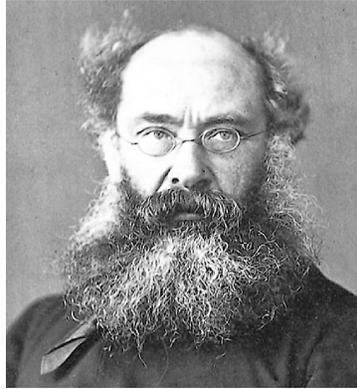


# THE WARDEN

by Anthony Trollope



## THE AUTHOR

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) was born in London to a failed barrister and a novelist whose writing for many years supported the family. Financial difficulties forced him to transfer from one school to another and prevented a university education. At age 19 he began work for the Post Office, for which he labored for more than thirty years. His earliest novels, written in Ireland in the late 1840s, were not especially successful, but with the publication of *The Warden* in 1855, he began the series of six Barchester novels, known as the Barchester Chronicles, focusing on the daily issues of church politics in upper middle-class England, that would prove to be the foundation of his reputation. Trollope was by personal profession a High Churchman, but sought to find good in evangelicals and reformers as he skewered their enthusiasm; he consistently attacked, not the Church, but its foibles. His writing technique was disciplined to say the least. Rising daily at 5:30 and writing at the steady rate of a thousand words per hour until time to report to the Post Office (from which he finally retired in 1867 to devote his full time to writing, after which he worked until 11:00 A.M.), he methodically produced sixty-five books, forty-seven of which were novels, writing even while he was traveling abroad to places as far-flung as Australia, Ceylon, Iceland, and even America (of which, like Dickens, he was very critical). He continued to write until the end, and died of a sudden stroke at the age of 67.

*The Warden* was Trollope's earliest success, and has continued to be praised for the sympathetic view it provides of a man who struggles with moral questions in the context of life's realities rather than dealing with them merely in theory. Septimus Harding is a living example of one who is willing to take the log out of his own eye before trying to take the splinter out of his neighbor's, and is a man for whom forgiveness and loving one's enemies are not clichés. That Trollope spices up the narrative of church politics with delightful chapters skewering the press and the legal profession only makes the novel more interesting.

## PLOT SUMMARY

The early chapters introduce the central characters - Rev. Septimus Harding, precentor of the Barchester Cathedral and warden of Hiram's Hospital, his daughters Susan and Eleanor, Rev. Dr. Theophilus Grantly, a stiff and stuffy archdeacon who is married to Susan and is also the son of the

Bishop of Barchester, and John Bold, a surgeon who champions the cause of the poor and fights against all entrenched injustice, and who is also in love with Eleanor. Bold, having heard complaints from the twelve elderly inmates of the hospital that they receive a mere pittance from the charity while the warden gets 800 pounds a year, decides to investigate, knowing that in the process he will be hurting the man who he hopes will soon become his father-in-law. Harding insists that he knows nothing of the basis for the financial arrangements and notes that he has increased the allowances of the bedesmen (the inmates of the hospital) out of his own pocket. Meanwhile, his conscience begins to bother him, and he goes to see the bishop, who reassures him that the arrangements are perfectly just, but admits that he has not consulted old Hiram's will for more than thirty years. He tells Harding that the matter should be left in the hands of his son Grantly, the archdeacon, who is a tough nut on any occasion and a stalwart defender of the church's financial privileges.

Meanwhile, Bold's lawyer, Finney, is stirring up the bedesmen with a rumor that they ought to be receiving a hundred pounds a year instead of twopence a day. One of them, Abel Handy, circulates a petition among the twelve bedesmen in support of Bold's lawsuit. Six sign readily, three led by Bunce, the oldest of the group, refuse to sign, while three vacillate, eventually signing under pressure from Handy, as Bunce's argument that the warden has taken good care of them and that lawyers are unlikely to do so falls on deaf ears. When Grantly hears about the petition, he decides that Sir Abraham Haphazard, a noted member of Parliament, ought to be enlisted to defend the warden's cause. Harding has no desire to get involved at all, either in trying to influence the bedesmen or to defend himself, but Grantly insists on Harding accompanying him when he speaks to the bedesmen. He tells them in no uncertain terms that they have no injustices to protest, but rather many blessings for which to be grateful, and that they should be ashamed of themselves for thinking that they deserved a gentleman's income when they are poor charity patients. He then goes to the bishop's office, writes a short response to the petition, and has his father sign it. Harding, meanwhile, begins imagining that his name will become a public byword for the greed of the established church when he wants nothing more than to be left alone in peace and quiet.

Harding had promised Eleanor to arrange a party, and sees no reason to change his plans. He invites Bold and his sister Mary, reasoning that business matters should not interfere with personal relationships, especially given the budding feelings between Bold and Eleanor. Mary Bold gladly accepts the invitation, but her brother refuses to go, feeling that he cannot in good conscience enter the Harding house as a friend under the circumstances. Mary tries to convince him to drop his suit, arguing that it can't possibly make the old bedesmen as happy as they are now, and is more likely to make them and everyone else miserable. He stubbornly adheres to his position, however, and Mary goes to the party alone. The party is a pleasant gathering at which the musicians in the group perform, the young people eventually couple off, and the archdeacon and some of his clergyman friends engage in an intense game of whist. Eleanor hears for the first time about the lawsuit from Mary Bold, however. After everyone leaves, Harding assures his daughter that he greatly respects and admires John Bold, that he will always be welcome in their home, and that he thoroughly approves of the romance. Eleanor goes to bed much comforted, but when John encounters her in the park the next day, she coldly informs him that anyone who attacks or seeks to do harm to her father is surely in the wrong and will never have her support. She then stalks off, feeling nowhere near as angry as the impression she has given, but Bold is convinced his relationship with her is over; all this despite the fact that Harding had assured his daughter that Bold was doing nothing wrong and that she had no reason to excoriate him.

Shortly thereafter, a newspaper, the *Jupiter* (representing the *London Times*), prints an article pointing out in no uncertain terms the injustice of the situation in Barchester. This encourages

Finney, the lawyer hired by Bold, as well as the bedesmen who are anxious to receive what they now see as their just deserts. Meanwhile, Chadwick, the diocesan steward, reports to Grantly that Sir Abraham has written his opinion of the case, which is that the plaintiffs are going after the wrong target, since Harding and Chadwick, the parties named in the suit, are nothing more than employees of the trust. Grantly, now confident of victory, is warned by Chadwick to keep Sir Abraham's opinion a secret lest it suggest lines of attack to the opposition. The next day Grantly meets with his father and Harding to share Sir Abraham's opinion. He overpowers the other two as usual; the bishop wants nothing but peace and quiet, and Harding, though he has serious doubts about the justice of his cause, cannot stand up to his son-in-law. He is embarrassed by the article in the *Jupiter* and is seriously considering resigning his post, despite the fact that Grantly insists that such an action would not only legitimize the cause of those pressing the suit, but would open the door for challenges to livings throughout the Church. Harding goes home in deep sorrow; he wishes he could resign his post, but has no way of conquering the archdeacon's arguments. Eleanor sees his sorrow but he avoids her. She pays a visit to Mary Bold, John's sister, and learns that John is in London engaged in work with others who are trying to get rid of clerical sinecures and reform the financial privileges of the Anglican Church. Harding spends most of the day walking the grounds of the hospital alone, but at teatime Eleanor sits on his lap and comforts him, telling him not to hold onto his post for her sake, that she would be happy in a tiny cottage as long as she could be with her dear father. At this point the dam bursts and the warden tells his daughter everything - why he wants to resign and why he must not. She insists that she will have nothing further to do with John Bold, but he tells her that she should not abandon her love for the sake of the present troubles, and both go off to bed feeling much better in the love they share for one another.

Eleanor now decides to make a great sacrifice on behalf of her father. Thinking of the heroic offerings of Iphigenia and Jephthah's daughter, she determines to humble herself before John Bold and beg him to drop the lawsuit for the sake of her beloved father. She also decides that, should he renew offers of love, he must be rejected because, after all, if she gets what she wants in exchange for arranging the termination of the lawsuit, what sacrifice has she made? She visits Mary Bold in order to lay the groundwork for a future plea, but surprisingly finds John at home. She screws up her courage and makes her case. John, not surprisingly, succumbs to her arguments (and her charms) and agrees to withdraw the case, but his ardent expressions of love are too much for her to resist, and the two are engaged by the end of the visit. When Bold goes to see the archdeacon at his residence at Plumstead Episcopi to communicate his decision, however, he is met with coldness; Grantly is so convinced that the Church will win the case that he refuses to accept Bold's offer, and is determined to win a smashing victory in court. On the other end, when Eleanor prepares to tell her father her good news, he informs her that he has decided to go to London and tender his resignation; an even more vicious attack has appeared in the *Jupiter*, and he has concluded that everything they say is true - that he has no right to the money he has been receiving from old Hiram's estate. He is firm about this even should the court case be withdrawn, and in fact plans to sneak off to London before the archdeacon knows about his decision. When she tells him about Bold's proposal, however, he joyfully encourages her in the relationship.

Bold, meanwhile, is back in London determined to keep his promise to Eleanor. He goes to the law office and instructs them to drop the case; they don't understand his reasoning because they are confident of victory, but can do nothing but obey. His next stop is the apartment of his friend Tom Towers, a reporter for the *Jupiter* and the man behind the damning articles that have caused so much unease in the life of the gentle warden [Trollope spends most of the chapter in an ironic skewering of the pretensions of the press]. When he tells Towers that he is dropping the suit and

asks him to cease and desist from printing attack articles in the *Jupiter*, his friend insists that he has no control over the paper's editorial policy (though Bold is reasonably sure that he himself had written the articles), and that furthermore it would be wrong for a newspaper to be influenced by private considerations [Trollope has some fun with this argument]. Towers then shares with Bold a few other sources that have picked up and publicized the story, including a popular pamphleteer (called Dr. Pessimist Anticant, a parody of essayist Thomas Carlyle) who can find nothing good about anything in society and a well-known novelist (Mr. Popular Sentiment, a clear allusion to Charles Dickens) whose latest serial offering, *The Almshouse*, begins with an ill-concealed description of the Barchester hospital. Bold leaves the home of his friend angry and frustrated.

Meanwhile, Harding makes his way to London and spends most of the day trying to hide from any possible contact with the archdeacon. He hides out in Westminster Abbey for hours, then eats at an out-of-the-way supper house, before finally managing to get an appointment with Sir Abraham Haphazard, from whom he intends to seek advice. When he gets to see Sir Abraham late that night, he is told that the case has already been dropped, and is advised to go back home and continue as if nothing has happened. The old barrister is astounded when Harding tells him he wants to resign his post, and tells him he should do nothing before speaking with Grantly - the last thing Harding wants to hear - and he approaches the inevitable conversation with a sense of impending doom. Despite his fears, he is able to stand firm against the scorn of his son-in-law and the pleas of his wife, Harding's elder daughter, and after they leave, he pens his resignation.

He returns home and finds that Eleanor is overjoyed that he has gone through with his resolution. They prepare to leave their home and embark on a life of poverty, since his income will now be limited to 150 pounds per year. The bishop is supportive and even offers to let him live in the bishop's palace, which has plenty of room. Grantly makes a last-ditch effort to have his father-in-law trade preferments with another clergyman, but Harding refuses both offers. He says farewell to the bedesmen, who are overwhelmed with shame at what they have done, and he and Eleanor take a small apartment in Barchester. Grantly never sets foot in the hospital again. Matters turn out rather predictably. Eleanor marries John Bold, and they often have her father in for dinner, as does the bishop, whose last public function is to perform the wedding of the happy couple. The bishop refuses to appoint a new man as warden of the hospital, and the twelve bedesmen suffer the consequences of their greed, gradually dying off with no one to care for their needs each day, and attended at their deaths only by their former warden, whom they had treated so shabbily. The faithful Bunce attends service each Sunday at Harding's small chapel in a poorer section of Barchester. Harding thus lives in straitened circumstances, still beloved by his friends and family, and with a clear conscience at last.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Septimus Harding - Precentor of Barchester Cathedral and warden of Hiram's Hospital, he is an effete but harmless clergyman who receives 800 pounds a year for doing very little. The uproar over this living leads him to resign his office.
- Susan Grantly - His elder daughter, married to the archdeacon of Barchester.
- Eleanor Harding - His younger daughter, in love with John Bold; she understands and sympathizes with her father's agonies of conscience.

- Theophilus Grantly - The Archdeacon of Barchester and son of the bishop, he is a stern and stuffy young man; as far as he is concerned, the Church is always right, especially when he speaks as the voice of the Church.
- Bishop Grantly - A gentle elderly man who is an old friend of Septimus Harding, he prefers to leave any matters involving conflict, either with people or institutions, to his son.
- John Bold - A surgeon who grew up in Barchester and has returned there to practice, he is a champion of the poor and the enemy of all tradition. He is also in love with Eleanor Harding. He initiates the lawsuit that drives Harding from his post.
- Mary Bold - John's sister and Eleanor's best friend.
- Mr. Finney - The lawyer hired by Bold to seek justice for the bedesmen.
- Sir Abraham Haphazard - Attorney General and member of Parliament hired to defend the Church's position in the lawsuit.
- Abel Handy - The most vocal of the bedesmen in opposition to Harding, he convinces most of the others to petition for what he expects to be a princely income of a hundred pounds a year.
- Mr. Bunce - The oldest and most traditional of the bedesmen, he is Harding's strongest supporter in the hospital.
- Mr. Chadwick - Diocesan steward of Barchester.
- Tom Towers - Friend of John Bold and a reporter for the *Jupiter*, he is greatly enamored of his own power over the mighty and is responsible for the articles critical of Harding in the press.

## NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Mr. Harding's warmest admirers cannot say that he was ever an industrious man; the circumstances of his life have not called on him to be so; and yet he can hardly be called an idler.” (ch.1, p.5-6)

“It would be well if one so young had a little more diffidence himself, and more trust in the honest purposes of others - if he could be brought to believe that old customs need not necessarily be evil, and that changes may possibly be dangerous; but no, Bold has all the ardour, and all the self-assurance of a Danton, and hurls his anathemas against time-honoured practices with the violence of a French Jacobin.” (ch.2, p.10-11)

“In the world Dr. Grantly never lays aside that demeanour which so well becomes him. He has all the dignity of an ancient saint with the sleekness of a modern bishop.” (ch.2, p.12)

“He is a moral man, believing the precepts which he teaches, and believing also that he acts up to them; though we cannot say that he would give his coat to the man who took his cloak, or that he is prepared to forgive his brother even seven times.” (ch.2, p.14)

“Dr. Grantly would be ready enough to take up his cudgel against all comers on behalf of the church militant, but he would do so on the distasteful ground of the Church’s infallibility. Such a contest would give no comfort to Mr. Harding’s doubts; he was not so anxious to prove himself right, as to be so.” (ch.3, p.24)

“He [Grantly] did not believe in the Gospel with more assurance than he did in the sacred justice of all ecclesiastical revenues.” (ch.5, p.36)

“In such matters it is omnipotent. What the Czar is in Russia, or the mob in America, that the *Jupiter* is in England.” (Grantly, ch.7, p.60)

“To a certain extent the interest of the Church is in our keeping. Should it be found that one after another of those who hold preferment abandoned it whenever it might be attacked, is it not plain that such attacks would be renewed till nothing was left of us? and that if so deserted, the Church of England must fall to the ground altogether?” (Grantly, ch.9, p.78)

“Eleanor was not at all addicted to the Lydian school of romance; she by no means objected to her lover because he came in at the door under the name of Absolute, instead of pulling her out of a window, under the name of Beverley.” (ch.12, p.102)

“This little court is the Vatican of England. Here reigns a pope, self-nominated, self-consecrated - ay, and much stranger too - self-believing! - a pope whom, if you cannot believe him, I would advise you to disobey as silently as possible; a pope hitherto afraid of no Luther; a pope who manages his own inquisition, who punishes unbelievers as no most skilful inquisitor of Spain ever dreamt of doing - one who can excommunicate thoroughly, fearfully, radically; put you beyond the pale of men’s charity; make you odious to your dearest friends, and turn you into a monster to be pointed at by the finger!” (ch.14, p.118)

“A clergyman generally dislikes to be met in argument by any scriptural quotation; he feels as affronted as a doctor does, when recommended by an old woman to take some favourite dose, or as a lawyer when an unprofessional man attempts to put him down by a quibble.” (ch.18, p.160)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus warns those who would pass judgment on others to “take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” How does Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden* provide an example of the proper application of this passage, which is so often misused? Address not only the meaning of the passage in question, but also be sure to show how specific incidents and quotations from the novel are relevant to its application.

2. In Matthew 5:40, Jesus tells His followers, “If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.” How is this passage about what it means to love one’s enemies illustrated in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden*? Discuss specific examples of the behavior of Septimus Harding that show the practical application of this well-known maxim from the Sermon on the Mount.
3. Discuss the role of forgiveness in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden*. How does the willingness to forgive shower blessings on the one offended as well as the one causing the offense? Support Trollope’s view of the importance of forgiveness with specific passages of Scripture and show how these are illustrated in the novel.
4. Discuss the picture of humility presented in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden*. How does the novel demonstrate that the poor in spirit will be blessed and that the meek will inherit the earth? Be sure to use both positive and negative examples from the novel to support your analysis.
5. When confronted with unfair criticism or unjustly attacked, most people become defensive, doing everything they can to counteract the critique that has been directed against them. Some few, however, first ask if the criticism, fair or not, has in it any validity, and thus look inward rather than outward as a reflexive response. Discuss the importance of such an approach, illustrating it by means of the character of Septimus Harding in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden*. How does Scripture indicate that such should be our own way of dealing with criticism?
6. Evaluate the critique of the press found in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden*. Be sure you separate the hyperbole that is an integral part of his satire with the basic points he is making about the values and methods of the popular press. To what extent do you believe his criticism to be valid? Could the same be said about the media today?
7. Compare and contrast the critiques of the press found in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden* and Henrik Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*. What practices do the two authors agree on as worthy of censure? Do both see the problems as equally damaging? Can you find any aspects of the work of the press on which the two disagree?
8. Compare and contrast the reforming doctors, John Bold and Tertius Lydgate, in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden* and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*. Include in your assessment their status in the community, their reforming ideas, and their roles in the plots of the two novels.
9. Choose two characters in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden* who serve as foils for one another in the novel. Explain why their opposing traits serve to emphasize one another’s characters and discuss the purpose for which the author uses these contrasts to bring out the central themes of the story.

10. Evaluate the author's attitude toward the established Church in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*. Is he a sentimental conservative who loves the old ways and mourns their passing or a cynical liberal who sees the traditions of the Church as outdated foolishness? In answering the question, note that you will have to determine in specific passages the tone in which his comments on the Church are intended to be taken.
11. Compare and contrast the Anglican clergymen in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Do the two authors have similar views of the Church and its leaders? What do they think of the patronage system? What in the minds of these authors constitutes a faithful and admirable clergyman?
12. In Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, the author contrasts the old and the new, not only within the Church of England, but in the country as a whole. With which does he have greater sympathy? Support your conclusion with references to specific incidents and quotations in the novel.
13. In Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, he includes a satirical passage clearly aimed at Charles Dickens, whom he calls Mr. Popular Sentiment. Examine the passage in chapter 16 and give special attention to his description of the purposes and characters of a novel. What aspects of Dickens' writing does Trollope criticize? How does he deviate from these characteristics in his own work? In answering the question, choose one Dickens novel (*David Copperfield* works well, but you may also choose another one) from which to draw examples to illustrate Trollope's critique.
14. Anthony Trollope was a Victorian realist, yet his style of realism differs markedly from that of his contemporary, Charles Dickens. Using Trollope's *The Warden* and Dickens' *Hard Times*, discuss the key differences between the realistic writing of the two novelists and address the impact on the readers of these differences. Be sure to use specific incidents and quotations in answering the question.
15. Discuss the use of hyperbole in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*. Consider some of the satirical passages as well as descriptions of people and places. Give special attention to the chapter where Eleanor Harding compares herself to Iphigenia. What do these uses of hyperbole accomplish in the mind of the reader?
16. In his critique of Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, Hugh Walpole asserts that the traits of the title character serve as the standard against which "every character in the six books [of the *Barchester Chronicles*] is finally judged." Without drawing on the entire series, comment on the extent to which this is true in the first novel. Does the author judge each character against Septimus Harding? Do you? Why or why not?
17. Some critics have argued that Septimus Harding, the title character of Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, deviates from the Victorian standard of masculine heroism, and in fact has qualities that are usually associated with the feminine. Do you agree or disagree? Why might Trollope have drawn his central and most admirable character in this way? Support your argument with incidents and quotations from the novel.

18. Effective fiction depends on the existence of conflict, often between good and evil, yet Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* is a book with no villains. What is the nature of the conflict that drives the story? How is a narrative focusing on essentially good-hearted people with very different values distinct from the usual "white hats versus black hats" approach to fiction? In your opinion, does this make Trollope's novel more or less realistic, more or less enjoyable? Support your arguments with details from the book.
19. Anthony Trollope believed that one of the chief tasks of the writer of fiction is to picture people as they really are: "Truth of description, truth of character, truth as to men and women." Do *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* accomplish this purpose? What do these novels tell you about the author's view of human nature? Be sure to use details and quotations from the novels and support your assessment from Scripture.
20. Henry James, in praising Anthony Trollope, said, "If he was to any degree a man of genius, and I hold that he was, it was in virtue of his happy and instinctive perception of human variety; his knowledge of the stuff we are made of." Do you agree? Consider *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*. What do these novels tell you about the author's view of human nature? Be sure to use details and quotations from the novels and support your assessment from Scripture.
21. Anthony Trollope's *The Eustace Diamonds* says little about the church of his day, but what it says is not encouraging. What does the treatment of the main representative of the clergy in the book, the Rev. Joseph Emilius, suggest about the author's view of the state church in the nineteenth century? Compare and contrast this with the satire of the church found in the same author's *The Warden*.