# SARAH SCOTT:

# RELIGION IN *MILLENIUM HALL* AND *THE HISTORY OF SIR GEORGE ELLISON*

by

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I dedicate this thesis to my role models, my mom and dad.

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ABSTRACT

Sarah Scott (1723-95), an eighteenth-century writer, historian, and social reformer, wrote in a variety of genres: romance, *The History of Cornelia* (1750); history, *The History of Mechlenburgh* (1762); utopia, *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762); and novels, *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766) and *The Test of Filial Duty* (1772) – to name a few. Forgotten for almost 250 years, she has begun to attract some critical attention in recent decades, almost all of which focuses on *A Description of Millenium Hall* and even less frequently, *The History of Sir George Ellison*. One subject that has hardly received any attention in this reevaluation is religion.

This thesis attempts to show that Christianity – more specifically, Anglicanism – is the basis for the utopian social vision of *Millenium Hall* and, more than a decade before the mainstreaming of the abolitionist movement, for Scott's critique of slavery and the slave trade in *The History of Sir George Ellison*, the two texts in which Scott's religious principles manifest themselves most clearly. Following an introductory chapter which briefly addresses relevant biographical contexts and introduces the historical and literary contexts in which Scott has been discussed by scholars, the chapter on *Millenium Hall* shows how Scott's utopian vision of a landed estate owned and run by women is based on a combination of Enlightenment rationalism and latitudinarian principles. The novel offers, in other words, the construction of a proto-feminist utopian community based on the reconciliation of reason and faith. The following chapter, which focuses on *The History of Sir George Ellison,* discusses the ways in which the novel offers a critique

of slavery from the same perspective, that of religion. Just as the primary focus of *Millenium Hall* is the construction of a secluded utopian community meant, eventually, to be spread across England – Scott suggests that any estate can, and should be, run like Millenium Hall – so *Sir George Ellison* suggests that the ameliorationist perspective of the eponymous protagonist, embodied by his planation, should be widely imitated.

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# INTRODUCTION

## SARAH SCOTT:

## RELIGION IN *MILLENIUM HALL* AND *THE HISTORY OF SIR GEORGE ELLISON*

Sarah Scott (1723-95), an eighteenth-century writer, historian, and social reformer, wrote in a variety of genres: romance, *The History of Cornelia* (1750); history, *The History of Mechlenburgh* (1762); utopia, *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762); and the novel *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766) and *The Test of Filial Duty* (1772) – to name a few. Through her sister, Elizabeth Montagu, who was a prominent member of the Bluestocking circle, Scott was also marginally associated with the Bluestockings, a group of eighteenth-century women concerned with social and educational reform.[1]

Only within the past twenty years have critics initiated serious study of Sarah Scott. Overshadowed by other authors of her time, the originality of her literary and social visions is finally being analyzed. Though Scott wrote in a variety of genres, almost all criticism analyzing her work focuses on *A Description of Millenium Hall* with

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1. The Bluestockings were small gatherings of women who were concerned with bettering women's opportunities through educational and professional opportunities, not available to women at the time, in society. They began by focusing on "different strands of female advocacy, wider social opportunities, and female aspirations to a life of the mind" (Myers 149). Consistently writing letters to each other, they encouraged one another in their endeavors to publish. For Scott's association with the Bluestockings, see Eger, Myers, and Pohl and Schellenberg.

occasional essays on *The History of Sir George Ellison*, though often only in connection with *Millenium Hall*. (*The History of Sir George Ellison* was written after *Millenium Hall*, but it is both its prequel and sequel as the events in it predate *and* postdate the events in *Millenium Hall*.) Scott scholars have primarily remained concerned with the utopian community in and the feminist perspective of *A Description of Millenium Hall.* Because of Scott's involvement with the Bluestockings, *Millenium Hall* has been categorized as a feminist novel, which centers on an estate run by women.[2] Scott's association with the Bluestockings and her advocacy of social reform in favor of female leadership aligns her with feminist beliefs. Critics like Elizabeth Eger have made connections between Scott's personal feminist beliefs and her novels, attempting to prove that Scott used her novels to promote feminism. Some scholars (Nicole Pohl, Nicholle Jordan) have even connected Scott's presentation of gender with her creation of utopia in *Millenium Hall*. The sparse criticism that does not focus on *Millenium Hall* spans a wide range of topics: economics, benevolence, character study, antiquarianism, *The Man of Real Sensibility* (1774) – the abridgment of *Sir George Ellison*; nevertheless, none of these topics have been studied in depth.

One subject that, despite growing interest in Scott, has hardly received any attention is religion, which, as this thesis will show, was one of Scott's crucial concerns.

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2. Myers explains why the Bluestockings are thought of as early feminists, citing their "rise in 'feminist consciousness'" (Myers 120). For an explanation on the evidence connecting the Bluestockings to other early feminist writers, see Myers.

Some Scott scholars have touched on the subject; for example, Betty Rizzo and Gary Kelly have identified religious elements as they appear in her novels but have neither analyzed Scott's motive in using religious rhetoric nor offered sustained readings of the role of religion in Scott's novels. Though Scott's connections with the Bluestockings are being addressed in current criticism, the significance of Christianity in Scott's personal life has not received similar attention. Because of this, the religious aspect of Scott's novels has also been largely disregarded. The purpose of this thesis is to begin to remedy this neglect.

The role of religion in *A Description of Millenium Hall* and its prequel/sequel, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, has been underestimated. Very few connections have been made between Scott's religious beliefs and her presentation of those values in her novels. The obvious significance of religion in Scott's personal life and her social reforms suggests that a study of the role of religion in her novels might be a rewarding endeavor. This thesis offers a reading of *Millenium Hall* tracing Anglicanism to the development of the novel's major concerns. *Millenium Hall* shows how Scott's utopian vision of a landed estate owned and run by women is based on a combination of Enlightenment rationalism values and latitudinarian principles. Furthermore, this thesis suggests that *The History of Sir George Ellison* expands on *Millenium Hall*'s focus on religion by offering, more than a decade before the mainstreaming of the abolitionist movement, a religious critique of slavery and the slave trade. I present the two novels as making similar moves. *Millenium Hall* is a novel about a landed estate which women run

on religious principles.  Just as the primary focus of *Millenium Hall* is the construction of a secluded utopian community meant, eventually, to be spread across England – Scott suggests that any estate can, and should be, run like Millenium Hall – so *Sir George Ellison* suggests that the ameliorationist perspective of the eponymous protagonist, embodied by his plantation, should be widely imitated.  Each of the following chapters focuses on one of these novels, in which Scott's religious principles manifest themselves most clearly.  The first chapter addresses the role of religion in Scott's *Millenium Hall* while the second chapter focuses on *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766).

The first chapter focuses on *Millenium Hall,* as the novel is Scott's most overtly religious text.[3]  Scott adheres to the Anglican church, and her Anglican views can be traced in a reading of *Millenium Hall*.  Like many Anglican writers of the period, especially those following latitudinarian principles,[4] Scott reconciles reason and religion

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3. Scott's *The History of Cornelia*, for example, is a romance novel and does not include any religious content.

4. In the eighteenth century, Latitudinarianism was a prominent philosophy in the Anglican church.  Latitudinarians believed human reason and the Holy Spirit (faith) to be appropriate guides in regards to religion, but they did not place importance on enthusiasm.  Latitudinarians also embraced tolerance and benevolence: "the latitudinarian divines of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries [...] argued that man was benevolent. In a significant essay, R. S. Crane has sketched the views that united them" (qtd. in Green 159).  For an extensive description of latitudinarians' influence on the discourse of benevolence in the eighteenth century, see R. S. Crane.

in the lives of the women of *Millenium Hall*. She also works as a social reformer, and her role as such is based on religion. The community Scott creates in *Millenium Hall* purposefully reflects her religious-based, social reformist goals because she is specifically concerned with illustrating how religion can affect this world, as opposed to the next world. Rather than address how religion affects the self, or individual, Scott is interested in showing the social implication of her religious beliefs. In creating the estate of Millenium Hall, Scott creates a utopian community founded on religious principles.

The second chapter directs attention to *The History of Sir George Ellison.* This novel addresses a different topic, that of slavery, from the same perspective, that of religion. Scott introduces Ellison, a benevolent slaveowner, to serve as a model to her readers. Ellison is governed by religion, just as are the women of Millenium Hall; however, whereas the primary focus of *Millenium Hall* is the construction of a utopian community based on reason and faith, *Sir George Ellison* constructs an ameliorationist view, with a focus on slavery, based on religious principles. Scott's views on slavery are evident in this novel and her position as an amelioration advocate is quite clear. She uses *Sir George Ellison* to depict her views on slavery's wrongness and to portray her support of benevolent actions, which, for Scott, are founded upon religious principles. Indeed, Scott not only advocates ameliorationism, but she actually opposes slavery in *The History of Sir George Ellison* despite the fact that Ellison remains a slaveowner.

# CHAPTER I

## *MILLENIUM HALL*:

## ANGLICANISM AND THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Sarah Scott has not been an author of interest to critics until recently. Having been overshadowed by other writers who published during her time, Scott has only become an author of interest in the past twenty years as critics have begun to analyze her innovative ideas more carefully. Because of this, little criticism has been published regarding Scott's work and virtually no criticism has directly focused on the religious content in her novels. A primary concern in *Millenium Hall* is religion, and to overlook such a subject neglects a topic of considerable interest to Scott. This chapter offers a reading of *A Description of Millenium Hall* focusing on religion, specifically Anglicanism, as Scott was a member of the Church of England. This chapter examines the significance of religion in Scott's stance on the reasonableness of Christianity, her work as a social reformer as reflected in *Millenium Hall*, and her concern for the social sphere in her novels. First, I will use Laura Mooneyham White's work on Anglicanism in Jane Austen as a framework for my argument on Scott.

To create a framework for presenting the significance religion has in Scott's novel, I will use Laura Mooneyham White's *Jane Austen's Anglicanism*, as it clearly explains Anglicanism and how it can be connected to the novel. White examines Jane Austen from a religious perspective. In her book, Laura Mooneyham White discusses Anglicanism, to which Jane Austen adhered, and then offers evidence of a religious

aspect being present in her novels, which until recently, has been regarded as practically nonexistent. An understanding of Anglicanism as defined by White in regards to Austen is important for the purpose of discussing Scott's novels, thus a short summary of Anglicanism follows.

Because White's explanation of Anglicanism is an acceptable mainstream definition of the term, it will be used for this chapter's purposes as well. The eighteenth-century Anglican church stressed the importance of reason over enthusiasm, or "religious zeal" (9). Compared to the earlier civil war, the eighteenth century was a time of peace (9). During the eighteenth century, "[r]ational approaches to religion dominated" (12) and ecclesiastical concerns did not take priority. Anglicans were primarily concerned with rational faith. The Church did not want emotion to prevail over a reasonable approach to their orthodox religion. In fact, Anglicans were quite against enthusiasm/ emotion (10). The Anglican church was concerned with presenting "rationalist arguments against the acceptance of a religion [Deism] stripped of most supernaturalism" (28) and presenting Anglicanism's reasonableness in "that attention to probabilities, both cosmological and psychological, led one to affirm Scriptural accounts of both the Old and New Testaments" (28). White cites Anglicans to have ensured "they had fully reasonable grounds for believing in Christian doctrine and Scripture" (29).

Contrary to some scholars' view that because Austen's novels do not directly reference Christianity she thus ignores Christianity altogether, White explains that Austen does in fact create a religious aspect in her novels by creating a Christian atmosphere.

According to White, several scholars have critiqued Austen as not having been a sincere Christian: "One of the most longstanding debates among Austen critics is over the question of whether Austen's Christianity 'counts,' that is, whether it truly shaped and affected her fiction" (5). White names D. W. Harding as having deemed Austen "a nominal Christian" (5), F. R. Leavis and Laurence Lerner as not having seen Christianity as present in her novels, and Avrom Fleishman to have seen Austen's novels as humanistic, not religious. White also names critics who oppose such views and "acknowledge the importance and centrality of Austen's Anglican beliefs to her work" (6), including Irene Collins and Alastair Duckworth. White positions "Austen's work and life firmly within the contexts of Anglicanism [...] focusing particularly on the ways her Anglican worldview, informed by that particular historical moment, affected her fiction" (7). She argues that Austen assumes "that her characters (and readers) go to church regularly and [...] that her characters (and readers) pray in private" (59) while acknowledging several instances in which characters pray in specific situations, such as Captain Wentworth's prayer after Louisa's accident in *Persuasion*. Additionally, she explains that Austen uses specific words, such as "sin" and "evil" in her text "both in religious and secular ways"; however, she "very rarely quotes Scripture" (63).

Though White explains the world in Austen's novels to have a Christian presence, she also addresses the fact that Austen did not deliberately or directly reference Anglicanism, and she provides two reasons for Austen having intentionally kept religious language from her text. One reason White suggests is that Austen thought "she would

bore, and possibly lose, her readers if she was too religiously didactic" (64). Thus Austen, having refrained from referring directly to the Bible, was able to reach a larger number of readers in hopes of having at least some type of religious impact on their lives. White explains that "[t]he ordinary behavior of her characters shows their moral and spiritual status, and their ability as free creatures to change and grow into greater Christianity maturity, an ability especially vouchsafed her heroines and heroes" (66). Austen also likely omitted Scripture from her text "because she felt serious subjects belonged in wholly serious venues, not in the popular arena of fiction" (65). The reason Austen omitted religious rhetoric was so that she might portray in her novels that "[l]iving in the real world [...] is the best test of one's Christian values, and the novels rest on this foundation of Christian purpose" (66).

My argument about Scott follows White's argument about Austen in that, just as in Jane Austen's novels, Anglicanism and its reliance on reason is the foundation upon which everything rests in Scott's *Millenium Hall*. However, Scott, as opposed to Austen who does not directly include specific references to Anglican religious positions in her novels, includes a religious dimension in *Millenium Hall* much more deliberately and overtly. Like Austen, Scott was heavily influenced by the Anglican Church. In "The Plausible Selves of Sarah Scott (1721-95)," Nicole Pohl identifies Scott to be "a Bluestocking reformer committed to Anglican philanthropy" (134) because Scott clearly depicts her Anglican beliefs in her novels. The eighteenth-century Anglican church's belief that "Christianity is so implausible that reason requires one to accept it" (White 31)

is reflected in Scott's *Millenium Hall*; her religion is attained through reason and excludes enthusiasm. Scott's Christian beliefs are directly reflected in her literary works.

Scott accepts the Anglican belief in the reasonableness of Christianity, and her novels facilitate a coexistence of faith and reason, two elements that had reunited by the eighteenth century. Differing religious beliefs and contrasting philosophical ideas caused conflict between reason and faith's brief alliance in the eighteenth century; however, during the eighteenth century, "reason was often an accompaniment to religion, a resource existing alongside faith rather than force in opposition" (Walker 39). John Locke was a primary supporter of reason regarding Christianity; he argued in support of this in his book *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. While some eighteenth-century philosophers, such as Henry Dodwell, believed "that reason cannot be the principle of faith" (Stephen 146), other philosophers with which Scott positions herself, such as John Locke and John Toland, rely on Christianity's reasonableness: "Locke had argued that Christianity was reasonable. Toland added that there was 'no nonsense in Christianity'" (88).

Scott deliberately supports Anglicanism's belief in reasonableness in *Millenium Hall* as is evident in her direct references to reason. After enjoying afternoon tea with the women of the house the second day of the men's visit to Millenium Hall, Mrs. Morgan directs George Ellison and Mr. Lamont's attention to the surroundings of the house. As the men tour the house's grounds, Mrs. Mancel takes the opportunity to explain to the men the importance of society's reliance on reason: "The love, as well as the pleasures of

society, is founded in reason, and cannot exist in those minds which are filled with irrational pursuits" (Scott, *Millenium Hall* 111). Seeing the beauty and riches of the estate – deer, hares, "all sorts of game [...] good dairy" (110) – Ellison remarks on the temptation that would ensue for an individual to completely extricate him or herself from society. Lady Mary explains that such is not possible at Millenium Hall: "Reason wishes for communication and improvement; benevolence longs for objects on which to exert itself; the social comforts of friendship are so necessary to our happiness, that it would be impossible not to enjoy them" (110). Sociability plays a crucial role in the eighteenth century, and Scott's reason is intertwined with the social.

Like Locke, Scott does not depict the idea that faith can be obtained instantly in *Millenium Hall*; rather, she shows that reason must influence one's decision to believe in Christianity. In Acts, Saul, a persecutor and killer of Christians, is overcome by "a light from heaven" (*Holy Bible King James Version* Acts 9:3) and is blinded as he travels to Damascus. After regaining his sight, he went immediately to the synagogue to preach that Jesus is the Son of God. Saul's transformation in becoming Paul, a loyal apostle to Christ, was instantaneous. Scott's religion, however, is obtained through reason, such as in the case of Lamont. Lamont, a young man about town concerned primarily with selfish desires, spends the entire novel learning about Millenium Hall's regulations and questioning the women about their practices. As Mrs. Mancel explains the women's pursuits to serve the poor, Lamont questions what "a poor man" can do for him: "I may relieve him, but how can he return the obligation?" (113). Mrs. Mancel explains that

"[t]he greatest pleasure this world can give us is that of being beloved" (113). After having witnessed the day-to-day workings of the house, the women's servanthood, and their religious' pursuits, Lamont is discovered by Ellison to be studying the Scriptures at the end of the novel. Lamont declares that the women's religion must be the true religion. He has not experienced instantaneous transformation like Saul, but rather, has reasoned through his discovery of Christianity as the true religion.

Scott was interested in social reform and was able to actively engage in reformist discussions, and, more importantly, actual reform efforts, because of her association with the Bluestockings. Betty A. Schellenberg establishes Scott to have influenced English society by way of her novels which call for social reform, naming her one of the most intellectual eighteenth-century women in her book *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Schellenberg declares Scott to be "[a] highly educated and well-read intellectual, a frequently published author in a range of genres, and the co-author of a 55-year-long correspondence with Elizabeth" (77). Elizabeth Montagu, Scott's sister, became enormously wealthy in marrying Edward Montagu, an English landowner. Because of Edward Montagu's wealth, Elizabeth Montagu was able to lead many Bluestocking activities, such as hosting salon gatherings. Through Montagu, Scott became marginally involved with the Bluestockings. Elizabeth Eger's *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* does not deem Scott a prominent member of the Bluestocking circle, yet she examines Scott's work because of her relation to Elizabeth Montagu, one of the nine members of the

Bluestockings on whom she focuses her book. Eger discusses Scott's writing to illustrate the concerns of the Bluestocking women. Eger relates Montagu's desire to create a fellowship among women writers by hosting the Bluestockings to Scott's *Millenium Hall* as she explains Scott to have illustrated "a female community supported by charity and social compassion" (116) in her novel. Unlike Montagu who hosted upper-class salon gatherings, Scott concerned herself with creating a social experiment of radically different ideals not limited to the upper class.

Scott works as a social reformer, as described by Rizzo, and Scott's reformist ideas are based on religion. While scholars like Rizzo see Scott as a reformer, they neglect the Christian basis of her interest in and ideas about social reform. In *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women*, a study of relationships among eighteenth-century women which includes a chapter citing Scott as a social reformer, Rizzo provides historical background about Scott. Because of the difficulties Scott experienced in her own life, Scott "reached the point of altruistic behavior" (306) to help women in similar difficult situations. Rizzo makes connections between situations Scott experienced in her own life and reflections of those situations in her novels. One obvious similarity between Scott's life and *Millenium Hall* is Scott's attempt to set up and maintain an establishment similar to Millenium Hall. In May 1754, Barbara Montagu, Scott's dear friend (no relation to Elizabeth), bought a house in Beatheaston, and Elizabeth Montagu, after visiting Scott, "described the house a kind of a convent" (309). Elizabeth describes Scott in a letter to have "become a truly serious

Christian" (309) saying, "My sister seems very happy, it has pleased God to lead her to truth, by the road of affliction" (qtd. in Rizzo, *Companions* 309). Scott's daily life looked much like the routine of the women of *Millenium Hall*; she "rose early, read prayers to the household, and then sat down to cut out and prepare work for twelve poor girls whose schooling the two women paid for" (309). Rizzo describes the house as "an imaginative reconstruction of what genuine Christianity might produce if it had ever been realized" (307).

As a Christian, Scott incorporated the faith-based practices from her own life in the creation of Millenium Hall, the nucleus of a society she believed was possible in this world; thus her Christian beliefs are reflected in *Millenium Hall*. Though often analyzed as an alternative society, Millenium Hall is meant to be less a utopian vision than a proposal for actual reform; in other words, Scott creates an idealized society which she intended her eighteenth-century audience to recognize as a model. *Millenium Hall* suggests that Ellison and Lamont could replicate an estate such as Millenium Hall, and, indeed, Ellison, referring specifically to the example of Millenium Hall, does. Scott clearly believed a Millenium Hall-type estate – a worldly millenium – could exist as her own was near Bath. Montagu likely suspected Scott to have become eccentric in her faith because she pointedly describes her, as though relieved at her normality, as still having been "calm and rational" (Rizzo, *Companions* 310). Rather than set her newfound-lifestyle in reclusive form, Scott did not stop attending the theater and balls nor did she create her convent-like house in the country, where it might have been traditionally

thought appropriate. Instead, Scott decidedly remained in "fashionable Bath life" (310). However, Scott knew the utopia created in *Millenium Hall* must be somewhat geographically separated, as it is not a reality, but a vision of possible reality. Millenium Hall is a large landed estate, not a small operation as was Scott's created estate. It is a kind of experiment that must be developed in pure experimental conditions.

Scott was not the first eighteenth-century author to use the novel to make religious arguments. Daniel Defoe, for example, incorporates religious language in his novel *Roxana,* and his more famous novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Because Defoe's religious focus centers on the individual's relationship with God, I will use Defoe to show how Scott's interest in religion does not focus on the individual, but rather, on a clear social component. Defoe uses religion in *Roxana* and in *Robinson Crusoe* as he examines the individual, and his use of religion contrasts Scott's in her presentation of concern for how religion can affect the social sphere.

Defoe uses religious language in examining the inner struggle of Roxana in his novel *Roxana*. The plot is entirely concerned with the inner workings of the self, not with a larger social vision. Defoe makes one of his first allusions to the Bible in one of Roxana's initial weak moments after her husband abandons her and her children at the beginning of the text: "But the Misery of my own Circumstances hardned my Heart against my own Flesh and Blood" (19). Roxana's pride and her feeling of superiority cause her to become increasingly concerned for herself when she realizes she might starve should her children remain with her. Knowing his audience to recognize religious

allusions, Defoe creates Roxana to echo the same struggle Pharaoh experiences when he hardens his heart when God instructs him to free His people, the Israelites, from bondage: "Pharaoh's heart was hard and he hearkened not unto them" (*Holy Bible King James Version* Exodus 8:15). Defoe concentrates on Roxana's inner struggle of pride by using religious language.

Defoe's novels were concerned primarily with how religion can affect the individual. Defoe's Puritan background influenced his writing, and this can easily be seen in *Robinson Crusoe*, his first novel. In *Robinson Crusoe,* Defoe clarifies Crusoe's narrative's purpose in the Preface, saying his story is told "with a religious application of events to the uses to which wise men always apply them, viz. to the instruction of others by this example, and to justify and honour the wisdom of Providence in all the variety of our circumstances" (Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* 1). Defoe intended to use Crusoe's narrative as a teaching device to readers at an individual level, as his sole focus remains on the self. Robinson Crusoe's religious focus on the individual is evident as Crusoe falls in and out of religion. John Paul Hunter explains in *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe* that "Puritans found biblical events, persons, and objects to represent virtually all aspects of contemporary life" (103) and reflected on how they affected the self.

Because Defoe was concerned about the state of the individual, not the social, he also produced conversion narratives. Puritans commonly used a "travel metaphor," a journey to a heavenly goal (Hunter 103) – often "a sea journey . . . to suggest man's

turbulent passage to another, better county" – to "emphasize the uncertain, erratic nature of man's movement through life and sometimes his progress, even though confronted by formidable obstacles, toward his final destination" (106-107). Hunter says *Robinson Crusoe* "portrays, through the struggles of one man, the rebellion and punishment, repentance and deliverance, of all men as they sojourn in a hostile world" (126). Defoe believed in repentance and God's acceptance and forgiveness: "Heaven itself receives those who sincerely repent into the same state of acceptance as if they had not sinned at all" (qtd. in Novak 112). By changing his ways, Crusoe, the individual, experiences the deliverance step and exchanges "Misery" for "Happiness" (Hunter 147).

Unlike Defoe who focuses on the self, Scott focuses on social, reformative ideas; she is not concerned with the self, but rather in depicting religion as it concerns society. Her "intention" (6) in writing *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766) - "to record [Ellison's] virtues, and rather to represent him as an object of imitation than of wonder" (7) - is comparable to that of its predecessor, *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762). *Millenium Hall* is an essentially didactic novel, educating Sir George Ellison and his companion, and that didacticism has a strong religious flavor in the sense that virtue, for Scott, is not a secular concept and is not individualized in regards to the inner struggle of a particular character or spiritual growth of a character's life journey.

In the following paragraphs, I present a reading of *Millenium Hall* focusing on religion's role in a social sense, which creates a religious utopia. Millenium Hall is placed in a pastoral setting, lending itself to the idea of a vision, or a dreamlike image. In

her essay, "Gentlemen and Gentle Women: The Landscape Ethos in *Millenium Hall,*" Nicholle Jordan establishes the necessity of viewing Scott's *Millenium Hall* "through the lens of landscape" (31). She argues that Scott did not intend the landscape surrounding Millenium Hall to appear simply as a setting, theme, or object; the landscape "is the physical manifestation of an ethics or piety, industry, and benevolent stewardship" (32). After the narrator's chaise breaks down at the beginning of the novel, George Ellison (the narrator), and his companion, Lamont, walk through the countryside where their accident took place, describing it as "a truly pastoral scene" as they hear a flute played by a shepherd in the distance (56). Lamont is a young man about town, who, at least at the beginning of the novel, is a rather facetious young man. He is selfish and primarily interested in the pursuit of pleasure; Lamont is concerned with himself, thus he is an individualist encountering a socially-oriented community. While walking in this visionary (or dreamlike) setting, Lamont explains, "If Nebuchadnezzar had such pastures as these to range in, his seven years expulsion from human society might not be the least agreeable part of his life" (57). One view of Scott's purpose in using this Biblical allusion is simply for rhetorical purposes, but such an allusion actually implies significant religious meaning. Nebuchadnezzar was not simply expelled from society; he was "driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (*Holy Bible King James Version* Daniel 4:33). Therefore, Lamont seems to believe that Nebuchadnezzar's horrendous metamorphosis would be worth embracing

should he have lived in a setting such as Millenium Hall. Such an allusion is by no means a mistake or for only rhetorical purposes; Lamont provides a strong implication of the beauty of Millenium Hall's landscape. Like all pastoral landscapes, *Millenium Hall*'s setting is a benevolent form of nature. It is also worth noting that Lamont, not yet a Christian, makes one of Scott's first direct allusions to the Bible. Lamont's enthralled view of Millenium Hall's setting and powerful Biblical allusion serves to exemplify the visionary introduction to Millenium Hall.

The name of the house contributes to the idea of Millenium Hall as a vision in both the sense of an obtainable ideal and a dreamlike image. Prior to Ellison's description of his discovery of Millenium Hall, he explains to the recipient of his letter that he "shall nominate Millenium Hall [...] to avoid giving the real name" (53). Gary Kelly, the editor of the 1995 Broadview Press edition of *A Description of Millenium Hall*, notes that the name, Millenium Hall, references "the book of Revelation, that general evil will soon be overcome, initiating a millennium, or thousand-year reign of peace, by the righteous together with Christ" (27). Kelly also explains the millennium belief in context: "In seventeenth-century England, Puritan republicans saw the millennium as a 'fifth monarchy,' following the four unrighteous monarchies in the Bible, and many equated it with the Commonwealth or English republic (1652-60). Republicans and commonwealthmen were sometimes called 'fifth monarchy men'" (27). Kelly believes that Scott presented a version of a 'fifth monarchy' ruled by women in *Millenium Hall*.

Scott's 'fifth monarchy' of women rulers, as defined by Kelly, supports the view of Millenium Hall as a vision of society's potential, yet the significance placed on communal living, as emphasized by the women of the house, does not lend itself to the idea of women ruling over others, as is the case with any monarchy. The women of the house oppose any type of ruling body, even in regards to the animals the house keeps, as Mrs. Mancel explains that "when reason appears only in the exertion of cruelty and tyrannical oppression, it is surely not a gift to be boasted of" (71). In other words, the women believe that just because power can be obtained does not mean that it should be exercised. Millenium Hall's residents are at leisure to come and go in each other's company as they please, as Mrs. Maynard explains, saying, "As no one is obliged to stay a minute longer in company than she chuses, she naturally retires as soon as it grows displeasing to her, and does not return till she is prompted by inclination, and consequently well disposed to amuse and be amused" (119). Mrs. Mancel only wishes people "to have leisure to consider by whom they were sent into the world, and for what purpose, and to learn, that their happiness consists in fulfilling the design of their Maker" (112). However, I do not wish to imply that the women form a republic either. The women "live in the very strict practice of all religious duties" (119).

Most significantly, Kelly's idea of Scott's 'fifth monarchy' is misplaced in deeming women the ruling power: the women of the house jointly work to spend their lives "in an endeavor to obey our Maker" and no other (246). Though the women have the power to determine how the house functions, they simply act as stewards of the

house, not as rulers over each other. Religion serves as the justification of their home and as its foundation. The women proclaim God to be the only power they serve, and at the end of the novel, Mrs. Trentham, speaking for the women of the house, presents a concluding thought on the women's attempt to consistently serve God: "Whatever renders us forgetful of our Creator, and of the purposes for which he called us into being, or leads us to be inattentive to his commands, or neglectful in the performance of them, becomes criminal, however innocent in its own nature" (246-247). Kelly misses the crucial link between Millenium Hall and Revelation. In Revelation, John, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, describes a vision of the future of a thousand year period in which the people who have been persecuted because they have acted as faithful Christians will reign with Him for a thousand years in peace (*Holy Bible King James Version* Revelation 20:4). Just as in John's vision in Revelation, Millenium Hall's inhabitants have been persecuted while attempting to live virtuously in their lives before arriving at Millenium Hall, and because they have done so, they now live peacefully in Millenium Hall as God rules over their house and as they serve Him. The 'fifth monarchy' belongs to God.

As the residents of Millenium Hall live in a purely Christian-based society and as certain values are required by true Christian living, peace would be unattainable should vices coexist with Christian virtues in such a society. Betty Rizzo explains how Millenium Hall is clearly set in opposition to one particular vice, being that of tyranny (especially the tyranny of men). However, much because Rizzo's research centers on female companionship – the relationships of actual women rather than only their literary

or artistic work – and innovative ideas of eighteenth-century women – especially those of the Bluestockings – she does not address other concerns Millenium Hall opposes and promotes many of which are based upon religious principles. Nevertheless, Rizzo comments that *Millenium Hall* "was inspired primarily by a detestation of tyranny [...] for it was apparent to these women [independent-minded women of the Bath community of which Sarah Scott was a part] that genuine Christianity and patriarchy could not coexist" (307). Millenium Hall is a Christian community that is clearly gendered, offering an alternative not only to the way in which landed estates function in the culture and the economy, but also to the masculinist church hierarchy.

Christianity, past and present, has experienced concerns with patriarchal constraints, but Scott rectifies such problems in *Millenium Hall*. Gary Kelly explains that the Church of England allowed men the best opportunities "to acquire true faith and perform good deeds" (Kelly 38), and different levels of participation in various activities were limited to women in the 'real' world. Yet Scott makes these activities available to women in *Millenium Hall*. In Scott's *Millenium Hall,* "the creed of the established Church of England" actually "fulfills and 'corrects'" (38) so as to allow the women opportunities to practice their faith and do good deeds. Scott uses tyranny to contrast the peace of Millenium Hall to the unrest of the women's past lives. Scott recognizes that people cannot be "reasoned into altruistic behavior, reasoned out of their enjoyment of inflicting their power upon others" (Rizzo 313), but she also believed, like John Locke, that God had created man with the ability to reason, thus obligating man to use the ability

in His name (Stephen 84). Scott purposefully illustrates how involvement with any form of tyranny will not allow for a life of peace.

Patriarchy is not the only type of tyranny Scott claims to be irreconcilable with 'genuine Christianity' in her visionary and idealized society. Sin does not apply to the traditional definition of tyranny, the control of people by other people. However, in Christianity, sin is certainly a form of tyranny. Chapter eight of the book of Romans, a letter written from the Apostle Paul to the Roman people, describes sin specifically as a type of tyranny from which Christ frees Christians: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (*Holy Bible King James Version* Romans 8:1-2).[1] Though Christianity and sin can literally exist together, Christians are freed from such oppressions as their

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1. Eugene Peterson translated the New Testament's original Greek to English to better engage its readers in the modern translation, *The Message*. This translation specifically uses the word "tyranny": "Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to life under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death" (*The Message* Romans 8:1-2). Though the King James Version that Scott would have used does not use the term "tyranny," she would have thought of this passage in terms of tyranny, as it describes the tyranny (oppressive rule) of sin.

own sin. Millenium Hall introduces a society in which temptation of sin is practically non-existent (Scott, *Millenium Hall* 118).

Scott operates with a concept of sin in her novels to reason that a life of immorality will never allow for peace, as sin is the strongest form of tyranny. Rizzo explains that "[t]he efforts of the group at Millenium Hall are a counter to the tyranny of the outer world" (Rizzo, *Companions* 313). For example, Millenium Hall offers a place of residence to dwarfs devoid of tyranny so that "they find refuge from the tyranny of those wretches, who seem to think that being two or three feet taller gives them a right to make them a property, and to expose their unhappy forms to the contemptuous curiosity of the unthinking multitude" (Scott, *Millenium Hall* 72). The group of women specifically resists the tyranny of sin. Millenium Hall coexists with sin – the surrounding world is sinful and Lamont, George Ellison's companion, is a pleasure-seeker – yet Millenium Hall does not *associate* with sin. As a Christian society, Millenium Hall models Jesus' prayer for his disciples in the book of John: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (*Holy Bible King James Version* John 17: 15-17). The women that escape to Millenium Hall saw the world as temptation, and that world endangered women much more than men. Women who succumbed to temptation were punished socially in ways men were not; the men who succumbed to temptation often still incurred deleterious effects primarily for women involved, not men. Enlightenment reason, especially in the

context of utopian communities, was often used to create entirely rational worlds, in which everybody escapes the temptation of unreasonable and irrational desires. This is another point where reason and faith collaborate.

Locke believed that faith could be obtained through reason. In *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* (1695), Locke declares a belief that man should rely on reason by studying the Scriptures and on faith by believing God to be the true God and Christ to be the Messiah.[2] Locke believed in both the authority "of reason and of the Bible" (Stephen 79), and, as a believer that both reason and faith were to be relied upon, he thought that men who accept Christ as his Lord and Savior should follow His laws, but each man should do so willingly, not by force. Recognizing that since Jesus had not forced his Apostles to follow and accept manmade creeds such as the Athanasian Creed, Locke thought that believing Christ to be the Messiah was "the one essential article of faith" (80). Further, he believed in regards to Christianity "that Christ is the Messiah, [and man] must add repentance and willingness to obey" (81).

Scott implements John Locke's beliefs that voluntarily accepting to follow God's laws is necessary to Christianity and that such a decision can and should be reached by way of reason in creating regulations that the women choose to follow. In order to live at Millenium Hall, the women must follow the regulations set forth. The ladies of the estate

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[2] For more on Locke's beliefs regarding reason and religion, see Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity.*

"drew up several regulations, to secure the peace and good order of the society they designed to form" (116). The regulations range from each lady having a bedroom to herself to more serious regulations stating that "[i]f any one of the ladies behaves with imprudence she shall be dismissed" (117). The women recognize that should the regulations not be adhered to by the residents, their society would not remain in peace. As the women enjoy their home, they strive to adhere to the regulations set forth "to preserve a comfortable harmony" (118). The women who established Millenium Hall teach new residents "that it was the duty of every person to be of service to others" (118). The women of Millenium Hall create a kind of Eden both in terms of the absence of sin and as a paradise in that they accept their faith through reason. Because of this, sin is virtually absent to have the opportunity to tempt anyone.

The Bible speaks against worrying about worldly concerns such as vanity and pride, vices with which the women of the house are not consumed. The book of Proverbs says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feath the LORD, she shall be praised" (*Holy Bible King James Version* Proverbs 31:30). The epistolary book 1 Timothy, written by the Apostle Paul to his younger friend regarding his ministry in the city of Ephesus, addresses these concerns directing women to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (*Holy Bible King James Version* 1 Timothy 2:9-10). The regulations self-imposed on the Millenium Hall community mimic the Bible's instructions. The first regulation

explains that when a woman takes refuge at Millenium Hall, she must give her fortune, whatever it may be, to the treasurer of the house in order "to preserve an exact equality" (Scott, *Millenium Hall* 116) among the women living in the estate. The eighth regulation states that the women's clothing "shall be quite plain and neat" (118), again, reenforcing a sense of equality. Implementing such regulations keeps the women from the sin caused by the first temptation, as it was pride that caused the fall of man. In the book of Genesis, the devil appeals to Eve's pride when he tells her that should she eat of the forbidden fruit, she will be like God: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (*Holy Bible King James Version* Genesis 3:4-5). Because Eve wanted to be like God, she ate and enticed Adam to do the same. The women of the house take measures to ensure that such a vice as pride, even in regards to thinking of oneself above others, is not a temptation.

Scott illustrates why associating with sin would not work in the description of the women's lives previous to coming to Millenium Hall. Not surprisingly, some of these instances combine the tyranny of sin with the tyranny of patriarchy, such as one resident's case who was raised by a libertine to eventually satisfy his sexual desires. Miss Louisa Mancel, a "most beautiful child" (Scott, *Millenium Hall* 78), abandoned by her parents and orphaned when her aunt passed, is taken in by a Mr. Hintman, who becomes her benefactor and enrolls her in school. As she grows, she becomes even more "[d]azzingly handsome at first view" (96), thus "[i]t is not strange that Mr. Hintman's fondness should

increase with Miss Mancel's excellencies, but the caresses which suited her earlier years were now become improper" (97). Such sinful conduct renders Louisa prisoner to "inexpressible uneasiness" (99). Scott uses Mr. Hintman's sin to show the unrest it causes. Though it is not Louisa's sin that gives her anxiety, her association with sin cannot allow for a peace, holding her captive. Thus Scott illustrates sin's tyranny. Additionally, in a world organized in a patriarchal manner, women find it difficult to escape sin because of the pressure inflicted upon them by men.

Scott also demonstrates the attainable liberation one can experience should one put his or her faith in God. Rizzo explains that *Millenium Hall* "resolutely opposes the altruistic standards of the women of the community to the tyrannies of the patriarchal structure. This is a feminine utopia designed to convert men by showing them a better system" (*Companions* 313), even more important is the utopia's goal to convert sinners by creating an atmosphere of peace. Knowing Mr. Hintman's behavior to be sinful but being in a position of submission, Louisa decides "to trust in that of heaven" and believe "her prayers for [God's] protection would not be unavailing" (99). Mr. Hintman, his vice being "the love of women" (98), intended for Miss Mancel to stay with him in country when "school broke up at Easter" (99). Louisa feels "inexpressible concern" (100) as the day approaches, and her "addresses to heaven for protection now became more vehement and continual, and the greatest part of her time was spent on her knees in praying to that power in whom she trusted" (100). Her friend, Miss Melvyn, and her teacher, Mr. D'Avora, also experience anxiety on Louisa's behalf and, knowing the situation to be out

of their control, pray in response, for "the protection of the Almighty, to whom we seldom apply with entire faith and resignation while we have any hopes in human assistance" (100). When Louisa is scheduled to take leave to the country in two days, her "anxiety was risen to the utmost height" (100), she receives word the Mr. Hintman has passed away from "a fit of an apoplexy" (100). Therefore, it seems that Scott intends to convey a sense that, should one implore God's protection, trust in him, and remain faithful, good will indeed avail. Perhaps it is also worth noting that the school break occurs at Easter, a Christian holiday celebrating Jesus Christ's overcoming of sin and death. Scott, a Christian herself, likely did not haphazardly choose Easter to be Louisa's time of liberation from the tyranny of sin. Louisa escapes Mr. Hintman's immoral ambitions and his tyrant-like position to her ultimate place of refugee, Millenium Hall, where no such behavior is even mentioned.

Gary Kelly analyzes providence's presence in the novel, and while he claims providence places "special significance on personal suffering" (Kelly 33), he explains that providence also serves as an excuse for the absence of "agency and power" (33) so that the women avoid demanding change. Kelly applies the wrong providential idea to Scott's *Millenium Hall*, and further weakens his argument by not considering Scott's Christian beliefs, as they were incorporated in her novel, while also mistakenly assuming "providence" and "good fortune" to be synonymous. Jacob Viner discusses two ideas regarding providence and economy in "The Providential Elements in the Commerce of Nations," a chapter in his book *The Role of Providence in the Social Order*. The first idea

establishes "the benevolence of providence with respect to man's life on this earth [...] the idea of the providential abundance of necessaries as compared to the scarcity of luxuries" (29). Supporters of this idea of providence believed man need not and should not intervene because where "natural circumstance was lacking, providence would have seen to it that a favorable offsetting circumstance would exist nearby to make up for the deficiency" (28), thus this view encourages a resignation to providence; where a need exists, providence will intervene in one's life. This idea correlates with the explanation Kelly gives of Scott's incorporation of providence in *Millenium Hall*. Kelly asserts that Millenium Hall's residents' "religious outlook involves resignation to Providence" (32) which "offers consolation for lack of agency and power at the cost of forestalling individual or collective action for change" (33). However, Viner explains that he has "not found the [first] idea expressed or implied in the [Bible]" (28), and Kelly does not consider the significance of Scott's religion. He uses the term "resignation" throughout his discussion of providence's role in the novel, yet this term does not align with Scott's Anglican beliefs nor her literary intention as the residents did not resign themselves to complacency, but instead, reason.

The second idea Viner explains regarding providence asserts that "providence favors trade between peoples as a means of promoting the universal brotherhood of man" and "to give economic incentives to peoples to trade with each other providence has given to their respective territories different products" (32). Millenium Hall promotes a reliance on companionship – "universal brotherhood of man" – among the residents, and

the estate encourages the trading of goods and services – "trade between peoples" – such as education. Additionally, Viner states that the second idea "was also true for the writers of the Old Testament" (33), writers with whom Scott, as a Christian, was well acquainted. Kelly, meanwhile, implies "providence" and "good fortune" to be interchangeable: "Reliance on good fortune and Providence, however, are characteristic of the lottery mentality and customary economy of those who have no control over their own lives, like the social groups gathered together at Millenium Hall" (32), yet Viner's second providential idea advocates change, not resignation.

Scott's *Millenium Hall* shows no evidence of being a conversion narrative, save one part: Lamont. Scott illustrates society's potential for change through presenting Millenium Hall as a model; though Millenium Hall is Scott's version of an idealized estate, she shows that a house like this *can* be made possible. To prove her point, Scott wrote *The History of Sir George Ellison*, a novel showing George Ellison's life both prior to and after his encounter with Millenium Hall. After visiting Millenium Hall, Ellison improves his estate and begins his own version of Millenium Hall – just as Scott hoped others might do as well. But perhaps most convincingly of this point is Lamont's realization of the reasonableness of Christianity. Lamont, described as a young man about town and interested in the pleasure of self, becomes a rational, benevolent Christian after having spent time at Millenium Hall. At the end of Ellison and Lamont's visit, Ellison finds Lamont in his room reading the New Testament (*Millenium Hall* 248). Ellison describes Lamont's change of heart:

> 'he was convinced by the conduct of the ladies of this house, that their religion must be the true one. When we had before considered the lives of Christians, their doctrine seemed to have so little influence on their actions, that he imagined there was no sufficient effect produced by christianity, to warrant a belief, that it was established by a means so very extraordinary; but he now saw what that religion in reality was, and by the purity of its precepts, was convinced its original must be divine.' (248)

While Scott is concerned with using Millenium Hall as a model to be imitated, she is most concerned with implementing the Christian principles in her novel: to portray Christianity as being founded upon reason. Even Gary Kelly, who does not rely on Scott's Christian beliefs in his arguments regarding *Millenium Hall*, recognizes Scott's purpose of "adapting worldly means to spiritual ends" (39). That Scott uses the novel to depict Christianity as reasonable is proven in her text.

Before Ellison and Lamont reach *Millenium Hall*, and prior to Lamont's allusion to Nebuchadnezzar, the men see a shepherd as they walk through the pastoral setting Scott describes surrounding the estate: "Our pleasure was not a little heightened, to see, as the scene promised, in reality a shepherd, watching a large flock of sheep. We continued motionless, listening to his music, till a lamb straying from its fold demanded his care, and he laid aside his instrument, to guide home the little wanderer" (56). Jesus explains to his Apostles in the book of John, "I am the door [for the sheep]: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture [...] I am come

that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (*Holy Bible King James Version* John 10:9-11). In Ellison's description, the lost lamb comes to the shepherd, just as in the Bible, lost people come to Jesus, the good shepherd. Scott uses the end of her novel to conclude the point of her tale. Lamont, by no coincidence is reading the New Testament, and has decided Christianity is the only true religion, thus illustrating Scott's hope for all her readers. Lamont does not experience a conversion such as Robinson Crusoe; rather, after having been a part of such a Christian environment, he reasons that Christianity is the true religion. Lamont becomes a reformed rake, and it is religion that reforms him.

The influence of Scott's Anglican background is evident in *Millenium Hall,* and the Christian values she implements in *Millenium Hall* certainly prove Scott as promoting Christian ideals. Writers such as Jane Austen, an Anglican who incorporated a Christian presence in her novel, though differently than Scott, nonetheless, provide a convenient starting point to unveil Scott's purpose and Christian perspective of *Millenium Hall*. Millenium Hall's Christian society promotes a refusal of sin and tyranny, and ultimately, Scott effectively creates a successful society founded upon Christian ethics and illustrates the way a society could function if Christianity was truly promoted by its inhabitants. This reading adds to critical debates in that *Millenium Hall* can be understood as something other than a feminist utopia. Furthermore, Scott has offered a model of a different kind of religious narrative (a communal rather than an individual journey), and

her model may shed light on other novels in the eighteenth century as having created other types of religious narratives not yet analyzed as well.

# CHAPTER II

## *THE HISTORY OF SIR GEORGE ELLISON*:

## SLAVERY AND CHRISTIANITY

Little literary criticism has been devoted to Sarah Scott's *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762)*,* but *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766) has received even less. This is perhaps justified because *The History of Sir George Ellison* is a more conventional novel. Still, *Sir George Ellison* deserves more attention because it expands *Millenium Hall*'s focus on religion into a discussion of slavery and the slave trade. The focus of the earlier novel, the development and functioning of a landed estate, expands from a private, landed estate, to the public sphere, as Ellison owns a plantation in Jamaica and an estate in England. The two novels are essentially one artistic whole. *Millenium Hall* is about the ways a landed estate can be run on religious principles, as the novel deals with an estate run by women. The expansion is then imagined as being conducted by men like Ellison, as *Sir George Ellison* is about the running of a slave plantation on religious principles, which actually suggests not just amelioration but, in my view, abolition. The carrier of that message is the owner of the plantation.

*The History of Sir George Ellison* was written after *Millenium Hall*, but it is both a prequel and a sequel to the earlier novel, as the events in it predate *and* postdate the events in *Millenium Hall*. Ellison, the elder of two surviving children and the son of a landed gentleman in Dorsetshire, receives two-thirds of his father's money to improve the financial state of his father's estate. Ellison moves to Jamaica as a merchant and marries

a plantation owner's daughter while there. After having made the money he had hoped to make (and more) in Jamaica, Ellison moves back to England. Though only briefly mentioned in *Sir George Ellison*, Ellison and his friend, Lamont, visit Millenium Hall. Having witnessed the estate, Millenium Hall, Ellison is then inspired to replicate a similar estate, which he does in England. Because the plot sequences of the two novels are quite intertwined, the following graphic provides a short chronological visual image of Ellison's life prior to *Millenium Hall* and his life thereafter.

| Ellison as a young man in Jamaica, *The History of Sir George Ellison* | Ellison's visit at *Millenium Hall* | Ellison's life after his visit, *Sir George Ellison* |
|---|---|---|

Though the settings differ between *Millenium Hall* and *The History of Sir George Ellison*, Scott presents the same principles in both settings. While *Millenium Hall* takes place largely in the domestic sphere, *Sir George Ellison* is set in both England and Jamaica. *Millenium Hall* establishes how benevolence, based on religion, can operate in England and *Sir George Ellison* shows how the same kind of benevolence can operate on a slave plantation and depicts improvements based on the same types of ideas initiated in *Millenium Hall*. Ellison's narrative is Scott's attempt to apply the values of Millenium Hall in an already-established estate and to show what Ellison had learned from his visit to Millenium Hall.

Scott creates a society in *Millenium Hall* which she intends her eighteenth-century audience to use as a model. *Millenium Hall* suggests that Ellison will undertake replicating an estate like Millenium Hall. In Betty Rizzo's introduction in *The History of Sir George Ellison*, she explains that the Ellison in this novel is far different than the Ellison of *Millenium Hall* who gives no indication of having a benevolent past. *The History of Sir George Ellison* begins before Ellison's visit to Millenium Hall, so readers are able to see his past before visiting Millenium Hall and his life after Millenium Hall. Betty Rizzo explains that "[Ellison's] utility to Scott is clear: it is as if she thought, 'Suppose we had the money and were of the sex who might carry out our plans within an ordinary family and neighborhood. Suppose we had the power to alter society rather than being crushed by it'" (xxx). Ellison's plantation and his estate in Dorsetshire, which he eventually inherits, are much more similar to Millenium Hall than they are to actual eighteenth-century plantations and estates; Scott encourages the idea that an estate like Millenium Hall could be realized.

Ellison is a man of sensibility and his sensibility manifests itself in acts of benevolence, which, for Ellison, appears in the ameliorative practices he implements on his plantation. The man of sensibility, a figure of the second half of the eighteenth century, is a man capable of engaging in the suffering of others, and such engagement inclines him to act benevolently. Markman Ellis's *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender, and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* uses the description David Owen makes in connecting sensibility to benevolence: "David Owen, in his history of benevolent

charities in England, argues that 'Modern humanitarianism took its rise in the course of the century, and the benevolence and sensibility associated with it, though sometimes no more than emotions which it was fashionable to display, had a good deal to do with forming the social temper of the time'" (15). Because Ellison is a man of sensibility, his perception of feeling leads him to take ameliorative measures on his plantation. In its most basic form, amelioration means "the action of making better; or the condition of being made better; improvement" ("amelioration, n."). In regards to slavery, George Boulukos clearly and concisely defines "amelioration" as "the idea that slavery could be improved and made more humane" (362). Before developing my argument in detail, I will first establish a connection between sensibility and religion, which is the focus of this thesis, as Ellison is a man of sensibility, is a benevolent slave-owner, and is governed by religion.

My argument is that much of *The History of Sir George Ellison* is founded upon religiously-based ameliorative practices. To prove Ellison to be a benevolent slaveowner who implements ameliorative practices because he is governed by his religion, I will begin by presenting background information concerning religion's influence on the discourse of benevolence in the context of the eighteenth century. In his essay, "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'," an old but still useful essay, Stephen Crane – though not offering a comprehensive argument or one that more recent critics have found convincing – succeeds in elaborating *one* of the major contributing factors to the development of the discourse of sensibility.

Crane suggests religion, specifically Anglicanism, to have had the greatest impact on the discourse of benevolence and the role it played in the mid-eighteenth century. He asserts that attributing all "sentimental benevolism" (190) to the third Earl of Shaftesbury does not go back in time far enough. The discourse of benevolence, its (partial) origin to religion, and its emergence in the man of feeling/sensibility originated prior to Shaftesbury, and Crane suggests:

> that the earliest impulse which led to the popular triumph of 'sentimentalism' toward 1750 is to be sought, not so much in the teaching of individual lay moralists after 1700, as in the combined influence of numerous Anglican divines of the Latitudinarian tradition who from the Restoration onward into the eighteenth century had preached to their congregations and, through their books, to the larger public essentially the same ethics of benevolence, 'good nature,' and 'tender sentimental feeling.' (190)

According to Crane, the discourse of benevolence stemmed from Anglican divines. Latitudinarian clergy promoted "virtue as universal benevolence" (191), and sermons about God's benevolence became exceedingly popular during the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. Crane cites Joseph Glanvill, a Latitudinal clergyman, to explain universal benevolence as being available to everyone: "That every lover of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, who lives according to the few, great acknowledg'd Doctrines, and Rules of a vertuous and holy life, is a *true Christian*, and will be happy" (qtd. in Crane 193, emphasis Glanvill). Ultimately, these men

attempted to teach "benevolent feelings and acts as the best means at once of actualizing the beneficent designs of God for man and of realizing the aim of religion to perfect human nature" (194).

Eighteenth-century Latitudinarians also taught that charity should play an important role in benevolent actions, which men should enact in order to show God's love to their fellow man. Crane explains that the Latitudinarians saw the need to be charitable, acting kindly "to all men" with "an active desire to relieve their sufferings, if not to alter the social conditions in which they live" (194). In 1705, Samuel Clark, an Anglican clergyman, stated that "[t]he true End and Design of Religion, is manifestly this; to make Men Wise and better; to improve, exalt, and perfect their Nature; to teach them to obey, and love, and imitate God; to cause them to extend their Love and Goodness and Charity to all their Fellow-Creatures" (qtd. in 195). The Anglican teachings of benevolence encourage loving all of God's people.

Crane connects the latitudinarians' influence to benevolence – which is important because Scott was Anglican and therefore influenced by the latitudinarians' beliefs regarding benevolence – but benevolence has always been considered an important biblical concept, even prior to the Anglican's reinforcement of it in the seventeenth century. Donald Greene reconsiders Crane's essay in "Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling' Reconsidered." Greene identifies benevolence's presence in the New Testament. Specific references to and about benevolence (feeling for one's fellow man) are most prevalent in the New Testament, due to Jesus' coming and

instruction to love one another (Matthew 22:39). Greene explains that "Love of God and love of one's neighbor have been regarded as inseparable at least since Matthew 22 [...] When Jesus was asked, 'Who is my neighbour?' he replied with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)–the untaught outsider who succored an unknown stranger, after a priest and a Levite of the victim's own race and religion had refused 'to get involved'" (Greene 161-2). These biblical lessons of benevolence are also seen in 1 John, which instructs Christians to love one another as God has loved all mankind:

> Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (*Holy Bible King James Version* 1 John 4:7-11)

Greene also examines Crane's suggestion that "a characteristic of the 'new' sensibility was 'moral weeping'" (163). Greene connects weeping directly to the Bible, explaining such "moral weeping" to have been present even then, but Crane asserts its reappearance as being due to the latitudinarians' discussion of it. Ultimately, both Crane's explanation of benevolence as having been made a concept of discourse in the eighteenth century being due to Anglicanism and Greene's argument that benevolence was an area of importance in religion before the Latitudinarians strongly encouraged it proves that Scott,

an Anglican and devout Christian, would have certainly thought of benevolence as a religious principle.

My argument about Ellison follows Crane's exposition in two ways. First, Crane presents the idea that the discourse of benevolence in the eighteenth century should be attributed to Anglicanism because of the prominence of the discussion of benevolence originating from the Latitudinarians and because of the Church of England's great presence in eighteenth-century society. (Because much discourse in the eighteenth century involved benevolence, that discourse manifests itself in novels of the time, like Scott's *Sir George Ellison.*) So too does Scott's stress of the importance of benevolence stem from her Anglican background. Second, Crane explains that Anglican divines taught in favor of all men acting in love to one another to help their fellow man. In *Sir George Ellison*, Scott illustrates the idea that man should indeed love his fellow man, but she takes this idea further by creating a man, Ellison, who loves his slaves. Abolition had not yet become a mainstream idea at the time of *Sir George Ellison*'s publication, but Scott depicts Ellison as a benevolent slaveowner who acts in love towards his slaves, and, as he sees them, his fellow man.

Religion, according to Crane, had exerted great influence on the discourse of benevolence in the mid-eighteenth century, and benevolence, by the late eighteenth century, was having great influence on slavery; anti-slave trade sentiments were largely based upon sensibility. Before illustrating Ellison's acts of benevolence to his slaves in Scott's *Sir George Ellison*, I will first give a brief and general biblical history of slavery

to provide a sense of how Scott (and eighteenth-century religious leaders, such as Isaac Barrow, Samuel Clarke, and others) would have understood slavery in terms of how the Bible addresses slavery. I will then explain how both pro-slavery and anti-slavery advocates used the Bible's mention of slavery and benevolence in support of their arguments.

The Bible gives direct instruction about how slaves were to be treated during biblical times since slavery was lawful. At various moments in the Old Testament, the Israelites conquered other nations and were themselves held in captivity by the Egyptians and the Babylonians. Because of this, the Old Testament provides more direct instruction to slave-owners about how to treat their slaves than the New Testament does. Reasons a person became a slave in the Old Testament varied, but regardless of the circumstance, slaves were still to be treated decently. One could be forced into slavery due to debt, war, self-sale (often if wanting to remain with a family member), or punishment, yet many regulations were put into place to force masters to treat their slaves properly. In *A Historical Guide to World Slavery*, Ephraim Isaac explains that "the Hebrew Bible affirms the common humanity of the slave and establishes laws to delineate the limits of the master-slave relationship" (93). He goes on to explain "the most significant biblical law" to be "affirming the equal humanity of the slave" (93). The Bible ruled that should a slave-owner take one of his slaves' lives, murder, even of a slave, was punished by death no matter the offender: "And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished" (Exodus 21:20). Though slavery was

permissible by law, the rules regarding slavery were taken into considerable seriousness in the Old Testament.

Both pro-slavery and anti-slavery notions were well-grounded in religion. Pro-slavery advocates drew on biblical regulations which instructed slave-owners in how to treat their slaves, thereby justifying owning slaves. Meanwhile, anti-slavery advocates used the Israelites' freedom from captivity in arguing against slavery and in favor of God's will. Isaac explains there to be significant anti-slavery sentiments in the Bible. Anti-slavery advocates argued that even in the Old Testament, when slavery was lawful in Hebrew culture, God does not explicitly condone slavery. Isaac uses the Israelites as an example to prove this point in that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and held in captivity but were set free because it was the will of God (Exodus 8:20). Because the Bible speaks directly to slave-owners, instructing them how to treat their slaves, and because the Israelites were brought out of slavery by the hand of God, "we must

understand [that] the Hebrew Bible was used by both abolitionist and pro-slavery movements" (97).[1]

Before moving on to my discussion of *Sir George Ellison*, I will first visit a debate involving slavery in eighteenth-century fiction as it is the same context in which I

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1. In regards to how thoughts involving abolition took form in the eighteenth century, the early decades of anti-slavery agitation (1770s) in England were dominated by the Quakers and the Methodists. Anthony Benezet, a leading voice for the Quakers, began actively engaging in anti-slavery sentiments in the late 1740s. The Quakers founded their anti-slavery sentiments on the principle "of equality before God" (Jackson 33). The Quakers did not believe in the doctrine of original sin; instead, they believed that humans were born without sin and would not be punished for the sins of ancestors. This thinking applied also to their thoughts of slavery: "the illegal slavery of their parents could not be passed down to their children" (33). Benezet argued against the idea that people could be born into slavery. Quakers believed that "[t]he purpose of life was to do good and to leave the world, upon death, a better place" (33). Though the Methodists were often criticized by Anglicans since they decided to branch off from the Church of England, they were, nevertheless, another religious group heavily involved in the anti-slavery movement. In 1774, John Wesley, a leader in Methodism, attacked the institution of slavery. By 1788, the Methodists planted their mission in Barbados. Scott's Ellison owned a plantation in Jamaica, though prior to the Methodists' arrival; nevertheless, his presence there and his views on slavery, expounded upon later in this chapter, help show a connection and exemplify the significance of religion in Scott's work as religious affiliations such as the Methodists were clearly concerned in the affairs of the anti-slavery movement. Their missionary organization was especially concerned with providing slaves with knowledge of Christianity, though not in an effort to promote imperial power, but rather as a "prerequisite to emancipation" (Lambert 225). The Methodist Missionary Society was closely tied to anti-slavery bodies and, because of this, the Methodists in the West Indies were persecuted by pro-slavery advocates (Lambert 224-225). It is entirely possible Scott was aware of the Quakers and Methodist arguments against slavery, but her religious position is definitely Anglican.

work. Novels written by other eighteenth-century authors referencing or involving plantations have been analyzed much like Scott's. Edward Said, for example, has analyzed the role of the Bertrams' Antigua plantation in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, and his reading of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* helps in reading other eighteenth-century novels prior to Austen, such Scott's. Said's "Jane Austen and Empire" in *Culture and Imperialism* serves as a point of contrast in relationship to Scott's work in that Austen's support of imperialism in *Mansfield Park* as explained by Said contrasts Scott's advocacy of amelioration in *The History of Sir George Ellison*. I will analyze Austen's *Mansfield Park* alongside Scott's *Sir George Ellison*, as such analysis allows for a closer reading of Scott's *Sir George Ellison*.

Said believes the novel, as an art form, to have been one of the most powerful means of influence on English society during Scott's lifetime, and because of this, he believes concepts of great concern during the eighteenth century – such as slavery and how imperial rule relies on the institution of slavery – should be carefully considered when represented in novels. Said positions the rise of the British novel as simultaneous with Britain's dominance as an empire: "By the 1840s the English novel had achieved eminence as *the* aesthetic form and as a major intellectual voice, so to speak, in English society" (71-72, emphasis Said). Scott's novels, having been published prior to the 1840s, would have been involved in the time period in which novels were reaching such eminence. Believing that writers during this time should be more thoroughly examined in regards to the novel's influence on imperialism, Said seeks to unveil the desire to

colonize in writers not often thought of as colonist writers, such as Jane Austen. Having published her work approximately fifty years before Austen's novels, Scott's *The History of Sir George Ellison* explores amelioration and reformation; however, Austen does not address such topics in detail as Scott does.

According to Said, as many nineteenth-century writers promote imperialistic ideas, terminology of "ours" and "theirs" becomes apparent, and, essentially, justifies pro-imperial attitudes. These ideas appear in writers' geographical constructions in their novels. For example, in *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas Bertram's sugar plantation in Antigua provides the income to run the Bertrams' English estate, Mansfield Park. Said explains that by creating an estate run by the profits made from a distant plantation, Austen advances imperialist motives in *Mansfield Park*. Said claims that writers such as Austen promote England as empire "to validate [empire's] own preferences while also advocating those preferences in conjunction with distant imperial rule" (81). Save Fanny Price's slave trade question which has, as George Boulukos states, taken over critics' discussion "of Austen's engagement with slavery, colonialism, and empire" (361), the Antigua plantation is seldom mentioned and is certainly never seen through the narrator's direct perspective so as to actually allow the reader to witness the inner workings and conditions of the plantation. Because of this, the Bertrams appear as a moral family and as uninvolved in administering harsh conditions to the plantation's slaves. Nevertheless, because Mansfield Park relies on the plantation's production, the Bertrams essentially rely on imperialism to maintain the lifestyle to which they are accustomed. Thus Austen,

according to Said, does not only "devalue other worlds" (81), she also does "not present or inhibit or give resistance to horrendously unattractive imperialist practice" (81).

Susan Fraiman, a scholar who does not agree with Said's position on Austen's *Mansfield Park*, shows that slavery and empire are barely represented in Austen's novel. In "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism," Fraiman – unlike Said, who would argue that novels that do not directly address slavery assume the functioning of a plantation to be part of the way the world at the time worked which shows the ideological power of empire – explains that because Austen seldom references the Antigua plantation, she essentially avoids the topic of slavery, and by doing so, certainly does not promote slavery. Fraiman argues against Said's depiction of Austen as a "flatly conservative figure" and presents the idea that "while arguing vigorously for the novel's active role in producing imperialist plots, Said also in effect replays the story of its author's passivity regarding issues in the public sphere" (807). Even if Said, as Fraiman suggests, incorrectly analyzes Austen's mention of the Antigua plantation, slavery and empire do in fact appear rather obliquely in Austen's novels – and very unlike Scott's depiction of slavery and her references to empire.

Scott takes an entirely different approach than Austen and makes a clear attempt to depict slavery. Rather than only illuminate Ellison's good works at home in Dorsetshire, Ellison travels to Jamaica at the beginning of Scott's novel. While still living, Sir George Ellison's father bestows two thirds of his money to George, and George, being unafraid to leave his native land, moves to Jamaica to profit from his trade

for his family. Essentially, Scott takes her readers *to* Jamaica so that Ellison's plantation in Jamaica can be seen directly, not merely alluded to later. Scott's writing to allow her readers to view the Caribbean plantation through the perspective of the narrator and to witness Ellison's evident beliefs of slavery's wrongness and ameliorative practices contrasts Austen's limited English estate perspective which distances its reader from the slave-run plantations, which Austen believed could not be run on benevolent principles.

Furthermore, Scott not only takes her readers to Jamaica, she surreptitiously scrutinizes the empire – the empire that condones slavery – beforehand. Scott shows, through Ellison, a belief that birth is the only attachment to one's native country. Ellison knows many people who would not consider "leaving their native country; a circumstance to which he had perfectly reconciled himself" because he believes "that the country where he has the best means of living, is most properly his own; subsistence being a more rational cause of attachment than birth" (*Sir George Ellison* 6). Ellison takes "leave of his father and this kingdom" for Jamaica (6). The kingdom to which Scott refers is England, Ellison's homeland. Scott has no problem overtly addressing (and covertly scrutinizing) England as empire. In Austen's *Mansfield Park,* the Bertrams own an estate in Antigua which has not been profitable; this estate provides the income to run Mansfield Park. As a play, i.e., "something dangerously close to libertine" (86), is close to being performed by the youth of the household, Sir Thomas Williams arrives and stops such "frivolous behavior" (87). Said makes the connection that this type of dominant control is likely the control Sir Thomas used in Antigua, especially considering that upon

Sir Thomas Bertram's return to Mansfield Park, his Antigua estate has become much more profitable. Said's Austen, therefore, subtly portrays the idea that "[w]hat assures the domestic tranquility and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other" (87). Austen's oblique references to the empire, regardless of what her position, if any, was, allows for Said's interpretation to contrast Scott's portrayal of the empire, as she takes her readers to Jamaica.

Austen's narrator does not go to the Antigua plantation so no slave is ever seen or heard from; however, Scott's narrator not only describes the workings of the plantation, the narrator also bears witness to the slaves' voice. Advocating "contrapuntal reading," Said defines such a reading as "that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded" (66-67). Said acknowledges that Austen does not allow the slaves on Sir Thomas's planation a voice. Austen's reasoning for not giving a voice to her slaves could have likely been due to the fact that she did not know any slaves to represent and would have not felt comfortable in doing so. It is noteworthy that Scott makes an effort to individualize the voice of the native as a character, as opposed to Austen who leaves the plantation life very much in the background. The voice Scott gives to the slaves is not necessarily realistic (their speaking roles proclaim Ellison to be a good slave-owner); however, she does, nevertheless, make an attempt to give them a voice. When Ellison begins planning to leave his plantation and return to England, he realizes his most difficult task in leaving will be to "get a steward who would treat his slaves with the same

gentleness to which he had accustomed them" (Scott, *Sir George Ellison* 31). His slaves become distressed about his leaving exclaiming, "Oh! master, no go, no go; if go, steward whip, beat, kill poor slave; no go, no go; you go we die" (31). The slaves are not only respectful of Ellison, they are concerned for their wellbeing in the future should Ellison leave. Rather than appear as solely appreciative of Ellison's care for them, they also show concern for their futures, something slaves did not do in novels published during this time. Because of society's norms, Scott is not able to allow making slaves' voices and consciousness fully distinguished from Ellison, but that does not discount that Scott was doing something far different than Austen and other writers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Scott gives the slaves a voice in the narrative unlike other authors during her time.

In *The History of Sir George Ellison,* Sir George Ellison is a benevolent slaveowner in Jamaica. Ellison, a native of Dorsetshire, England, moves to Jamaica to engage in mercantile work, and while there, marries the daughter of a plantation owner and inherits slaves. Not having been exposed to the ill treatment and horrid conditions of slavery, Ellison is overcome with compassion for the slaves' plight. He improves his slaves' living conditions, makes an exorbitant profit from the plantation, and eventually returns to England where he establishes his own estate.

Scott's advocacy of amelioration is evident because she depicts Ellison as a benevolent slave-owner who implements ameliorative measures on his own plantation. Ellison immediately acts benevolently after moving from England to Jamaica. Forced to

become directly involved with slavery after marrying a planation owner's daughter and inheriting the duty of slavemaster, Ellison is shocked by the inhumane treatment of his slaves: "Slavery was so abhorrent to his nature, and in his opinion so unjustly inflicted" (Scott 10). He betters their living conditions (10-11) by "erect[ing] a great number of cottages, and assign[ing] to each family a comfortable habitation, with a little piece of ground adjoining, well stocked with vegetables" (14), allows them to leave work early two days a week, allows them to rest during the day should the weather be too hot, and sees to their needs if they become sick (14). The changes Ellison makes dramatically change the living conditions and treatment the slaves incurred prior to Ellison's arrival.

Ellison's desire to act benevolently towards his slaves is not shared by his wife. The "uneasiness" Ellison felt caused by the institution of slavery "astonished" his new bride (10). As Alfred Lutz states in his article "Commercial Capitalism, Classical Republicanism, and Man of Sensibility in *The History of Sir George Ellison*," "[t]he reader sympathizes with George Ellison, who is determined to improve the living conditions of his slaves, rather than with his wife, who advocates the brutal punishments of slaves and reserves her finer feelings for her dog" (561). Scott highlights Ellison's benevolence by contrasting his compassion to Mrs. Ellison's lack of concern for her slaves since she "had from her infancy been so accustomed to see the most shocking cruelties exercised on the blacks, that she could not conceive how one of that complexion could excited any pity" (10). Ellison, however, sympathizes with the slaves and so changes many of the routine practices – severe punishments inflicted upon slaves – on the

planation as he relieves his "fellow creatures from misery" (11), thus ameliorating their conditions.

Scott's representation of Ellison as a benevolent slave owner is further shown when Scott's *The History of Sir George Ellison* is compared to *The Man of Real Sensibility* (1774), an abridged version of *Sir George Ellison*. In "Sarah Scott and America: Sir George Ellison, The Man of Real Sensibility, and the Squire of Horton," Eve Tavor Bannet asserts that *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1774) was "significantly altered" by James Humphreys Jr. to make Ellison appear as Humphreys wanted: a man most concerned with the production and economic success of his estate (and the economic advantages of amelioration). Bannet explains that rather than simply republish Scott's novel, Humphreys "unpicks Scott's text to make it a different book" (638). Humphreys used his abridgment to downplay Ellison's benevolent treatment of his slaves in deleting instances of Ellison's benevolence in his version. For example, while Humphreys retained the portion of Ellison's desire to improve his slaves' conditions, he over-emphasized (or, more so emphasized than Scott had) the productivity levels that resulted due to the improvement of conditions. Additionally, because Scott remained concerned with agricultural capitalism, Humphreys was forced to cut various portions of *The History of Sir George Ellison* and add his own material in order to make Ellison appear as a man concerned with mercantile capitalism.

Production was, for some plantation owners, the motivational factor behind ameliorating slaves' conditions. According to Michael Steffes, amelioration was set in

motion during Scott's lifetime because "conditions on the plantations were so harsh that the slaves did not reproduce themselves in sufficient numbers to maintain the labor force" (32). J. R. Ward's book *British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834: The Process of Amelioration* explains amelioration to have been necessary in maintaining plantation prosperity and to have simultaneously promoted the wellbeing of slaves. Slavery was in fact a system of production and amelioration efforts often helped to increase production.

Once Ellison's ameliorative ideas have been implemented on his plantation, it is more productive than it was before. In his essay, Lutz explains that Ellison operates in a "system that allows smaller self-contained economic units to exist independently" thus allowing him to "realize his moral intentions, which manifest themselves as virtuous actions separate from the economic sphere proper in which his wife and the other slaveowners operate" (561). Therefore, Ellison's plantation's improved productivity is not motivated by selfish motivations, as he is "a fountain of benevolent actions and thrives on self-denial" (560). Lutz establishes that Ellison "does not want to become a public servant because he believes the political system to be fundamentally corrupt" and thus privatizes his virtue – "Ellison displays [his virtue] in the private sphere over which, as the novel suggests, he has total control" (562). Ellison does not wish to become a public servant in regards to politics; he does, however, enter into the public sphere in regards to the benevolence he bestows on his slaves and others' slaves on the island. After providing for his slaves' basic needs – "plentiful food, and a comfortable life" (Scott, *Sir George Ellison* 17) – his slaves "became stronger than any in the island;

the natural strength of those who belonged to other master, being consumed by hardships and hunger. His were, therefore, able with ease, to do so much more work, that he might have diminished their number; if compassion had not prevented him" (17).

Because Ellison benefits economically by behaving benevolently, the novel might seem to suggest that Ellison's intention in ameliorating his slaves' living conditions to be motivated by selfish, economic interests, but Scott shows this is not the case because she goes far beyond being concerned with only economic interest. Scott attempts to convince her readers who do not act benevolently that they should be so, even if doing so is just for the purpose of economic success. Scott explains in her Preface that she wants Ellison to serve as "a character proper for imitation" (4). Ellison is more interested in moral improvement. Betty Rizzo states, Scott "invariably does present Ellison as a genuine Christian, thus reminding her readers of what they too as Christians might be expected to perform" (xxxii). Scott's advocacy of benevolence does not stem from selfish interests.

Though the novel advocates amelioration, Scott moves beyond amelioration to abolition. Scott published *Sir George Ellison* during a time that benevolence and amelioration were topics of great discussion, but topics such as racial equality and the abolition of slavery had not yet become popular ideas. Anti-slavery sentiments were popular amongst the public by the time Austen was publishing her novels: "[t]he anti-slavery movement was, thus, a significant element in politics" (Steffes 24). Steffes explains that by the time the slave trade was abolished in England in 1807, "[o]pposition to slavery [...] had ceased to be the cause of a radical or visionary minority" (24). Yet

such anti-slavery sentiments were not popular before the 1780s, and such opposing views *were* considered radical during Scott's publishing years.

About a decade and a half after *Sir George Ellison*'s publication, thoughts on slavery changed, much because the Church of England became involved – though hesitantly – in the discussion surrounding slavery. In *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism,* Christopher Leslie Brown explains the Church of England to have finally begun investing in anti-slavery sentiments. Granville Sharp, an advocate of abolishing the slave trade, initiated anti-slavery sentiments within the Church of England. Sharp believed "the clergy particularly suited to promote antislavery" as they "also had a special interest in speaking out for justice and humanity" (192). Yet many members of the clergy, though they believed in slavery's wrongness, "had no desire to take a public position on a question of commercial policy" (195). Sharp "raised consciousness, [but] he did not start a movement" (195). Nevertheless, Sharp "held an unyielding view of Christian duty [...] he could never regard human bondage in anything other than moral terms" (199).

Scott opposed slavery because she believed racial equality to be moral; because of this, she took steps to convince her readers of slavery's wrongness. Betty Rizzo argues that Scott's support for "racial equality" is irrefutable, as it is one of the "conditions she attributes to heaven" (Introduction xxxii). Scott recognized that for her dream of racial equality to come to fruition, she must encourage her readers to believe it moral and just. She also recognized that for her audience to consider such radical ideas, she must first

make a modest move toward promoting racial equality. This modest move toward such a radical goal as racial equality was the ameliorative ideas she presents to her readers. Mary Ellison defines amelioration's purpose as Scott hoped to promote: "amelioration itself led to expectations in Britain that more benign slavemastering was the thin end of an abolitionist wedge" (991). Amelioration was a step toward racial equality, made possible only through the abolishment of slavery.

Ultimately, Scott chose to take the position of an amelioration advocate, though her more radical views of desired racial equality, as would have been thought during the eighteenth century, are nevertheless evident and stem from her Christian beliefs. Victor C. D. Mtubani explains in "The Black Voice in Eighteenth-Century Britain: African Writers Against Slavery and the Slave Trade," "The most important task of late eighteenth-century humanitarianism was to draw attention to the plight of black slaves and campaign for their freedom" (85). Scott calls attention to slavery's ill-treatment when she takes her readers to Jamaica and represents Ellison as considering his slaves his equals. Ellison explains to Mrs. Ellison that all people "live in a state of reciprocal services" (16) and "each side has its obligations to perform" (17). It is not only the poor or less fortunate who should continually give to the rich as slavery suggests; in Ellison's estimation, even the rich should give to the poor, not out of duty but out of love and mercy because "[God] is Love and Mercy itself" (16). Ellison echoes Jesus' teaching of acting benevolently and serving one another: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (*Holy Bible King James*

*Version* John 13:14). Jesus goes on to explain that "[t]he servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:16), thereby explaining the importance of treating one another equally. Ellison believes that because God gives man the freedom to make his own choices, he should do the same for his slaves: "whenever he [a slave] finds it eligible to change his master, he is as free as I am" (*Ellison* 17).

Ellison does not only consider his slaves as "fellow creatures" (13), but humbly asserts them better than himself. He explains to his wife that their slaves are "far our superiors in merit, and indeed in nature" (12). Ellison goes on to explain to his wife that when buried, "our lowest black slave will be as great as we are; in the next world perhaps much greater" (13). Ellison's stand for equality stems from his religious beliefs, and he not only considers his slaves' eternal life, he compares it with his own as better. Mrs. Ellison, having been born in a county steeped in the tradition of slavery, struggles to understand Ellison's compassionate motives. Yet even though she believes the slaves to be "the most despicable part of the creation" (13) – so as even to concern herself much more with the injury her lap dog incurs than her slaves – she does recognize there being "some truth in what her husband had said" (17). Because of Ellison's enduring affection for his slaves, "he had not a slave who would not have joyfully sacrificed his life for him" (18), and they began to think of Ellison as a deity. However, rather than revel in adoration, Ellison "endeavoured to turn their love and adoration of him to his and their

Maker" (18). Ellison does not satisfy worldly desires with the praise of his slaves, but he rather prompts them to adore God, just as he does.

Perhaps one of the most telling examples of Scott's portrayal of Ellison's belief that his slaves are his equals is when he sends for a teacher for his slaves and acts benevolently, not only to his slaves, but to other slaves on the island. Ellison explains to Mrs. Ellison that "the difference between us [Mr. and Mrs. Ellison and the slaves] lies only in education" (16). Ellison requests his father to send a teacher from England to Jamaica so as to be sure of the teacher's abilities. Upon the schoolmaster's arrival, Ellison makes sure that he will "teach reading, writing, and accounts" (17), but he also ensures that the schoolmaster will instruct the children "in the principles of the Christian religion" (17). Ellison was certainly concerned with improving his own slaves conditions, but we are to understand that the goal of Ellison's benevolent acts toward his slaves was not solely for the selfish purpose of improving production on his plantation – though that definitely did happen. Ellison was not only benevolent to his slaves, he was so to other plantation owners' slaves as well, at least, to the extent he was able. His "goodness to this race was not confined to those under his own care. He made it the object of his constant endeavours to prevail with all his acquaintance to treat their negroes with humanity [...] it could not fail of influencing men attached to their own interest, and Mr. Ellison had the satisfaction of seeing the condition of the slaves much mended in the greater part of the island" (36). Ellison's benevolence extended beyond his own plantation, and "he had not his equal in benevolence" (36) on any other

plantation in Jamaica. Ellison, recognizing education to be the divider between those who are free and those who are slaves, "gave a liberty to all his neighbours to send as many children as they pleased to his schools, and was happy to find they accepted the permission" (36). Ellison not only attempts to educate the children of his own slaves, he invites other slave children to partake in a privilege he gives to his slaves for the purpose of bridging – and mending – the gap between free and slave.

Scott didactically encourages amelioration through Ellison's actions and also successfully reveals and surreptitiously promotes her beliefs of racial equality in her novel, an uncommon endeavor among novelists in eighteenth-century England; nevertheless, because of her position as a native to England, she encounters several obstacles. Rizzo explains that "underlying Scott's accommodation [amelioration] is a sense of outrage controlled by an intellectual perception of what she could and could not propose. She could, for example, banish corporal punishment from Ellison's plantation. She could not abolish the institution of slavery; she could only insist on its injustice" (Introduction xxxii). Though Scott knew she could not realistically propose the abolition of slavery in her fiction – because had she, she likely would have had no audience at all, thus no audience to whom to implore any kind of meaningful message – she made what radical statements she could. Ellison knew he could not release his slaves: "According to the present state of the island he was sensible he could not abolish this slavery" (Scott 10), though his desire to do so is clearly evident. Scott acknowledges that "what is natural [...] takes moral precedence over what is merely socially

constructed" (Rizzo, Introduction xxxii), thus recognizing slavery, a manmade institution, to be unnatural. Though Scott knew such social constructions defined much of her eighteenth-century English society, she nevertheless attempted to take steps in unveiling such demoralization in her literature.

Sarah Scott is ambitious in implementing ameliorative ideas through a benevolent slaveowner, brave in advancing ideas about racial equality, and innovative in surreptitiously advocating the abolishment of slavery in support of racial equality. After analyzing Austen as having promoted imperialist ideals and the stronghold of empire in *Mansfield Park*, Edward Said addresses the unresolved paradox of his argument: "There is a paradox here in reading Jane Austen which I have been impressed by but can in no way resolve. All evidence says that even the most routine aspects of holding slaves on a West Indian sugar plantation were cruel stuff. And everything we know about Austen and her values is at odds with the cruelty of slavery" (95-96). Scott's personal beliefs, on the other hand, align with the content she writes, the themes she addresses, and the arguments she makes in *The History of Sir George Ellison.* While Austen paradoxically idealizes empire, Scott critiques empire by not promoting institutions, such as slavery, that were helping to advance England as the eighteenth-century's empire. Scott had hopes that her presentation of Ellison's benevolent actions would spread to her audience as they did in the novel before he leaves Jamaica to return home: "Mr. Ellison's goodness to this race was not confined to those under his own care. [...] Mr. Ellison had the satisfaction of seeing the condition of the slaves much mended in the greater part of the island" (36).

# CONCLUSION

## SCOTT:

## CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES AND OTHER RELIGIOUS ANGLICAN CONNECTIONS

Religion plays an important role in both Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and *The History of Sir George Ellison.* An essentially didactic writer, she intended her readers to use these novels as models in order to better society. By depicting a utopian community in *Millenium Hall* and an English estate and a Jamaican plantation in *The History of Sir George Ellison*, Scott provides examples of how society could function should it adhere to Christian principles. Based on religious principles, Scott depicts ways of reconceptualizing the domestic and political realities, in regards to who should rule, in *Millenium Hall* and creates ideas on how to run the empire in *The History of Sir George Ellison*.

Scott's *Millenium Hall* is founded upon Christian principles, and Scott creates a Christian presence in Millenium Hall's estate. Scott's reliance on reason further associates her with Anglicanism, as Anglicanism promoted a belief in reason and the need for reasonableness as an element of Christianity. She was also concerned with reform, and she bases all her reformist ideas on religion. Scott adhered to the Church of England, and the values of the Church are clearly represented in *Millenium Hall*, as all the women of the estate follow Christian regulations. Of course, Scott's goal in creating such an establishment in her novel was to illustrate society's potential should it mimic Millenium Hall.

In considering Scott's novels from a religious standpoint, other areas of interest open up for discussion, including religion as it appears in other novels in the eighteenth century, as the mid-eighteenth century novel has not often been thought of in the context of religion. Even authors who do give some attention to religion do not do so as overtly as Scott. A theological argument is not necessary in such an analysis, but rather, consideration from a religious perspective.

Scott's *The History of Sir George Ellison* continues her ambitious move to create an idealized society, though in a reality (Ellison's plantation and estate), not a utopia (a female run estate). Sir George Ellison, being a man of sensibility inclined to benevolence, ameliorates his slaves' conditions on his plantation in Jamaica. These benevolent motives are tied to Scott's Anglican religion, as the eighteenth century Latitudinarians have been given credit for stirring the interest in and discourse around benevolence in the eighteenth century. Though Ellison moves to Jamaica to earn money for his family's estate at home in England, his benevolence, not merely his desire for profit, manifests itself in the ameliorative measures he takes on his slave plantation. Scott's most radical idea in *Sir George Ellison* is her support of racial equality seen in Ellison's actions while in Jamaica.

Having focused on religion in two of Scott's novels, considering the Bluestockings in terms of religion would also be an interesting avenue to pursue. Scott's being on the margins of the Bluestockings allows for some reason to reconsider the Bluestockings from that perspective. Elizabeth Eger's *Bluestockings: Women of Reason*

*from Enlightenment to Romanticism* does not discuss this topic, and Sylvia Harcstark Myers's *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* only mentions religion in passing. Even Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz's *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings* does not mention the Bluestockings as having any connection with religion. Yet some information we know about the Bluestockings point us in the direction as perhaps needing to explore their religious affiliations. For example, the Bluestockings were avid readers of Samuel Richardson's novels, which have some religious context. Additionally, the name of the group, the Bluestockings, has been discussed as having a connection to the stockings that Benjamin Stillingfleet, an impoverished writer in the early eighteenth century, wore to evening events.[1] Interestingly, Stillingfleet was Anglican. Because there is a possible connection between the women's group's name and Stillingfleet, an Anglican man, there is reason to consider other connections which have not yet been made from the Bluestockings to religion. Research regarding such would certainly be interesting to pursue and beneficial to Bluestocking, and Sarah Scott, scholarship.

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[1] For more information regarding the connection between Benjamin Stillingfleet's stockings and the Bluestockings, see "Blue Stockings" in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature.*

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