

Chapter 2

A Family Affair: Mary Sumner, Religious Habitus, Evangelical Enthusiasm and Anglican Advocacy

2.1 Family life, living religion, capital assets and symbolic gifts

Mary Sumner's religious preferences were framed against a context of attention to matters of religion within the home and to the public performance of perceived religious obligations. Her initial encounters with religion in home life were under the guidance of her parents, Thomas and Mary Heywood, former Unitarian converts to Anglicanism. From the age of twenty (1848) Mary's experience of religion in home life, and in matters of doctrinal interpretation, was also informed by the Sumner family. Her marriage placed her in proximity to her husband's views on religion and to the authoritative views of his uncle, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his father, the Bishop of Winchester. Both families exemplify the contemporary evangelical enthusiasm in their approach to religion, characteristic across a range of denominations at a time of 'religious revival' and contested authority in the field of religion. This chapter explores religion in the daily conduct of home life and public affairs that Mary Sumner experienced in childhood and married life. The evangelical enthusiasm and Anglican affiliation of Mary Sumner's kin is related to notions of religious capital particularly in relation to women. The chapter then moves outwards to locate the doctrinal preferences prioritised in Mary Sumner's kinship network against a context of contested religious capital. Attention is given to the field of religion within which members of her kinship and social network manoeuvred. The contextual circumstances which framed these manoeuvres are noted as they inform Mary Sumner's notions of capital and horizons of possibility and are thus pertinent to her activism via the MU.

Mary Elizabeth Heywood was born on 31st December 1828 in Swinton, near Manchester. Mary's mother Mary Elizabeth Barton (d. 1870) was the daughter of John Barton of Swinton, a Unitarian land owner. Her father Thomas (1797-1861) was the third son of the banker

Nathaniel Heywood and had attended Manchester Grammar School before becoming, in 1818, a partner in the family bank.¹ Prior to their conversion circa 1832, her parents had been prominent members of the influential Manchester Unitarian Cross Street Chapel. Unitarians did not believe in the virgin birth or the doctrine of the Trinity, nor did they use the Book of Common Prayer. They were also distinctive in denying the doctrine of original sin. For Unitarians, Jesus was not divine but represented the most perfect human; humanity was envisioned as perfectible and living religion was perceived as an application of reason to improve the individual and society.² However, as in the evangelical tradition within Anglicanism, social ills were seen as attributable to bad habits and the remedies were to be sought in personal efforts towards improvement. The Cross Street Chapel congregation, led by William Gaskell between 1828 and 1884, represented powerful families from the commercial and industrial elite of the town who were committed to social reform, civic improvement and the removal of the cultural and political disadvantages attendant on their denominational preference.³ What Helen Plant encapsulates as ‘the quest by Unitarian men to achieve “gentleman” status, and occupy the positions of leadership within the new urban middle class to which their growing affluence seemed to entitle them’, an aspiration supported by joining the Established Church, appears to be exemplified in the careers of Thomas Heywood and his elder brother Sir Benjamin Heywood (1793-1865), also a convert to Anglicanism.⁴ Benjamin had been created a baronet in acknowledgement of his parliamentary support of the 1832 Reform Bill. Thomas Heywood likewise achieved public office as Borough Reeve of Salford in 1826 and as High Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1840. Whilst David Bebbington attributes Sir Benjamin’s conversion

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1. C.W. Sutton and Alan G. Crosby, ‘Thomas Heywood (1797-1866)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2010), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13191>, accessed November 27th 2012].
 2. Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women’s Rights Movements, 1831-51* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 7, 26.
 3. Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (London: Longman, 1998). Isabel Mary Heywood and Sir Thomas Percival Heywood, *Reminiscences, Letters and Journals of Thomas Percival Heywood, Baronet. Arranged by His Eldest Daughter (Isabel Mary). With a Preface by the Rev. George Body* (printed for private circulation: Manchester, 1899), 4-5.
 4. Helen Plant, “‘Ye Are All One in Christ Jesus’: Aspects of Unitarianism and Feminism in Birmingham, c. 1869-90”, *Women’s History Review* 9, no. 4 (2000): 723.

to the Established church to the attraction of liturgy rather than status, the conversions of Benjamin and Thomas Heywood did coincide with advances in their social and political status.¹

Piety and scrutiny of conscience feature prominently in *Mary Sumner: Her Life and Work* and *A Short History of the Mothers' Union*, but there is no reference to Mary Sumner's Unitarian heritage. This is an understandable omission, given that both sources are written with the intention of asserting the superiority of Anglican approaches to liturgy and belief. Although Joyce Coombs acknowledges the Nonconformist tradition of the family, her assertion that the Heywoods all 'returned to the Church of England' is incorrect. The younger brother of Thomas and Benjamin, James Heywood, a liberal MP noted for his efforts to revoke the Test Acts (which permitted only Anglican communicants to obtain English university degrees), remained active as a Unitarian.² James does not feature in Mary Sumner's recorded recollections of family interaction. However, the emphasis on culture, self-improvement and philanthropy characteristic of Unitarian belief are evident in the Heywoods' conduct of private life and public affairs, and Katherine Gleadle's view that Unitarian beliefs were significant in influencing attitudes to the spiritual status, role and education of women resonates with Mary Sumner's experience.

In 1833 Thomas Heywood retired from the bank and assumed the life of a country landowner at Hope End near Ledbury in Herefordshire. The previous owner of the 500-acre estate, Edward Moulton-Barrett (who later assumed the surname Browning), had built the house in 1815 in an oriental, Moorish style that incorporated minarets at the eastern end. However, Moulton-Barrett, whose fortune derived from the ownership of sugar plantations in Jamaica, was forced to sell when financial difficulties brought about by slave emancipation led to his mortgage being foreclosed. His daughter, the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, commemorated her childhood home at Hope End in *The Lost Bower*, a detail that Mary Sumner recorded in her biographical notes. This celebrity connection was reproduced in *Mary Sumner: Her Life and*

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1. Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860*; David W. Bebbington, 'Unitarian Members of Parliament in the Nineteenth Century' (2009), [<http://hdl.handle.net/1893/1647>, accessed May 17th 2017].
 2. Joyce Coombs, *George and Mary Sumner: Their Life and Times* (Westminster: Sumner Press, 1965), 37; M.C. Curthoys, 'Heywood, James (1810-1897)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/56315>]. James Heywood kept his Unitarian faith and sources relating to Mary Sumner suggest there was no contact between them.

Work. It was at Hope End that Mary remembered galloping her pony Strawberry and boating on the lake in what is recorded as ‘a girlhood that was not only happy, but was also characterised by an amount of freedom,’ with her elder sister Maggie and brother Tom.¹

The Heywoods were personally attentive to their children’s religious and cultural education. The children were included in trips to the continent. Mary an accomplished musician, spoke several languages and was encouraged to enjoy history by her antiquarian father, an early member of the Chetham’s Society and the collector of a library of tracts and pamphlets.² Bible study was directed by Mrs Heywood and the children’s upbringing also reflected Thomas Heywood’s commitment to philanthropy as a means of social improvement. The establishment of a school and the funding of the Anglican Church on his estate at Wellington Heath were projects that the Heywood children were encouraged to support.³ The emphasis on philanthropy, education and culture characteristic of Unitarians is also demonstrated by Sir Benjamin Heywood, a noted promoter of Mechanics’ Institutes.⁴ The themes of philanthropy and education in relation to Mary Sumner’s activism are the subject of following chapters.

In the winter of 1846 the Heywoods were in Rome with their daughters Margaret and Mary, where they were introduced to George Sumner (1824-1909) at a party given by his cousin Mrs Wilson, a daughter of John Bird Sumner (1780-1862), who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1848. George, then aged 22, was enjoying a period of travel after graduating from Balliol College, Oxford, prior to taking Holy Orders. George was the son of Charles Sumner (1790-1874), Bishop of Winchester from 1827 until 1867, and formerly chaplain to George IV.⁵ George and Mary were married on July 26th 1848 at the Church of St James’s the Great, Colwall, in a ceremony presided over by the bridegroom’s father. Mary Sumner reproduced in full what she referred to the ‘glowing and amusing terms’ with which the *Herefordshire Journal* reported the festivities to

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1. Mary Porter, Mary Woodward, and Horatia Erskine, *Mary Sumner: Her Life and Work and a Short History of the Mothers’ Union* (Winchester: Warren and Sons, 1921), 4-6.
 2. Sutton and Crosby, ‘Thomas Heywood (1797-1866)’.
 3. Mary Sumner, ‘Account of Her Early Life at Hope End 1828-46’ in *Mothers’ Union* (Lambeth Palace Library).
 4. Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860*, 91. Mary Sumner’s parents were Thomas Heywood (1797-1866), formerly of Heywood’s Bank in Manchester, and Mary Elizabeth Barton (d. 1870).
 5. Porter, Woodward, and Erskine, *Mary Sumner*, 9-10.

its readers in her memoir of her husband. That this was written more than sixty years after the wedding suggests, somewhat poignantly, that Mary had retained the clipping from the newspaper. In addition to a faithful report of the attire of the bride and bridesmaids, the *Journal* recorded a 'sumptuous déjeunér' served to sixty friends and family. The *Journal* article gives an indication of the extent of the Heywood's estate in recording that:

More than 600 people partook of the lavish hospitality provide by Mr and Mrs Heywood for their tenants and labourers with their wives and children from Wellington Heath, Munsley, Coddington, Bosbury and Colwall. Games and amusements of varied kinds were provided after the repast in a large field near the upper lodge and were cheered by the strains of an excellent band.¹

George and Mary Sumner lived for two years at Crawley near Winchester, where George served as curate to Canon Jacob. Following the death of Mrs Charles Sumner, George, Mary and their baby daughter Margaret Effie (born 1849) moved to Farnham Castle where, with George's unmarried sister Emily, they became part of the bishop's household. The birth of their second daughter, Louisa 'Loulie' Mary Alice, in 1850 enlarged the family. George's official position in the Castle was as his father's domestic chaplain and at this time he was also appointed as a chaplain to his uncle the Archbishop.² So Mary was positioned at the heart of a kinship circle representing the highest authority in Anglicanism, in a prestigious location, where family life and the family business of administrating and upholding the ascendancy of the Established Church coexisted.

After two years at Farnham, Bishop Sumner appointed his son to the living of Old Alresford, a large rural parish a few miles from the cathedral city of Winchester. George and Mary set up home in the twelve-bedroom rectory where they were to live for the next thirty five years. It was here in 1853 that their son Heywood, who in later life became an artist associated with the Arts and Crafts movement and a noted archaeologist, was born. They socialised amongst the local gentry and were regular guests in local country houses but maintained connections

1. *Hereford Journal* August 2nd 1848, 3; Mary Sumner, *Memoir of George Henry Sumner, D.D., Bishop of Guildford: Published for His Friends by Special Request* (Winchester: Warren and Son, 1910), 8-10.
2. Mary Sumner, *Memoir of George Henry Sumner, D.D., Bishop of Guildford: Published for His Friends by Special Request* (Winchester: Warren and Son, 1910), 8-14.

with the network of social and clerical contacts established by association with their ecclesiastical kinsmen. Although removed from the Bishop's residence, the family business of religion continued to be centred on and conducted from home. As mistress of her own household, twenty-three year old Mary embraced the duties of 'helpmeet' and practical assistant to her husband in efforts to promote adherence to the Church and instil religious principles in the conduct of parish life.

Bishop Charles Sumner and Archbishop John Bird Sumner (1780-1862), are considered highly influential evangelicals; representative of what Owen Chadwick considers 'the strongest force in British life', significant because in inspiring religious enthusiasm across a range of denominations it affected the conduct of public affairs.¹ Within Anglicanism there were different emphases on the interpretation of doctrine: Lower Church understanding was closer to the Protestantism of Methodists and other Nonconformist denominations, whereas High Church (Anglo-Catholic) positions were closer to Roman Catholic practice. Evangelicals believed that in order to achieve salvation the depravity of man and the sacrifice of Christ as atonement for sin must be accepted. Evangelical believers sought a purposeful and worthy life in order to be able to give a satisfactory account of their lives at judgement day. This was realised through an emphasis on demonstrably 'living' religion in the home sphere and public life. This imperative for accountability also encouraged a sense of 'mission' and an appetite to spread the 'joys of living religion' which was frequently pursued through philanthropic activity or educational initiatives.²

The evangelical impulse had its roots in the emotionally experienced religion of John Wesley but the evangelical tradition upheld by the Sumner family remained firmly within the Anglican Church and drew inspiration from the influential Clapham sect, so called in reference to the location of the church that formed the locus for members' worship. Reforming rather than radical, 'Claphamites' were dedicated to the improvement of society through the practical application of religion to current affairs. The exercise of power should be mediated by conscience

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1. Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church Part I, 1827-1859* (A&C Black, 1966), 5. See also Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984* (T&T Clark, 1988); D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1988).
 2. Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), 21. Bradley notes William Wilberforce pressing his son Samuel, the future Anglican bishop, for evidence of his religious awakening.

and moral conduct. Foremost amongst prominent members of the sect was William Wilberforce (1759-1833) the distinguished campaigner against the slave trade.¹ The Sumners were related to the Wilberforce family by marriage. Wilberforce's wife Judith was the aunt of Hannah Bird Sumner, the mother of Charles and John Bird Sumner. The family connection was sustained over the following generations through ecclesiastical patronage and friendship. William's son Samuel, later Bishop of Oxford and successor to Charles Sumner at Winchester, was given the livings at Brightstone and Alverstoke, and appointed to the post of archdeacon of Surrey in 1839 by his second cousin. In later years Samuel was to be a regular visitor at Old Alresford rectory and his son Ernest and his second wife Emily were to feature as key players in the recount of genesis of the diocesan Mothers' Union.

The practice of recording biographies of notable male family members was common to both the Heywoods and the Sumners. These functioned as mementos for the numerous members of their extended families. Mary's eulogistic *Memoir of George Sumner, D.D., Bishop of Guildford*, 'written for his friends by special request' and 'published for private circulation' in 1910, is certainly in this category and may also be interpreted as a means for articulating her grief.² George Sumner, the author the 1874 *Life of C.R. Sumner, D.D., Bishop of Winchester During a Forty Years' Episcopate*, was not only his father's biographer but also completed a memoir of Sir Benjamin Heywood on behalf of his father-in-law.³ Thomas Heywood's own *Reminiscences* were edited by his daughter Isabel, Mary Sumner's niece. Her claim that: 'It will help many a one to know how a layman, living in the world . . . and sharing the ordinary pleasures of a country gentleman, can yet fulfil the command; "What so ever ye do, do all to the Glory of God"',⁴ illustrates the assertion of symbolic religious capital, a characteristic common to all the Heywood and Sumner memoirs. Both families presented religion as a public practice and as integral to the conduct of harmonious domestic

1. David Spring, 'The Clapham Sect: Some Social and Political Aspects', *Victorian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1961); Anne Stott, *Wilberforce: Family and Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
2. Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*.
3. Thomas Heywood, Sir Benjamin Heywood, and George Sumner, *A Memoir of Sir Benjamin Heywood . . . By His Brother, T.H. With Two Chapters of Domestic Life, and Letters, 1840-1865* (Manchester: printed for private circulation, 1888); George Henry Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner, D.D., Bishop of Winchester, During a Forty Years' Episcopate* (London, 1876).
4. Heywood and Heywood, *Reminiscences*, x.

life. The memoirs publicise private devotion as a public virtue. The *Memoir of Sir Benjamin Heywood* includes ‘Two Chapters of Domestic Life’. Mary Sumner’s references to religion in daily life, as a child and in her married life recalled in her manuscripts *Early Life at Hope End and Account of the Founding of the Mothers’ Union and Parochial Work at Old Alresford*, accord with the emphasis on earnest religion recorded by other members of her family, and by George Sumner as a feature of his evangelical upbringing.

All the memoirs follow a pattern. In addition to recording the observance of religious practice in home life, attention to religious education and scrutiny of conscience, they communicate the valuing of warm family relationships. A happy childhood guided by affectionate pious parents, is followed by domestic harmony in marriage, and a career featuring religious and educational good works. Finally, family members (and servants) gather for a peaceful deathbed parting and testimonials to the character of the deceased from worthy sources are quoted. Mary affirmed the affectionate relations in the Sumner family by commenting on her own reception as a daughter in law:

There never could have been a more united family than the Sumners, and it was remarkable that the sons and daughters who entered into the home life at Farnham Castle, were each one treated as part of the family quite as much as the real sons and daughters.¹

Mary and George maintained strong links with their Heywood and Sumner relatives through regular visits. From 1850 they took annual holidays with Bishop Sumner, which included visits to Geneva, Rome and Seville, whilst their children stayed with their Heywood grandparents ‘who made them supremely happy’ at Hope End.² Mrs Heywood, Mary’s mother, when widowed in 1866, moved to Old Alresford Rectory. Kinship ties were reinforced through the rituals of christenings, weddings and funerals. Inter-marriage between relatives was not unusual. Just how close connections could be is exemplified by the marriages of Mary’s elder sister Margaret (d. January 30th 1894) and daughter Margaret Effie. Margaret married Sir Benjamin’s son, her cousin (Sir) Thomas Percival Heywood (MP for Salford), on May 19th 1846 and Margaret Effie (1849-1916) married Arthur Percival Heywood, the eldest son of her aunt Margaret, in 1872. The remarriage of widowers within close kinship, social and professional networks was also common. In 1837 George

1. Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 11.

2. *Ibid.*, 25-27.

Sumner's sister Louisanna married the Reverend William Gibson, who had previously been married to her cousin Eliza. George and Mary's daughter Louisa became the second wife of Barrington Gore Browne, the son of Bishop and Mrs Harold Browne of Winchester in 1882.¹

The Heywoods and Sumners were on cordial terms. The former Unitarianism of Mary's parents and uncle was not perceived as a difficulty by the Sumner family, despite their prominence in the Anglican hierarchy. Thomas Heywood and his brother Sir Benjamin, who was considered by Charles Sumner to be 'most devotionally minded and kind hearted',² were accepted as committed Anglicans. George acted as chaplain to his brother-in-law, Thomas Percival Heywood, in his role of High Sherriff of Lancashire (1851), and gave his funeral sermon in 1897.³ Although Mary Sumner did not refer to the conversion of her parents, her cousin Thomas Percival Heywood's *Reminiscences* acknowledged the Unitarian background of his parents with respect: 'To this day I hear with pain and impatience any abuse of Unitarians. . . . My father and mother were faithful and devoted servants of God before they became members of the Church.'⁴

The value placed on religious sensibility characteristic of evangelicals is illustrated by Mary Sumner choosing to recall her mother's girlhood religious awakening after a dream of judgement (when still a Unitarian) in her 'Memoir of Early Life at Hope End'. Mary's references to the solemnity of confirmation and communion also accord with the personal experience of 'vital religion' professed by evangelicals, and also affirm the advocacy for communion expressed by her husband and father-in-law. She recalled the birth of her daughter, Margaret Effie, in 1849 as a religious experience: 'My first thought when my first child was born was of an awful sense of responsibility – God had given an immortal soul in to our keeping it was a blessed solemn moment the joy was quite unspeakable.'⁵ The evangelical belief in active efforts

1. Heywood and Heywood, *Reminiscences*, 27-30, 40, 261. Louisanna and William Gibson's daughter Ella Sophia married Henry, a son of Sir Benjamin Heywood; Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 10, 135-6; Heywood Sumner, 'Memorials of the Family of Sumner from the Sixteenth Century to 1904' (Southampton 1904). Porter, Woodward and Erskine give 1871 as the date for Margaret Effie's marriage, in contradiction to other sources.

2. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 425.

3. Heywood and Heywood, *Reminiscences*, 43, 264-75.

4. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

5. Mary Sumner, 'Account of the Founding of the Mothers' Union and Parochial Work at Old Alresford' in *Mothers' Union* (Lambeth Palace Library).

towards securing salvation is illustrated in her other writing. In a talk directed to mothers on 'Obedience' she drew on biblical authority to assert that: 'Our Father in Heaven shows by his training of us, his grown up children that life was meant to be a place of discipline and self-conquest.'¹ As a young wife Mary kept a card on her dressing table as prompt towards religious endeavour and although she recalled this in her public recollections on the genesis of the MU, it was at the time, a private exercise.² Similar scrutiny of conscience is noted in Jennie (Mrs Charles) Sumner's response to the Bishop's translation to Winchester in 1827: 'humility fills my mind my prayer is most earnest that we may be kept humble . . . more talents added to our charge calls for redoubled vigilance and activity', a sentiment repeated by George Sumner when, as Bishop of Guildford, he urged clergy not to overlook their own private prayer and improvement.³

Religion was presented as a comfort and a good death signified a good life. Mrs Heywood was sustained in her final illness by her son-in-law's sermons and ministration. Preparation for, and anticipation of, the afterlife were mentioned frequently. George Sumner was described as 'sailing placidly to eternity in absolute submission to the will of God.'⁴ Jennie Sumner approached death with expressions of 'joyful hope and expectation' in a 'happy state of semi-entrancement'. The death of her husband was similarly an occasion for family participation, with George Sumner taking Holy Communion at his father's bedside amidst children and servants waiting to be wished farewell by the dying bishop.⁵ The joyful anticipation of the afterlife was similarly recorded in the later account of Mary Sumner's own death, which notes 'the vision must have been wonderful.'⁶ The sorrows of parting were alleviated by the comfort of the family circle and the conviction that a life well lived would assure salvation and reunion in the hereafter. The attention to preparation for what Mary Sumner referred to as 'the Home above' involved the

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1. 'Obedience' in *Home Life* (Winchester: Warren and Sons, 1895), 33. Romans 16, 'We are the children of God'; Hebrews 16, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth'.
 2. Porter, Woodward, and Erskine, *Mary Sumner*, 13.
 3. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 126; Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 108-9. Charge by the Bishop of Guildford.
 4. *Memoir of George Sumner*, 13, 28, 153-4.
 5. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 324, 479. Jennie Sumner died in 1849; Charles in 1874.
 6. Louisa Gore Browne, 'Letter to Mrs Hubert Barclay in Response to Condolence Letter on the Death of Mary Sumner, August 1921' in *Mothers' Union* (Lambeth Palace Library).

observance of religious ritual in the earthly home.¹ Sunday was observed as a quiet day for spiritual refreshment; two services were attended even whilst on holiday. The habit of family prayer, in which servants were included, shared by both the Heywoods and Sumners, was sustained by George and Mary Sumner in their own household. In 1886 their new home was consecrated by a religious service and the reading of a prayer specially composed by George to mark the occasion.²

The evangelical emphasis on individual efforts towards salvation prompted reflection on the religious natures of men and women. William Wilberforce's 1797 publication *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in The Higher and Middle Classes of this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity* was influential in asserting a heightened religious sensibility in women, which was thought to suit them to the domestic sphere, as providers not only of physical respite but a moral refuge from the competitive masculine world of work and public affairs. The trope of the 'Angel in the House', a phrase originating from Coventry Patmore's poem extolling loving domesticity, encapsulated this conception of womanhood which became a dominant discourse during the nineteenth century.³ The evangelical focus on the home as a site of religious observance, far from suggesting a division of separate spheres, involved greater emphasis on domestic relations, including the negotiation of marriage and the role of fathers in home life; issues that Mary Sumner addressed in much of her writing.⁴

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1. Mary Sumner, 'Marriage Address 2' in *Home Life* (Winchester: Warren and Sons, 1895), 24.
 2. *Memoir of George Sumner*, 21, 16, 84.
 3. Eileen Janes Yeo, 'Some Paradoxes of Empowerment' in *Radical Femininity; Women's Self Representation in the Public Sphere*, ed. Eileen Janes Yeo (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 4; Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1994), 29-31; Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 3, 7-9.
 4. 'Evangelical Christianity was a domestic religion [which] articulated a new masculine norm against which men's conduct has been measured ever since.' John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, [Conn.]; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 6, 11; see also Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 41. Knight notes the large volume of religious publication as evidence for the home as a site of religious observance; Stephanie Olsen, 'The Authority of Motherhood in Question: Fatherhood and the Moral Education of Children in England, c. 1870-1900', *Women's History Review* 18, no. 5 (2009).

The focus on religion in the home that positioned parents as religious educators and acknowledged the influence of women was evident in the Sumner and Heywood families. Charles Sumner, as Rector of Highclere in 1817, circulated an address to parents emphasising the importance of religious home example on children.¹ The Heywoods also modelled religious conduct to their children. Mary Sumner wrote: 'I never remember disobeying my parents. Such a course seemed to be made impossible . . . by their example of high principle as regards obedience, truth and honour.' She noted the 'debt of gratitude' owed to Mrs Heywood for the thorough religious training that she and her siblings Tom and Maggie had received, which included daily Bible reading. Mary created a picture of childhood as a time of innocence and playfulness, and parental care as affectionate. She also noted the affection shown by her father-in-law to her baby daughter, Margaret Effie,² which accorded with George Sumner's recollection of his parents' enjoyment of holidays with their children. He included an extract from a letter written by his mother, Jennie Sumner, in the memoir of his father:

We are greatly enjoying ourselves walking – rambling over the rocks still more by being with our children and permitted to enjoy their society as we can never do at home to be so much with my dear husband and to see him thus surrounded with our children and delighting to hear them converse freely are sources of happiness.³

Mary Sumner's experience of family relationships demonstrated that the role of mother and helpmeet was esteemed. Jennie Sumner regarded married love as blessed and sanctified by God, and George Sumner's grandmother, Hannah Bird Sumner, is quoted as stating: 'no life can be happier than that of a private clergyman's wife – when the parties are tenderly united by a bond of rational affection, not expecting unchequered felicity (which in no station here below is attainable).'⁴ Accounts of family life, couched in conventional religious rhetoric, refer to the contribution of wives and mothers and extol their virtues as religious exemplars to their families. At Farnham Castle, George Sumner's home from 1827-1848:

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1. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 34.
 2. Sumner, 'Early Life'; *Memoir of George Sumner*, 14; Porter, Woodward, and Erskine, *Mary Sumner*, 8.
 3. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 220. Extract from a letter from Mrs Charles Sumner included in the memoir without addressee or date.
 4. *Ibid.*, 220, 23.

There never was a house where domestic happiness was more beautifully seen . . . who can forget the joyous radiance of Mrs [Charles] Sumner of whom it may be truly said, that she was the centre of a system of gladness, which influenced the whole circle as it moved harmoniously around her.¹

Mary Sumner drew on a well-worn cliché in referring to her mother as the ‘Angel in the house to us all’. She further eulogised her mother by describing her as ‘winning people of all sorts and kinds, rich and poor by her tender sympathy, her charm of manner, her cleverness and humour, and her quick appreciation of all that was good and interesting in those who approached her’. Mrs Heywood was also celebrated for her ‘very decided religious convictions’ which ‘moulded her whole tone of thought and manner of life and were an influence to those with whom she came in contact.’² Her endeavours as a spiritual helpmeet were acknowledged by her husband on his deathbed: ‘It is all through you that I die in faith and peace – God bless you we shall soon meet again.’ Jennie, Mrs Charles Sumner was similarly commended; her moral influence on students tutored by her husband was considered worthy of comment in the memoir of his life.³ According to George Sumner: ‘She was a true mother in Israel and throughout her married life a helpmeet to the husband that she dearly loved both in domestic and public life.’⁴ A eulogy signed by 684 clergy publicly acknowledged her contribution to family life and her husband’s career:

She ‘consecrated all to the service of her heavenly master’ and well did she work with him [the Bishop] by her loving holy influence. The Golden thread of principle, the fear and love of God was woven into the Farnham daily life, and made it very attractive to all who shared in it.⁵

George Sumner’s conduct as a parish clergyman, which involved the ‘heart to heart’ work of taking religion into the homes of parishioners by visiting, leading family prayer, and winning over men, upheld the evangelical stance of his father, for whom ministry was more than the public act of preaching ‘for hearers only’ once a week. It involved ‘attention to the

1. Ibid., 199. Reminiscence of Reverend Charles Hume.

2. Sumner, ‘Early Life’.

3. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 37.

4. Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 28, 12.

5. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 324; Mary Sumner repeats the anecdote, see Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 12.

young and all that general parochial superintendence which is implied in what is termed the cure of souls.¹ Mary was brisk in her dismissal of the previous absentee incumbent of Old Alresford, who personified the spiritual laxity and financial abuses that Charles and John Bird Sumner sought to eradicate in a revitalised Church. Francis North, the sixth Earl of Guildford, had held the livings of Old Alresford, New Alresford and Medstead for over fifty years. The beneficiary of the patronage of his father Brownlow North, a former Bishop of Winchester, he also received income as the incumbent of St Mary's Southampton, as a Prebendary of the Cathedral and, more lucrative still, as Master of St Cross, the alms houses which were the subject of the 1851 financial scandal satirised by Anthony Trollope in his novel *The Warden*. The rectory was to be 'no longer the land of lotus living ease' but 'a centre of parochial usefulness'.² This was realised through a number of projects in the years between 1851 and 1886 that aimed to foster religious knowledge and behaviour, such as the village reading room (1878). Even the 'Cottage Garden Society' can be interpreted with the promotion of the religiously approved virtues of thrift and temperance in mind. The Sumners' approach to parochial work assumed that, following the pattern of her mother-in-law, Mary would be an active helpmeet in the parish. According to her memoir of life at Old Alresford, George 'greatly approved' of the mothers' meeting, 'which went through catechism, baptismal and Holy Communion services, the marriage service and special passages from the Bible and Prayer Book'.³ An accomplished musician, she served as church organist and directed the choir. A married men's meeting and a branch of the GFS (1875) were also under her direction.

2.2 Anglican advocacy and contested authority in the field of religion

George and Mary Sumner's presence in the Bishop's household and years of parish ministry occurred against a context of religious controversy. At the time of the inauguration of the Girls' Friendly Society (1875) and the parochial genesis of the MU (1876), the Established Church had been facing sustained challenges to its dominance in the religious field. These were posed by the increase of non-Anglican denominations (as

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1. *Memoir of George Sumner*, 111; Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 171.
 2. Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 15.
 3. 'Founding.' The membership cards introduced in 1876 were an innovation to an existing meeting for which the date is unspecified. A later chapter will discuss philanthropy in relation to Mary Sumner's understanding of mission.

revealed in the 1851 census) and their increasingly favourable treatment in law.¹ Bishop Charles Sumner and his brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury, were, as agents with high field position, at the forefront of manoeuvres to support the status and authority of the Anglican Church. They were also engaged in negotiating struggles over authority within Anglicanism which concerned doctrinal interpretation and preferred forms of worship. The views advanced by adherents of the Tractarian movement, so-called after the 1833 *Tracts for the Times*, published by Oxford scholars John Keble, Richard Hurrell Froude, William Palmer and John Henry Newman formed a key focus for controversy. The repercussions of these struggles directly affected Mary Sumner and her kinship network. They informed her personal experience of religion and the aims and practices of the Anglican organisations in which she was active.

Tractarians were motivated by a desire to defend the priestly authority of the clergy against the incursions of government intervention. They also sought to revitalise and beautify the Anglican Church of England, an aspiration embodied in the ornate adornment of churches exemplified in the gothic revival style of Augustus Pugin. As in the case of evangelical Low Church views, Tractarianism was a stimulus to religious revival in its reaction against lack of rigour in religion and morals. The Anglo-Catholic Anglicanism asserted by Tractarians challenged the Protestant ascendancy of the reformation and stimulated scrutiny of the core Anglican beliefs of apostolic succession, the sacraments of baptism, communion, marriage and the use of the Book of Common Prayer. This attention to identity involved the taking of frequently hostile 'party' positions amongst Anglicans.

The Anglican 'evangelical party' (notably Archbishop John Bird Sumner and Bishop Charles Sumner) perceived Tractarianism as a threat to the authority and unity of the Church of England.² Tractarian belief in transubstantiation (the objective presence of the body and blood of Christ in the mass), the sacrificial role of the priest, priestly authority, and baptism as automatically regenerative was close to

1. Key legislation included the Repeal of the Test Acts 1828, Catholic Emancipation Act 1829 and Irish Disestablishment 1871. See also Nigel Scotland, *John Bird Sumner: Evangelical Archbishop* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1995), 67-80. Scotland details other legislation that affected the financial status of the Church and Sumner's response to social legislation.

2. *Ibid.*, 81-94. Scotland explains Sumner's strong opposition to Tractarian ideas; see also Michael Chandler, *An Introduction to the Oxford Movement* (New York: Church Publishing, 2003), 99-106.

Roman Catholic doctrine. The High Church Anglo-Catholicism of Tractarianism associated with a scrutiny of conscience did culminate, in several cases, in conversion to Roman Catholicism. Notable converts close to the Sumner's circle were future Roman Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce's brother-in-law, and his brothers Henry, William, and Robert.¹ Despite the relaxation of legal restrictions on denominational participation in public institutional life, there remained intense anti-Roman Catholic suspicion. Whilst the prevalence of Roman Catholicism in the urban lower orders might be attributed to deficiencies of education, class or 'race', when practiced by the ruling classes and members of the Anglican hierarchy it was a cause of political as well as spiritual unease because it asserted the authority of the Pope as transcending national boundaries.² Clerical celibacy was also a focus for concern as it was perceived as a challenge to the patriarchal governance of the family; an institution regarded by Anglicans and evangelicals, including Mary Sumner, who wrote 'the home is God's own institution ordained and founded by him at the beginning', as divinely ordained and a bulwark of social order.³

'Correct' form in baptism, communion and ritual in worship was disputed by Low Church evangelicals (such as Bishop Charles Sumner and Archbishop John Bird Sumner), who emphasised individual effort towards salvation, and High Church Tractarians, who favoured ritual and priestly authority. The effect of Charles Sumner's antipathy to those suspected of Tractarian views, which included the exclusion of ladies from philanthropic projects, is recalled by Charlotte Moberly, a friend of novelist Charlotte Yonge, who wrote:

Bishop Charles Sumner had not long been Bishop of Winchester. He and almost all the clergy wives were of the Evangelical School. He had entirely made up his mind that Mr

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1. D. Newsome, *The Parting of Friends: A Study of the Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (London: Murray, 1966); see also Arthur Rawson Ashwell and Reginald Garton Wilberforce, *Life of the Right Reverend Samuel Wilberforce, D.D: Lord Bishop of Oxford and Afterwards of Winchester, with Selections from His Diaries and Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1880).
 2. See Eileen Janes Yeo, 'Protestant Feminists and Catholic Saints' in *Radical Femininity: Women's Self Representation in the Public Sphere*, ed. Eileen Janes Yeo (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 127, for the hysterical reaction of a lady passenger seeing the architect Pugin crossing himself whilst on a train; 'Guard, guard, let me out!', and for the attitude of the Unitarian Reverend Samuel Gaskell to the threat of his daughter converting.
 3. Sumner, 'Marriage 2', 20.

Keble would go over to Rome and was dreadfully afraid of him. The Tractarian Oxford movement was just beginning [1833] and the new Headmaster [of Winchester College, Charlotte's father George Moberly] had the reputation of being connected with it and being full of Romish tendencies so for many years he had a hard time of it in Winchester.¹

The strength of feeling associated with establishing the exact doctrinal interpretation of the Anglican Church and, by implication, defending its spiritual authority is demonstrated by the Gorham case. In 1850, after three years of dispute, Archbishop John Bird Sumner supported Reverend Gorham's view that baptismal regeneration was upheld by living the baptismal promise, rather than by virtue of the rite itself, which had been legally contested by Tractarian Bishop Henry Phillpotts as against Anglican doctrine.² George Sumner devoted nine pages of biography to justifying Charles Sumner's support for his brother's judgement which, by implication, emphasised the role of parents and godparents in preserving baptismal grace and protecting the child from sin,³ a view that Mary Sumner was to make central to the 'Objects' of the Mothers' Union.

The conversion of senior Anglican clerics to the Roman Catholic Church affirmed Charles Sumner's fear that Tractarianism led to Rome. The sense of threat to the Established Anglican Church was heightened by the establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England, the so called 'papal aggression' of 1850. Charles Sumner considered it to be an invasion of the Queen's supremacy as head of the Church of England. His aversion to the 'corruption of Rome' was reflected in his objection to the use of Marian iconography, and he perceived Roman Catholic priests as an assault on the paternal authority of the family:

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1. C.A.E. Moberly, *Dulce Domum: George Moberly, His Family and Friends* (London: John Murray, 1911), 58-59, 83. See Appendix 2. Charlotte Yonge was spiritually mentored by John Keeble when he was vicar of Hursley, a parish near Winchester. By the time Charlotte Yonge took over the editorial of *Mothers in Council* in 1890, feelings were not running so high.
 2. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, 13, 26. The case went to the Ecclesiastical Court of Arches and the Privy Council. Philpotts threatened to excommunicate Sumner after his ruling. It was this controversy over baptismal regeneration that was the catalyst for the conversion of Henry Manning, the Wilberforce brothers and several others.
 3. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 331-40.

The system of the confessional is foreign to the spirit of the gospel. . . . Englishmen will never endure to see the weaker members of their families subjected to an authority which, if it does not taint and confuse the moral sense, will subdue the mind to the extinction of all independent volition and chains it captive with passive submission to the will of a spiritual director.¹

In 1876 Mary Sumner's sister Margaret converted to Roman Catholicism. According to the account written by Margaret's daughter Isabel Heywood: 'Of this act and of the mental agony which it caused to herself and to my father, both having been always of one heart and of one mind working together for God and His Church, I cannot write.'² There is no surviving record of Mary Sumner's view on this, but her writings for the MU reveal her to be in accord with her father-in-law's views on Roman Catholicism. She averred that 'the father should be the priest in the house.'³ Similarly, when discussing the use of images in relation to MU materials, she insisted that the Madonna should only be represented with the infant Jesus:

She was most blessed as Mother of our Saviour but RC's worship her. Our Lord clearly showed that he did not wish this during his life . . . he always showed respect to her – but as an honoured human being – let us guard against worshipping the Virgin Mary as the RC's do.⁴

Mary also felt that Roman Catholic attempts to 'win our people' were a threat to be resisted, and whilst she could respect Nonconformist Protestants, she was strongly opposed to Mormonism and the 'deadly heresy' of Christian Science.⁵

The death of Tractarian John Keble in 1866 within the Anglican Church may have alleviated local tension in Winchester but the struggle for authority over doctrine and related field manoeuvres, remained current

1. Ibid., 345-6, 286-7, 380.

2. Heywood and Heywood, *Reminiscences*, 125-6. This was the same year Mary Sumner initiated the membership card at her mothers' meeting.

3. Mary Sumner, 'To Husbands and Fathers' in *Mothers' Union* (Lambeth Palace Library, n.d.).

4. 'Letter to Mrs Maude Central Secretary of the Mothers' Union 1917' in *Mothers' Union* (Lambeth Palace Library).

5. 'Letters to Mrs Maude' in *Mothers' Union* (Lambeth Palace Library, 1908-1920); 'Secular Education', *Mothers in Council* (October 1894); 'Letter to Mrs Maude Re Christian Science May 25th 1909' in *Mothers' Union* (Lambeth Palace Library).

within Mary Sumner's family. In 1868 George Sumner edited *Principles at Stake*, a collection of essays by anti-Tractarian scholars. George's essay, 'The Doctrine of the Eucharist Considered, with Statements Recently Put Forward Concerning the Sacrament', reflected the evangelical view in its argument against transubstantiation:

If the wicked only eat the sign or sacrament of the body of the Lord without being in any wise partakers of Christ then it seems to follow that consecration cannot so change the elements of bread and wine as that they shall be themselves the body and blood of Christ. . . . Eucharist is not a sacrifice but a sacrament, a symbolic receiving, to the heart of the believer the sacrifice is of praise and thanksgiving not body and blood [as Tractarians and Roman Catholics believed].¹

Despite a refutation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, evangelicals within the Anglican Church promoted communion, according to Charles Sumner: 'more frequent administration of the Holy Sacrament is much to be desired, so that the well-disposed . . . may have many opportunities of drawing near to the table of the Lord'. An increase of communicants was regarded as a measure of Episcopal success, and Mary Sumner thought it relevant to comment on the uplifting effect of her husband's confirmation addresses.² Taking communion was advocated on the MU membership card.

The refurbishment of churches was a typical practice amongst George and Mary Sumner's kin and social network. Charles Sumner (1844 Hale), Thomas Heywood (1840 Wellington Heath), and the Yonges (1872 Otterbourne), all endowed or improved churches. However, the appropriate adornment of churches was a matter for dispute between opposing doctrinal factions.³ Thomas Percival Heywood, who

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1. George Henry Sumner, ed. *Principles at Stake: Essays on Church Questions of the Day* (London, 1868), 161. The word 'stake' evoked Protestant martyrs Latimer and Ridley 'whose blood had been shed for the pure truth of God'. *Ibid.*, 170.
 2. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 173. The confirmation drive extended to repentant prisoners at Parkhurst Reformatory. *Ibid.*, 319; Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 83-84.
 3. Sumner, *Life of C.R. Sumner*, 135. Charles Sumner 'preached the restoration and adornment of churches so shortly to be monopolised by the opposite school of thought', 170; Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 16-18; Georgina Battiscombe, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: The Story of an Uneventful Life* (London: Constable & Co., 1943), 48-49.

sponsored the (1874) church refurbishment that was the catalyst for a legal challenge to the legitimacy of the form of (allegedly Tractarian ritualistic) worship conducted by the incumbent, was directly caught up in the bitter controversy of the 'Miles Platting Affair'; which finally concluded in 1882. His daughter, Isabel, recorded the grievance felt at perceived interference on the part of an extreme anti-Tractarian Low Church faction.

My Father's efforts, both public and private, in defence of the clergy and people of St. John's during the cruel and unjust persecution which they had to undergo were generous and untiring; they were also entirely unselfish. He was not contending for a ritual which he personally preferred, for he was no ritualist. . . . But he could not, and would not, endure to see a united congregation, with its devoted parish priests, insulted and molested by persons who had nothing to do with the church or parish, and relentlessly persecuted for obeying, in perfect good faith, the rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer.¹

The 1871 church restoration funded by George and Mary Sumner at Old Alresford avoided controversy: 'there was neither excessive ornamentation nor severe plainness'. The avoidance of 'severe plainness' illustrates the Sumners' rejection of views tending towards more extreme Protestantism; although evangelical in earnestness they rejected a Nonconformist emphasis on preaching. The church was a '*House of Prayer*' (Mary Sumner's italics) not a 'House of preaching'.² The appointments of Samuel Wilberforce (1869), and Edward Harold Browne (1873) in succession to Charles Sumner (1827-69) brought a perspective to the interpretation of doctrine more accommodating to Higher Church views which George, who had attempted a conciliatory tone in *Principles at Stake*, adapted to. As archdeacon (1885) he was described as a 'moderate High Churchman', and on his appointment as Bishop of Guildford (1888), 'a champion of no party or sect'.³ Despite taking the Bible as inspiration, the Sumners were also to accept the theological interpretation that accommodated the scientific understanding of evolution which emerged towards the latter years of

1. Heywood and Heywood, *Reminiscences*, 138-9.
2. Sumner, 'Prayer', 127.
3. Sumner, *Principles*, 153. 'What I have said [on transubstantiation] has been, I hope urged in a spirit of brotherly candour and charity. Hard names convince no one.' Sumner, *Memoir of George Sumner*, 51, 71.

the century. As with their interpretation of the sacraments of baptism and communion, belief in 'the sense not the letter' allowed them to recognise the non-literal 'Higher Criticism' approach to biblical interpretation as advocated (amongst others) by their acquaintances, Archbishop William Temple and Charles Kingsley.¹

2.3 Synopsis: religious habitus and capital

Mary Sumner's habitus was located in a milieu in which agents upheld the doxa of Anglicanism. Her network included clergymen who, as holders of official positions in the field of the Church, were invested with symbolic social capital accruing to high office and pedagogic authority by virtue of their institutional attachment. The enthusiastic advocacy for living religion, evident in Mary Sumner's kinship network, indicates that lay members of her family were also habituated to mis/recognise the religious cultural arbitrary as legitimate. Their attention to the public assertion of scrutiny of conscience, piety, service and charity as symbolic religious capital indicates that these attributes were esteemed within kinship and wider networks. In Mary Sumner's experience of marriage and family, symbolic capital assets accrued to women as helpmeets and maternal exemplars of religious values. Possession of this symbolic capital was rewarded by esteem within the family, and the hope of a happy reunion in the 'hereafter'. The symbolic violence of patriarchal domination was masked by the conformity of men to gendered expectations of protectiveness, chivalrous behaviour and concessionary delegation of some authority to women that could be realised in the pedagogic action of philanthropy or parish work. Capital thus earned gave reputation (and thereby a degree of pedagogic authority) for the individual women. It also added to the collective capital of the family because it was recognised within the social milieu and field of the Church, which were structurally informative of the habitus of Mary Sumner and her kin.

Mary Sumner's dispositions of habitus were informed at a time when the ownership of the 'goods of salvation' was bitterly contested. The temporal durability of this contest indicates the high capital value accorded to the possession of 'correct' doctrinal interpretation within the evolving field of religion as a whole, and within the sub-field of the Anglican Church. The struggles for authority in matters of doctrine could (and did in Mary Sumner's kinship and close social network) have

1. Sumner, *Principles*, 158; Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church Part 2, 1860-1901*, 2nd ed. (London: A&C Black, 1972), 87-110.

professional, legal, and personal repercussions. Her relatives participated in field manoeuvres to uphold the established status of the Anglican Church and in advocacy for an interpretation of doctrine which rejected both ornate ritual and austerity in forms of worship. For Mary Sumner and her kin (with the notable exception of her sister), orthodoxy, and thus the religious capital of most worth, lay in Anglican belief. Thus Mary Sumner's activism was informed by an evangelical emphasis on living religion in the home and an evangelical appetite to promote living religion in the public sphere, contextualised by an imperative to uphold the doctrine of Anglicanism as interpreted by her authoritative relatives against encroaching rival denominations and interpretations.

SAMPLE