

Displeasing Pictures of Clergymen

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Shortly after the appearance of *Emma*, published anonymously as the work of the writer of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen began noting down opinions of the novel expressed, sometimes unguardedly, by various friends and acquaintances. Among them was a Mrs. Wroughton (otherwise unknown to posterity) who said that she “thought the authoress wrong, in such times as these, to draw such clergymen as Mr. Collins and Mr. Elton” (*MW* 439). The date was 1816. Britain had emerged victorious from the long wars against France, but the memory of events in that country over the past 25 to 30 years had left among propertied and peace-loving people a widespread feeling that respect for the church was vital to the maintenance of social order. The outbreak of the French Revolution, it was believed, had been largely due to writers such as Voltaire undermining respect for the church. The Revolutionaries at an early stage in their career had confiscated the property of the church, and Burke’s ominous predictions had apparently been fulfilled: from that one sacrilegious act, increasing horrors had stemmed. England could not pride herself on immunity from revolution. In 1797 there had been naval mutinies at the height of the invasion scare, and in the later stages of the war Luddite riots had occupied the attention of more troops than Wellington had at his disposal in the Peninsula. In 1816 itself, with unemployment increased by cutbacks in the armed forces and food prices upheld by the Corn Laws, there was unrest among miners and weavers in the Midlands and disturbances among agricultural labourers in the eastern counties. Radical orators and pamphleteers were attacking church and state in increasingly jacobinical terms; and, as though this was not enough, a writer of supposedly entertaining novels was holding up the clergy to ridicule in the eyes of the respectable reading public—the very class whose support for the status quo was vitally necessary. Knowing, as we now do, that Jane Austen, the novelist in question, came from a clergy family, we may well ask ourselves what she was about.

Of one thing we can be quite sure: she meant no harm. She had no wish at all to undermine people’s respect for the church or their faith in the doctrines it preached. She was a loyal member of the Church of England, attending its services Sunday by Sunday, defending its Prayer Book from criticism and using its approved publications regularly in her private devotions.¹ Her own faith was to be strong enough to support her all too soon through a distressing illness

towards an early death. Nor did she share the opinion that England was on the verge of revolution. In spite of her affection for the Stuarts, and in spite of her father's obligation to hold services annually on January 30th in fearful remembrance of Charles I's beheading, she regarded revolution as a phenomenon peculiar to the French, whom she despised (*Letters*, No. 145, 321).

It is important to remember that she knew a vast number of clergy—more than any lay person would be likely to know today. Her correspondence includes references to at least 90 clergymen of her acquaintance, and her biographers could add many more to the list. Clergy were noticeably thick on the ground in rural areas, where the rest of the population was small. They were accepted as members of neighbourhood society; hence any member of the professional or gentry class, travelling frequently to different parts of southern England as Jane Austen did, would meet clergy as a matter of course at the houses of friends and relatives. They were in great demand at card parties, dinner parties and dances, particularly during the war. They were a varied lot of people, providing an unending source of interest for a novelist. The range of society from which clergy were drawn was wide. The majority came from professional and lower gentry backgrounds, but on the one hand there could still be found a small number from farming and shopkeeping families whilst on the other there was a growing minority—some 20 per cent of the total—of upper class candidates attracted to the church by the rising standard of living among the clergy and the rich perquisites available to the fortunate. Jane Austen's clergy acquaintances included both the impecunious son of the local doctor at Basingstoke and the son of the 13th Baron Saye and Sele.² The academic requirements for ordination being vague and minimal, the scholarly range was enormous too. Doctors of Divinity teaching in Oxford and Cambridge colleges were required if they married to move out into the parishes, where they joined the ranks of less erudite clergy such as the Revd. Charles Edward Twyford whom Jane Austen could not discover to be "anything except very dark-complexioned" when he was curate of East Worldham near Chawton (*L*, No. 78, 199).

Like many members of the Church of England both then and now, Jane Austen looked upon the imperfections and absurdities in the behaviour of the clergy with tolerant amusement. When she invented Mr. Collins it seems never to have occurred to her that she might be undermining his calling or bringing the whole body of clergy into disrepute. By the time she wrote *Mansfield Park* she was aware that ill-disposed people like Mary Crawford were pouncing upon the manifest faults of a small section of the clergy to do just that. The clergy, according to Mary, were worthless—they had nothing to do but eat (110). She might equally have said that they had nothing to do

but hunt; for although Wilberforce flattered himself in 1813 that "the race of buck parsons" was "nearly extinct,"³ Jane Austen knew many clergymen, including her brother James and his friend Fulwar Fowle, who were enthusiastic riders to hounds. In *Mansfield Park* she provides Mary Crawford with a clergyman who can be cited as evidence for the argument that the clergy are chiefly occupied in indulging their pleasures: Dr. Grant is excessively fond of a good dinner every day. But not all clergymen are like him, Edmund Bertram points out. And, in any case, his gourmet habits do not prevent him from being a satisfactory parish priest. He resides in his parish, preaches excellent sermons, practices hospitality, improves his dwelling and, in spite of quarrelling with his wife when the dinner is substandard, shows respect for her opinions and presents to the world at large an improving picture of conjugal felicity (110-12, 361). Considering that the formal duties of a parish priest at the time consisted of no more than two services on Sundays, a communion service once a month and a very occasional baptism, wedding or funeral among the members of his tiny flock, there is no reason to suppose that Dr. Grant fails to carry them out conscientiously. Having put her readers right on these points, Jane Austen relaxed again, and in her next novel produced in Mr. Elton a rival in unpleasantness to the deplorable Mr. Collins.

In all, and disregarding her juvenile writings and unfinished novels, Jane Austen invented 12 fictitious clergymen or clergy candidates: Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility*, Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, Henry Tilney and Mr. Morland along with his son James in *Northanger Abbey*, Edmund Bertram, Mr. Norris and Dr. Grant in *Mansfield Park*, Mr. Elton in *Emma* and Charles Hayter, Dr. Shirley and the shadowy Mr. Wentworth in *Persuasion*. Among them they reveal many of the problems the clergy encountered as a result of the current structure of the Church of England, especially their poverty as curates and their difficulties in obtaining a benefice. Vicars selected their own curates and paid them out of their own pockets, hence it was not unusual for young ordinands to pester any incumbents they knew, as Charles Hayter does Dr. Shirley (78). Curates were supposed to be paid at least £50 a year, but the market was so overcrowded that many had to settle for far less. Even £50 a year was barely enough to provide a decent standard of living for a professional man who had to keep a wife: there would be no money to buy books, entertain neighbours or undertake charitable work. Mrs. Jennings is so appalled at the thought of her cousin Lucy marrying Edward Ferrars on a £50 curacy that she begins looking out unwanted furniture to give them (*S&S* 276-77). Charles Hayter has a curacy a few miles from his old home, but he does not live in the parish—presumably because he either cannot afford to live in

the parsonage house or (as in some 3,000 of England's parishes) no parsonage house has been provided, or (another 2,000 parishes) the parsonage house is unfit for habitation and he cannot afford lodgings. He continues to live with his parents at Winthrop and rides over to his church when there are duties to perform. Marriage is out of the question until he can secure a resident appointment. His opportunity comes when he is offered a situation as curate-in-charge of a parish which is awaiting a vicar, the living having been promised to a candidate who is still a mere boy. Even then, it is important that his wife-to-be can expect a dowry which will supplement his income (*P* 73-74, 217-18). As for getting a benefice, Edmund Bertram agrees with Mary Crawford that it would be madness for any young man to enter the church unless he already had the prospect of a parish. He himself has had a living set aside for him for many years by his father. Henry Tilney and James Morland are similarly provided for by their fathers (*MP* 108-10, *NA* 135, 175-76). Almost half the parishes in England and Wales were in the gift of individual landowners and it was taken for granted that they would provide first for their families. Charles Hayter hopes ultimately to "get something" from his bishop through the recommendation of some mutual friends, but it is a long shot (*P* 76). Some 2,500 parishes were in the gift of bishops, but they too mostly provided for the members of their own family.

Jane Austen knew about these problems because many of her relatives and friends had encountered them. Yet when she writes about them in her novels she is not doing so in the hope of promoting a change in the system. In real life she accepted patronage without a murmur. So did many people at the time, because to tamper with it would be tantamount to encroaching upon the rights of property and endangering the stability of society. In any case, as a novelist she was not interested in systems as such; she was only interested in the way people behaved within them. In *Northanger Abbey* she tells us that a novelist must convey "the most thorough knowledge of human nature" and "the happiest delineation of its varieties" (38). Church organization was one of many backgrounds against which she revealed the personal characteristics of individuals involved. She followed Samuel Johnson in believing that a good novel should improve as well as entertain, but any improvement she may have had in mind was in the realm of behaviour.⁴

Among the friends and acquaintances whose comments she listed was a Mr. Sherer, whom she had met at her brother Edward's house in Kent. The Revd. Joseph Godfrey Sherer had become vicar of the parish of Godmersham in 1811 and Jane had liked him from the first time of meeting him. She must have been disappointed to find that although he had enjoyed several of her novels (including *Pride and*

Prejudice) he was “displeased” by her “pictures of clergymen” (*L*, No. 89, 226; *MW* 437). One wonders why he viewed them with so general a disapproval. Perhaps he disliked the impression they gave that clergymen had almost nothing to do. Mr. Collins spends most of his day either gardening or looking out of the window for Miss de Bourgh’s phaeton; during the few days a week that Henry Tilney spends in his parish he has time for his dogs and his garden, and he seems to find no difficulty in staying for more than a month at Bath awaiting his father’s decision to leave; Mr. Elton can hurry off to London with Harriet’s portrait and miss no engagement more serious than a meeting of the whist club (*P&P* 168; *NA* 138-39, 157, 175, 214; *E* 49, 68). Jane’s letter to the Revd. James Stanier Clarke rejecting his invitation to write a novel specifically about a clergyman shows that she would not have trusted herself to produce a convincing account of a clergyman’s more serious activities even if she had thought them an appropriate subject for a novel, which she did not: a suggestion she once made to her nephew Edward that they should get hold of one of his Uncle Henry’s sermons to fill out a chapter of a novel was intended as a joke (*L*, No. 132 D, 306; No. 146, 323).

Perhaps Mr. Sherer was better pleased some years later when he read in *Persuasion* the glowing tribute to Dr. Shirley of Uppercross who has worn himself out in years and years of doing good. But then, *Persuasion* also features Charles Hayter, who is introduced to us approvingly by the author as a young clergyman determined to become—what? not a great pastor or preacher but “a scholar and a gentleman.” Indeed, with the possible exception of Mr. Collins, whose time at the university has been misspent, and of Mr. Elton, whose behaviour in polite society leaves much to be desired, Jane Austen’s clergymen can be said to fit very well the description Wilberforce once gave of a typical Church of England clergyman of his day: “a sensible, well-informed and educated, polished, nobleman’s and gentleman’s house-frequenting, literary and chess-playing divine.”⁵ John Henry Newman, long before he turned to Rome, denounced the whole lot as “vile creatures” and criticized Jane Austen for her failure to appreciate what he regarded as the true nature of priesthood.⁶ She would have disliked his high churchmen as much as she mistrusted evangelicals, on the grounds that they lacked a sense of humour and a sense of proportion in human affairs. She saw nothing wrong with the attributes listed by Wilberforce, which were shared by her adored father and could have been found also in his friend the Revd. I. P. George Lefroy at Ashe and in many more of her clergy acquaintances. Mr. Sherer, however, may have disapproved of the genial image as much as Wilberforce did. He was by no means socially inept himself (Jane Austen tells us

that he “dined very prettily” at Edward Knight’s table when the formidable George Moore, son of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, was staying in the house), but he seems to have been distinctly earnest. He was about to take the unusually conscientious step of returning for three years to his former parish of Westwell, which he held in plurality with Godmersham, in order to be able to evict a curate whom he had heard was unsatisfactory. Having taken to Mr. Sherer socially, Jane was surprised to discover that he was somewhat fervent, or as she put it “eager,” in his preaching. He had perhaps decided that he would have to liven up the church’s services in order to meet the challenge from the Methodists, who were stronger in Kent than in any other of the southern counties Jane Austen knew (*L*, No. 90, 231; No. 93, 243).

Mrs. Wroughton’s especial dislike of Mr. Collins and Mr. Elton is nevertheless easier to understand. They are in a category of their own in that Jane Austen fully intended her readers to despise them. They tell us a good deal about the clergy of their day, but it seems unlikely that this was why she created them; her incentive was almost certainly literary rather than didactic. She invented Mr. Collins in the 1790s when she was experimenting as a novelist.⁷ She probably already cherished a secret hope of becoming a published author, and what surer way could there be of appealing to readers than by presenting them with a comic character whose features, though exaggerated, they could easily recognise? It was a common complaint in country districts like hers that the clergy kowtowed to the great landowners and thereby encouraged them in arrogance, snobishness and tyrannical behaviour. Generations of children, brought up with *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes* as their only reading book, remembered the story of Parson Smith, who was forced to follow the dictates of Sir Timothy Gripe lest his tithes should be taken away. Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh were a partnership guaranteed to produce both appreciation and merriment. Playing on popular prejudices may not be a very laudable game, but hopefully it was forgivable in a young author seeking to gain approval, for Jane Austen indulged in it a second time in the same novel with regard to the militia. In 1796-1797, when the first version of *Pride and Prejudice* was written, the militia was vital to Britain’s defence. The government was doing its best to secure more volunteers. Jane Austen knew enough about militia service from her brother Henry to have been able to promote its values, yet she encouraged instead the prejudices rife in the countryside against young officers who had broken away from the restraints of family and neighbourhood and were only too likely to leave behind them bad debts, broken hearts and even worse evidence of irresponsible behaviour whenever they moved on.

Mr. Elton was required to fulfil a different purpose. The plot of *Emma* demanded a male character whose social status was sufficiently fluid to arouse mixed hopes regarding his marital designs. A clergyman, even if his origins were obscure (we are not told who offered Mr. Elton the Highbury living), would have been admitted to gentry circles by virtue of his profession. The days when a fictional clergyman could be married off to a dairymaid were over, but he could still be presented as less choosy than a young gentleman of impeccable pedigree. It would be reasonable to have Emma Woodhouse scheme to marry him to a protégé of gentle demeanour but illegitimate birth. He himself with equal verisimilitude could be given higher ambitions. A parson with a benefice had much to offer along with his hand in marriage. He had a rent-free house and an "improvable" income. His wife would have the opportunity to pose as the Lady Bountiful of the parish and she would be admitted to the best society the neighbourhood could provide.

It remains to be decided to what extent these two fictional characters typified the clergy of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It is hard to believe that anyone could have been as awful as Mr. Collins, yet soon after he made his appearance in print an old friend accused Jane Austen of portraying an individual. She was horrified at the suggestion—not, however, because she believed there could be nobody like Mr. Collins but because she regarded the copying of known persons as an infringement of privacy.⁸

The partnership between Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh is a caricature both of the relationship which existed between clergy and landowners and of the views which could be found in the countryside concerning it. The potential hostility which existed among farming communities towards the clergy on the one hand and the landowners on the other was rooted in the fact that farmers paid tithe to the former and rent to the latter. In most areas of the country for most of the time, matters were arranged amicably: there is no sign of antipathy from Hugh Digweed, who farmed a large part of the land at Steventon, either towards his rector, the Revd. George Austen, or towards Thomas Knight, his landlord. In times of hardship, however, and in areas where the personalities involved were less congenial, it was inevitable that stories would be spread abroad of clergy and landowners combining to grind down the faces of the farmers. Cobbett listened to such stories gleefully when he heard them on his "rural rides." In fact the interests of the two parties were not easily compatible, as Cobbett himself recognized.⁹ If tithes were excessive, farmers would not be able to pay their rents, and vice versa; if both were excessive they would not be able to pay at all. It therefore behoved clergy and landowners to agree on reasonable terms. Mr. Collins quite properly recognizes that "The rector of a parish . . . must

make such an agreement for tythes as may be beneficial to himself and not offensive to his patron." His only fault is that he gives the task priority over all other clerical duties (*P&P* 101).

In this as in most other respects Mr. Collins is the caricature of a good parson rather than of a bad one. He does all the things expected of a clergyman, but spoils the effect either by boasting of perfectly ordinary activities or by engaging in them to excess. He performs the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England meticulously, but surprises Elizabeth Bennet by thinking it necessary to say so. He rightly determines to show respect for his patron, but respect in his vocabulary means adulation. He resides in his parish and regularly visits his parishioners, but carries his attentions to the point of interference. He is justly proud of his position as a clergyman, but thinks that it gives him the right to impose inappropriate advice on persons towards whom he has no pastoral duty in situations of which he has no first-hand knowledge. In other words, he fails to exercise the discriminatory powers which were known at the time as "taste" or "sense." This is a personality defect, and there can be no statistics to tell us to what extent it was shared by other members of the clergy. Jane Austen attributes it, in part at least, to the "self-conceit" born of having secured a handsome living at an early age. The majority of clergy could at least plead immunity from any such hazard. Mr. Collins had been remarkably lucky, as Jane Austen readily admits. Having neglected the opportunity to cultivate useful acquaintances at university, where many young men found future patrons, "a fortunate chance had recommended him to Lady Catherine de Bourgh when the living of Hunsford was vacant" (70). This was a most unlikely occurrence. Far from obtaining a valuable living at the age of 24 or 25, many men had to wait as long as 10 or 15 years before obtaining a benefice of any kind. Some failed even to obtain a curacy, and either went into teaching or disappeared from view by entering into some occupation for which a clerical qualification was not required.

There is a certain amount of statistical information against which to assess Mr. Collins's biggest fault, his mercenary mindedness. This showed itself in a number of ways which were not particularly connected with his profession: for instance, his delight in the architecture of Rosings is based on the amount it cost Sir Lewis de Bourgh to glaze the windows on the main front, and his estimate of Lady Catherine's greatness derives from the number of carriages she possesses. However, it also prompts him into frequent attendance at Rosings in the hope of obtaining further patronage, and this raises the whole question of plural holdings (169).

The fact that many of the clergy held more than one benefice is often regarded as the greatest evil tolerated by the Church of England at the time. The extent of the practice should not be exaggerated: only

about a third of the clergy obtained more than one parish. It was nevertheless very much in Jane Austen's mind—the one-third of the clergy who were pluralists including, as it did, her father, his neighbour the Revd. I. P. George Lefroy, and her godfather the Revd. Samuel Cooke at Great Bookham. She was fully aware of the pastoral problems involved, since she regarded the presence of a residential clergyman as important and it was clearly impossible for any incumbent to live in more than one parish at once (*MP* 247-48). She never tackled the question head on in her novels, although Mr. Morland in *Northanger Abbey* is a pluralist and Edmund Bertram seems likely to become one when he is lucky enough to acquire the living at Mansfield just as he is beginning to find Thornton Lacey insufficiently lucrative (*NA* 13; *MP* 473). From references to Henry Tilney's arrangements at Woodston and comments on the career of Charles Hayter in *Persuasion* it appears that Jane Austen was satisfied if a curate was employed to live in a parish from which the incumbent was absent for most or all of the time (*NA* 221; *P* 78, 102-03). She never condemned pluralism out of hand, since it was often the only way for a clergyman to secure a reasonable standard of living. Many parishes were tiny, the glebe inadequate and the tithes poor. The Revd. George Austen, even when he had added the parish of Deane to his original holding at Steventon, had to supplement his income by taking in boarding pupils until his sons were off his hands. Jane Austen in *Sense and Sensibility* makes much of Colonel Brandon's revelation that the rectorship of Delaford would not enable Edward Ferrars to support a wife: Edward's mother has to come up with £10,000 to supplement his income before he can marry Elinor Dashwood (284, 374). It was nevertheless perfectly clear that some clergymen did from greed what others did from necessity. They may be said to have included Jane's brother James, who was one of a very small number of clergy (about 6 per cent of the total body) holding three or more benefices. The Revd. William Collins seems set to join the ranks of the compulsive pluralists. His income at Hunsford is perfectly adequate, as he is fond of telling us; yet he goes on courting the abominable Lady Catherine in case she should have more livings in her gift. Mr. Bennet, who has summed him up with his usual acumen, is in a position to give him the ironical advice, when Lady Catherine falls out with Darcy: "if I were you, I would stand by the nephew. He has more to give" (383).

Mr. Elton's faults, like Mr. Collins's, are also to a large extent personal: he is not a gentleman. He judges by appearances. His wife's showiness blinds him to her vulgarity. He has "smartened up" his vicarage, but not "improved" it in a way which Jane Austen would have accepted as showing a proper regard for his trusteeship (83). Alarmingly, Ben Lefroy's opinion on reading *Emma* was to the

effect that Mr. Elton was admirably drawn, which would seem to indicate that a young man from a clergy family had known others like him (*MW* 438). Again there are no serviceable statistics, but it is worth noting that Mr. Elton is a social climber, and the position of a clergyman at the time lent itself to social climbing. In the early decades of the eighteenth century, the clergy came mainly from the small farming and shopkeeping classes. By mid-century, many were coming from professional and even lower gentry circles. By the end of the eighteenth century, considerable landowners such as Sir Thomas Bertram and General Tilney were putting their sons into the church. As the level rose, clergymen were more readily accepted into local elites, and recruits from the lower echelons were likely to find themselves moving in higher circles than those to which they had been accustomed. In a small community such as Highbury, which had few inhabitants that could be considered socially presentable, even a Mr. Elton (who was “without any alliances but in trade”) would soon find himself invited to play cards with a Mr. Woodhouse and attend a party at the Westons’ (136). Having arrived at this eminence, a standard way of securing the position was to marry into the new circle. A Miss Woodhouse with £30,000 would have been above the touch of any Mr. Elton, but a Charlotte Lucas would probably have been glad to have him. In the tight little communities of rural England, women’s opportunities for marriage were not great.

Mr. Elton’s cruelty to Harriet calls into question the sincerity of his Christian commitment. Aspirants to Holy Orders were not tested for their sense of vocation. Some 60 per cent of graduates from Oxford and Cambridge went into the church and, whilst there were few examples among them of notorious cynicism or loose living, many candidates with no more than ordinary religious leanings can be expected to have regarded the clerical profession as a job like any other. Mr. Elton does everything expected of a parish priest. He visits the sick and supports the needy; the magistrates and overseers are continually seeking his advice; his conduct in church is admired by the whole parish. No less a judge than Mr. Knightley says that he is “a very respectable vicar of Highbury” (66). Emma Woodhouse may not enjoy having him to dinner but she has no objection to his performing her marriage service. We learn from *Emma* that the importance of the clergy setting a moral example was beginning to be felt, but in spite of the Reformation the main body of the Church of England was still Catholic enough to believe that God’s grace flowed mainly from the Sacraments, to which category marriage was widely assumed to belong.

Fears of godlessness and revolution proved to be unfounded: England became more religious as the nineteenth century proceeded, and revolution never occurred. Yet it must be admitted that Jane

Austen's pictures of clergymen did a kind of damage in the long run. Generations of historians have cited them as evidence of the worldliness of the clergy and have picked on Mr. Collins as a revelation of the unmitigated evils of patronage. Only in recent years have historians begun to assess the conduct of the clergy with fewer judgmental prejudices, thereby making it easier to appreciate Jane Austen's sharp but essentially good-natured comments.¹⁰

NOTES

- ¹ In addition to possessing copies of V. Knox, *Elegant Extracts in Prose*, and W. Vickers, *Companion to the Altar*, she was familiar with Thomas Secker's *Lectures on the Catechism* (see David Gilson, *A Bibliography of Jane Austen* [London 1982] 433, 445 and Gene Koppel, *The Religious Dimension of Jane Austen's Novels* [Ann Arbor, MI 1988] 7). She referred to Thomas Sherlock as her favourite sermon writer (*Letters*, No. 108, 278). Her respect for the *Book of Common Prayer* led her to attribute criticism of its "redundancies and repetitions" to the superficial Henry Crawford (*Mansfield Park* 340).
- ² John Lyford is referred to in *Letters*, No. 1, 2 and the Hon. and Revd. Dr. Thomas James Twistleton in No. 89, 228.
- ³ *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, edited by his sons, Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce (2 vols, London 1840) ii, 272-73.
- ⁴ For Johnson's views on the novel, see for example *The Idler*, No. 92.
- ⁵ *Persuasion*, 78, 102; Muriel Jaeger, *Before Victoria* (London 1956) 34.
- ⁶ *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. C. S. Desain et al. (vols i-vi, Oxford 1978-1984; xi-xxii, London 1961-1972; xxiii-xxxii, Oxford 1973-1977) vi, 46.
- ⁷ The manuscript of the original version has not survived. However, since all that Jane Austen tells us about the changes she made prior to publication is that she shortened the text, it may be assumed that the chief characters were already in place.
- ⁸ R. W. Chapman, "Jane Austen's Friend Mrs. Barrett," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 4/3 (December 1949), 171-74.
- ⁹ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides . . . during the years 1821 to 1832* (2 vols, London 1893) i, 133-135.
- ¹⁰ The most important revisionary work is Peter Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and Problems of Reform, 1700-1840* (Cambridge 1989).

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Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (3rd ed., Oxford and New York 1995). Page numbers from these works are given in parentheses in my text.

A detailed account of the condition of the clergy at the time of the novels can be found in my *Jane Austen and the Clergy* (London and Rio Grande 1994).