood voor de sociale problemen van zijn tijd. Zijn strijd voor een menswaardig bestaan voor allen was echter niet ingegeven door politieke voorkeuren. Hoewel hij zich verwant voelde met het gedachtegoed van de Fabians, dat uitging van geleidelijke sociale hervormingen, was Galsworthy, in wezen, apolitek. De wijze waarop met name Dickens en Maupassant schrijven over het leven in de krottenwijken en de arbeidsomstandigheden waaronder vrouwen en kinderen veelal werkten, had Galsworthy aangezet om deze thema's ook tot de zijne te maken. Hij werd daarin tevens gesterkt door het werk van de toneelschrijvers die hem enkele jaren voorgingen, zoals Bernard Shaw.

Galsworthy gelooft niet meer in het dogmatische christendom van de gevestigde kerk, maar kent daarentegen een "gedemystificeerd geloof", een nieuw geloof van "onbaatzuchtige menselijkheid", hetgeen hij uiteindelijk betitelt als een "ethisch christendom". Het waren daarbij met name de romans van Dickens, en Tolstoj's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894) die voor hem, ten aanzien van dit punt, een belangrijke bron van inspiratie vormden.

Galsworthy bekritiseert de maatschappij vanwege haar dubbele moraal ten aanzien van gemeenschap voor het huwelijk, overspel, echtscheiding en prostitutie. Galsworthy's

creativiteit werd echter met name gevoed door thema's zoals het liefdeloze huwelijk, het kerkelijk huwelijk en de onverbreekbare huwelijksband. Hij wijst daarbij veelvuldig op de verstandshuwelijken zoals hij deze in zijn omgeving waarnam, die, ondanks dat beide echtelieden daarin ongelukkig waren, niet werden ontbonden. Dit werd veroorzaakt door de schande die dit met zich mee zou brengen en het onwrikbare standpunt van de kerk, dat het huwelijk niet ontbonden kon worden. Galsworthy verwerpt het sacrale karakter van het huwelijk, zoals dit was vastgelegd in *The Book of Common Prayer*, mede vanwege het feit dat dit de ondergeschikte positie van de vrouw zo sterk benadrukte. Galsworthy stelt keer op keer de vraag waarom het continueren van een liefdeloos huwelijk niet even zondig is als het verbreken ervan. Naarmate de jaren verstrijken, zien we een geleidelijke verschuiving van Galsworthy's kritiek op de kerk ten aanzien van het echtscheidingsvraagstuk, naar zijn kritiek op de staat voor de traagheid waarmee de hervormingen in het huwelijksrecht werden doorgevoerd. Het was hem duidelijk dat het niet langer de kerk was die deze hervormingen tegenhield, maar de moraal van de gevestigde klasse.

Gedurende zijn hele leven als schrijver denkt Galsworthy na over het leven na de dood. In zijn jonge jaren stelt hij slechts vragen en zoekt hij naar antwoorden. Als meer volwassen schrijver verwerpt hij het leven na de dood in religieuze zin, en benadrukt hij liever het leven hier en nu. Tussen 1910 en 1920 wordt zijn denken meer filosofisch van aard, en dit vertaalt zich ten aanzien van het vraagstuk rond leven en dood naar gevoelens van verlies en nostalgie. Bij het naderen van zijn eigen dood in 1933 zien we hoe Galsworthy spreekt over de dood als "darkness" en "nothingness". Wat overblijft, is Galsworthy's heilig geloof in het leven, in het hier en nu. Wederom waren het de schrijvers uit de negentiende eeuw die hem de antwoorden gaven op zijn vragen. Niet dat zij het mysterie konden oplossen, maar wel brachten zij een demystificatie aan die Galsworthy zocht.

Galsworthy respecteerte de Bijbel als een literair werk. Hij was bekend met Herbert Spencers en Thomas Huxleys mening dat de Bijbel niet letterlijk genomen moest worden, en met Matthew Arnolds opmerking dat theologen de Bijbel verkeerd uitlegden. Rond 1890 werd een heftige discussie gevoerd over dit thema en dit leidde uiteindelijk tot een ingezonden brief in *The Times* waarin een aantal prominente Engelse geestelijken zich uitsprak voor de "truth of Holy Scripture". Dit was het religieuze klimaat waarin Galsworthy zijn loopbaan als schrijver begon.

Galsworthy ontkent weliswaar het bestaan van God en de goddelijkheid van Christus, maar heeft wel grote waardering voor de spreuken van Christus in de Bergrede (Evangelië van Matteüs), vanwege de menselijke en universele waarden die daaruit spreken. Uit Galsworthy's werk komt tevens een opmerkelijke belangstelling naar voren voor het begrip "erfzonde". Mijn onderzoek toont aan dat dit een aspect raakt in het karakter van Galsworthy waar minder over bekend is: zijn onvervulde verlangens en de uiteindelijke acceptatie van de zwakten van de mens en daarmee ook zijn eigen zwakten.

Nooit heeft Galsworthy tijdens zijn loopbaan als schrijver uiting gegeven aan een geloof in de antropomorfische God van het christelijke geloof, met uitzondering van het gedicht “The Valley of Death”. Galsworthy’s geloof in een godheid ontwikkelt zich vanuit de pantheïstische gedachte dat God alom vertegenwoordigd is in de ‘Natuur’, via een geloof in hogere kosmische krachten, tot een verering van “the great wonders of Eternity.” Maar ook in een insect herkent hij de goddelijkheid en zo accepteert hij meer en meer het bestaan van een allesdoordringend en harmoniserend principe. Daarbij verwerpt hij te enen male de God van het Oude Testament, zoals hij dat bijvoorbeeld toont in zijn gedicht “The Dream”. Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog omarmt Galsworthy de denkbeelden van Henri Bergson die God ziet als een “eindelozscheppingsdrang”, en verwoordt hij Spencers en Bergsons denkbeelden omtrent een godheid als een “bovenmenselijke, maar niet te bevatten, scheppende kracht die wij gewoon zijn ‘God’ te noemen”. Galsworthy verwerpt daarbij tevens het mysticisme en het theïsme, en stelt dat alleen ons geweten onze enige leidraad is.

Denkers als Emerson, Arnold, Spencer en Huxley hebben de intellectuele groei van Galsworthy tussen ongeveer 1887 en 1900 sterk beïnvloed. Gelijktijdig kende hij een toenemende belangstelling voor het werk van de grote literaire meesters in binnen- en buitenland. Ook hun ideeën vonden hun oorsprong in het gedachtegoed van de negentiende-eeuwse filosofen en denkers en versterkten in hevige mate Galsworthy’s eigen religieuze en filosofische ontwikkeling. Daarbij waren het vooral de denkbeelden van Bergson en Spencer ten aanzien van een godheid die voor Galsworthy het meest betekenisvol waren. In wezen bleef God voor Galsworthy de “helping of man by man”, een geloof waarnaar hij zijn hele leven heeft geprobeerd te handelen.

Galsworthy was in zekere zin een kind van twee tijdperken: de Victoriaanse tijd en de moderne tijd. In de Victoriaanse tijd was daar enerzijds de autoriteit van de kerk, anderzijds de worsteling tussen wetenschap en religie, waardoor Galsworthy die tijd kenmerkt als een “tijdperk zonder echt geloof”. Ook Galsworthy’s literaire voorgangers worstelden openlijk met hun religieuze twijfels en vertaalden deze naar agnosticisme, ongelooft, atheïsme en uiteindelijk humanisme. Het is met name in dit humanisme dat Galsworthy zich zo verwant voelde met zijn literaire voorgangers. Die verwantschap voelde hij bovenal ten aanzien van zijn vriend W.H. Hudson, die hij betitelt als “vaandeldrager van het nieuwe geloof”. Galsworthy noemt de periode na 1912 dan ook een “Derde Renaissance”, vanwege de geboorte van een nieuwe filosofie. Een filosofie die hij als het “enig mogelijke geloof” ziet. Een geloof dat zich richt op “vervolmaking”, niet vanuit een hoop op beloning in het hiernamaals, of uit angst voor bestraffing, maar alleen ter wille van die “vervolmaking”. Galsworthy voorspelt daarbij dat dit geloof de traditionele godsdienst snel zal verdringen.

Galsworthy was sterk beïnvloed door het agnosticisme van Spencer, met name het concept van de “Unknowable God”. Hij noemt zichzelf een agnost ten aanzien van het “grote Waaronder” der dingen, en volgt daarin sterker het denken van Spencer dan van Huxley. Anders

dan Huxley, heeft hij in wezen toch het gevoel dat er goddelijke krachten bestaan in de natuur en in de mens zelf, maar niet in christelijke zin. Met Bergson gelooft hij in een “scheppende kracht” en beschouwt hij de scheppingsdrang als het “Goede”, “de God”. Met Tolstoy is hij van mening dat “geloof in God en in het goede het enige doel van de mens is”, en met hem is hij ervan overtuigd dat “het Koninkrijk Gods” zich in de mens zelf bevindt. Uiteindelijk bestaat, kort voor zijn dood, Galsworthy’s geloof uit het fundamentele besef dat de mens het goede voor zijn medemens moet nastreven en dat alleen vanuit een oprechte liefde voor menselijke waardigheid. Daarbij blijft Galsworthy bovenal geloof houden in het leven, in de mens, en is hij eerder Confuciaans en Humanist dan Christen; beschouwt hij rechtvaardigheid, liefde en moed als fundamentele deugden en ziet hij ons geweten als enige leidraad om tot “vervolmaking” te geraken. Volgens Galsworthy maakt dit het leven op zich al “de moeite waard” en kan dit de mens het “innerlijke geluk” bieden waarnaar hij op zoek is. Wat Galsworthy ten diepste propageert is het Confuciaanse principe van “geloof in voorouders en traditie, respect voor ouders, eerlijkheid, bescheidenheid, liefde voor dieren en allen die afhankelijk zijn, altruïsme, en het stoïcijns tegemoet treden van pijn of de dood.”

Curriculum Vitae

Maarten Willem Knoester werd geboren op 1 januari 1953 te 's Gravenhage. Hij behaalde in 1971 het HAVO-diploma aan de Chr. Scholengemeenschap J.R. Snoeck Henkemans te 's-Gravenhage. Vervolgens studeerde hij MO-Engels aan de School voor Taal en Letterkunde te Den Haag en behaalde de akte Engels MO-A in 1976 en rondde de deeltijdopleiding MO-B af in 1981. Daarna behaalde hij het diploma Engels Tolk-Vertaler in 1983 en de akte Engels MO-Handelsbriefwisseling (MO-C) in 1986. In 1988 rondde hij de studie Engels af met het doctoraal getuigschrift Engelse Taal en Letterkunde van de Rijksuniversiteit Leiden. Hij startte zijn loopbaan in 1975 als leraar Engels in het lager beroepsonderwijs en was daar werkzaam tot 1980. In dat jaar kreeg hij een aanstelling als docent Engels op het toenmalige Wessel Gansfort College (HAVO-VWO), later Pallas College te Zoetermeer. In 1988 maakte hij de overstap naar de Ichthus Hogeschool te Rotterdam en was tot 2002 werkzaam als, achtereenvolgens, docent Engels, propedeusecoördinator HEAO, studierichtingsleider van de Economisch-linguïstische opleiding, directeur van de sector Economie & Management (HEAO) en ten slotte directeur van de sector Communicatie. Daarnaast bekleedde hij de functie van directeur Internationalisering. Na de oprichting van Hogeschool INHOLLAND in januari 2002, totstandgekomen na een fusie van de voormalige Hogeschool Alkmaar, Hogeschool Haarlem, Hogeschool Holland en de Ichthus Hogeschool/ Hogeschool Delft werd hij directeur Bestuurszaken van deze nieuwe hogeschool en Secretaris van het College van Bestuur. Van 1990 tot 1998 was hij lid van de Staatsexamencommissies MO Handelsbriefwisseling en Tolk /Vertalen Engels. Van 1992 tot 2002 was hij Bestuurslid van ITV-Hogeschool voor Tolken en Vertalen te Utrecht en van 2002 tot heden lid van het Curatorium van deze hogeschool.