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LAURENCE STERNE'S RELIGION: THE SERMONS AND NOVELS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Outside of Lansing Hammond's *Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, discussion of Sterne's religion has been at best oblique or subordinated to a study of his narrative techniques, aesthetic accomplishments, life in general, or place in the history of the English novel. Such a study needs to be done, not only because Sterne was an Anglican priest who wrote sermons in addition to *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, but because it is clear, upon close analysis, that a consistent moral philosophy of sorts seems to permeate both sermons and novels. The part that this ethic plays in his works, its relation to the religion which he supported in his personal life, and its relation to his comic techniques need to be explored.

We must, however, keep Sterne in historical perspective. He was, in most ways, a man of his age, despite what many critics regard as his innovative genius at the art of the novel, and we shall keep that age in mind throughout our study. We shall, in fact, begin by examining some of the religious trends of the eighteenth century. These trends helped to shape the Church of England as it was when it ordained Sterne a priest, and they helped to create what we might call a religious climate within which he lived and wrote. Also, we shall consider the facts of Sterne's life that may have had some bearing on
his religious attitudes or that may reveal something of the nature of those attitudes.

We must also examine his **Sermons of Mr. Yorick**. They represent the only explicit and overt discussions of religion and religious ideas that Sterne left, and as such they are fundamental to a study of his religious position. From them we can infer a general body of beliefs, a "creed" of sorts, that we shall endeavor to trace in the novels. While any student of Sterne is indebted to Hammond's analysis and source-study of the sermons, no analysis of their doctrinal content, to this writer's knowledge, has been done. Without any pretensions to being the final word on the subject, the present work will attempt a general analysis of the sermons in the hope of finding religious concepts that Sterne may have indicated in the novels.

We shall then attempt to learn if and how these religious ideas are worked out, first in **Tristram Shandy**, then in **Sentimental Journey**. Because of the loose, or digressive, plot structure of **Tristram**, our first area of concentration will be its language, that is, more specifically, its religious idiom and broad religious statements, as a clue to the Anglican orthodoxy and general religious orientation of the Shandys. Our focus will turn then to characterization and conflicts of character in **Tristram Shandy**. Certain of the characters, like Yorick, Toby, Trim, and Tristram himself seem to endorse, sometimes directly, moral viewpoints of the sort found in the sermons. **Dr. Slop**, as an antagonist to the other characters, will be considered in this
context as well. And more importantly, we shall examine the themes and general structure of Tristram Shandy with a view to relating what Tristram calls its digressive and progressive development to what we have learned of Sterne's religious views from the sermons.

Finally we shall investigate Sentimental Journey. That novel presents more problems, in a way, than the considerably longer Tristram Shandy, because Sterne's religious position in it is in some respects more subtly and more indirectly stated than it is in Tristram Shandy. A close analysis, however, of the major episodes and statements by Yorick, the narrator, will, we hope, enable us to detect a consistent endorsement of a moral-religious attitude throughout that complements the religious viewpoint manifested in Tristram.

The conclusion of this study will synthesize what we have found in our investigation of Sterne's major works. We hope that the results of our analysis will justify the time spent on consideration of these works. Sterne, as a major English novelist, deserves not only close reading but the shedding of new light on him that may make further reading of him more fruitful. Officially ordained to the priesthood of the Church of England, Sterne had religious attitudes. This work hopes to prove that those attitudes are indicated by what he wrote.
NOTES

Introduction


In Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments: The Ethical Dimension of the Journey (Pittsburgh, Duquesne U. Press, 1966), Arthur Cash discusses Sterne's religion, or some limited aspects of it, in Sentimental Journey.

CHAPTER I

The Church of England and Political Trends in the Eighteenth Century

Over two hundred years ago, a Grub Street hack, apparently in the name of an indignant Christianity, called Laurence Sterne the Anti-Christ.\textsuperscript{1} His disapprobation, though, was far from universal, as the numerous editions and many of the reviews of *Tristram Shandy* indicate. In fact, Wilbur Cross tells us that many of Sterne's contemporaries, including his own ecclesiastical superior, Archbishop Drummond of York, read *Tristram Shandy* and enjoyed it.\textsuperscript{2} The Grub Street pamphleteer did not represent, despite his vehemence, all of Christianity, any more than did the archbishop or the Reverend Sterne himself. But the hack and the priest belonged, presumably, to the same Established Church and shared the same communion, though spiritually and intellectually, as well as geographically, they were miles apart.

This spiritual diversity amid which Sterne lived and wrote was a major element in eighteenth-century English life and had been present since before the century started. This variety of thought and belief was the result of many things immediate and remote: historical events and trends that by Laurence Sterne's lifetime had produced a religious and political situation and an intellectual climate that helped make the Shandys, Yorick, and all of the people in and around
Shandy Hall the sort of Englishmen that they are.

Sterne, an author of popular and controversial novels and sermons, was also a clergyman in the Established Church of England. His own religious views may be understood only when the nature of his Church is understood, for though Tristram's and Yorick's escapades brought critical and moral censure down on Sterne, Sterne was nonetheless a representative and defender of that Church, and a product of it. To understand the Church and the religious-political structure that made it what it was is to understand him.

One has to go back to the Reformation and earlier to learn what determined the nature of the Church of England as Sterne knew it. Even before Henry VIII's break from Rome, as Cecilia Ady points out, the Church in England had begun to assume markedly national characteristics. The insular character and position of England, in addition to her growing power and sense of independence, tended to place her beyond the pale of the Roman sphere of influence, and all that her Church needed was a Henry VIII to make the breach formal. There was no desire, however, on the part of Henry or his bishops, to make the English Church anything but a Catholic one in liturgy or dogma, with the exception of the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal supremacy. So it became in effect a "Protestant Catholic" Church, retaining the traditions of the sacramental system, the Eucharistic Service, and the episcopacy, while denying papal authority in all spheres. As the Reformation progressed, there began to be attacks
even on these Catholic customs, indeed upon "the whole Catholic sacramental and sacerdotal system," and it was not until Elizabeth I's time that there was an attempt to bring the Church of England to a position where it could include old "Catholic" practices as well as new Protestant beliefs and points of view.  

It is this general balance in practice and attitude that Sterne felt in the Church of his times and that has, in fact, persisted to this day. The most radical change, therefore, that the Reformation effected was not a revising of overt ritual, though there was revision. It was not a change in dogma, though there was some alteration. What was changed was the leadership of the Church from papal rule to English monarchical rule. From Henry VIII henceforth, the supreme head of the Church of England was to be the British monarch, and this subordination and alliance of church to state became the basis of the entire English ecclesiastical structure. It was this structure that sheltered Sterne and that he in turn helped to support. It provided simultaneously for Sterne the security necessary for writing and the friction necessary for creativity.

The subordination of church to state in England brought about harmony and friction in a number of ways. The Church attitude generally was a docile one. Since the Reformation the Church of England has been dynamic and unified enough to cause and survive dissension and some fragmentation. But while its supreme head, the British monarch, is a purely civil ruler, the Church has never become restive
enough under this rule to fight for a constitutional change to independence from this head. The Restoration and subsequent Revolution of 1688 brought an end to its severest test; the English Church survived the Civil War and the deposition of James II, and its tradition was maintained.

Its tradition, we must remember, is basically twofold: it is, first, an English Church and, second, for the English it is the "Catholic" Church, regarded as directly linking with the Church founded by Christ and entrusted to his Apostles and their successors. And while some practices of medieval times such as praying with beads, kissing relics, offering of candles before statues, and going on pilgrimages to shrines were abandoned at various times after the Reformation, it was by Sterne's time still the Church of tradition. 6 There was still a sacramental system. Priests wore vestments in church. Holy days and feast days were celebrated. Priests and bishops were consecrated, and the bishops were regarded as in direct succession from the Apostles.

That the bishops were not restive under the rule of the state is not surprising when we consider that they were chosen by the state for their bishoprics and that the English sovereign played a direct part in the consecration ceremony. In addition, the bishops were required to take an oath of allegiance to their sovereign and offer homage in gratitude for their sees. 7 Their office was therefore both sacred and profane, for their work was apostolic, but their consecration to office was dependent upon the civil monarch. Thus their loyalty was assured
before the office was bestowed; the office of bishop was prestigious, and English sovereigns regarded it as such in naming their prelates.

The intense loyalty between Charles I and Archbishop Laud was never repeated or for that matter necessary in the relations between eighteenth-century monarchs and bishops. This was due, not to an increase in tensions, but to a decrease in civil strife after the Revolution of 1688 and a concomitant increase in political harmony: the powers and responsibilities of King and Parliament were established, and the loyalty of the Church was given in return for the assurance of its own security and a voice in civil affairs in the House of Lords. Bishops in the eighteenth century were, of course, loyal. While the devotion of a Laud was not called for, the hard work and political loyalty of the episcopacy as a whole were expected and received.

They were not needed usually for emergency situations, but for the long-range preservation of the political fabric of the country. For after the Restoration, a delicate system of checks and balances was established that created both a tension and defenses against that tension. In 1673 Parliament passed the Test Act which required that anyone holding government office must first renounce the doctrine of transubstantiation and receive communion according to the rites of the Church of England. Thus, non-Anglicans, both "high" and "low" (Catholics and Puritans), were barred from government service. In 1688 the Toleration Act was passed, a bill that granted freedom of worship to Dissenters, though the Test Act remained in effect and was
to remain for years to come. The Established Church and existent diversity of belief were thus preserved, decidedly at the expense of the latter, though the balance was to change by degrees during the eighteenth century.

But more factors than these influenced this peculiar status quo. We should remember that while the Test Act was passed partly because of fear of Roman Catholicism and while James II was deposed for the same reason, England had no desire to repeat the civil wars she had suffered so recently. The deposition of James was regarded as a "glorious" revolution precisely because it was a peaceful one. Catholicism was feared, we are told, as a political and temporal power rather than as a spiritual force, and it was so treated, in 1688 particularly. James II was replaced by William III, a Protestant, but not a man dedicated with great vigor to the Church of England. Though he was its titular head, he was not a "high" churchman in the sense of the word that connoted "extreme" or "advanced." A Dutch Calvinist, William was not interested in persecuting either Non-Jurors or Dissenters. He simply wanted the Toleration Act enforced.

None of the subsequent "foreign" British monarchs were aggressively "high" churchmen, and for much the same reason. However, the non-juring bishops who refused allegiance to William represented a segment of national feeling that was to plague the country directly and indirectly until the middle of the eighteenth century. For while there were "low" church dissenters--Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and
Congregationalists—there were, as we have indicated, dissenters among High Church believers too. These latter were generally traditionalists in religion and politics, and they favored a return to Roman Catholic, or medieval, ceremonial rubrics and the restoration of James II or his son, later his grandson, to the British throne. The Jacobites were involved in two insurrections during Sterne's lifetime, in 1715 and 1745, and were responsible, indirectly, for Sterne's earliest publications, about which more will be said later.

So British monarchs were forced to take a middle-of-the-road position. And because the Jacobites were generally associated with the Tories, and because George I, a German Prince, was indignant at the Tories' settling of the Peace of Utrecht of 1713, the Tories lost favor and the Whigs came into power, monopolizing that power for over half a century. A. D. McKillop cites as a truism that after 1688 the English Church took on the political coloring of the administration in office, and so it is no surprise to learn that Whig thought (as opposed to Tory thought and its concomitant High Church associations) dominated the Church during these years, the years of Sterne's life.

The Whig cause was undoubtedly strengthened, though no one knows just how much, by the widespread fear of both Jacobites and Roman Catholics. Not every Tory, of course, was a Jacobite, nor was every Jacobite a Roman Catholic, but in the public mind and imagination the distinction was often fuzzy. Dr. Slop, who delivers
Tristram Shandy into the world, is acknowledged as a caricature of a Tory physician and fellow-Yorkshireman of Sterne's, Dr. John Burton, whose extreme Toryism, Cross tells us, led him to be suspected of being both Jacobite and Catholic, despite the fact that he was probably neither. Sterne and his uncle Jaques Sterne, both clergymen, fought for the Whig cause during the 1745 Jacobite Uprising and helped to persecute Burton. The cause could be a militant one, and the Church stood ready to help—even, like Sterne's superior, Archbishop Herring, to the point of raising money, horses, and volunteers.

The Church took on the coloring of the administration because this was clearly in the interests of both. The monarchs favored Whigs and appointed them to bishoprics because, Sykes tells us, it was an age when political education was imparted by way of the pulpit, and the bishop, through his clergy, could be a most efficient party organizer. The weapon of the Church, then, was not the sword, Archbishop Herring notwithstanding, but the sermon:

The expectation of... [the bishops] assistance in forwarding the interest of their party in the election of members of parliament for constituencies situated within their territorial jurisdiction was a corollary of their political character in the house of lords, and in this respect the party chiefs accounted the bench amongst their most valuable allies.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find Sterne and Herring engaged in active and sometimes militant politics. We are unable, of course, to probe the sincerity of their motives, but from a knowledge
of the times we can see that their efforts were expected. Bishops did political favors in return for the power and prestige of the office to which they were appointed, and the lower clergy were enlisted as well.

Sterne's relationship with Herring was not necessarily indicative of that between the bishops and clergy of his time, however. It is a paradox, at least an apparent one, of the eighteenth century that the bishops of the Established Church generally represented a more liberal point of view, theologically, than did the priests. Indeed, differences between the two were so sharp that the convocation of both houses of the Church (bishops and priests) was suspended in 1717 and not resumed until 1852. George Every claims that the Toleration Act was the basis of this occasionally very bitter conflict, the formal cause being the political mentality, already discussed, which prompted Hanoverian kings to appoint Whig bishops. The bishops were appointed for their religious and political toleration, while the lower clergy became embroiled at the parish level in problems of the practical application of the principles of toleration. And in 1690 William and Mary formally deprived the Non-juring bishops of their sees.¹⁸

Anglican bishops in the eighteenth century numbered many capable men among their ranks whose influence dominated Church thought for over a century.¹⁹ The dominant strain in their thinking was a religious and political phenomenon known as Latitudinarianism, which was anathema to some and among the loftiest (or at least most reasonable) ideals of Christianity to others. It is at once a theological
position and a political hallmark, though as the latter it leaves more room for inaccuracy, since while Latitudinarianism is generally associated with the Whig party, it does not in itself represent Whiggery, nor does Whiggery represent it. ²⁰ It is associated with Whig politics because as a theological position it is associated with Whig bishops.

Latitudinarianism, Sykes tells us, had its origins at least partly in a feeling of reaction against the religious disputes of the seventeenth century and in the new spirit of scientific inquiry adopted by the generation which saw the discovery or adaptation of the telescope, microscope, barometer, and thermometer. ²¹ It was an attitude, as opposed to a formal, organized religious body or a formal credo. Its origins, actually, were multifold and ill-defined. McKillop and others trace it to the Cambridge Platonists, ²² and Abbey and Overton find its ideological beginnings as far back as Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine, Anselm, Dante, Erasmus, and Laud. ²³

It was a religious attitude that was rational and tolerant and that tended to stress the reasonableness of Christianity rather than bicker over ecclesiastical doctrines or practices. It is associated with Whig bishops, because under a Whig administration bishops were expected to be less vigorously High Church in their attitudes than the Tories. It was at once a reaction against rigidity, excessive Catholicism in Established Church practices, deism, and enthusiasm, and an attitude which favored toleration, freedom of conscience, and the doctrine of comprehension which hoped to bring dissenting religions, relatively
intact, under the roof of the Established Church. 24

A slow but radical process of evolution may thus be seen in the Church of England from the time of the Reformation to Sterne's lifetime. Certainly it is hard to imagine Henry VIII ever tolerating Latitudinarian deviation from official practice and belief. But in trying to bridge the gap from the Church of Rome to an independent church, he only paved the way for further attempts at independence. The Restoration ended most of the bloodshed over religious issues, and because toleration became almost official doctrine, the Church became more comprehensive, more tolerant, and less anxious to accentuate differences and thereby provoke hostilities.

The breaks from the tradition established by Henry VIII--represented by Puritans, Methodists, and Non-Jurors--nearly became, through comprehension and toleration, part of the tradition. The more important changes, those of moral emphasis, are represented by three bishops whose lifetimes span almost all of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Bishops Hoadly and Watson, of Bangor (ultimately of Winchester) and Llandaff, respectively.

Tillotson, for all practical purposes, is regarded as the chief influence on eighteenth-century Latitudinarianism, and his strong influence on Sterne's sermons will be discussed in the next chapter. The years of his lifetime (1630-94) span the period that was most immediately influential in shaping the Church of England as Sterne
knew it. Tillotson saw the periods of the Civil War, the Common-wealth, and the Restoration, and he saw the incorporation of the Toleration and Test Acts as well as the attempted establishment of comprehension, and he saw the first of many "foreign" monarchs accept the English crown. It was an age of diversified expression of thoughts and feelings, and like many others, Tillotson expressed his. As Archbishop of Canterbury he naturally commanded a great audience; as a gifted writer, his influence was widespread.

Archbishop Tillotson was a controversial churchman mostly because of his many earnest attempts to discuss Christianity on the basis of reason alone. This led to controversy, but it won him many followers as well. For Tillotson was not fiery, but calm and persuasive, and this had a unique appeal to the mentality of his age.

This emphasis led him, as it was to lead Sterne, to a rejection of any person's claim to powers of spiritual insight distinguishable from ordinary human powers of reason. Called a free thinker by some and a deist by others, he believed that the Gospels were God's inspired word but refused to admit that this could be known infallibly.

For Tillotson, virtue was the most reasonable course of action and vice the most unreasonable; religion's yoke is easy:

There is incomparably more trouble in the ways of sin and vice than in those of Religion and Virtue. Every notorious sin is naturally attended with some inconvenience of harm, or danger, or disgrace; which the sinner seldom considers till the sin be committed, and then he is in a labyrinth, and in seeking the way out of a present inconvenience he entangles himself
in more. He is glad to make use of indirect arts, and laborious crafts, to avoid the consequence of his faults; and many times is fain to cover one sin with another. The ways of sin are crooked paths, full of windings and turnings; but the way of holiness and virtue is a highway, and lies so plain before us that way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein. There needs no skill to keep a man's self true and honest; if we will but resolve to deal justly and to speak the truth to our neighbour, nothing in the world is easier: For there is nothing of artifice and reach required to enable a man to speak as he thinks, and to do to others as he would be dealt withal himself.

Let no man then decline or forsake Religion for the pretended difficulties of it, and lay aside all cares of God's commandments upon this suggestion that they are impossible to be kept. For you see they are not only possible but easy. 28

The emphasis on reason and the defense of Christianity as the most reasonable religion became the hallmarks of Latitudinarianism as a positive religious spirit. Along with a belief in freedom of conscience, as long as it was not destructive of the individual or society, these hallmarks were to remain for over a century. Their spirit was maintained by such bishops as Hoadly and Watson throughout the span of the eighteenth century.

Sykes claims that Hoadly and Watson "were indeed representative of their age, being Whigs in politics and Latitudinarian in religion, and ascending to the dangerous eminence of the episcopate by virtue of fidelity to this dual tradition." 29 Bishop Hoadly in 1717 touched off what became known as the Bangorian Controversy when he said in a sermon that Christ was the sole lawgiver to His subjects and that He
left behind no visible human authority or absolute interpreters of His word. Claiming that sincerity alone was the test of moral uprightness, Hoadly alarmed numbers of Anglicans, who discerned between his lines the influence of a neo-Erastianism, a heresy which maintains that no Christian church has rights of jurisdiction and excommunication. Like Watson, Hoadly was a student of Cambridge, and like Watson he had been indoctrinated with principles of civil and religious liberty which showed in his writings. He claims, for example:

To Liberty, and Property,... I add the free Exercise of Religion as necessary to the Happiness of a govern'd Society; because as there is no Tyranny so odious to God as Tyranny over the Conscience; so is there no Slavery so uneasy, and ignominious, as a forc'd Religion, or a Worship imposed upon weak Men by Fear, or Application of outward Inconveniences; besides that nothing promotes the flourishing Condition of a Nation more than the Indulgence of this Freedom to all whose Principles are not manifestly inconsistent with the Public Safety. And that this Freedom together with the Enjoyment of Civil Liberty, and Property...must be an invaluable Happiness to a Nation, needs no Proof, unless it be to those who are grown weary of their own Happiness by Use, and have forgotten what Terrour there was once in the Fears of the contrary Unhappiness.

The Bangorian Controversy died down and there were no drastic results, though the problem of ecclesiastical authority and toleration was a live one throughout the century and most of the next. Hoadly and Watson were not so much influential as they were prototypical Whig prelates of their day. Watson's profession of Latitudinarian faith claims that

I reduced the study of divinity into as narrow a com-
pass as I could, for I determined to study nothing but my Bible, being much unconcerned about the opinions of councils, fathers, churches, bishops, and other men as little inspired as myself. . . . Now my mind was wholly unbiased; I had no prejudice against, no pre-
dilection for the Church of England; but a sincere re-
gard for the Church of Christ, and an insuperable objection to every degree of dogmatical intolerance. I never troubled myself with answering any argu-
ments which the opponents in the divinity schools brought against the articles of the church, nor ever admitted their authority as decisive. . . .

Thus, the appeal of Christianity was a reasonable one, an appeal not to faith but to the judgment of any reasonable man's mind. Both men, in addition, favored Toleration and a repeal of the Test Act, though they were, as many Anglicans and nearly all Whigs were, fearful of the Church of Rome, less as a religion than as a foreign power. Both were Whigs of the 1688 school.

The higher clergy of the eighteenth century were typically men of letters, like Hoadly and Watson, keenly interested in intellectual controversy, of rational and critical minds, broadminded, and generally in favor of the inclusion of Dissenters in the Church of England. 33 They represented the general temper of the eighteenth century, which, Sykes points out,

was averse from the appeal to antiquity and inclined rather to trust to the enlightenment of its own age; so that, although the desire of ardent spirits for the reformation of the doctrines and liturgy of the Church in accordance with the principles of the aufklarung was frustrated, a middle way was advocated widely of the formulation of articles of subscription only in terms used in the Scriptures. 34

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church traces the
Latitudinarianism of this century to the Cambridge Platonists, who assumed a philosophical position between "high" Anglicanism and puritanism, advocating toleration and comprehension. The political advantages this position might have offered during the seventeenth century were ignored, and the Civil War was precipitated by the unalterably opposite stands assumed by Anglicans and Puritans. But the eighteenth century saw the advantages and acted on them. Latitudinarianism was convenient, for while it did not please everybody, its theological tendency was to de-emphasize or ignore doctrinal differences. Basil Willey claims that the Cambridge Platonists, though "Puritan in affinity," tended to "illustrate...the tendency of advanced Protestant thought, after passing through its dogmatic post-Reformation phase, to reveal once again its original rationalising temper, and to fall thus in line with the general movement of the century."  

Sterne's generation was well aware of the discoveries, and potential discoveries, by the telescope and microscope and other instruments of the new science. Modern knowledge about the universe added vision to religion and, as Sykes says, "Creation testified with a convincing authority to the wisdom, majesty, and universality of its Creator. The realisation of the rule of law in the visible universe evoked a welcome appreciation of the nature of God as rational and reliable, not arbitrary and capricious." Thus, deism, a belief in God based exclusively on rational (non-supernatural) inferences from His creation, was related to Latitudinarianism, despite the efforts of such
works as Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736), which attempted to show that natural religion is neither as clear nor as perfect as it professed to be. The Latitudinarians relied on the proofs of reason and the reasonableness of Christianity for their apologetics. Deism, however, went at least a step further than Latitudinarianism in that it tended to disparage the notion of divine revelation. Officially, therefore, deism was equated by the Latitudinarians with evils of the ilk of popery, Methodism, and atheism. A disbelief in Scripture, of course, posed a very practical threat to the Church of England which the Whig-Latitudinarian bishops, and Prebend Sterne of York, had to uphold.

In trying to refrain from the extremes of Puritanism and excessively dogmatic Anglicanism, the Latitudinarians found themselves appealing only to a small intellectual elite. Religious fervor declined, and the Church of England was characterized by an attitude of bland moralizing, which by the 1760's, the decade of *Tristram Shandy, Sentimental Journey*, and the *Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, had settled upon it like a pallor. Horton Davies says that "the Spirit of the Age was not conducive to worship in general, and was peculiarly opposed to liturgical forms." The Anglican tradition became tepid as a result of emphasis on the "reasonable" and the de-emphasis of doctrine and its relation to the sacramental system. Lansing Hammond goes so far as to say:

A respectable moderation in one's living, a combination of good sense, good taste, and therefore, good
morbidity, was the conventional goal sought by the ordinary Englishman living during the middle years of the eighteenth century. Christianity was the name given to this commonplace code of ethics but almost any other appellation would have been equally pertinent; it characterized Christian and deist alike. 40

So by mid-century Latitudinarianism was, as a theological position, rather nebulous, though it was an attitude characteristic of members of the Church of England, and if not entirely distinguishable from deism, it was distinguishable from Low Church or Dissenter attitudes and Methodism. Its most distinguished prelates were frequently controversialists rather than effective spiritual leaders, shunning any kind of religious "enthusiasm." 41

This was of course in the Tillotson tradition, mentioned above, which rejected any claim of extra-rational powers of spiritual insight. The very rational and decorous Latitudinarianism, therefore, was the opposite of Methodism or "enthusiasm," 42 which was on the ascent during the mid-1700's and was naturally regarded with some suspicion as a religion by the Latitudinarians.

That Sterne was in the mainstream of this Latitudinarian tradition needs to be shown, and perhaps it can be better shown by his writings than by the few pertinent facts of his life. Among the latter, however, are his family tradition and, as indication of his orthodoxy, his being received into Anglican orders and remaining an active cleric for the rest of his life. His ecclesiastical good standing as well as his benevolent and sentimental personal inclinations, revealed to a large extent in his letters, serve as additional testimony to the
mixture in his life of the orthodox and the extra-orthodox.

Sterne lived during a time of almost total involvement of the Church with domestic political machinations, but it was a Church whose doctrinal and liturgical tradition had grown somewhat lukewarm as the result of many factors, including the early moderating force of Cambridge Platonism; a widespread reaction to, and fear of, the excesses of doctrinal and political rigidity; a widespread desire to avoid another civil war; a spirit of inquiry, encouraged by the growth of the New Science, which influenced thinkers in the Church; an emphasis, also brought about, at least in part, by the New Science, on providing a rational basis for Christianity; and a new emphasis, as well as a particular law by that name, on toleration of religious and political differences within increasingly more flexible bounds of civil authority. This is a broad picture of the Church to which Sterne subscribed and in the name of which he preached and wrote his Sermons of Mr. Yorick.
NOTES

Chapter I

1 John Hicks, "Critical History of Tristram Shandy," BUSE, II (1956), 69, quotes a Grub Street pamphlet allegedly by the "Rev. George Whitfield, B.A."


3 The English Church (London, Faber and Faber, 1940), 155.

4 Ibid., 156.

5 Ibid., 176-80. A historical discussion of this transition may be found in Norman Sykes's Old Priest and New Presbyter (Cambridge, University Press, 1956).

6 Ady, 174.


8 Sykes, Church and State, 77-78.


11 Sykes, Church and State, 297. Cecilia Ady mentions as well that William wanted to allow foreign reformed ministers to officiate in England without episcopal ordination and that he wanted to abolish kneeling for communion and other High Church customs. P. 158.

12 Every, 109.

13 English Literature from Dryden to Burns (New York, Appleton-Century-Croft, 1948), 206.
14 The *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, 84. Cross makes clear the degree of passion at this time that helped make party and church distinctions seem indistinguishable.


16 Sykes, *Church and State*, 78. See also Basil Williams, 76-78.

17 Sykes, 77-78.

18 *The High Church Party*, 61-67.

19 Opinions on this are in almost universal agreement, though with varying degrees of emphasis on the exact proportion of worthy men to others. See Abbey and Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century* (London, Longmans, Green, 1878), I, 269-70, et passim; George Every, *ibid.*; and Sykes, *Church and State*, 92-116, et passim.

20 Sykes, *Church and State*, 343.


23 Abbey and Overton, 271-72. They infer a Latitudinarian position on the part of these men only as certain statements of toleration indicate.

24 Every, 32-33. There were various prescriptions, counterparts to modern "loyalty oaths," for Quakers, Baptists, and Congregationalists.

25 Abbey and Overton, 284, ff. They provide the most comprehensive background study of English religious history in the eighteenth century, though it antedates a number of more recent works. See also McKillop, Sykes, and especially Louis Locke, *Tillotson* (Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1954). Locke states, for instance, that "to
understand the development of English thought from the Revolution to the mid-eighteenth century, there is no better place to gain the knowledge than in Tillotson" (164).

26 Abbey and Overton, 284, ff.

27 Ibid., 287.


29 Church and State, 332.

30 Ibid., 292-93. Hoadly was disputed by the zealous non-juror, William Law. See Abbey, English Church and its Bishops 1700-1800 (London, Longmans, Green, 1887).


32 Quoted in Sykes, Church and State, 350-51.

33 See Sykes, Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London (London, Humphrey Milford, 1926), 4-5.

34 Sykes, Church and State, 348.

35 Indeed, John Stoughton in History of Religion in England (London, Hoddes and Stoughton, 1881) claims that the Cambridge school of theologians were called Latitudinarians as early as 1662. V. 4, 323, ff.

36 The Seventeenth Century Background (New York, Doubleday, 1953), 141.

37 Church and State, 343. See also Paul Stapfer, Sterne (Paris, 1870), who quotes a letter from Sterne to a Mr. Cook, in which Sterne discusses the "two infinitys" between which man is situated, and which man can multiply or subdivide infinitely. The physical realization of this, of course, is effected by telescope and microscope respectively.

38 Church and State, 345-46. See also the CHEL, IX, ch. 11, "Berkeley and Contemporary Philosophy," by W. R. Sorley.

40 Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick (New Haven, Yale U. Press, 1948), 91.

41 See Sykes, Edmund Gibson, 5, 183-84.

42 Davies, 248, et passim.
CHAPTER II
STERNE'S SERMONS

Part i
Religion as a Part of Sterne's Life

Like such religious men of Latitude as Tillotson and Hoadly, Laurence Sterne was less concerned with dogma than ethics, and less concerned with the metaphysical basis of ethics than with practical behavior. He was a man "who extolled the homely virtues because they increased the happiness of man, who bent his efforts to acquaint his fellows with the little occupations of the kind-hearted and with the sufferings of the poor."¹ And his religious position, like his life, must be seen as a synthesis of various aspects: traditional/orthodox and Latitudinarian/pragmatic; religious and political; religious and ethical. A synthesis of these elements shows us a picture of Sterne as a loyal member and clergyman of the Church of England, benevolent and undoctrinaire in attitudes toward ethical matters, and an anti-papist defender, under the auspices of his church, against the Jacobites.

Sterne, born in 1713, was a member of a family traditionally Anglican, and in fact, one of his ancestors--his great-grandfather Richard Sterne--was an Archbishop of York who had distinguished himself by raising treasure for Charles I during the Civil War and by being subsequently imprisoned.² An Irish great-uncle, John Sterne, became, like his friend Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's in

24
Dublin. His previously-mentioned uncle, Dr. Jaques Sterne, was Precentor of the Minster and Archdeacon of Cleveland. As Cross indicates (p. 34), "Sterne was destined for the Church, not because of deep and peculiar piety but because the Church was an obvious career to one who bore his name."

From his ordination in 1738 until his death in 1768, he was actively and officially a priest, despite the travels and vacations necessitated by his publications and by his health. ³ The available information, including official records, indicates not only that Sterne was faithful to his ecclesiastical duties but was regarded with personal favor by his parishioners and superiors. In a letter to John Clough in August of 1753, for example, Sterne's recommendation that a poor woman of his parish caught in adultery be not fined, or better, have her penance suspended, seems more solicitous than the law would require him to be.⁴ Another letter to the Overseers of Highways for Clifton (June 13, 1757), signed by Sterne and others, makes angry demand that the roads near his parishes be put in better repair—a request based on not purely selfish grounds.⁵ And while his relationship with his parishioners was not idyllic (Cross mentions, without indicating his source, "occasional flares of temper") Sterne and his parishioners seem to have lived in general harmony together (p. 68).

In May of 1743, Sterne responded to a questionnaire sent by Archbishop Herring of York, his immediate ecclesiastical superior;
his reply was, Cross says (pp. 67-68), "unique for its completeness":

1. There are about a Hundred and twenty Families in my Parish; of which five are Quakers.
2. There is a Meeting House for the Quakers, Licens'd; where about thirty assemble generally every Sunday.
3. There are two Petty Schools; the one without Endowment, the other endowed with twenty shillings a year. The number of Children taught in them about 40. as to the care taken to instruct them in the Principles of the Christian Religion I will make answer under the ninth Article.
4. There are no Alms Houses, etc., in my Parish; no Lands or Tenements for the Repair of the Church. There is a small Benevolence for Bread, distributed faithfully every Sunday to the Poor who attend Morning and Evening Prayers, according to the Intention of the Founder.
5. I do reside personally upon my Cure, and in my Parsonage House.
6. I have no Curate.
7. ...Except one Quaker Woman whom I have prevailed with to come to Church, but have not been able to gain her consent to be Baptized [all others in the parish are baptized].
8. Public Service is duly performed twice every Lord's Day.
9. I Catechize every Sunday in my Church during Lent, but explain our Religion to the Children and Servants of my Parishioners in my own House every Sunday Night during Lent, from six o'clock till nine. I mention the Length of Time as my reason for not doing it in Church. 6
10. The Sacrament is administered five Times every Year in my Church. There are about 250 Communicants above one Half of which communicated last Easter.
11. I do give timely Warning of the Sacrament before it is administered. My Parishioners do not send in their Names, nor have I required it. I have not refused the Sacrament to any one.

L. Sterne

Another questionnaire, answered from Coxwold in the summer of 1764, some twenty-one years later, indicates that Sterne was apparently still
as conscientious. 8

In 1744 Sterne received the curacy of Stillington, the Dean and Chapter of York having petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury for the allowance, based on Sterne's "good life and conversation" (Cross, p. 55). And Sterne is known to have been on a personally friendly basis with Archbishop Drummond, having stayed at least two times with the Archbishop at his residence. 9 Shocked readers of Tristram Shandy got nowhere, Cross tells us (pp. 423-24), in petitioning Drummond to censure his famous priest.

Sterne was active in local Whig politics in York during the early years of his priesthood. Only in a superficial way, however, is his brief political career indicative of his religious attitudes. Just as he entered the Church because there seemed to be few acceptable alternatives, his initiation into Whig politics was scarcely avoidable. The clergy of York, headed by Archbishop Herring, formed, as Curtis tells us, "a Whig faction which could better persuade men to loyalty than to virtue, and ranged themselves more formidable against political opposition than against heresy itself." Coming to York, a young curate under the tutelage of his uncle Jaques, a fervid member of the established Whig faction, Sterne could hardly avoid joining their ranks. 10

Sir Lewis Namier's England in the Age of the American Revolution claims that generally the established Whigs were, in both Church and State matters, "unromantic latitudinarians" and used the Jacobite
cause as a political bogey. At any rate, Whig politics were apparently a York ecclesiastical tradition, and anti-papistry—as a concomitant of the Jacobite scare—had been part of the tradition since 1715. The York church Whigs appear to have been more interested in electing Whig MP's and in baiting Catholics than in espousing any broad national principles. Sterne and his uncle helped establish the York Gazetteer "partly...to correct the weekly Poison of the Tory York-Courant," hoping "that the Well-Wishers to the Cause of Liberty and Protestantism will give it Encouragement." Sterne's role in politics was largely that of journalist for the Gazetteer between 1741 and 1745.

Dr. John Burton, Dr. Slop of Tristram Shandy, was a Yorkshire physician and a Tory, suspected of papist leanings and also suspected of Jacobite sentiments, mostly because he crossed paths with the Jacobite rebels—apparently by accident—during the Uprising of 1745. Sterne's uncle Jaques helped to have Burton arrested and detained briefly for treasonable activities. According to Burton's memoirs, Laurence Sterne helped to fan the flames of suspicion by insinuating in a letter that Burton had collaborated with the rebels. Although Sterne later claimed in his brief "Memoirs" that he "detested such dirty work: thinking it beneath me," his anti-Catholic bias remains, not only in a number of his sermons but in the caricature of Burton as Dr. Slop. Cross claims (p. 93) that he did, however, eventually fall in with the less militant faction of the local clergy.
Sterne's letters, as we have already seen, provide some indication of his religious attitudes, although perhaps largely in a negative way. For, though Curtis's collection lists 236 items, in addition to the Journal to Eliza, there is little mention made of religion, religious beliefs, or even (strangely enough, for a prolific minister-writer), of ecclesiastic affairs. Sterne was actively involved and interested in things of the world, and his letters are filled with his concern about his health, his homes, his wife and child, his travels, his revelry in London and abroad, his jollity with the Demoniacs, and, of course, his writings. Attitudes toward religion and moral behavior, however, may only be gleaned here and there.

His letters are filled with the pious and commonplace expressions, religiously oriented, that may be observed in the conversation of the Shandy family: "God preserve us" (p. 16); "God bless & direct you!" (p. 57); "pray to God I may see My dearest Girl soon & well" (p. 102); and "God bless You my dear Kitty" (p. 105).

These mildly religious idioms are occasionally supplemented by more explicitly Christian ones, as in his 1760 letter from York to an unknown doctor whose advice, Sterne says, he has considered "as dispassionately and charitably as a good Christian can" (p. 88). In a letter to Garrick, from London in 1760, Sterne refers to the "Christian World," apparently as synonymous with the "known" or "civilized" world (p. 93), and in a tone of humorous disparagement, he bids Hall-Stevenson, the "Eugenius" of Tristram Shandy, to ask one
of their fellow-Demoniacs\textsuperscript{17} to "pray for me, when he prays for the Holy Catholic Church." This letter concludes with mock-papistry when Sterne closes with

\begin{center}
and the blessing of God the Father\textsuperscript{17} \\
Son \\
&
\textit{holy ghost be with you \textsuperscript{17}p. 291.}\textsuperscript{17}
\end{center}

Sterne, on occasion, did reveal moral attitudes in his letters that can best be compared to the vague and benevolent "philosophy"--though it is not at all systematized or profoundly based--of the \textit{Sermons of Mr. Yorick}. To his future wife, with whom Sterne promised to be "as merry, and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the arch fiend entered that undescrivable scene" (p. 16), he wrote in 1739/40 about a friend who had died recently, leaving a widow and five children:

If real usefulness and integrity of heart, could have secured him from this, his friends would not now be mourning his untimely fate. --These dark and seemingly cruel dispensations of Providence, often make the best of human hearts complain. --Who can paint the distress of an affectionate mother, made a widow in a moment, weeping in bitterness over a numerous, helpless, and fatherless offspring? --God! these are thy chastisements, and require (hard task!) a pious acquiescence \textsuperscript{17}pp. 18-19.\textsuperscript{17}

And to Mrs. Sterne and to his daughter, he writes from Paris in 1762, "Now my dears, once more pluck up your spirits--trust in God--in me--and in yourselves--with this, was you put to it, you would encounter all these difficulties ten times told..." (p. 177).

Sterne's attitude toward the future was apparently based on an
optimistic belief in an all-wise and ultimately benevolent Providence, for he mentions this belief a number of times, even when an implicit violation of the injunction against adultery was concerned. To "Kitty" Fourmantel, he writes from London in 1760, "these Separations, my dear Kitty, however grievous to us both--must be--for the present--God will open a Dore, when we shall sometime be much more together" (p. 104). And in a letter to Eliza from London in 1767, he prays

May the God of Kindness be kind to thee, and approve himself thy protector, now thou art defenceless! And, for thy daily comfort, bear in thy mind this truth, that whatever measure of sorrow and distress is thy portion, it will be repaid to thee in a full measure of happiness, by the Being thou hast wisely chosen for thy eternal friend [p. 311].

In the same year, and perhaps with a more detached spirit, Sterne wrote to Ignatius Sancho from Coxwold:

I am a resign'd being, Sancho, and take health and sickness as I do light and darkness, of the vicissitudes of seasons--that is, just as it pleases God to send them--and accomodate myself to their periodical returns, as well as I can--only taking care, whatever befalls me in this silly world--not to lose my temper at it. --This I believe, friend Sancho, to be the truest philosophy--for this we must be indebted to ourselves, but not to our fortunes [p. 370].

This is as explicit a statement as Sterne makes in his letters about resignation to God's will or, in his words, "Providence."

Regarding the spirit of benevolence, or "philanthropy," as he calls it in his sermons, Sterne in 1763 wrote from France to Lord Grosvenor, thanking him for a recent loan of one hundred pounds:
I would not wish to have a better text than this, for a Sermon upon public Spirit—How should a man, my Lord, have that in the Gross, which he has not in the Detail? Or pretend to be a friend to all Mankind, who has not a Soul to do a kindness to any one Man?—You may take my word, my Lord, That a Man must have a good heart before he can have a generous one—and that to have a generous one, A Man must live so as to Afford to consider the public more than himself—and till this reformation in our Luxury is brought about, there will always be a Scarcity, of what you justly say, is now so much wanted [p. 206].

Here benevolence and Providence are causally linked, for Sterne continues in the same letter:

In the mean [time] you must be content to bear the mortification of fresh discoveries every day, of men acting, my Lord, upon views diametrically opposite to yours, in which your only comfort will be, that at least you set a good example, & can say to yourself Liberavi animam meam, in case the world will go to the Devil [p. 206].

Benevolence, then, is the saving virtue. That Sterne was, as a person, entirely capable of manifesting, or at least affecting, a spirit of sentimental benevolence is evident in a number of his letters, but perhaps in none so clearly as in his letter in 1766 to Ignatius Sancho, the former slave who had begged Sterne in a letter to "give half an hours attention to slavery as it is at this day undergone in the West Indies." He felt that Sterne's treatment of such a topic "would ease the Yoke of many, perhaps occasion a reformation throughout our Islands." Sterne's reply is fully in the spirit of the sentimental benevolence seen most clearly and explicitly in his sermons:

There is a strange coincidence, Sancho, in the little
events (as well as in the great ones) of this world: for I had been writing a tender tale of the sorrows of a friendless poor negro-girl, and my eyes had scarce done smarting, When your Letter of recommendation in behalf of so many of her brethren and Sisters came to me—but why her brethren?—or yours? Sancho,—any more than mine: it is by the finest tints and most insensible gradations that nature descends from the fairest face about St. James, to the sootiest complexion in Africa: at which tint of these, is it, that the ties of blood & nature cease? and how many tones must we descend lower still in the scale, 'ere Mercy is to vanish with them? but tis no uncommon thing, my good Sancho, for one half of the world to use the other half of it like brutes, and then endeavour to make 'em so. for my own part, I never look Westward, (when I am in a pensive mood at least) but I think of the burdens which our Brothers & Sisters are there carrying; & could I ease their shoulders from one ounce of 'em, I declare I would set out this hour upon a pilgrimage to Mecca for their sakes....

If I can weave the Tale I have wrote into the Work I'm about—tis at the service of the afflicted—and a much greater matter; for in serious truth, it casts a sad shade upon the World, That so great a part of it, are and have been so long bound in chains of darkness & in Chains of Misery...[pp. 285-86].

Thus, if a religious attitude can be inferred from Sterne's letters, it is one that is oriented to Protestant Christianity and that is optimistic and benevolent in its outlook. Sterne mentions innocence, apparently of an almost preternatural kind, as the most desirable cast of mind; it is the sort of emphasis that enabled him to envision his bride and himself "as merry, and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise," and to write to Foley from Montpellier in France in 1764, "Let us live as merrily but as innocently as we can--It has ever been as good, if not better, than a bishoprick to me--and I desire no other" (p. 208). To Foley, to whom he stated later in 1764 that "all is for the
best—which is my general reflection upon many things in this world"
(p. 209), he had confided in 1762 in a letter from Toulouse,

I am got pretty well, and sport much with my
uncle Toby in the volume I am now fabricating for
the laughing part of the world—for the melancholy
part of it, I have nothing but my prayers—so God
help them! [p. 189].

While the idiomatic tradition within which he communicated was,
as we have said, oriented to Protestant Christianity, the virtues en-
dorsed—tolerance and sentimental benevolence—are non-sectarian;
if anything they can be called simply humanitarian. Arthur Cash says
that "Sterne has a warm-hearted optimism about the goodness of man
which seems more a product of temperament than of philosophy."22
In his Journal to Eliza, Sterne tells Eliza of the troublesome Mrs.
Sterne's return to France, saying that she has vowed never to "give
me another sorrowful or discontented hour—I have conquered her, as
I would every one else, by humanity & Generosity" (p. 399).

And, as with the dalliance with Maria in Sentimental Journey
that leads Yorick to exclaim that he is positive he has a soul, Sterne
apparently like to dwell, or pretended to dwell, on the emotional
warmth of a situation as much as on the attendant virtue. In a letter
to his daughter from Coxwold, Sterne wrote in 1767, anticipating her
return,

My poor cat sits purring beside me—your lively
French dog shall have his place on the other side
of my fire—but if he is as devilish as when I last
saw him, I must tutor him, for I will not have my
cat abused—in short I will have nothing devilish
about me—a combustion would spoil a sentimental thought \textsuperscript{p. 391}.

And in a letter to Stanhope a month later, Sterne says

My Sentimental Journey will, I dare say, convince you that my feelings are from the heart, and that that heart is not of the worst of molds—praised be God for my sensibility! Though it has often made me wretched, yet I would not exchange it for all the pleasures the grossest sensualist ever felt \textsuperscript{p. 396}.

Sterne’s ostensible end as an Anglican priest was, as he claimed about the initial preaching of the "Conscience" sermon in 1750, "the Hopes of doing Good, by contributing something to the Interests of Religion and Morality" (p. 24). To his friend Mrs. Montagu, he was, facetiously, in a letter to her sister in 1765,

...the deepest Divine, the profoundest casuist, the most serious (on paper) the reformed Church affords. I suppose from the description you will guess this grave and sage personage can be no other than the Rev’d. Mr Sterne. I will venture to say for him, that whatever he may want in seriousness he makes up in good nature. He is full of the milk of human kindness, harmless as a child, but often a naughty boy, and a little apt to dirty his frock \textsuperscript{p. 238}.

This is as telling a synthesis of the orthodox and unorthodox (as well as the extra-orthodox) elements in Sterne that his contemporaries have left. His stress was on optimism and benevolence, rather than doctrine; he was more concerned with "the milk of human kindness" than the literal or figurative spotlessness of his frock. Orthodox in his official priesthood, Sterne’s religious attitudes, apparently through the entirety of his life, were less conspicuous than his obsession with innocence, optimism, and the "sensibility" for which he
praises God.
Part ii
The Latitudinarianism of Sterne's Sermons

Though the primary tendency of religious Latitudinarianism was to be anti-doctrinal and while such negative tendencies are sometimes hard to identify, it is not difficult to see clear indications of Latitudinarian thought in Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick. In their content and tone they are representative of eighteenth-century Latitudinarianism with its peculiar emphases and prejudices. While they are written in a uniquely Shandean style, they reflect their age's vaguely benevolent ethic expressed by Latitudinarianism as it developed from the time of the Cambridge Platonists to the middle third of the eighteenth century.

A less direct proof, though one worth noting, is the various influences on, and sources of, the sermons. Though these influences and sources range from the orthodox to the liberal, they represent generally the mainstream of eighteenth-century religious thought and thus provide support for the overall argument. The authority for this part of the evidence is Lansing Hammond's Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick, which will be cited frequently in this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to provide a source-study of Sterne's sermons but to analyze their content, even though we shall mention sources as a separate indication of Latitudinarianism or, at least, a middle-of-the-road position on Sterne's part.
Thus there is no attempt made here at correlating Latitudinarian thought in general with individual sermons and their particular sources. The important thing is that Sterne was acquainted with these writers; the fact that he paraphrased or even copied directly from some does not seem particularly relevant here, since his plagiarizing seems to have been more or less indiscriminate, not based so much on content, apparently, as on the popularity of the particular preacher. The sources of the sermons are many, and even Hammond makes no correlation between individual sources and general content. The degree of Sterne's indebtedness for the sermons in general, or for particular sermons, is irrelevant here. Hammond makes clear both that borrowing among eighteenth-century preachers was common and not regarded as plagiarism, and that most of the people from whom Sterne borrowed were of some prominence and popularity. Verbatim copying is confined almost exclusively to the posthumously published sermons, which, Hammond argues, were not intended for future publication.

Hammond lists seventeen sources in all for ideas and verbatim passages. They include: Richard Bentley (1662-1742), controversial critic and scholar, slain in the "Battle of the Books" in Swift's Tale of a Tub; James Blair (1656-1743), Scottish Episcopalian and first president of William and Mary College in America; and Joseph Butler (1692-1752), whose Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed (1736) was the official Anglican defense against deism. Also included
are Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), controversial to deists and high churchmen alike, whose influence appears in seventeen sermons; James Foster (1697-1753), a dissenter and Arian; Joseph Hall (1574-1656), satirist and high churchman, friend of Archbishop Laud; and Walter Leightonhouse, a little-known contemporary of Sterne's.

Other influences are John Locke (1632-1704), whose influence Hammond traces in seven sermons; John Norris (1657-1711), a scholar and divine of mystical tendencies, influenced by the Cambridge Platonists; John Rogers (1679-1729), who fought Hoadly during the Bangorian Controversy and defended the powers of the priesthood; and Richard Steele (1672-1729), whose Christian Hero influenced two of the early-published sermons. Three well-known writers whose influence extends to thirty-four of Sterne's sermons between them are Edward Stillingsfleet (1635-99), a Latitudinarian and popular London preacher to whom Sterne was indebted, at least in part, for three sermons; Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), who influenced two; and John Tillotson (1630-94), Archbishop of Canterbury and regarded as perhaps the most eloquent Latitudinarian, who influenced twenty-nine sermons. The last three are more obscure: Thomas Wise, a preacher at Christ Church in Canterbury; William Wollaston (1659-1724), a religious thinker in the intellectual tradition of Samuel Clarke, who influenced ten sermons; and Edward Young, father of the author of Night Thoughts, chaplain to William and Mary.

Quantitatively the influence of Latitudinarians and non-high
churchmen is strongest, with Blair, Clarke, Foster, Locke, Norris, Stillingfleet, Tillotson, and Wollaston appearing seventy-seven times. What is more significant than this is the fact that in borrowing passages and ideas from these men, Sterne gave evidence that he was familiar with them. And nowhere in any of the sermons, despite his familiarity with conservative Anglicanism, does Sterne enunciate principles peculiarly High Church: nowhere is he concerned with man's sinfulness, against religious toleration, sympathetic to a more ritualistic, quasi-Roman Catholic liturgy, or concerned with any sort of apologetics to prove such doctrines as transubstantiation. Sterne himself provides the most apt description of the subject matter of the sermons in his prefatory remarks to the first two volumes, published in 1760:

--they have been hastily written and carry the marks of it along with them. --This may be no recommendation;--I mean it however as such; for as the sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I trust they will be no less felt, or worse received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head. I have nothing to add, but that the reader, upon old and beaten subjects, must not look for many new thoughts, --'tis well if he has new language....

So philanthropy and virtues associated with it are Sterne's subjects. The concomitant tone, as well as the above-mentioned prejudices and points of emphasis, confirm this set of sermons as unmistakably Latitudinarian.

A synopsis of Sterne's religious position in the form of a "creed"
would comprise these tenets: There is a God, a personal and benevolent Creator; Jesus Christ is the Son of God and man's Savior and Redeemer; Scripture may be reasonably regarded as of unimpeachable authority; though the Christian Church is very reasonable in its teachings and interpretations of Scripture, sincerity and charity are enough for any individual's spiritual welfare; philanthropy—a disposition to give material or spiritual benefaction to anyone in need of it—motivated by feelings of benevolence, which are instinctive in all men, is the highest and most virtuous human activity; selfishness and uncharitableness, summed up in spiritual pride, are the worst of vices; the moral precepts taught by Christianity are the most reasonable code of ethics; sincerity of motive is of the highest spiritual significance, while religious rigidity and ritual—as in the practices of the Church of Rome—without sincerity, is in itself meaningless; and mere feelings of faith and divine grace—as among the enthusiasts—are also meaningless. In brief, as McKillop points out in his critical preface to the Harper edition of Tristram Shandy (New York, 1962, p. xi), "The Sermons express Sterne's views as a moderate Churchman, emphasizing natural and moral duties rather than ritual and dogma, or in Yorick's words, expounding 'practical' rather than 'polemic' divinity."

This so-called creed is not stated in its totality in any one sermon but is, of course, a synthesis of many ideas expressed throughout the forty-five Sermons of Mr. Yorick. And since the forty-five
are not in any sort of logical or developmental sequence, the approach here will be topical, not chronological or according to order of publication.

That there is a God is assumed and never really discussed as a doctrine; Sterne can not be accused of ever being metaphysical or polemic in this regard. To him, "the assistance of God's grace and Holy Spirit to direct our lives" (I, 1, 6) is an unexamined belief and never argued. God is, therefore, a benevolent and Supreme Being, the "Best of Beings" (I, 2, 14). The reference above to the Holy Spirit is as close as Sterne gets to any mention of Trinitarian views. Mostly in the sermons, God is--if he is a member of the Trinity at all--God the Father, the omnipotent personal force to whom man must turn as his Creator and benefactor, but man, in turn, is "the fairest and noblest part of GOD's works" (II, 10, 117) and thus reflects his Creator who blesses man's good works (I, 5, 53). There is "but one GOD, the Maker and supporter of Heaven and Earth,--infinite in wisdom and knowledge, and all perfections," and he is "the great GOD of gods, and LORD of lords" (IV, 11, 58).

He is the "GOD of truth!" (IV, 10, 47), but unlike the Apollo who impinges upon the life of Oedipus, Sterne's God is a personal and loving force, who rewards benevolence with benevolence. He is a God who performs personal and kindly favors, as to the Widow of Zarephath, in exchange for acts of piety and generosity (I, 5, 53 ff.). Man is fashioned after the image of his creator with respect
to reason and the great faculties of the mind; he 
cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field; 
as it surpasses the vegetable world in beauty, so 
does he the animal world in the glory and excell-
encies of his nature, 30 

and man owes God an "aweful regard" (II,14,160), but if this regard 
is paid, "there is little probability of his falling into considerable 
disappointments or calamities—not only because guarded by the 
providence of GOD, but that honesty is in its own nature the freest 
from danger" (V,1,87). This last sermon is entitled "Temporal 
Advantages of Religion," and, while "a virtuous life is the only 
medium of happiness and terms of salvation, --which can only give us 
admission into heaven" (V,2,95), God rewards virtue in this world 
as well; virtue has more rewards than just itself. Indeed, 

a virtuous life is the foundation of all our happiness,
--that as God has no pleasure in wickedness,
neither shall any evil dwell within him, --and that, if 
we expect our happiness to be in heaven, --we must 
have our conversation in heaven, whilst upon earth...
\[V,2,97\].

In brief, Sterne professes (I, 7, 89-90) that 

there is a GOD who made me, --to whose gift I owe 
all the powers and faculties of my soul, to whose 
providence I owe all the blessings of my life, and 
by whose permission it is that I exercise and enjoy 
them; that I am placed in this world as a creature 
but of a day, hastening to the place from whence I 
shall not return. --That I am accountable for my 
conduct and behaviour to this great and wisest of 
Beings, before whose judgment-seat I must finally 
appear, and receive the things done in my body, --
whether they are good, or whether they are bad.

Reason, furthermore, has always been able to discover not only this 

fact but that there is an obligation, "the foundation of all religion,"
for God's creatures to worship Him (IV, 11, 58). He is merciful, just, and omniscient:

In all thy exigencies trust and depend on him;—nor ever doubt but he, who heareth the cry of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widow, if it is just, will hear thine, and either lighten thy burden, and let thee go free;—or, which is the same, if that seems not meet, by adding strength to thy mind, to enable thee to sustain what he has suffered to be laid upon thee [VI, 7, 151-52].

This is as doctrinal as Sterne gets in his sermons: God exists, we are His creatures, we owe him homage and obedience, he will judge us and do so mercifully. We should "love and fear GOD;—... provide for our true interest... by devoting ourselves to him, --and always thinking of him, --as he is the true and final happiness of a reasonable and an immortal spirit" (VI, 12, 203). Hammond remarks, "Nowhere in the sermons is there so much as an allusion either to Holy Communion or to Baptism," and he adds in a bit of an understatement, "Doctrinal Christianity, quite obviously, held no charms for Sterne." 31

Each of the forty-five Sermons of Mr. Yorick begins with a passage from Scripture and is based, sometimes rather indirectly, upon that passage. Twenty-six of these references are from the Old Testament and nineteen from the New. From this alone one might surmise that the sermons deal more with general religious topics than with specifically Christian doctrines, but there is a clear and often explicit statement of the one most fundamental Christian doctrine, the divinity of Christ and his role as redeemer.
Thus, Christ is explicitly "our SAVIOUR" (I, 3, 25, et passim) and "our blessed SAVIOUR" (I, 6, 72, et passim). Once again, as with the existence of God, Sterne is not interested in metaphysical arguments. Christ's role as the generous and merciful redeemer is assumed as an already proven fact. As God is the final happiness of a reasonable spirit, a reasonable man is able and willing to believe the Scriptural account of Christ's life and divinity. As Bishop Hoadly says,

If therefore, any Person ask, as I find some ready to do, Whom they must follow in this point, their Old Guides or New Lights, as they express themselves; I answer that there are many Old, and New Guides of one judgment, and many of another: but the only safe way is to follow neither, but to embrace that opinion which, upon a serious examination, they find to be most agreeable to Reason, and the Word of God. 32

Sterne apparently regards Christ's redemptive role as "agreeable to reason."

Scripture is thus a "reasonable" authority for the doctrine of Christ, the "Master" who was humbled "even to the death of the cross; --the death of a slave, --a malefactor, --drag'd to Calvary without opposition, --insulted without complaint" (IV, 10, 47). Christ also has a role as ultimate judge, both of the enemies of his cross and of his friends: he shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto him" (V, 2, 94).

Christ's sufferings should be contemplated periodically to put our thoughts into perspective (V, 3, 106), because Sterne professes
that Christ "hast the words of eternal life, --and we believe, and know that...[Christ is] the son of GOD" (V, 4, 121). 33 Man's primary endeavor should be to seek salvation "through a rational faith in his Redeemer, to make his calling and election sure" (VI, 11, 195-96). Christ's hylomorphic nature is an assumption but not at all Sterne's chief concern.

Christ, like God the Father, is concerned not with the militant execution of justice among mankind, but with establishing, by the example of his life, mercy and social harmony among men. The sermon on "Humility" (IV, 10, 41-52) discusses that virtue, using the life of Christ as a prototype:

The voluntary meanness of his birth, --the poverty of his life--the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the Gospel to the poor, --the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head, --all spoke the same language;--that the GOD of truth should submit to the suspicion of an imposture:--his humble deportment under that, and a thousand provocations of a thankless people, still raises this character higher;--and what exalts it to its highest pitch, --the tender and pathetick proof he gave of the same disposition at the conclusion and great catastrophe of his suffering.... 34

In fact, there seems to be as much, if not more, preoccupation with the way this is said as with what is being said. And this is true throughout the sermons; the historical Christ takes second place, if not to rhetoric--that is, concern with the effectiveness of what is said--then certainly to what Christ stands for as a model of human benevolence.
Sterne nowhere articulates anything fundamental about Scripture or his reasons for believing it. He takes it, so to speak, as "gospel." For instance, "Scripture tells us, and gives us many historical proofs that man can deceive himself" (I, 4, 37). In the next sermon (p. 53), Scripture is referred to as the conventional "holy writ," and in the sermon after that (I, 6, 72), in discussing the parable of the rich Pharisee and poor Publican, Sterne says that "our blessed SAVIOUR left us their real character upon record." In the sermon on "Time and Chance" (II, 8, 93), Sterne says, regarding Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes, ch. 9, v. 11, "the race is not to the swift," that "the authority of the observation is strong beyond doubt." And in the sermon on "Our Conversation in Heaven," the gospel is "God's word."

Revelation as manifested in Scripture is therefore acceptable to Sterne. It is clearly observable that in the sermons, Sterne always concludes that if properly understood, Scripture is always right. But Sterne's point is always about "decent living," not Scripture, which serves him as a springboard to spiritual or ethical matters.

The sermons are not, properly speaking, discourses on ethics, if by "ethics" is understood a systematized philosophy of moral behavior. But they are concerned with "decent living," that is, with the need for sincerity and charity as the twin bases for the spiritual welfare of the individual: though the Christian religion is reasonable in its interpretations of Scripture and in its moral precepts, these two
virtues transcend any boundaries of church or dogma.

That Christianity does offer advantages is a principle that Sterne insists upon. In "Advantages of Christianity to the World" (IV, 11, 53-64), he asserts that without it, the world would have no motives for fighting corruption. Religion does not act by force but by moral suasion. Its excellence of doctrine, precepts, and examples tends to make us virtuous and happy, and its "every page is an address to our hearts to win them to these purposes" (p. 63). But these purposes are not sectarian by nature, and one could scarcely argue for Sterne's dogmatism on the basis of this sermon. He overtly denies (p. 61) that religion and morality are independent of one another, but discusses Christianity more in terms of negation, what the world would be like without it:

full of unrighteousness, --fornication, --covetousness, --maliciousness, --full of murder, --envy--debate, --malignity, --whisperers, --backbiters, --haters of GOD, --proud, --boasters--inventors of evil things, --disobedient to parents, --without understanding, without natural affection, --implacable, --unmerciful! --GOD in heaven defend us from such a catalogue!

[p. 577].

Hammond quotes a Tillotson sermon (which Sterne paraphrases partially in VII, 14, 219-25):

Religion tends to make men peaceable [sic] one towards another. For it endeavours to plant all those qualities and dispositions in men which tend to peace and unity, and to fill men with a spirit of universal love and goodwill....

...if men would but live as religion requires they should do, the world would be a quiet habitation, a most lovely and desirable place in comparison to what it is now. 37
So the effects of religion are what are most desirable. The rites of Christianity are less important than to "live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, . . . the only way to entitle us to that blessedness spoken of in the Revelations" (V, 2, 99).

The famous sermon on "The Abuses of Conscience Considered" (IV, 12, 65-80), which appears in Tristram Shandy, posits the existence of a moral standard: man has a conscience because man can sin. But the argument is not doctrinaire: religion and morality, "calm reason, and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth" should aid and supplement conscience; "let Conscience determine the matter upon these reports, --and then, if they heart condemn thee not, . . . the rule will be infallible" (p. 74).

But Christianity is important as a reasonable moral code. Christianity and "the beauty and wisdom of providence" govern men "by such laws, as do most apparently tend to make us happy" (V, 1, 86). Sin is there, and its consequences are that it is disruptive socially.

Religion solves this:

> justice and honesty contribute very much towards all the faculties of the mind: I mean, that it clears up the understanding from that mist, which dark and crooked designs are apt to raise in it, --and that it keeps up a regularity in the affections, by suffering no lusts or by-ends to disorder them. . . . it makes a man so much the abler to discern, and so much the more cheerful, active, and diligent to mind his business [V, 1, 87].

In fact, in the same sermon, Sterne says there is

> a natural tendency in themselves, which the duties of
religion have to procure us riches, health, reputation, credit, and all those things, wherein our temporal happiness is thought to consist, --and this not only in promoting the well-being of particular persons, but of public communities and of mankind in general....

In his sermon on "Eternal Advantages of Religion," Sterne comments on the injunction in Ecclesiastes XII, 13, "Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." He interpolates that this counsel

is the whole duty of man; --that, to be serious in the matter of religion, and careful about our future state, is that which, after all our other experiments, will be found to be our chief happiness, --our greatest interest, --our greatest wisdom, --and that which most of all deserves our care and application.... Every consideration upon the life of man tends to engage us to this point, --to be in earnest in the concernment of religion; --to love and fear God; --to provide for our true interest, --and do ourselves the most effectual service, --by devoting ourselves to him, --and always thinking of him, --as he is the true and final happiness of a reasonable and an immortal spirit [VI, 12, 206].

What is noteworthy about this sermon, aside from the spiritual pragmatism suggested by the title, is that the terms of the title remain almost completely undefined. What the eternal advantages are is not clear, any more than what religion is--aside from providing "for our true interest" and "devoting ourselves" to God.

There is considerable irony in the hypothetical example Sterne uses in this sermon of the man, who, told that he will die and "be dealt with by a just God according to his actions... will[7] thank God he is no deist" and go on sinning (pp. 205-206). The irony lies in the
fact that the religion preached here is tantamount to deism, excepting the allusions to Scripture and the closing reference to "the chief end of... man's being, -- the eternal happiness and salvation of his soul. Which may God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ." Hammond's judgment that the last three volumes of sermons are filled with uninspired commonplaces is not refuted by this one.

If the highest kind of human activity is not necessarily to be found in the systematized, sacramental Christianity of the Church of England, it does lie in philanthropy of spirit and action, motivated by feelings of sincere benevolence. Sterne's prefatory remarks to the first two volumes of the sermons, quoted earlier, indicate that what follows will deal with this subject, and with few exceptions, the promise is kept. Nearly every sermon discusses in some way the reasonableness of human charity and/or the natural (as opposed to supernatural) rewards of that virtue, and it is not within the scope of this chapter to list and discuss each such reference. But there are a number of such sermons that typify this latitudinarian emphasis more than others, and an investigation of these provides an understanding of the thematic content of the sermons as a whole.

The title itself of "Philanthropy Recommended" (I, 3, 25-36) is indicative of the content, which is an extolling of the actions of the Good Samaritan (Luke, X, 30-37). In case there was any doubt about man's duties, Sterne says (p. 26) that

Our blessed SAVIOUR, to rectify any partial and pernicious mistake in this matter...
once this duty of the love of our neighbour upon
its true bottom of philanthropy and universal
kindness... by a direct appeal to human nature
in this parable. This "engaging account" (p. 27) is paraphrased by
Sterne in order to emphasize not only the virtue of the
Samaritan's action but the necessity of his concomitant feelings of
benevolence.

So our attention is immediately commanded, Sterne says, by
Christ's account of the traveler who falls among thieves who strip
and beat him, leaving him for dead. It is commanded because of "a
certain generosity and tenderness of nature which disposes us for com-
passion, abstracted from all considerations of self" (pp. 27-28). The
human mind "has no power to make resistance, but surrenders itself
to all the tender emotions of pity and deep concern" (p. 28).

The Samaritan's reflections on finding the abused traveler are
prototypical of Sterne's preoccupation with benevolent philanthropy:

for aught I know, he is some one of uncommon merit,
whose life is rendered still more precious, as the
lives and happiness of others may be involved in it:
perhaps at this instant that he lies here forsaken, in
all this misery, a whole virtuous family is joyfully
looking for his return, and affectionately counting
the hours of his delay. Oh! did they know what evil
hath befallen him--how they would fly to succour
him. --Let me then hasten to supply those tender
offices of binding up his wounds, and carrying him to
a place of safety--or if that assistance comes too
late, I shall comfort him at least in his last hour--
and if I can do nothing else, --I shall soften his mis-
fortunes by dropping a tear of pity over them
[pp. 33-34].

The tear of pity is important because man's likeness to God is not
manifest in man's physical parts but in "the kind and benevolent
affections of his nature" (I, 7, 82). And every individual man has the right to the kindness and respect of every other because of this mutual benevolence of nature. Man is a creature instinctively benevolent at all stages of his life, despite the hard lessons of experience. He is a social animal who by his very nature must at times act in the interests of others:

Let any man of common humanity, look back upon his own life as subjected to these strong claims, and recollect the influence they have had upon him. How oft the mere impulses of generosity and compassion have led him out of his way?--In how many acts of charity and kindness, his fellow-feeling for others has made him forget himself?--In neighbourly offices, how oft he has acted against all considerations of profit, convenience, nay sometimes even of justice itself?--Let him add to this account, how much in the progress of his life, has been given up even to the lesser obligations of civility and good manners?--What restraints they have laid him under? How large a portion of his time, --how much of his inclination and the plan of life he should most have wished, has from time to time been made a sacrifice, to his good nature and disinclination to give pain or disgust to others? [I, 7, 88-89].

On the purely secular level, the advantages of a spirit of benevolence are such that Sterne says all virtues in man increase or decrease according to the degree of its presence. He says, "Tell me therefore of a compassionate man, you represent to me a man of a thousand other good qualities--on whom I can depend--whom I may safely trust with my wife--my children, my fortune and reputation" (I, 3, 36). Ending this sermon as he does with this aphoristic inference from the Good Samaritan parable, Sterne plainly is at least as emphatic about the temporal advantages of religion, or more properly,
religious feelings, as he is about the eternal advantages.

His interpolation of the parable of the Prodigal Son (III, 5, 227-37) is even more sentimental; that is, quantitatively he interpolates even more than he does in the Good Samaritan sermon regarding the feelings of the personae. He says himself, "the interesting and pathetic passages... are left to be supplied by the heart" (p. 227). The purpose of the sermon is to warn against the dangers of imprudent inquiry and restlessness of mind and spirit, but there is at least an equal stress on the tender emotions of proper filial and parental love:

Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and distress, --strayed out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his absence with anguish, --cut off from all his tender offices, by his folly, --and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times [p. 229].

The state of brimming tender feelings is evidently a sine qua non for virtuous action; at least it is a concomitant. Part of the sermon (p. 278) reads like a scenario:

the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:--the father, --sad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic sentiment, 'that all would not go well with his child,'--approaching to embrace him, and bid him adieu.

And part borders on the purely fanciful:

The feasts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the east, --the costs of Asiatick rarities, --and of Asiatick cooks to dress them--the expences of singing men and singing women, --the flute the harp... the dress of the Persian courts, how magnificent! their slaves how numerous!--their chariots, their horses,... palaces,... furniture, what immense sums they had devoured!
... [How could he explain] that a whore of Babylon had swallowed his best pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead... [p. 231]. 38

At its most dynamic, the Christianity that Sterne preaches is warm and benevolent. In its more passive manifestation, it is polite and inoffensive: "when rightly explained and practised, [it] is all meekness and candour, and love and courtesy..." (IV, 10, 48).

Religious ritual, especially as in the practices of the Church of Rome, is in itself meaningless without these qualities. As Tillotson put it, "we should express our inward reverence and love to him [God] by external worship and adoration" (emphasis added). 39

Sterne's concern with overemphasis in the Church of Rome on ritual becomes an end in itself and extends to a general damning and making fun of Catholicism as such. Thus, "a crack'd brain'd order of Carthusian monks" may well prefer the House of Mourning to the House of Feasting (I, 2, 14), and the Pharisee of the New Testament parables becomes a prototype of the Roman Catholic with his obsession with externals:

the celebration of high mass, when set off to the best advantage with all its scenical decorations and finery, looks more like a theatrical performance, than that humble and solemn appeal which dust and ashes are offering up to the throne of GOD... [I, 6, 78].

Indeed, it is easier "for a zealous papist to cross himself and tell his beads, than for an humble protestant to subdue the lusts of anger, intemperance, cruelty and revenge" (I, 6, 78). What is noteworthy here is that the subject under discussion is no longer the importance
of religious ritual but the absurdity of Roman Catholic ritual: the rhetorical contrast between "zealous papist" and "humble protestant" is obvious.

The spiritual paucity of Roman Catholicism and the social-political dangers it entails are evidently one of Sterne's favorite topics. In comparing the Christianity of the Church of Rome to the Judaism of the Pharisees, he claims (I, 6, 79-80) that

'Tis to be feared the buffooneries of the Romish church bid fair to do it /religion/ the same ill office, to the disgrace and utter ruin of christianity wherever popery is established.... GOD... must be worshipped suitable to his nature, i.e., in spirit and in truth--and that the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer him is a virtuous and an upright mind--and however necessary it is, not to leave the ceremonial and positive parts of religion undone--yet not like the pharisee to rest there--and omit the weightier matters, but keep this in view perpetually... they are still but INSTRUMENTAL DUTIES, conducive to the great end of all religion--which is to purify our hearts--and conquer our passions--and in a word, to make us wiser and better men--better neighbors--better citizens--and better servants to GOD.

But Roman Catholicism "and her tyrants (or rather executioners)"
do not do this. It is, Sterne insists, "a false and bloody" religion whose Inquisition typifies its "tyrannic usurpation" of temporal prerogatives and exemplifies the political as well as spiritual dangers it represents (II, 10, 122). In the sermon on "The Abuses of Conscience Considered" (IV, 12, 65-80), the Roman Church is represented as one which systematically subordinates, or better, perverts, conscience to evil ends. The villain who "cheats, liyes, perjures, robs, murders"
is told by the priest simply:

That he must believe in the Pope;--go to mass; cross himself;--tell his beads;--be a good Catholic; and that this in all conscience was enough to carry him to heaven. What?--if he perjures?--Why,--he had a mental reservation in it. But if he is so wicked and abandoned a wretch as you represent him,--if he act, receive a wound itself?--Ay--But the man has carried it to confession, the wound digests there, , and will do well enough, --and in a short time be quite healed up by absolution /p. 72/.

Religion, that is, a system involving external ritual under the auspices of human authority, such as a pope, cannot be divorced from morality, that is, philanthropic concern for fellow-man. The Roman Church, Sterne says, has historically been the cause of "scenes of cruelty, murder, rapines, bloodshed---sanctioned by a religion not strictly governed by morality." (p. 78).

The examples used in the Conscience sermon to concretize the Inquisition are borrowed from Bentley and like other anti-Catholic passages in the Sermons seem ultimately concerned with the dangers of Catholicism as an authoritarian political force--dangers which lurk behind the ritual:

Behold religion with mercy and justice chain'd down under her feet, --there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal... Hark! --what a piteous groan! --See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock trial and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of religious cruelty has been able to invent. Behold this helpless victim...so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers. --Observe the last movement of that horrid engine, --What convulsions it has thrown him into. --Consider the nature of the posture in which he now
lies stretched. --What exquisite torture he endures by it. --'Tis all nature can bear [p. 797].

As religion and morality are inseparable in Sterne's discussions of them, hypocrisy and ambition are intertwined with Catholicism. The Roman Church relies upon tyranny and deceit to strengthen the pillar of ignorance that upholds it, making popery "a system... contrived to operate upon men's weaknesses and passions, --and thereby to pick their pockets, --and leave them in a fit condition for its arbitrary designs" (VI, 10, 180).

While Sterne never articulates in one sermon or passage a systematized credo or religious philosophy, it is clear that Catholic rituals serve him not only as an objective correlative for excessive ritualism; Catholic customs as the religious practices of a foreign political power also serve, as is clear in some of the preceding examples, as an objective correlative (or a pious mask) for a politically dangerous system. Wilbur Cross sees the intensity of Sterne's anti-Catholicism as a manifestation of strong Whig feelings occasioned by the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 (an intensity that Cross feels was abated by his later visits to France and Italy). The Pope is an alien and menacing figure (II, 14, 165-66) whose ambitions are reflected in the ruthlessness of the Inquisition (pictured in the Conscience sermon) and whose frightening power is reflected in the absurdity of religious ritual, something good in itself, but insisted on to an unreasonable degree to the detriment of personal spiritual integrity (VII, 16, 241-45).
If empty ritual is a thing to be avoided, so is the practice of relying upon private feelings of faith or of divine inspiration. Sterne's rejection of this sort of spiritual self-satisfaction, is seen in his attacks on enthusiasm, or methodism. At the very best, enthusiasm begs the question of whether one's good works bear any relation to his spiritual status. At the worst, it is a potential source of spiritual smugness and pride, akin to the stereotyped example Sterne gives of the smug Catholic telling his beads.

Indeed, in the sermon on "Self-Examination" (II, 14, 160-68), enthusiasm is balanced against Catholic authoritarianism as an opposite evil, though of equal degree. Papal or priestly tyranny, reflected in the doctrines of infallibility and auricular confession, is counter-balanced by the tyranny of purely personal authority, or the belief of Methodists in

that extraordinary impulse and intercourse with the Spirit of God which they pretend to, and whose operations (if you trust them) are so sensibly felt in their hearts and souls, as to render at once all other proofs of their works needless to themselves 

II, 14, 166.

The smugness of this personal conviction, the unarguable position in which the claimant places himself, and the spiritual questions of objective merit that it begs are its concomitant evils.

These evils are comprised by a single phrase: spiritual pride, "the worst of all prides" (IV, 10, 48) because it precludes any sentiment or disposition to help others. The Latitudinarian Ideal Christian is one "of a cool head and sound judgment" (IV, 10, 49) who would
never endeavor to distinguish which moments of his life reflect
divine assistance. That there were contemporary aberrations,
Sterne readily points out:

However backwards the world has been in for-
mer ages in the discovery of such points as GOD
never meant us to know, --we have been more
successful in our own days:--thousands can trace
out now the empressions of this divine intercourse
in themselves, from the first moment they re-
ceived it, and with such distinct intelligence of
it's [sic] progress and workings, as to require no
evidence of it's [sic] truth [IV, 10, 49].

These 18th-century enthusiasts, he adds, are "the most illiter-
ate mechanicks" who are capable of framing their absurdities
to the nonsense of the times, as to beget an opinion
in their followers, not only that they pray'd and
preach'd by inspiration, but that the most common
actions of their lives were set about in the spirit
of the LORD [IV, 10, 50].

This group includes quakers ("a harmless quiet people") as well as
methodists, since both are "collateral descendents from the same en-
thusiastic original; and their accounts and way of reasoning upon
their inward light and spiritual worship, are much the same" (IV, 10,
50). Enthusiasm is a "strange force" (VI, 10, 176) that perhaps has
its origins as much in physical disorder as mental--brought on by
excessive fasting and self-mortification until "the mechanical dis-
turbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty
head, should be mistook for workings of a different kind from what
they are" (IV, 10, 51).

Religion as well as morality is necessary, but too much super-
naturalism should be avoided. Any negative approach like
Jansenism among some Catholics or the Calvinism of some Methodists
should similarly be eschewed: there should be no "black shade" of
sackcloth and ashes cast upon religion (VI, 10, 176). The sermon on
"Penance" also equates this extreme of both Catholicism and en-
thusiasm: the tendency toward harsh negativism, an emphasis on
man's sinfulness rather than on his redemption. The tone used,
however, in discussing enthusiasm is one of ridicule with no sugges-
tion, as in the discussions of Romish dangers, of anything sinister.

In his sermon "On Enthusiasm" (VI, 11, 186–98), Sterne shows
the errors of that and other attitudes in contrast to "the safe and true
doctrine of our church" (p. 187). The errors, however, do not con-
cern specific doctrines, "safe and true" or otherwise. They concern
interpretations of Scripture and are twofold: a tendency to find no
meaning at all in Scripture or a tendency to find too much. Sterne's
acceptance here of the authority of Scripture is manifest. The coming
of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues after Christ's ascension are
miracles, and more important, they are necessary miracles, since
the apostles were not of themselves capable of the work assigned them:

Unless this want had been supplied, --the first ob-
stacle to their labours must have discouraged and put
an end to them for ever. As they had no language
but their own, without the gift of tongues they could
not have preached the gospel except in Judea; --and
as they had no authority of their own, --without the
supernatural one of signs and wonders, --they could
not vouch for the truth of it beyond the limits where
it was first transacted. --In this work, doubtless,
all their sufficiency and power of acting was immediately from GOD... [p. 188].

The distinction between such spectacular examples of divine intervention and the day-to-day manifestation of God's presence in our lives is not one merely of spectacle. The one is purely gift, "in which the endowed person contributed nothing" (p. 189), and in the other, we see "the calm co-operation of divine grace... with our own endeavours" (p. 189). This is the point of departure from "the true doctrine of our church," and the argument is a subtle one. People reduce Scripture to nothing who say that all human powers depend on God as man's Creator and that God does not intervene directly because man doesn't need him to (p. 190). This de-emphasizes the role of the human will in spiritual matters and makes man a passive moral agent, since he is naturally disposed to a virtuous life; it blurs the distinction between moral virtues that must be striven for—e.g., continency, patience, humility—and natural talents such as wit, fancy, and imagination (pp. 190-92). The rebuttal of this, Sterne says, is in history, which "is full of melancholy instances of what man is, when GOD leaves him to himself, --that he is even a thing of nought" (p. 192).

Concerning an over-reliance on God's assistance, Sterne insists (pp. 194-95) that Scripture tells us that God's graces "were not intended to destroy, but to co-operate with the endeavours of man." He gives us an eighteenth-century Anglican view of an enthusiast:
See him ostentatiously cloathed with the outward garb of sanctity, to attract the eyes of the vulgar. --See a cheerfull demeanour, the natural result of an easy and self-applauding heart, studiously avoided, as criminal. --See his countenance overspread with a melancholy gloom and despondence; --as if religion, which is evidently calculated to make us happy in this life as well as the next, was the parent of sullenness and discontent. --Hear him pouring forth his pharisaical ejaculations on his journey, or in the streets. --Hear him boasting of extra-ordinary communications with the GOD of all knowledge, and at the same time offending against the common rules of his native language, and the plainer dictates of common sense. --Hear him arrogantly thanking his GOD, that he is not as other men are; and, with more than papal uncharitableness, very liberally allotting the portion of the damned, to every christian whom he, partial judge, deems less perfect than himself--to every christian who is walking on in the paths of duty with sober vigilance, aspiring to perfection by progressive attainments, and seriously endeavouring, through a rational faith in his Redeemer, to make his calling and election sure [pp. 195-96].

He compares his contemporary enthusiasts with the fanatics of the seventeenth century who pleaded Scriptural authority for "the most impious absurdities that falsehood could advance" (p. 196). The pardons and indulgences of Roman Catholicism are no more to be doubted than the "visionary notions" of an enthusiast, the "suggestions of a frantic brain... blasphemously ascribed to the holy spirit of GOD" (p. 197). In fact, although their troubles proceed from a disorder "in the head rather than the heart" (p. 197), the extravagances of Methodists with their "legendary accounts of visions and revelations" (p. 197) may lead the English Church back to popery,

for they have nothing more to do than to say, that the
spirit which inspired them, has signified, that the pope is inspired as well as they, --and consequently is infallible. --After which I cannot see how they can possibly refrain going to mass, consistent with their own principles \([pp. 197-98]\).

The sermon closes with a prayer begging that "our holy religion" may never suffer from these "opposite errors" of spiritual coolness or "immoderate heat."

The **Sermons of Mr. Yorick**, as may be seen, reflect contemporary Anglican biases. They reflect as well eighteenth-century religious emphasis on tolerance, moderation, and benevolence: toleration of ecclesiastical and doctrinal differences (which, with the anti-Catholicism and anti-Methodism bring about the position of "liberal orthodoxy"); moderation in interpretation of Scripture, in daily habits, and in religious ritual; benevolence as the basis of virtuous activity (rewarded in the next life) and as the basis for reasonable, peaceful human conduct. God is the creator and benevolent protector of man; man is instinctively able to incorporate benevolence in his life. In all of this the **Sermons** preach the Latitudinarian ideals of social and spiritual behavior and motivation.\(^4^3\) The new trend, started in the Church of England in the seventeenth century by the Cambridge Platonists, toward tolerance and benevolence, mixed with tenderness,\(^4^4\) is in full flower in these sermons, reinforced with the acknowledgement of Scriptural authority, an emphasis on what is "reasonable," and the Latitudinarian assumption that all spiritual matters may be freely investigated and discussed.\(^4^5\)
The "High Church" attitudes, which Sterne's Latitudinarianism tended to ignore or circumvent, are summed up in the following passages from a tract by Bishop Edmund Gibson of London (1669-1748), with its emphasis on an authoritarian God, the sinful nature of man, and external manifestations of worship:

The two things, which above all others, help to preserve in Christians a Spirit of Religion, and a Reverence of Almighty God, are Daily Prayer, and the Frequent Receiving of the Holy Sacrament. No Person, who duly attends these two offices, can be unacquainted with God, and his Soul; and I may add, that whoever lives in the Neglect of them, lives in an habitual Forgetfulness of God, and his Duty; or at best, is Lukewarm and Indifferent in the Concerns of Religion.

Communion gives fresh Nourishment to the Soul, and is the Means of conveying into our Hearts new Supplies of spiritual strength; and surely, none who do in Earnest labour against Sin, and at the same Time feel their own Weakness and Corruption, can need much Persuasion to use the proper Means of obtaining Strength from God, to support and quicken them in their spiritual Warfare.

That which makes Men careless of their Ways and presumptuous in offending God, is the Want of considering how provoking and abominable a Thing, Sin is in his Sight; a due Sense of which would be a perpetual Restraint from it. Now, as often as we receive the Holy Sacrament, we have before us the utmost Expression of God's Wrath and Indignation against Sin, inasmuch as no Attonement could make Satisfaction for Sin, or reconcile the Sinner to him, but the Death of his own Son, which we are commemorating. The Destruction of the old World by the Flood, and the raining of Fire and Brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, were dreadful Testimonies of his Displeasure against Sin. But... more terrible is this Expression of his Displeasure... that when Christ had undertaken our Deliverance from the Wrath of God, no less Attonement could satisfy the Divine Justice than those Agonies and Sufferings of his dearly beloved Son.... All
which, the Sacrament of his Body and Blood is
design'd to set before us in the most lively and
affecting Manner, and by that to imprint and re-
vive upon our Minds a just Sense of the Abhorrence
that God has of Sin, and the Suitable Dread that Man
ought to have of committing it. 46

Sterne, or "Mr. Yorick," 47 upheld the Established Church of
which he was not only a member but an ordained clergyman. Roman
Catholicism and Methodism were the "highest" and "lowest" corrup-
tions of that church, and in his sermons he eschews both as of equal
danger. The spiritual and moral ideals that he upholds, as well as
the dangers he decries, show his tendencies as a preacher to be
undeniably Latitudinarian. 48
NOTES

Chapter II


2 All biographical information about Sterne is from Cross's Life and Times of Laurence Sterne, unless otherwise noted.

3 In his Journal to Eliza, in an entry as late as August 3, 1767, less than a year before his death, Sterne mentions an offer he has had of a living in Surry while still retaining Coxwold and the prebendaryship of York. All references to the letters and to the Journal to Eliza will be from Letters of Laurence Sterne, ed. L. P. Curtis (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1935). This entry is on p. 386. Sterne was also active while traveling; he mentions preaching at the British Embassy in Paris in 1764. See pp. 212, 219-20.


5 Ibid., 48-50.

6 "This reply is remarkable," according to Curtis, Letters, p. 23, n. 4. Curtis claims it represents extraordinary zeal.

7 Ibid., 21-22.

8 Ibid., 217-18. Some notice should also be given to Sterne's evident concern for the young curates who helped with his parishes, especially during his absence. See two letters to Archbishop Drummond, one from Paris in 1762 (p. 164) and the other from Coxwold in 1764 (p. 229). Cf. S. L. Ollard, "Sterne as a Parish Priest," LTLS, May 25, 1933, p. 364, and June 1, 1933, p. 380.

9 Letters, 346, 380. The visits were during May and July, 1767.

10 Curtis, Politicks, 5-6.


13 Quoted in Curtis, _Politicks_, 36-37.

14 _A History of Yorkshire_, 242. Cross claims (p. 84) that local suspicions had Burton a Catholic, though it is doubtful that he was.

15 _Burton's British Liberty Endanger'd_, quoted in Curtis, _Politicks_, 18.

16 Published by his daughter Lydia in 1775, written in 1767. Quoted here from _Letters_, ed. Curtis, p. 4.

17 Itself based to a considerable degree, apparently, on anti-Catholic jollity of a noisy but not vicious sort. See Cross, 130-131.

18 See Archibald Shepperson, "Yorick as Ministering Angel," _VQR_, XXX (1954), 54-66. Shepperson publishes for the first time five of Sterne's letters from Toulouse which reveal his kindness to a fellow-Englishman whom Sterne cared for in his last illness.

19 _Letters_, 282-83.

20 Cf. _Tristram Shandy_ (IX, 6, 606-607).

21 Cf. his letter to the Bishop of Gloucester from Coxwold in 1760. In referring to Hall's attack on him in the _Royal Female Magazine_, Sterne claims that "God knows, too often such profligate wretches gain their end" (p. 115)

22 "The Sermon in _Tristram Shandy_," _ELH_, XXXI (1964), 414-15. Cash mentions the impossibility of fitting this moral ethic into an orthodox "school" (p. 395) as well as any lack of philosophical justification by Sterne for his belief in the powers of man's natural goodness (p. 415).


24 Quantitatively, there is some leaning toward the Latitudinarians in Sterne's borrowings, which though it proves little in itself, deserves to be mentioned.

25 See his chapter "In Extenuation," 74-89.

26 Background material for these men is from the DNB; Abbey and Overton, _The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century_ (London,

27 All references to The Sermons of Mr. Yorick will be to the Shakespeare Head Press edition, published in two volumes at Oxford, 1927. This quotation is from v. 1, pp. vii-viii.

28 Indeed, the last eighteen sermons, three volumes, were printed posthumously and are thought by Hammond, because of their lack of originality of content and polish of style, to be Sterne's earliest sermons. See Hammond, 17-18, ff.

29 The references to the Sermons henceforth will be first, to the original volume number, then to sermon number, and lastly to the page numbers.

30 II, 10, 117.

31 Hammond, 93.

32 Hoadly, The Measures of Submission to the Civil Magistrate Consider'd (London, James Knapton, 1710), 150.

33 Christ is elsewhere referred to as the Son of God. See VI, 10, 185. Whether such references proceed from conviction or pulpit oratorical convention, or both, cannot, I think, be proved. But Hammond's remark (p. 95n) that Sterne never mentions Christ's redemptive role is incorrect; there is a lack of emphasis but not of explicit mention.

34 See also the sermon on "St. Peter's Character" (V, 4, 110-23) for a similar description of Christ's life.


36 See Wilbur Cross, Life and Times of Laurence Sterne (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1929), 247.

37 Hammond, 155.

38 Ernest Dilworth, in The Unsentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne (Morningside Heights, N. Y., King's Crown Press, 1948) cautions against ingenuous acceptance of Sterne's sentimentalism in his novels, and such a caution seems justifiable here. Though it cannot of course be proved, I am inclined to disbelieve that such examples and interpolations come about purely spontaneously. Sterne
has a sense of what is rhetorically effective for a given audience. But he is, obviously, linking the religious and the sentimental in such sermons. The grotesquerie of the humor reinforces the reader's sense of Sterne's conscious detachment; it is at least open to debate whether the writing down of this philosophy proceeds "more from the heart than the head."

39 The Works of the Most Reverent Dr. John Tillotson (London, Goodwin, Tooke, and Pemberton, 1720), v. 1, 56. See also Louis Locke, Tillotson (Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1954), 79.

40 See Hammond, 105, et passim.

41 The sermon on "Penances" (VI, 10, 175-85) perhaps illustrates this by its emphasis on the miseries of papist countries, miseries imposed by the Church, though it was published in 1766, four years after Sterne had first visited the continent. See Cross, 88.

42 See John Laird, Philosophical Incursions into English Literature (Cambridge, University Press, 1946), 90-91.


45 See Norman Sykes, From Sheldon to Secker (Cambridge, University Press, 1959), 146-49.


47 Each volume is subtitled Sermons by Laurence Sterne, A. M., Prebendary of York, and Vicar of Sutton on the Forest, and of Stillington near York. There seems to be complete identification here between Sterne and Yorick.

48 Hammond, 10.
CHAPTER III

Language and Implied and Explicit Religious Attitudes in Tristram Shandy

The religious attitudes contained in Tristram Shandy are those endorsed in the Sermons of Mr. Yorick. Since Tristram Shandy is narrated in the first person, the life and opinions of its narrator are recounted in his own personal idiom, and while that idiom is couched in a unique, "shandean" style, it closely reflects the traditional religious values which underlie the benevolence of the novel's prevailing ethic. The purpose of this chapter will be to analyze the religious element in Tristram's and the other characters' idiom with a view to showing it as a cohesive factor in the Latitudinarianism evinced in the novel.

There is no implication here that Tristram's characteristic manner or style of expression is particularly religious, nor is there any pretension in this chapter of analyzing his speech patterns or idiomatic peculiarities in their entirety. Rather, the purpose is to examine what is demonstrably one kind of pattern, that is, recurrent expressions relevant to religion. While a claim that Tristram is about religion as such seems farfetched, the virtuosic nature of Tristram's/Sterne's approach to narration, and indeed to life, makes religion in some respects likely material for both the comedy and the implicitly endorsed ethic of this novel. Thus the many religious ex-
pressions and interjections--cliches, many of them--that Tristram
and the others use help to establish their orthodoxy, while broader
usage of religion, in the context of the narrative, provides ripe
comic material.

Like the general "creed" inferrable from the sermons, that
inherent in Tristram Shandy assumes belief in a God, both just and
merciful, and is oriented, at least in its vocabulary, to Protestant
Christianity. It assumes, too, the existence of man's soul as a
supernatural principle and an afterlife for that soul, to be determined
specifically according to individual merits. Thus it is traditional in
the broadest sense of English Protestantism, both in its idiom and in
the cosmos which it implicitly affirms. Keeping in mind James
Work's observation that "Sterne was intellectually, in the last
analysis, an amiable \[\text{philosophical}\] dilettante,"\(^2\) we shall examine
some of the religious expressions and idioms of Tristram Shandy.

The homunculus, Tristram tells us, has inherent rights since
he is "created by the same hand" as we, a proposition attested to by
the "minutest philosophers... (their souls being inversely as their
enquiries)" (I, 2, 5). The divine concept is later couched in senti-
mental rhetoric in talking of Yorick's death: the good parson "stands
accountable to a judge of whom he will have no cause to complain"
(I, 10, 23). The existence of a creator is assumed by Walter Shandy
who, Tristram says, fears that an accident during the time of his
wife's lying-in will "prove fatal to the monarchical system of
domestick government established in the first creation of things by God" (I, 18, 47).

Walter frequently, for reasons that seem to be more rhetorical than religious, makes reference to the God of creation. He says to Uncle Toby, upon Toby's interruptive remark about the prodigious armies in Flanders, "Brother Toby, I do believe thee to be as honest a man, and with as good and as upright a heart as ever God created..." (III, 6, 163). And Tristram refers to "the supreme Maker and first Designer of all things" (III, 39, 236), and to "the great author and bestower" of wit and judgment on himself (III, 20, 193). Such passing references to God in the novel, when they do specify divine powers, prerogatives, or attributes, make him either "author" (creator) or "bestower" (benefactor). Tristram says that reason is man's "precious gift of God" (III, 21, 203), and he calls upon "gracious heaven" to defend him from unpitying and insensitive men (III, 33, 220). God, says Tristram, is the "great Author" of sleep (IV, 15, 290), and Trim, calling upon God as bestower, hopes "in God" that the news of Bobby's death is not true (V, 7, 360). And Uncle Toby, who "feared God, and reverenced religion" (III, 41, 240), replies to his brother Walter, who has marveled at man's ability to withstand the "cross reckonings and sorrowful items" of life.

'Tis by the assistance of Almighty God... 'Tis not from our own strength, brother Shandy—a sentinel in a wooden centry-box, might as well pretend to
stand it out against a detachment of fifty men—we are upheld by the grace and the assistance of the best of Beings [IV, 7, 277-78].

This is as explicit and direct a theistic statement as there is in the novel, outside of Yorick's "Sermon on Conscience." As was stated earlier, it is farfetched to claim that Tristram is about religion, even though in his prefatory remarks to the Sermons of Mr. Yorick, Sterne refers to Tristram as "a moral work, more read than understood," and, as Work points out, this very likely refers to "his benevolent philosophy... which had wide Latitudinarian as well as philosophical sanction and which lay behind it [Tristram] and which he hoped to disseminate through it."

The religious idiom is generally used in Tristram Shandy with little apparent consciousness of religious connotations or associations. Perhaps nothing exemplifies this so much as Walter's well-known "Good G--! Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?" (I, 1, 5). Trim's "God bless your Honour" (II, 17, 138) to Uncle Toby is as unreflective if not as explosive as Walter's rhetorical question. Earlier in the chapter, Uncle Toby's response to Dr. Slop, who claims that whoever wrote the sermon would be flung by the Roman Church "into the Inquisition for his pains," is a quick and simple "God help him then" (II, 17, 124). The lack of reflection and obvious feelings inherent in all of these exclamations bears out Traugott's claim that Sterne is less concerned with Christianity than with a description of people pretending to
wisdom, and less with the latter than with making a "rhetorical and satirical demonstration of human passions."\(^5\)

Frequently, religiously oriented utterances come as remarks made in anger or excitement. Trim's reply to Yorick's tale of Tripet's and Gymnast's interminable military flourishes---"Good God! cried Trim, losing all patience, one home thrust of a bayonet is worth it all."\(^6\)--is one of many examples of this. As exclamatory and more comic is Uncle Toby's cry when Dr. Slop pulls forceps and syringe, intertangled, from his bag: "God God! are children brought into the world with a squirt?" (III, 15, 186).

In Volume VI, apropos of the Le Fever episode, Toby and Trim discuss soldiers' need to pray. A soldier, says Trim, "prays as often (of his own accord) as a parson;--and when he is fighting for his king, and for his own life, and for his honour too, he has the most reason to pray to God, of any one in the whole world" (VI, 7, 421). Trim reports that he told Le Fever's landlord

I believe, an' please your reverence, that when a soldier gets time to pray, --he prays as heartily as a parson, --though not with all his fuss and hypocrisy. --Thou shouldst not have said that, Trim, said my uncle Toby, --for God only knows who is a hypocrite, and who is not:--At the great and general review of us all, corporal, at the day of judgment, (and not till then)--it will be seen who has done their duties in this world, --and who has not; and we shall be advanced, Trim, accordingly. --I hope we shall, said Trim. --It is in the Scripture, said my uncle Toby; and I will shew it thee tomorrow.

This passage provides easy transition to a second element in the
creed, the notion of a soul that sets man apart as a distinct being, a life principle which leaves the body at death but does not itself die, passing after "the great and general review of us all" to a supernatural place of reward or punishment. One should point out here, however, that the tendency in the use of expressions dealing with the soul is to give little apparent regard to specific doctrine about the soul, but rather to refer to it either for rhetorical effect or completely unreflectively. There is no statement comparable, say, to Yorick's exclamation in Sentimental Journey that "I am positive I have a soul; nor can all the books with which materialists have pestered the world ever convince me to the contrary."7

Thus, Tristram refers to the local lady-midwife as a "poor soul" (I, 7, 12) and describes Uncle Toby's decision to build his back-yard fortifications as made "without consulting further with any soul living, --which, by the bye, I think is right, when you are pre-determined to take no one soul's advice" (II, 5, 93). Walter Shandy uses such expressions as "for the soul of me" (II, 12, 110) and "with all my soul" (V, 28, 387), and Uncle Toby, in recompensing Walter for the heirloom jack-boots, declares, "I'll pay you the ten pounds this moment with all my heart and soul" (III, 22, 205). Tristram uses the word similarly: "by my soul" (II, 2, 84), "for my soul" (III, 20, 199), and "I wish from my soul" (V, 1, 343).

In the above examples a clear distinction may be seen between two usages of the word soul. One refers, or rhetorically purports to
refer, to that element of man's nature that is spiritual: "by my soul" or "with all my soul." The other is a kind of synecdoche, the part used to express the whole: "poor soul" or "any soul living." In both cases the basis of the expression is that the soul is regarded as an essential part of a person's (or Man's) being.

Occasional references to the soul are made with some degree of apparent consciousness or reflection. As close as the novel comes to metaphysical speculation is the conversation between Trim and Uncle Toby about Negroes' souls:

A Negro has a soul? an' please your honour, said the Corporal (doubtingly).
I am not much versed, Corporal, quoth my uncle Toby, in things of that kind; but I suppose, God would not leave him without one, any more than thee or me--
--It would be putting one sadly over the head of another, quoth the Corporal.
It would so; said my uncle Toby IX, 6, 606.

Of course the existence of the soul is assumed by both men, so philosophically their speculation is not in any sense penetrating, nor does it pretend to profundity. Earlier in the story, Tristram uses the soul-body relationship as an analogy for the relationship between a man and his hobby-horse (I, 24, 77), indication, it would seem, of conscious consideration of the traditional concept of the soul. Walter Shandy's theory of wit is based upon the individual's soul, here in its role as the source of man's rational powers. He believes

That every man's wit must come from every man's own soul, --and no other body's.

Now, as it was plain to my father, that all souls
were by nature equal, --and that the great difference between the most acute and the most obtuse understanding, --was from no original sharpness or bluntness of one thinking substance above or below another, --but arose merely from the lucky or unlucky organization of the body, in that part where the soul principally took up her residence, --he had made it the subject of his enquiry to find out the identical place.

Now, from the best accounts he had been able to get of this matter, he was satisfied it could not be where Des Cartes had fixed it, upon the top of the pineal gland of the brain; which, as he philosophised, formed a cushion for her about the size of a marrow pea. ...my father had certainly fallen with that great philosopher plumb into the centre of the mistake, had it not been for my uncle Toby, who rescued him out of it, by a story...of a Walloon officer... who had one part of his brain shot away by a musket-ball, --and another part of it removed by a French surgeon; and, after all, recovered, and did his duty very well without it.

If death, said my father...is nothing but the separation of the soul from the body; --and if it is true that people can walk about and do their business without brains, --then certes the soul does not inhabit there. Q. E. D. (II, 19, 147-48).

Certainly the major and minor characters speak in the general religious tradition of the soul, even Susannah the servant girl--"Bless my soul!" (III, 13, 184). Tristram doesn't speculate to the degree that his father does, but he does consider the soul's operations. For instance, he claims that if a Momus glass had been installed in every human breast to let others see the workings of the heart,

nothing more would have been wanting, in order to have taken a man's character, but to have taken a chair and gone softly...and look'd in, --view'd the soul stark naked;--observ'd all her motions, --her machinations;--traced all her maggots from their first engendering to their crawling forth;--watched her loose in her frisks, her gambols, her
capricios... [I, 23, 74].

And later in the story (V, 7, 361) he claims that the eye is the sense that "has the quickest commerce with the soul, --gives a smarter stroke, and leaves something more inexpressible upon the fancy, than words can either convey--or sometimes get rid of."

The soul and the concept of immortality presuppose an afterlife. The word devil, for example, is actually associated both with life on earth and an afterlife. Thus Tristram refers to riders on hobby-horses "scampering it away like so many little party-color'd devils" (I, 8, 14), and he claims that when Yorick knew something that would have done himself credit, "the devil a soul could find it out" (I, 10, 22). Others besides Tristram make such references to the devil: Walter, for instance, thinks the name Nick "was the DEVIL" (I, 19, 54), and he tells the imperturbable Toby that he wishes "the whole science of fortification, with all its inventors, at the devil" (II, 12, 113).

A few, more explicit and reflective references to supernatural existence come up throughout Tristram. Angels and spirits are "superior classes of beings" (III, 40, 237). Yorick on his deathbed talks to Eugenius about the contingency of their meeting hereafter (I, 12, 30), and Tristram, more rhetorically than religiously, says that the Frenchwoman who curled her hair with scraps of his manuscript "had better have gone with it unfrizled, to the day of eternity" (VII, 38, 531). And earlier, for obviously comic purposes, Tristram
declaims to his readers, in reference to his discussion of noses,

for the love of God and their own souls, to guard
against the temptations and suggestions of the devil,
and suffer him by no art or wile to put any other
ideas into their minds, than what I put into my
definition [III, 31, 218].

Religion provides a useful foil for comedy, simply because of
the solemnity of its associations. And the many references, especi-
ally the reflective ones, to religious concepts help establish the
Shandy's as reliable moral agents—though of course many other
aspects of characterization, dealt with in the two subsequent chapters,
complete this portrait of them. For Walter, such idiom is useful as
well for his own personal rhetoric:

How far my father actually believed in the devil, will
be seen in the progress of this work [though it never
is]: 'tis enough to say here, as he could not have the
honour of it, in the literal sense of the doctrine—he
took up with the allegory of it.... Prejudice of edu-
cation, he would say, is the devil, --and the multi-
tudes of them which we suck in with our mother's
milk--are the devil and all [V, 16, 375].

Completing the tradition suggested by numerous expressions and
statements implying or expressing belief in a divine creator, the
human soul, and an afterlife with its attendant phenomena such as
devils, angels, hell, and heaven, are numerous references that es-
establish the tradition as Christian and Protestant. The two qualities
are of course fundamental to the underlying Latitudinarian creed of
the Sermons of Mr. Yorick; both are discernible in references to
Christianity in Tristram Shandy.
The Shandy household is a Christian one, at least professedly; Christianity is the basis or point of reference, or provides the framework of much of the thought of its members. Tristram says that his dedication is made "for no one Prince, Prelate, Pope, or Potentate, --Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount, or Baron of this, or any other Realm in Christendom" (I, 9, 15). And the Yorick post of jester, Tristram tells us, has been abolished not only from the Danish court, but from "every other court of the Christian world" (I, 11, 24).

And of course the Christian tradition is reflected in Walter's pre-occupation with Christian names that he finds so influential:

Your BILLY, Sir! --would you for the world, have called him JUDAS? --Would you, my dear Sir, he would say, laying his hand upon your breast, with the gentlest address, --and in that soft and irresistible piano of voice, which the nature of the argumentum ad hominem absolutely requires, --Would you, Sir, if a Jew of a godfather had proposed the name for your child, and offered you his purse along with it, would you have consented to such a desecration of him? --O my God! he would say, looking up, if I know your temper right, Sir, --you are incapable of it; --you would have trampled upon the offer; --you would have thrown the temptation at the tempter's head with abhorrence [I, 19, 51].

Debating the subject of which midwife to choose for Tristram's delivery, Walter argues with his wife, Tristram tells us, first "as a Christian" and, when done, again "as a philosopher" (II, 19, 146). Later, Tristram describes his father's extravagant affliction, upon hearing of his son's mashed nose, and the "unchristian manner he abandoned and surrender'd himself up to it" (III, 30, 217). A major
element in the story, of course, is Tristram's christening and the
concomitant misnaming "in opposition to my father's hypothesis, and
the wish of the whole family, God-fathers and God-mothers not
excepted" (II, 19, 154). And such expressions as Phutatorius's
"Zounds!" (IV, 27, 318), Trim's "Blood an' ounds" (V, 21, 380), and
Tristram's "'Sdeath!" (V, 15, 371, and VII, 2, 481), are based, of
course, on originally Christian religious meanings. Tristram's
treatment at the hands of the French bureaucracy is contrary not only
to the law of nature and to reason, but "'Tis contrary to the GOSPEL"
(VII, 35, 527).

The milieu suggested by the language, then, is basically
Christian. Mention should be made, however, of one of Sterne's, or
rather Tristram's, habits which, while it does not contradict the
preceding statement, in a way qualifies it. This habit is the occasion-
al invocation of non-Christian gods, sometimes mythological,
sometimes merely personified abstractions. The qualification is
merely this: since these invocations are apparently rhetorical, that
is, made for no other apparent reason than the effect they have at the
moment, the same could very possibly hold true for the Christian-
oriented expressions already noted. This merely repeats what was
said before; in addition to providing vocabulary for the expression of
religious ideas, religious language can provide rhetorical effect to
the expression of non-religious ideas. The same holds true, one can
reasonably conclude, whether the religion is Christian or otherwise.
Thus, we see the comic dedication of Tristram Shandy to the moon:

Bright Goddess,
If thou art not too busy with Candid \(5\text{sic}\) and Miss Cunegund's affairs, --take Tristram Shandy's under thy protection also \(I, 9, 77\).

We see as well such invocations as "Great Apollo!" (III, 12, 182), "Chaste stars!" (III, 20, 195), "O ye POWERS!" (III, 23, 207), "dear Goddess" (referring to Nature: IV, 17, 293), "Gracious powers!" (VI, 25, 452), and "Blessed Jupiter! and blessed every other heathen god and goddess!" (VII, 14, 495). And despite the priapic utopia foreseen in the latter passage, nothing conclusive can be inferred about a definitive religious attitude in the novel, other than that a pagan vocabulary better suits a priapic vision than does a Christian vocabulary.

Walter, despite his basic Christianity, is a devotee of astrology:

had I faith in astrology, brother, (which by the bye, my father had) I would have sworn some retrograde planet was hanging over this unfortunate house of mine, and turning every individual thing in it out of its place \(I, 23, 206\).

And later:

There has been certainly, continued my father, the duce and all to do in some part or other of the ecliptic, when this offspring of mine was formed. --That, you are a better judge of than I, replied Yorick. --Astrologies, quoth my father, know better than us both:--the trine and sextil aspects have jumped awry, --or the opposite of their ascendents have not hit it, as they should, --or the lords of the genitures (as they call them) have been at bo-peep --or something has been wrong above, or below with us. 10
Uncle Toby, as orthodox a spokesman as a non-orthodox position like Latitudinarianism can have, questions Walter who is in the midst of his dispute with Yorick about the kinds of love:

I know there were two RELIGIONS, replied Yorick, amongst the ancients—one—for the vulgar, and another for the learned; but I think ONE LOVE might have served both of them very well—

It could not; replied my father—and for the same reasons: for of these LOVES, according to Ficinus's comment upon Valesius, the one is rational—

—the other is natural—

the first ancient—without mother—where Venus had nothing to do: the second, begotten of Jupiter and Dione—

—Pray brother, quoth my uncle Toby, what has a man who believes in God to do with this? [VIII, 33, 58-7].

Walter does not reply and it appears that Toby again has the rhetorical advantage: Walter has the most to say, while Toby stands the chance of making most sense to the reader, who is closer, probably, to Toby's religious position to begin with.

The menace represented by Roman Catholicism very likely seemed more real than imagined to many Englishmen at the time of the Jacobite uprising of 1745, during which time Sterne worked actively for the loyalists. Wilbur Cross states in The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne that

Sterne's intense hatred of the Church of Rome, which carried him, with the rest of his party, to the verge of madness, was a phase of his early development that endured until he came to visit France and Italy and move freely among all classes in the two countries. Not till then was he aware that it was possible for Roman Catholics to be content and happy. In the meantime, his feelings against Rome naturally became less violent as his mind was drawn to other things. 11
Rather than the intense hatred, we see in the occasional references in *Tristram Shandy* to things Roman Catholic a conventional disdain, sometimes couched quite whimsically. The pronouncement, for instance, by the Doctors of the Sorbonne, with its absurd hair-splitting and accompanying indelicacy, is just such a reference. Tristram compliments the doctors and "hopes they all rested well the night after so tiresome a consultation" (I, 20, 62). Obadiah ties up the papist Dr. Slop's medical bag, making it a "mix'd case; for it was obstetrical--scrip-tical, squirtical, papistical" (III, 8, 166).

Uncle Toby's "Lillabullero" is an anti-Catholic nonsense song, Work tells us (p. 69, n. 10). And in the same vein as the Sorbonne pronouncement is the pompous and coldly deliberate Curse of Ernulphus, read by Dr. Slop who takes it quite seriously, despite Uncle Toby's protest that he would not "curse the devil himself with so much bitterness" (III, 11, 171-79).

Certainly the Slawkenbergius Tale about Diego's nose, while its theme and structure have nothing to do essentially with anti-Catholicism, manages to effect some satirical humor at the expense of Roman Catholics. The basis of the religious humor is twofold: the reaction of the vulgar to the stranger's nose, and the reaction of the learned. The centinel exclaims, "As I am a true catholic--except that it is six times as big--'tis a nose like my own" (IV, 247). Diego's vow of celibacy (p. 247) is of course a parody of piety, and so are the conventional "Catholic" responses of the various townsfolk. The
inn-keeper’s wife’s invocation (p. 251) of St. Radagunda—famous for the "pricks which enter’d her flesh," Work tells us—is a counterpart to Diego’s vow to St. Nicolas. The Abbess of Quedlingberg, with her concern about placket-holes (p. 253, ff.); the restlessness of the Third Order, nuns of Mount Calvary, Praemonstratenses, Clunienses, and Carthusians; and the cathedral scholars’ concern about "butter’d buns" are obviously butts of Sterne’s Catholic-baiting humor, as is the further scholarly debate about Luther’s damnation (pp. 254-66).

The Fragment on Whiskers (V. 1, 343-48) makes fun of Roman Catholicism in much the same way—not by making it the direct target of the tale’s humor, which is sexually suggestive, but by making the Catholics in the story accomplices to various indecencies. The queen’s Ave Maria (p. 345) prayed on the occasion merely makes her somewhat of a burlesque figure, like the Lady Carnavalette, "counting her beads with both hands, unsuspected under her farthingal" (p. 346). There is the same mixture here of professed piety and subliminal sexuality as in the Fair Beguine of Trim’s anecdote who rubs Trim’s wounded knee, thereby inflaming his passions, and who "would do a thousand times more for the love of Christ" (VIII, 22, 574).

While narrating his adventures in continental Europe, Tristram, as Cross mentions, does become exposed to a culture that is steeped in Catholicism and he becomes a fairly objective tourist in that he sees the sights without a great deal of bias in his commentary. There is some comedy, it is true, in the visit to the tomb of St. Maxima,
especially with the comic tension between Walter, Toby, and the monk who serves as a guide—even though Walter "hated a monk and the very smell of a monk worse than all the devils in hell" (VII, 27, 514). Tristram even determines to visit the college of the Jesuits, though he is thwarted in that, because "all the JESUITS had got the colic" (VII, 39, 532). In this European sequence, however, he tells the tale of the Abbess of Andouillet's and the novice Margaret, a somewhat bawdy parody of what can best be described as casuistic hairsplitting (VII, 21-25, 504-510), but there is nothing else in his European narration that can be construed as biased against the Roman Church.

The most obvious anti-Catholic element in the novel is Dr. Slop, a parody in both physique and personality of the most foolish and unlikeable kind of Catholic. He is

a little squat, uncourtey figure of a Doctor..., of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a serjeant in the horse-guards [II, 9, 104].

And in his first appearance in the story, he crosses himself while on his plunging horse, falls off, and lands "with the broadest part of him sunk about twelve inches deep in the mire." He is rescued by Obadiah in a burst of mud, never having been "so transubstantiated, since that affair came into fashion" (II, 9, 106). So it is obvious from the first that his status as a Papist gives Dr. Slop an extra dimension in Sterne's mind as a comic figure.
Slop, as was mentioned earlier, is a caricature of a Tory physician with whom Sterne had been in conflict during the turbulent 1740's at the time of the Jacobite Rebellion. He was Dr. John Burton, not likely a Roman Catholic, Cross tells us, nor even a Jacobite, but an extreme Tory who was suspected of being one or the other, if not both. Cross points out, in fairness to Sterne and his zealous uncle Jaques, that Burton "excited disgust among many others with whom he came into conflict, for he was obstinate, noisy, and meddlesome." Everyone knew, when *Tristram Shandy* was published, that Slop and Burton were the same.

However accurate the resemblance was intended to be, Slop is obviously a caricature, if not of an individual, of a type of unpleasant Catholic. He interrupts, "laughs immoderately," and likes puns (II, 12, 111), and unlike Yorick (see next chapter) he is impatient with, and intolerant of, the needs of horses (II, 14, 118). He is self-righteous and commits what may be supposed to be the cardinal Latitudinarian sin of judging and damning others, as proved by the Curse of Ernulphus, which he reads so willingly against Obadiah (III, 11, 171-79). His bad temper is attested to a number of times, often while defending his faith against some real or imagined attack, although his quarrel with Susannah (VI, 3, 412-13) proves that his temper extends to the secular world as well.

It is mostly during Trim's reading of the sermon, however, that Slop's unpleasant papistry is most evident. His assurance that the
writer of the sermon is a Protestant "by the snappish manner in which he takes up the Apostle" (II, 17, 124; all subsequent references to the sermon will indicate only the page number) is evidence both of his rigid authoritarianism and what a Protestant of Sterne's day (or any reasonable person, for that matter) would likely regard as an exaggerated obsession with hierarchy. We shall see in the next chapter how badly Dr. Slop fares with Uncle Toby in their interchange about the Inquisition (124), and in addition to this hierarchical "hobby-horse," he is, or is made to appear as, an ecclesiastical extremist.

Defending the number of Roman Catholic sacraments, he demands of the mildly surprised Uncle Toby:

Why, Sir, are there not seven cardinal virtues?--Seven mortal sins?--Seven golden candlesticks?--Seven heavens?--'Tis more than I know, replied my uncle Toby.--Are there not seven wonders of the world?--Seven days of the creation?--Seven planets?--Seven plagues?\[129\].

Slop's defense of the Inquisition (124, 137, 139) is certainly the act that most clearly labels him potentially hostile to English Latitudinarian Protestantism. His righteousness and hierarchical obsession make him appear perhaps more ridiculous than anything else, as when he claims that Catholic sermons "never introduce any character into them below a patriarch or a patriarch's wife, or a martyr or a saint" (141). But certainly the authoritarian structure of the Roman hierarchy, especially with its ceremonials and rubrics, would seem alien and less republican in spirit to an English Protestant
than even the hierarchy of the Church of England with its episcopal system.

And of course we must remember that Slop is outnumbered and/or outwitted in all of the situations he is in, whether rhetorical or dramatic. For instance, in his quarrel with Susannah, she gets in the last blow by emptying the dressing-pan on him (VI, 3, 413). Making the sign of the cross, he falls off his horse. Toby easily has the better of him in the matter of the Inquisition ("Pray is the Inquisition an antient building, or is it a modern one?" P. 124), and he is even moved by Trim to pity Trim's brother, a victim of the Inquisition (138). When Slop cries triumphantly, apropos of the discussion on love, that "'Tis Virginity which fills paradise," Walter replies "Well push'd nun!" VIII, 33, 588). And in the ensuing wager about the Widow Wadman's resistance to Toby, Dr. Slop asks Trim "jeeringly" where he got his knowledge of women:

> By falling in love with a popish clergy-woman; said Trim. 'Twas a Beguine, said my uncle Toby. Doctor Slop was too much in wrath to listen to the distinction; and my father taking that very crisis to fall in helter-skelter upon the whole order of Nuns and Beguines, a set of silly, fusty baggages--Slop could not stand it... the company broke up... [VIII, 34, 596].

So the religious milieu of Shandy Hall is Christian and Protestant. Tristram is, as Uncle Toby says, "the plain child of a Protestant gentleman" (IV, 29, 327) and he is christened according to that Protestant tradition. The chapter meeting certainly verifies that,
Despite the burlesque humor of the situation, notably the hot chestnut dropped by accident in Phutatorius's codpiece (IV, 27, 318 ff) and the obviously burlesque names like Phutatorius, Gastripheres, Somnolentus, Agelastes, and Kysarcius. 17 The burlesque is nearly as pointed, though not as sustained as that toward Dr. Slop and reflects the theme of anti-pomposity so evident throughout the novel rather than an anti-Anglicanism which isn't found elsewhere in Tristram. 18

Tristram and the other characters, we may conclude, are believers without being especially doctrinaire in their belief. They implicitly acknowledge a deity, the human soul, and a supernatural afterlife but without becoming particularly explicit about the theological or philosophical details of these concepts. They are Protestant, but not aggressively so, and for reasons that we can assume are political as well as religious, they are biased to a degree against Roman Catholicism. Also, Walter expresses a mild disdain of Methodism. Thus there is a peculiar combination of the traditional and the empirically modern, as affirmed by Tristram's repeated references to John Locke and his ideas, "the sagacious Locke" (I, 4, 9):

Pray, Sir, in all the reading which you have ever read, did you ever read such a book as Locke's Essay upon the Human Understanding?--Don't answer me rashly,--because many, I know, quote the book, who have not read it,--and many have read it who understand it not.--If either of these is your case, as I write to instruct, I will tell you in
three words what the book is. --It is a history. --
A history! of who? What? Where? When?
Don't hurry yourself. --It is a history-book, Sir,
(which may possibly recommend it to the world)
of what passes in a man's own mind; and if you
will say so much of the book, and no more, be-
lieve me, you will cut no contemptible figure in a
metaphysic circle [II, 2, 85].

Even Uncle Toby refers to the Lockean theory of the succession of
ideas (III, 18, 189), and Tristram quotes Locke's views on wit and
judgment (III, 20, 193). 19

This mixture is very much analogous to the mixture represented
by Latitudinarianism itself. This attitude, as we have seen, pre-
serves the nominal trappings of the traditional Church of England
while at the same time softening its dogma to a universal and some-
what sentimental benevolence. This is a result, at least partially,
of refusal to argue very vehemently for the traditional, and partially,
as Sykes points out, because of the expanded universe in which the
new scientific man, including Sterne, found himself in the eighteenth
century, a universe whose vastness and complexity made theological
polemic seem foolish. 20 As Arthur Cash points out,

Sterne had no neurotic fear of sin. He was free of
the Puritan's over-confident condemnation of others
and of the anguished self-doubt which drives the
Puritan frantically through life. He was trustful of
man's moral capacity and secure in an orderly
universe ruled by a just God of reason. Consequently,
Sterne glossed no faults, crusaded for no reforms. 21

The Shandy's' Protestant Christianity and their Latitudinarian sym-
pathies are, in John Traugott's terminology, part of the rhetoric of
Sterne's "argument." The Shandy family is in the mainstream of eighteenth-century British life and, as the following chapters hopefully will demonstrate, its members serve as reliable moral focal points for Sterne's comedy.
NOTES

Chapter III

1 See Ben Reid, "The Sad Hilarity of Sterne," VQR, XXXII (1956), 107-130, for a cogent analysis of Sterne's artistic and moral vision. Reid sees Sterne as possessing a comic view of life, in the most traditional and profound sense of that term. He compares Sterne as comedian to Shakespeare in his "dark" comedies. See also, A. D. McKillop, Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence, U. of Kansas Press, 1956) 183-219.

2 "Introduction" to Odyssey Press edition of Tristram Shandy (1940), lxvi. All quotations from Tristram Shandy will be from this edition, noted first by volume, then chapter, then page.

3 See previous chapter on the Sermons.

4 Work, lxvi.


6 V, 29, 389. Of course, impatience with ceremonials is thematic here as well--something as foolish as Phutatorius's discussion of Latin suffixes or Dr. Slop's preoccupation with things in sevens: sacraments, plagues, planets, and so forth.


8 Louis Locke, in his discussion of Archbishop Tillotson--Tillotson (Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1954)--claims that the concept of an afterlife is essential to Tillotson's creed, hence essential to the mainstream of eighteenth-century Latitudinarianism. The concept must, however, be substantiated by revelation. See p. 88.

9 Reflective, as I am using it in this chapter, means other than purely spontaneous, with at least some small degree of consciousness (apparent on the part of the speaker) of the sound, meaning, or effect of the word or expression used.

10 V, 28, 386. Work's note informs us that these are genuine astrological terms and parody a passage in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.


13 Sterne's convivial group, the "Demoniacs" seems to have enjoyed the same sort of humor at their gatherings in Skelton, according to Cross. See pp. 130-31. Religion apparently was an easy target for their humor, especially at the expense of Catholicism.

14 Cf. Yorick's eventual warm relationship with the Franciscan friar in Sentimental Journey and their exchange of snuff boxes as token of it. See Chapter V of the present work.

15 Cross, 84. Ernest Baker claims that Burton was both Papist and Jacobite, in his History of the English Novel (London, Witherby, 1930), IV, 247-48, but Cross's claim seems more reliable. In any case, Thomas Yoseloff seems correct in calling Dr. Slop "the bitterest portrait in Sterne's gallery." See A Fellow of Infinite Jest (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1945), 90.

16 Cross, 84-85.

17 See Work's notes, 193-94, for comments on these names.

18 Note too the mildly disparaging reference to Methodism, "Whitefield's disciples," in the Slawkenbergius Tale as Walter speculates on that author's mysterious inspiration (III, 38, 231).


21 "The Sermon in Tristram Shandy," ELH, XXXI (1964), 417. Cash argues that beneath Sterne's benevolence and optimism, and despite his interest in the complexities of human psychology, was an ethic basically conservative. He believed, says Cash, that sin is both conscious and controllable, a belief that led him to write about "the hobbies and foibles rooted in blameless emotion," rather than about great sins or sinners. See 400-402.

22 See Traugott, passim.
CHAPTER IV

The Characterization of Tristram Shandy

The most important element in Tristram Shandy is not so much what the characters say as the way they behave, and not even so much that as the kinds of characters they are. We have seen in the preceding chapter that there are religious positions in Tristram inherent in some of the language and attitudes of the personae. While it is not what we might call a didactic novel, Tristram Shandy does exemplify through its characters and their conflicts a moral code almost as definite and as non-doctrinal as that found in the Sermons of Mr. Yorick.

McKillop, in his critical and biographical material appended to the Harper edition of Tristram Shandy (New York, 1962), sees the novel reflecting the new, post-Enlightenment chaos of conflicting philosophical and moral values, and Sterne as a distinct forerunner of Joyce, Kafka, and other modern novelists. McKillop says that Sterne is caught somewhere between Renaissance humanism and eighteenth-century empiricism, with the former an inherited tradition and the latter an essential and dynamic part of his environment. We can consider the tensions that resulted in Latitudinarianism, discussed in Chapter I, an analogue to this conflict.

In another work, Professor McKillop embellishes this thesis,
pointing out that in *Tristram Shandy* "sentiment," as both a fact and a norm of human behavior is regarded as "inevitable and admirable, the glory of human nature, but at the same time ludicrous." Sentiment is an essential part of whatever ethic can be inferred from *Tristram Shandy*, and the ludicrousness to which it is prone is the basis of much of the novel's comedy.

All critics agree that sentiment plays a major part in *Tristram*, although it is not always clearly defined. Perhaps the best definition of this phenomenon is provided by Sterne himself in his sermon "Philanthropy Recommended" (I, 3, 27-28) as "a certain generosity and tenderness of nature which disposes us for compassion." This disposition to benevolence is endorsed in *Tristram Shandy* almost as strongly as in the sermons; it is considerably more important than, in Ernest Baker's words, a "toying with the emotions of sympathy, pity, thwarted affection, and melancholy."  

The toying is the work of what Charles Parish calls *Tristram* the "author" who is concerned with the impact of his story on the reader and as such it is distinguishable from the ethic of benevolence that is occasionally victim of the "toying." John Traugott, in fact, insists that Sterne, in *Tristram Shandy*, quite deliberately mocks "the very notions on which he founds his faith." His analysis of Sterne's preoccupation with his relationship to the reader is pertinent. For to be able to distinguish Sterne's religious values, we must constantly be aware of his comic purposes, which frequently lead him to
use those values to surprise and amuse us.

Of course, a person who has read Sterne's sermons is already aware of Sterne's use of surprise as a device for clarifying or calling attention to a religious principle. The tension created when a serious subject is treated with originality and vitality has useful rhetorical effects, namely demanding a re-evaluation of the principle or at least a closer examination of it. In the sermon on "The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning Described," for example, Sterne uses the technique of quoting Scripture and then pretending to disagree. He quotes Ecclesiastes VII, 2, 3: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting." His response is "That I deny." He denies the principle unless it applies to "a crack'dbrain'd order of Carthusian monks" *(Sermons, I, 2, 14).* Thus he creates a rhetorical tension—the sermon-writer rejecting Scripture. He then of course goes on to resolve the tension; he is only, after all, rejecting a misinterpretation of Scripture.

Dr. Slop is disturbed at the beginning of the Conscience sermon by Yorick's "snappish manner" of responding to St. Paul:

> Trust! trust we have a good conscience! Surely if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving upon the most indisputable evidence, it must be this very thing...[II, 17, 125].

And indeed Yorick apparently intends that the reader be at least surprised, if not offended, by this vitality. Having gained the reader's attention, he goes on to distinguish between reliable and
unreliable consciences and to explain how one's trust in conscience
must be qualified. The sermon on "Vindication of Human Nature"
also quotes St. Paul: "For none of us liveth to himself" and responds,
"There is not a sentence in scripture, which strikes a narrow soul
with greater astonishment" (Sermons, I, 7, 81). Surprise, which is
of course basic to comedy, is useful as a starting point for the clarifi-
ication (or demonstration) of religious principle; it commands
attention, punctures rigid attitudes, and provokes more thoughtful
consideration of the principles at stake. While the vitality of
Tristram Shandy is part of Sterne's comic technique, it helps to
demonstrate many of the moral principles established in the sermons.

In both his delineation of character in Tristram Shandy and in
the dramatic and rhetorical advantages that he allows his characters,
Sterne endorses a sentimental and philanthropic Latitudinarian ethic.
But his comedy is diverting. For instance, upon the death of
Le Fever, we see the two major elements of the novel: the sentiment
of the benevolent ethic and Tristram's suddenly and deliberately mak-
ing us aware of his comic presence--

--You shall go home directly, Le Fever, said my
uncle Toby, to my house, --and we'll send for a
doctor to see what's the matter, --and we'll have an
apothecary, --and the corporal shall be your nurse;
--and I'll be your servant, Le Fever.

There was a frankness in my uncle Toby, --
not the effect of familiarity, --but the cause of it, --
which let you at once into his soul, and shewed you
the goodness of his nature; to this, there was some-
thing in his looks, and voice, and manner, super-
added, which eternally beckoned to the unfortunate
to come and take shelter under him; so that before my uncle Toby had half finished the kind offers he was making to the father, had the son insensibly pressed up close to his knees, and had taken hold of the breast of his coat, and was pulling it towards him. --The blood and spirits of LeFever, which were waxing cold and slow within him, and were retreating to their last citadel, the heart, --rallied back, --the film forsook his eyes for a moment, --he looked up wishfully in my uncle Toby's face, --then cast a look upon his boy, --and that ligament, fine as it was, was never broken. --

Nature instantly ebb'd again, --the film returned to its place, --the pulse fluttered--stopp'd--went on--throb'd--stopp'd again--moved--stopp'd--shall I go on? --No. [VI, 10, 425].

To Ernest Baker it may have seemed a negligible distinction, but rather than "toying," this passage seems to be trying to enjoy the benefit of both elements, sentiment and authorial comedy.

J. M. Stedmond observes that in sentimental passages in Tristram Shandy, such as in the above-quoted death of LeFever,

Sterne [Tristram] pulls up short and thus reveals his consciousness of what is involved. In the same way, in the smutty passages [e.g., the story of the Abbess of Andouillets, Vol. VII, Ch. 21], and the anti-papist pieces, he is self-consciously adopting conventional attitudes. He is ironically aware of what he is doing.  

This consciousness, or self-consciousness, needs to be stressed for our purposes here simply because it is an element of Sterne's craft of fiction and not an anti-sentimental pose. And if, as Walter Shandy says (V, 32, 393), "Every thing in this world is big with jest, --and has wit in it, and instruction too," this does not necessarily diminish anything in this world, benevolence and sentiment included. That
human feelings, such as are obviously the target of an episode like LeFever's death, can be made fun of, corrupted, or carried to a logical extreme does not necessarily diminish their validity.

Ernest Nevin Dilworth, in The Unsentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne, argues for Sterne as anti-sentimentalist, a shallow but great author, and merely a master of words. And certainly when Tristram gets around to writing his "Preface," we see the narrator as the burlesque poseur of sensibility:

Bless us! -- what noble work we should make! -- how should I tickle it off! -- and what spirits should I find myself in, to be writing away for such readers! -- and you, --just heaven! --with what raptures would you sit and read, --but oh! --'tis too much, --I am sick, --I faint away deliciously at the thoughts of it! -- 'tis more than nature can bear! --lay hold of me, -- I am giddy, --I am stone blind, --I'm dying, --I am gone.--Help! Help! Help! Help! [III, 20, 194-95].

But once again, the mockery of giddy sentiment need not be mockery of sentiment.

Characterization is the basis of this argument, rather than plot, since the action of Tristram Shandy proceeds, generally speaking, from character. Of the personæ of the novel, four are of paramount importance in the analysis of ethic: Uncle Toby, Trim, Yorick, and Tristram himself. Others, such as Walter Shandy, will of course be mentioned, but these four, respectively, will receive the focus of our attention.

We begin with Uncle Toby because he, more than anyone else, serves as an objective correlative of the morality of benevolence.
(We shall not proceed a priori from this premise, of course; there is considerable textual evidence to substantiate this claim.) Besides, Uncle Toby is not only the central character in one of what Wayne Booth calls the two central story threads of the novel,\(^{10}\) but he is the Shandy whom Tristram tells us most about.

That Uncle Toby is depicted in some episodes, the death of LeFever, for example, that enable Sterne to prick sentimental bubbles cannot be denied. It is Toby who informs Walter (V, 3) of Bobby's death, and Tristram is quick to exploit the comedy inherent in the various and conflicting reactions of Walter, Toby, Susannah, Trim, and the other servants. But it is Tristram who does the exploiting, not Uncle Toby, who is morally (and perhaps intellectually) incapable of such comedy or such comic insight.

Uncle Toby maintains his benevolent sympathy, despite the narrator's jesting. Both Traugott and Dilworth\(^{11}\) see the fly episode (II, 12) as deliberately controlled mock-sentimental bombast:

\[\ldots\text{my uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly.}\]

--Go--says he, one day at dinner, to an over-grown one which had buzz'd about his nose, and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time, --and which, after infinite attempts, he had caught at last, as it flew by him; --I'll not hurt thee, says my uncle Toby, rising from his chair, and going across the room, with the fly in his hand; --I'll not hurt a hair of thy head: --Go, says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke, to let it escape; --go poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee? --This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.

I was but ten years old when this happened; but whether it was, that the action itself was more in
unison to my nerves at that age of pity...or in what degree, or by what secret magic, --a tone of voice and harmony of movement, attuned by mercy, might find a passage to my heart, I know not;--this I know, that the lesson of universal good-will then taught and imprinted by my uncle Toby, has never since been worn out of my mind:...I often think that I owe half of my philanthropy to that one accidental impression.

And indeed there is bombast and comedy, as both Traugott and Dilworth insist, in the notion of "retaliating" upon a fly, harming (or even finding) a hair on its head, addressing it as a "poor devil," admitting that the world is big enough for it and someone else, and a ten-year-old basing a lifetime's philosophy on such an incident. But there is no evidence here or anywhere else that Uncle Toby is conscious of any bombast; he is his benevolent and ingenuous self, always with the consciousness of the humane military officer--hence it is possible for the undercurrent of officiousness even in his most beneficent scenes.

It is important to note that if there is comedy in this episode, it is due at least in part to a disparity of consciousnesses: Sterne's (or Tristram's, whoever is arranging the comedy) and Uncle Toby's. The latter's consciousness in the scene extends only to the fly and his own feelings; there is no evidence that he himself has ulterior comic motives underlying his speech or action. Uncle Toby, therefore, remains a "moral force," exemplifying a humaneness which is, if somewhat muddleheaded, sympathetic and benevolent.

And no matter what comic interaction Uncle Toby may be
involved in, two things remain constant: he is unaware of the comedy, and he is on the side of philanthropy, benevolence, sympathy, and tolerance. He can be called a "man of feeling," if only because he is not a man of reflection or introspection. And Uncle Toby is continually in the role of benefactor of one kind or another. Even Tristram's very first reference to his uncle (I, 3) acknowledges indebtedness for the anecdote of Tristram's conceiving. And from there, Uncle Toby is advisor (I, 15, 40), confidant (I, 16, 43), companion and brother (I, 18, _et passim_), family loyalist (I, 21, 65), kindly employer (II, 5, 97, 98), forgiver of brothers and flies (II, 12), comforter of the sick (VI, 6-10), mourner of the dead (VI, 11), protector of youth (VI, 12), principled soldier (VI, 32), and ingenuous suitor (VIII and IX, _passim_).

He is as consistent as a personality as he is useful in a comic scene. In some episodes he plays both roles with almost absolute simultaneity. At the time of Tristram's birth (IV, 12, 284-85), for example, Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy engage on the staircase in a conversation about women in childbirth. Walter claims that from the very moment the mistress of the house is brought to bed, every female in it from my lady's gentlewoman down to the cinder-wench, becomes an inch taller for it; and give themselves more airs upon that single inch, than all their other inches put together.

_I think rather, replied my uncle Toby, that 'tis we who sink an inch lower, --If I meet but a woman with child--I do it. --'Tis a heavy tax upon that half of our fellow-creatures, brother Shandy, said my uncle Toby--'Tis a piteous burden upon 'em, continued he, shaking his head. --Yes, yes, 'tis a painful thing--said my father, shaking his head too--_
but certainly since shaking of heads came into fashion, never did two heads shake together, in concert, from two such different springs.

God bless 'em all--said my uncle Toby
Duce take and my father, each to himself.

What Traugott calls "the indubitable reality of social sympathy" is in Uncle Toby both real and indubitable.

His sympathy is cosmological as well. When Dr. Slop has finished cursing Obadiah with Ernulphus's curse, Uncle Toby declares

...my heart would not let me curse the devil himself with so much bitterness. --He is the father of curses, replied Dr. Slop. --So am not I, replied my uncle. --But he is cursed, and damn'd, to all eternity,--replied Dr. Slop.

I am sorry for it, quoth my uncle Toby.

The comic basis of this scene is the same as that of the stairway scene just discussed: a disparity of viewpoints. And, while only the reader is aware of the conflict in the stairway conversation and all are aware of it in the interchange with Dr. Slop, Uncle Toby's moral role is the same. Even the devil can win his sympathy.

In the Sermons, Sterne manifests a clear and consistent "credo"; in Tristram Shandy, Uncle Toby lives out that same credo, especially, from what we have noted, in its predilection for philanthropy. But he is a Latitudinarian in more than his good works and good intentions. For while doctrinal statements from Uncle Toby are rare, he professes enough on various occasions to exemplify himself as a loyal English Protestant of leanings recognizably Latitudinarian:

...there is a secret spring within us--which spring, said my uncle Toby, I take to be Religion. --Will that
set my child's nose on? cried my father, letting go his finger, and striking one hand against the other --It makes everything straight for us, answered my uncle Toby... [IV, 9, 278-79].

The episode of Trim's reading of Yorick's sermon is an extremely useful one in attempting to arrive at an understanding of the moral-religious elements of the story. Uncle Toby is present mostly as a listener, though his comments do help reveal his viewpoints, and Walter's and, especially, Dr. Slop's presence helps to create a minor drama that serves to bring to focus two divergent attitudes toward religion. The two are represented by Yorick (in his sermon) and the papist Dr. Slop. Uncle Toby's allegiances are clearly, though not explicitly, with the Latitudinarian Yorick.

Dr. Slop claims (II, 17, 124):

If, in our communion, Sir, a man was to insult an Apostle, --a saint, --or even the paring of a saint's nail, --he would have his eyes scratched out. --What, by the saint, quoth my uncle Toby. No, replied Dr. Slop, --he would have an old house over his head. Pray is the Inquisition an antient building, answered my uncle Toby, or is it a modern one?

This is as much sarcasm as Uncle Toby ever expresses and significantly, it is of an anti-papist bias that the Sermons of Mr. Yorick lead us to expect of Sterne. When Dr. Slop goes on to assert that if the sermon writer were a Catholic and were to continue addressing the Apostle with flippancy, he would be "flung into the Inquisition for his pains," to which Uncle Toby's response is "God help him then."

And a bit later in the same chapter, the matter of Roman
Catholic sacraments is brought up:

Pray how many have you in all, said my uncle Toby, --for I always forget? --Seven, answered Dr. Slop. --Humph! --said my uncle Toby; tho' not accented as a note of acquiescence, --but as an interjection of that particular species of surprize, when a man, in looking into a drawer, finds more of a thing than he expected. --Humph! replied my uncle Toby. Dr. Slop, who had an ear, understood my uncle Toby as well as if he had wrote a whole volume against the seven sacraments.

As a caricature of a bigoted Catholic, Dr. Slop is eminently successful, but he is also successful as a foil to Uncle Toby's guileless, bland tolerance and benevolence. He and Walter upstage Dr. Slop when Walter observes that Yorick's sermon does not insult St. Paul:

A great matter, if they had differed, replied my uncle Toby, --the best friends in the world may differ sometimes. --True, brother Toby, quoth my father, shaking hands with him, --we'll fill our pipes, brother....

Dogma and ecclesiastical righteousness are thus abandoned for the far more cozy and personally satisfying aura of Latitudinarian benevolence.

Graham Greene sees Uncle Toby as an exemplification of Sterne's egotism--Sterne, through his character, "preening himself at the tender insight of his imagination."\(^{13}\) It appears to be an impossible point to prove, since it requires deciphering an author's most hidden intentions or motivations. It is logical, however, to conclude that if Sterne did view Uncle Toby as the product of his own
tender insight, then Uncle Toby must represent an ideal of one kind or another. And it is as a Christian of the sort Sterne idealizes in his Sermons of Mr. Yorick that Uncle Toby emerges. He is a believer and a Christian, but a man unconcerned with ceremonies and ritual. He is philanthropic and as spontaneously so as he is consistent:

I know Trim said... that I never refused quarter in my life to any man who cried out for it;--but to a woman or child, continued Trim, before I would level my musket at them, I would lose my life a thousand times. --Here's a crown for thee, Trim, to drink with Obadiah to-night, quoth my uncle Toby, and I'll give Obadiah another too (II, 17, 137-38).

And his spontaneity is evident in his reaction to Walter's reaction to Bobby's death. It is a comic scene wherein Uncle Toby believes Walter to have suffered some sort of mental derangement from the bad news, when Walter is quoting from Cicero's letters. Uncle Toby expostulates, "May the Lord God of heaven and earth protect him and restore him" (V, 3, 355). It is the purely conventional sort of exhortation of the kind found in the Sermons, and it identifies him as the sort of conventional Christian apt to utter such a prayer.

Uncle Toby believes in a beneficent and tender-hearted God. It is a deity about whose being and attributes he never speaks "but with diffidence and hesitation" (VIII, 19, 567) and it is a God who is too compassionate to drown the inhabitants of Germany to give Bohemia a seacoast (ibid.). He is a God who would not give a soul to a white man and not to a Negro (IX, 6, 606). And Uncle Toby, in his God's image, loves mankind in his bumbling way, more than glory or
pleasure (IX, 8, 609-10).

A. E. Dyson finds Sterne's philosophy the opposite of Swift's misanthropy, and while such oversimplifications are generally of little help, it is easy to infer from the characterization of Uncle Toby that through him Sterne exemplifies an ethic clearly philanthropic. Dyson, in fact, uses Uncle Toby as the major evidence for this part of his argument. Tristram's uncle is the spokesman for the morally positive forces in the world, occasionally, as we have seen, in contrast to, and oblivious of, the attitudes of his immediate peers. Like Don Quixote, Uncle Toby rides his hobby-horse energetically and without concern about oncoming traffic.  

Trim should be discussed after Uncle Toby simply because he is the character closest (that is, most sympathetic) to Toby. Trim himself, to take up Baker's analogy, serves as a kind of Sancho, though to make the analogy more exact, he is actually a lesser Quixote, riding second in the saddle on the same hobby-horse as his employer.

Our picture of Trim is less thorough than the one of Uncle Toby, but as with the latter, Sterne manages by "some familiar strokes and faint designations" (I, 22, 73) to acquaint us with Trim and make him a consistent and unique personality. Like Uncle Toby, Trim is a military man, but basically philanthropic in his motivations. He is sentimental and, as with Uncle Toby, Sterne involves his character's sentiment at times with his own (Sterne's) comic
consciousness, with the result that the sentiment is in its effects
subordinated to comedy, although not negated or refuted by it. Like
Uncle Toby, Trim is Christian and Protestant, benevolent toward
individuals, and a spokesman for Latitudinarian ideals.

Traugott's judgment that the Shandys represent Sterne's
reductio ad absurdum of Locke's dependence on the reason as an
infallible means to knowledge seems most accurate as regards
Uncle Toby and Trim, and especially Trim. For Trim is concerned
not only with military symbolism but with histrionics for rhetorical
effect. This is emphasized in two passages: the reading of the
sermon (II, 17, 120-23) and his expostulation to Jonathan after
Bobby's death (V, 7, 361). While Trim has a personality and dimen-
sion apart from being a frustrated orator, Sterne's elaborate
description of his exact physical attitudes in these two episodes makes
us take special regard of Trim in his role of speaker-gesticulator.

But this role is quite apart from the ethical attitudes that his
histrionics try to reinforce. We are introduced to Trim in Volume II
(Ch. 5, 94-95) as Uncle Toby's "valet, groom, barber, cook, semp-
ster, and nurse" and it is here that Tristram cautions us about Trim's
volubility. But it is not until the reading of Yorick's sermon that
Trim's ethic, as well as his pompous speaking style, can be seen.
The ethic is immediately perceivable as a blend of sentiment and
vague Protestantism, based to a large degree on anti-Catholicism,
which is in turn based on his brother Tom's sad experiences with the
Inquisition:

I have a poor brother who has been fourteen years a captive in it. --I never heard one word of it before, said my uncle Toby, hastily:--How came he there, Trim?--O, Sir! the story will make your heart bleed, --as it has made mine a thousand times;--but it is too long to be told now;--your Honour shall hear it from first to last some day when I am working beside you in our fortifications;--but the short of the story is this:--That my brother Tom went over a servant to Lisbon, --and then married a Jew's widow, who kept a small shop, and sold sausages, which, some how or other, was the cause of his being taken in the middle of the night out of his bed, where he was lying with his wife and two small children, and carried directly to the Inquisition, where, God help him, continued Trim, fetching a sigh from the bottom of his heart, --the poor honest lad lies confined at this hour;--he was as honest a soul, added Trim, (pulling out his handkerchief) as ever blood warm'd.

--The tears trickled down Trim's cheeks faster than he could well wipe them away. --A dead silence in the room ensued for some minutes. --Certain proof of pity! \[Π,17,124-257.\]

His moral sentiments are based partially, but not entirely, on fraternal affection in the narrow sense of that term. For his sentiments, like Uncle Toby's, extend generically to all underdogs. He reads from the sermon:

'Another is sordid, unmerciful,' (here Trim waved his righthand) 'a strait-hearted, selfish wretch, incapable either of private friendship or public spirit. Take notice how he passes by the widow and orphan in their distress, and sees all the miseries incident to human life without a sigh or a prayer.' (And please your Honours, cried Trim, I think this a viler man than the other \[hypocrite\] \[Π,17,129\].

In the ethic of moral sentiment, it seems that for its proper manifestation, there must be some sort of objective correlative: a widow,
an orphan, a helpless prisoner, a dying soldier, and so forth. These
serve as both cause and recipient of sentimental benevolence, as
Trim's tears testify.

In the reading of the sermon, Sterne maintains a careful bal-
ance, and dichotomy, between the moral force of the sermon (includ-
ing Trim's moral reaction to it) and the comedy of Trim's histrionics.
That Trim's emotional reaction is comic, unintentionally so on his
part, is obvious; he believes (II, 17, 138, ff.) that the hypothetical
victim of the Inquisition is his brother:

    Oh! 'tis my brother, cried poor Trim in a most
    passionate exclamation, dropping the sermon upon
    the ground, and clapping his hands together—I fear
    'tis poor Tom. My father's and my uncle Toby's
    hearts yearn'd with sympathy for the poor fellow's
distress.

As an elocutionist, Trim fails, because he cannot distinguish between
fact and fiction. "I fear, an' please your Honours," he says, that
"all this is in Portugal, where my poor brother Tom is," and
Walter Shandy has to argue with him that "'tis not an historical
account, --'tis a description."

The comedy lies, once again, in the dichotomy of understanding
--Trim's and everyone else's, including Yorick the sermon writer's.
But morally, Trim is on everyone else's side, opposed to Dr. Slop.
The ethical positions are divided either for or against the Inquisition,
which as a political institution was clearly still part of the basis for
English Protestant distrust of Roman Catholicism in the eighteenth
century. Trim's side on the issue is obvious.

Apropos of his brother Tom, Trim and Uncle Toby engage in a later scene that comments only obliquely on the Inquisition but that identifies the sentimental benevolence of both of them. It comes as an aside in Trim's tale of his brother's courtship:

But alas! Tom! thou smilest no more, cried the Corporal, looking on one side of him upon the ground, as if he apostrophized him in his dungeon.

Poor fellow! said my uncle Toby, feelingly. He was an honest, light-hearted lad, an' please your honour, as ever blood warm'd--

--Then he resembled thee, Trim, said my uncle Toby, rapidly.

The corporal blushed down to his fingers ends--a tear of sentimental bashfulness--another of gratitude to my uncle Toby--and a tear of sorrow for his brother's misfortunes, started into his eye and ran sweetly down his cheek together; my uncle Toby's kindled as one lamp does at another; and taking hold of the breast of Trim's coat (which had been that of Le Fever's) as if to ease his lame leg, but in reality to gratify a finer feeling--he stood silent for a minute and a half; at the end of which he took his hand away, and the Corporal making a bow, went on with his story of his brother and the Jew's widow [IX, 5, 605].

As with the reading of the sermon, the death of Bobby provides Trim with an opportunity for elocution. He does not need Yorick, for he gives his own sermon this time. And while Yorick's basic thesis has to do with the forming of a clear and honest conscience--a problem of some complexities that Yorick helps to clarify with such appealing examples as the treatment of widows, orphans, and prisoners of the Inquisition--Trim's message is succinct and developed strictly by gesticulation. His thesis is that
while time is fleeting, death should not be feared; his gestures are
two: striking the floor with his stick to demonstrate the apparent
stability of life, and dropping his hat on the floor to demonstrate the
swiftness of death.

His little talk to the assembled servants is a series of very
ordinary observations on life and death, and generally the scene
serves only comic purposes: Bobby is dead and nearly everyone is
more concerned with his or her immediate needs or reactions—from
Susannah's desire for Mrs. Shandy's "green sattin night-gown" to
Walter's and Trim's rhetorical flourishes. But Trim is a mourner
in spirit, and his elocution notwithstanding, he serves on this
occasion as a moral force for the other servants. His first reaction
to the news (V, 7, 360) is sympathetic: "I lament for him from my
heart and soul, said Trim, fetching a sigh. --Poor creature! --poor
boy! poor gentleman!" Moreover, in speculating about the reactions
of the rest of the family to Bobby's death, he claims that

...I pity the captain the most of any one in the
family. . . . --Madam will get ease of heart in weeping, --and the Squire in talking about it, --but my
poor master will keep it all in silence to himself.
--I shall hear him sigh in his bed for a whole
month together, as he did for lieutenant Le Fever
[V, 10, 365].

Uncle Toby's reaction will be one of unbombastic sympathy. Trim
reveals his own powers of sympathy in being aware of Uncle Toby's.

In the discussion, alluded to earlier, about Negroes' souls,
Trim serves more as an interlocutor to Uncle Toby, who in this
episode is a moral spokesman. But in discussing Negroes in general, and in particular the Negro girl who plays some part in Trim's story about his brother, Trim makes the girl a focal point for his sentimental benevolence:

Why then, an' please your honour, is a black wench to be used worse than a white one /if they have souls/?

I can give no reason, said my uncle Toby.

-only, cried the Corporal, shaking his head, because she has no one to stand up for her--

---'Tis that very thing, Trim, quoth my uncle Toby, which recommends her to protection--and her brethren with her; 'tis the fortune of war which has put the whip into our hands now--where it may be hereafter, heaven knows!--but be it where it will, the brave, Trim! will not use it unkindly--

---God forbid, said the Corporal /IX, 6, 606/.

The young Negress, like widows and orphans and other such unfortunates, represents a convenient object for sentimental attention. In this and in the episode in the previous chapter, discussed earlier, wherein Uncle Toby and Trim exchange tears of affection and when Uncle Toby's cheek "kindled as one lamp does at another," we are reminded of Sterne's sermon on the Good Samaritan, who, upon beholding the wretched traveler, says to himself, "I shall soften his misfortunes by dropping a tear of pity over them."18

The death of Yorick provokes pity to the extent that a page of black ink is devoted formally to mourn him. This is, of course, another example of stretching to a ludicrous degree the expression of sentiments. But what is perhaps not as evident is Yorick's role in the ethic of Tristram Shandy, a twofold role actually, that enables
him to serve as both object and subject of Latitudinarian sentiment.

On his "lean, sorry, jack-ass of a horse, value of about one pound fifteen shillings" (I, 10, 18), and with his ingenuous humor, Yorick is clearly designed as an object of the reader's affection.

Tristram makes this explicit:

...he was a man unacknowledged and unpractised in the world, and was altogether as indiscreet and foolish on every other subject of discourse where policy is wont to impress restraint. Yorick had no impression but one, and that was what arose from the nature of the deed spoken of; which impression he would usually translate into plain English without any periphrasis, --and too oft without much distinction of either personage, time, or place;--so that when mention was made of a pitiful or an ungenerous proceeding, --he never gave himself a moment's time to reflect who was the Hero of the piece, --what his station, --or how far he had power to hurt him hereafter;--but if it was a dirty action, --without more ado, --The man was a dirty fellow, --and so on:--And as his comments had usually the ill fate to be terminated either in a bon mot, or to be enliven'd throughout with some drollery or humour of expression, it gave wings to Yorick's indiscretion. In a word, tho' he never sought, yet, at the same time, as he seldom shun'd occasions of saying what came uppermost, and without much ceremony;--he had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his wit and his humour, --his gibes and jests about him [I, 11, 26-27].

It is this quixotic moralism, uniquely good-natured, that prepares the reader for the pathos of Yorick's death, brought about by the vengeful hounding by his enemies. That the sentiment of the death scene is stopped short by the black page does not lessen the fact that there is sentiment; it merely curtails the sentimental effects and demonstrates that all human processes have their logical extremes.
Yorick's death scene is actually a model of sorts for the death of LeFever and serves as an objective correlative for the sentimental benevolent ethic. As Yorick speaks his last,

...Eugenius could perceive a stream of lambent fire lighted up for a moment in his eyes;--faint picture of those flashes of his spirit, which (as Shakespear said of his ancestor) were wont to set the table in a roar!

Eugenius was convinced from this, that the heart of his friend was broke; he squeež'd his hand, --and then walk'd softly out of the room, weeping as he walk'd. Yorick followed Eugenius with his eyes to the door, --he then closed them, --and never opened them more [I, 12, 31-32].

Even the action of the subject's eyes is paralleled in Le Fever's death, though in the later scene, anti-climax comes more abruptly.

But in Eugenius, as in Uncle Toby, the philanthropic spirit is there; Eugenius is more exactly the Good Samaritan, though, dropping tears of pity over the victim's misfortunes.

Yorick's most substantial role in the manifestation of the Latitudinarian ethic, however, is not so much that of object of pity as of Sterne's alter-ego, the preacher whose sermon is read aloud by Trim in the second volume.¹⁹ The sermon, like Yorick, has a twofold purpose: the reading of it serves as a situation bringing Walter, Uncle Toby, Trim, Dr. Slop, and a clear statement of the Latitudinarian position on conscience into dramatic conjunction and conflict; and the content of it is the most overt and extended moral statement in the novel, one liked "hugely" by Uncle Toby--the most reliable moral spokesman in the story--who wishes it were longer
As a sermon its basic premise is Protestant in emphasis: man has a conscience, and it should be the guide to his moral conduct, providing it be honest and thorough in its dictates. Yorick makes the point that a silent conscience is not an infallible sign that conduct is beyond reproach, and of course the dramatic tension inherent in the situation is activated by Dr. Slop's excessive insistence on a hierarchically executed moral code, irrespective of conscience. The bias of this episode is anti-papist, with an even balance between its two causes: Slop's attitude and the content of the sermon itself. The emphasis on the conscience of the individual and the political fear of Catholicism (with what are regarded as concomitant moral hypocrisies) make the sermon and the reading of it an exercise in the expression of Latitudinarian attitudes.

The sermon is explicitly anti-Catholic in its discussion of the Inquisition and the supposedly blithe consciences of its executors:

In how many kingdoms of the world has the crusading sword of this misguided saint-errant spared neither age, or merit, or sex, or condition?--and, as he fought under the banners of a religion which set him loose from justice and humanity, he shew'd none; mercilessly trampled upon both,--heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their distresses [II, 17, 137].

And the discussion of the details of the torture becomes almost an end in itself, describing in detail the scene and all of the agonies of the victim:

Behold Religion, with Mercy and Justice chained down
under her feet, --there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and instruments of torment. Hark! --hark! what a piteous groan!....

See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it... just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of cruelty has been able to invent.... Behold this helpless victim delivered up to his tormentors, --his body so wasted with sorrow and confinement.... you will see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.

Observe the last movement of that horrid engine!.... See what convulsions it has thrown him into! --Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretched--what exquisite tortures he endures by it.... 'Tis all nature can bear'!

--Good God! See how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, --willing to take its leave, --but not suffered to depart! --Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell! \[\text{III}, 17, 138-397.\]

This is Yorick's dramatic exposition of the evil fruits of the

Romish religion. Earlier in the sermon he explicitly unites his principal topic, conscience, with a reductio ad absurdum of the Roman Catholic sacraments and sacramentals, inveighing, finally, against the Roman Church's morally deceptive authoritarianism:

See the bare-faced villain, how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders. --Horrid! --But indeed much better was not to be expected, in the present case, --the poor man was in the dark! --his priest had got the keeping of his conscience; --and all he would let him know of it, was, That he must believe in the Pope; --go to Mass; --cross himself; --tell his beads; --be a good Catholic, and that this, in all Conscience, was enough to carry him to heaven. What; --if he perjures! --Why; --he had a mental reservation in it. --But if he is so wicked and abandoned a wretch as you represent him; --if he robs, --if he stabs, --will not conscience, on every such act, receive a wound itself? Aye, --but the man has carried it to confession; --the wound digests there, and will do well
enough, and in a short time be quite healed up by absolution. O Popery! what hast thou to answer for?--when, not content with the too many natural and fatal ways, thro' which the heart of man is every day thus treacherous to itself above all things;--thou hast wilfully set open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary traveller, too apt, God knows, to go astray of himself; and confidently speak peace to himself, when there is no peace [II, 17, 1317].

Significantly, the sins represented here are social ones: lying, robbery, cheating, murder. To Yorick, the Roman Church's greatest sin is that it deceives the individual into sinning complacently against other individuals.

This deceit is in total contrast to the benevolence stressed in the sermon as the ethical ideal for man to pursue. The lack of benevolent regard for others in matters of chastity, for instance, will bring dishonor upon the head of the seducer's victim and "involve a whole virtuous family in shame and sorrow for her sake" (II, 17, 128). The "viler man"--in Trim's words--"passes by the widow and orphan in their distresses, and sees all the miseries incident to human life without a sigh or a prayer" (II, 17, 129). The "eternal measures of right and wrong" (p. 135), clearly an absolutist concept of ethics,²⁰ are regarded by Yorick as the safeguard of the helpless, unlike Dr. Slop's absolutes regarding liturgy and hierarchy (pp. 129, 141, et passim).

R. S. Crane, in discussing the genealogy of Latitudinarian benevolence, sees Yorick as the spiritual heir of a tradition beginning about the time of the Cambridge Platonists and continuing into the
latter half of the eighteenth century. Crane quotes from the sermon of a Charles Brent who makes what seems to be the definitive assertion of the sentimental benevolence that Yorick later espouses:

There is...a most Divine and Heavenly Pleasure in doing Good; a Pleasure that is suited to the truest Movings of Humanity, that gratifies the purest of all our natural Inclinations, that Delights and Comforts even to the cherishing of our own Flesh, that runs along with our Affections and our Bowels so very sympathetically, that some good Men have indulged and epicuriz'd in it, till they have been tempted to call it downright Sensuality: And yet a Pleasure without the least Abatement or Allay.

The sermon on Conscience is included in the Sermons of Mr. Yorick, and Sterne's identification with Yorick in that publication is complete. But we must distinguish Sterne from Tristram. The character whose life and opinions constitute the essential structure of Tristram Shandy does indeed reflect to some degree, in that life and those opinions, much of the novel's author. But more important to our purposes is the fact that Tristram himself, for all his comic awareness of the logical extremes potential in everything, asserts the same Latitudinarian ethic.

In discussing Tristram, however, we should keep in mind that he is Sterne's creation and that Sterne is making the novel Tristram's creation. Or in other words, Tristram Shandy is a story about someone's story, or about someone's "life and opinions," to be exact. This is important because Tristram's ethic is worth analyzing only if the distinction is made, otherwise Tristram Shandy would be important not as a character but merely as a pseudonym for Sterne. He
obviously says what Sterne, as author, wants him to say, but it is Tristram as narrator who can observe, select, and emphasize whatever he chooses, and ignore, reject, and de-emphasize whatever he wishes to as well.

Thus it is important, in recalling what we have observed regarding the religious-ethical attitudes of Uncle Toby, Trim, and Yorick, that it is Tristram's narration that provides us our information. Here too the distinction between Sterne the author and Tristram the narrator is worth remembering: Sterne has obviously selected the kinds of characters he wants Tristram to discuss. But it is Tristram the narrator whom Sterne allows to color and emphasize these characters. So Tristram, the silent character and observer, when present during the Uncle Toby/fly episode (II, 12, 113-14), owes half of his philanthropy to that one scene. And he clearly favors the side of benevolent sentiment, for example, when he gives such evident dramatic and rhetorical advantage to Toby and Trim over Dr. Slop during the reading of the sermon. And it is Tristram who establishes Yorick, through the sermon and the sketch that extends from chapters ten through twelve of the first volume, as the benevolent, good-natured country parson—too considerate of his horse to make it wear a saddle designed for a better-bred one—who is eventually victim of those too hardhearted to appreciate his good humor.

Tristram's ecclesiastical affiliation is with the Church of
England, as indicated by his baptism and the subsequent Council of Divines (IV, 26-29, 316-31) who debate the validity of his baptismal name; according to Uncle Toby, Tristram is "the plain child of a Protestant gentleman" (IV, 29, 327). What can be said of his doctrinal inclinations is perhaps best reflected by his father's belief in the devil, when he describes his father's use of that word (V, 16, 374):

--How far my father actually believed in the devil, will be seen,...'tis enough to say here, as he could not have the honour of it, in the literal sense of the doctrine--he took up with the _allegory_ of it... _[emphasis added]_.

Of course Tristram's tendency toward the benevolent-sentimental ethic is more important than his doctrinal leanings, but it is important that, like the general Latitudinarian position, his is basically non-doctrinal.

The benevolent-sentimental aspect of this position is best seen in the incident of the ass, whose "patient endurance of sufferings, wrote so unaffectedly in his looks and carriage, _[and]_ which pleads so mightily for him" (VII, 32, 522) delays Tristram in his whirlwind tour of Lyons. The incident is complex in that there is comedy in the confrontation, as well as benevolence. Tristram admits, "My heart smites me, that there was more of pleasantry in the conceit, of seeing _how_ an ass would eat a macaroon--than of benevolence in giving him one, which presided in the act" (VII, 32, 524). That there is tension in this episode between comedy and benevolence does not negate the benevolence, which, Tristram tells us, presides in the act of
feeding the beast. In extending generosity to a dumb animal, and to a
jackass at that, Tristram manages to succeed at both motifs—-benevo-

lence and comedy. For, like Uncle Toby's sympathy toward Satan,
or toward the fly, the act of kindness to the jackass involves almost
as unexpected an object of charity as possible. The novelty of the
situation, which gives Tristram even more "pleasantry" than the
benevolence, provides comic incongruity, but the sympathetic senti-
ments are there nonetheless.

Tristram's affinity with the philanthropic position of Uncle Toby
is stated with apparent definitiveness (III, 34, 224) in his eulogy to his uncle:

...my heart stops me to pay to thee, my dear uncle Toby, once for all, the tribute I owe thy goodness.
--Here let me thrust my chair aside, and kneel
down upon the ground, whilst I am pouring forth the
warmest sentiments of love for thee, and veneration
for the excellency of thy character, that ever virtue
and nature kindled in a nephew's bosom. --Peace and
comfort rest for evermore upon thy head! --Thou
envied'st no man's comforts, --insulted'st no man's
opinions. --Thou blackened'st no man's character, --
devoured'st no man's bread: gently with thy faithful
Trim behind thee, didst thou amble round the little
circle of thy pleasures, jostling no creature in thy
way;--for each one's sorrows, thou hadst a tear, --
for each man's need, thou hadst a shilling.

But the affinity with Uncle Toby's--and for that matter, Yorick's--
Latitudinarianism extends beyond generous and sympathetic inclina-
tions to include a sometimes overt anti-Roman Catholic bias.

This bias is manifested clearly, though obliquely, in Tristram's
frequent gibes at, and satirizations of, casuistic reasoning. As a
transitional discussion during his trip to the continent, for instance,

Tristram says (VII, 14, 494-95):

...yet I hate to make mysteries of nothing;--'tis the
cold cautiousness of one of those little souls from
which Lessius\(^{25}\)...hath made his estimate, wherein
he setteth forth, That one Dutch mile, cubically
multiplied, will allow room enough, and to spare, for
eight hundred thousand millions, which he supposes
to be as great a number of souls (counting from the
fall of Adam) as can possibly be damn'd to the end of
the world.

From what he has made this second estimate--
unless from the parental goodness of God--I don't
know--I am much more at a loss what could be in
Franciscus Ribbena's\(^{26}\) head, who pretends that no
less a space than one of two hundred Italian miles
multiplied into itself, will be sufficient to hold the
like number--he certainly must have gone upon some
of the old Roman souls, of which he had read, with-
out reflecting how much, by a gradual and most
tabid decline, in a course of eighteen hundred years,
they must have unavoidably have shrunk, so as to
have come, when he wrote, almost to nothing.

In Lessius's time, who seems the cooler man,
they were as little as can be imagined--

We find them less now--

Tristram, in fact, projects the theory of shrinking souls, envision-
ing as a corollary of it, the demise of Christianity and a return to a
priapic paganism. It is a specific indictment of casuistry; if it is an
essential part of Christianity, then Christianity will reason itself to
death.

This idea is echoed in the first chapter of the last volume (pp.
599-600) when Mrs. Shandy says that it is her curiosity that prompts
her to peek at the pursuit of Uncle Toby's amours through a keyhole.

Walter Shandy responds, "Call it, my dear, by its right name, and
look through the keyhole as long as you will." Walter immediately regrets this bit of "subacid humour," and as he does, his wife taps his hand with her fingers. Tristram comments that "'twould have puzzled a casuist to say, whether, 'twas a tap of remonstrance, or a tap of confession."

As happens frequently in the novel, the theme, here anti-casuistry, is blended with a comic motif, this time with bawdy overtones. Tristram comments:

The mistake of my father, was in attacking my mother's motive, instead of the act itself: for certainly key-holes were made for other purposes; and considering the act, as an act which interfered with a true proposition, and denied a key-hole to be what it was--it became a violation of nature; and was so far, you see, criminal.

It is for this reason, an' please your Reverences, That key-holes are the occasion of more sin and wickedness, than all other holes in the world put together.

Perhaps a more vivid exemplification of Romish casuistry is found in the anecdote of the Abbess of Andouilletts (VII, 21-25, 504-510). The anecdote has no action like Walter's hand-holding to win the reader's sympathy, and hence the devious gentility of the two nuns is made all the more ludicrous. The shared syllabication of vulgarities is, in a peculiarly literal sense, casuistic adherence to the very letter of propriety.

The language and the moral positions taken by these characters indicates their orientation to established Christian beliefs and the traditional cosmological view of man as a physical-spiritual being who,
after his life on earth, goes or is sent, depending on his merits, to heaven or hell. Equally important, Sterne's own religious attitudes are implied through these characters and their activities—not so much his orthodoxy, although the Shandys are clearly members of the Church of England—as his sentimental benevolence, the hallmark of his Latitudinarian position. The philanthropic predilection, represented best by Uncle Toby, easily devastates its opposite, the surly anti-benevolence of Dr. Slop.

Despite comedy's subversive ability to turn the religious or sentimental into the ludicrous, neither sentiment nor benevolence (nor religion) are destroyed. The ultimate "victims" of Sterne's comedy are the reader and his thwarted expectations. There is no evidence that Sterne derogates philanthropic or religious inclinations, only their logical extremes.
NOTES

Chapter IV

1  P. 539.

2  Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence, U. of Kansas Press, 1956), 186.


5  "The Nature of Mr. Tristram Shandy, Author," BUSE, V (1961), 84-85. See also Wayne Booth's Rhetoric of Fiction, 221, ff., for a discussion of Tristram's self-consciousness as a major factor in the novel, the very sort of factor that likely led to Baker's charge of "toying."


7  All references to Tristram Shandy will be to the Odyssey Press edition, ed. James A. Work, 1940. The references will list volume, chapter, and, when pertinent, page numbers, in that order.

8  "Satire and Tristram Shandy," SEL, I (Summer, 1961), 56.

9  King's Crown Press, Morningside Heights, N. Y., 1948. Dilworth's book, according to Alan D. McKillop, is one "to be used with caution"; Harper ed. of Tristram Shandy, 542.

10 Rhetoric of Fiction, 231. The two "threads" are Tristram's conception, birth, naming, circumcision, and breeching, and Uncle Toby's courtship of the Widow Wadman. See also Tristram, IV, 32, 337.

12 Traugott, 9-10. Traugott adds that Uncle Toby's indomitable and unreflective sympathy makes him an anti-Lockean figure, since his strength proceeds not from adherence to reason but from "social sympathy." See 31-33.

13 Greene, 61. Greene, however, finds Sterne "more readable" than Fielding for his more graceful style and "infinite subtlety of tone." See pp. 62-63.

14 Dyson, 310-11.

15 Ernest Baker says that Uncle Toby is Sancho to the quixotic Walter. He is, surely, but it is hard to deny Uncle Toby's quixotic nature. See Baker, 256.

16 Ibid.

17 Traugott, 29-30.

18 See Chapter II of the present work.


21 "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'," ELH, I (1934), 229.

22 Ibid. The sermon, Crane tells us, was delivered in Bristol in 1704.


24 See Charles Parish, 84-85, for a reasoned analysis of Tristram's various "roles" in the novel.

25 Work's note tells us that Leonardus Lessius was a Jesuit theologian with whom Sterne had become acquainted by way of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. As a Jesuit, Lessius would have been an apt symbol to Sterne of inhuman or, at best, ludicrous logic.
According to Work, Ribbera was a Spaniard, also a Jesuit, and also known to Sterne through Burton.
CHAPTER V

Tristram Shandy as a Manifestation of Sterne's Religious Attitudes

We have analyzed what we may properly call the religious accidentals of Tristram Shandy. What remains is to discover whether or not that novel has an essential religious framework or whether the occasional references to religion and the religiously-associated remarks are merely made in passing, and even though Toby, Trim, Yorick, and Tristram are benevolent in their actions and are obviously favored by Sterne in that respect, we must still relate their activities to the Latitudinarian Anglicanism that Sterne endorses in The Sermons of Mr. Yorick.

Sterne's official religious affiliation, as we have seen, was orthodox. He was an ordained Anglican priest, remained an active one all his life, and as such was a spokesman for, and defender of, the Established Church. Furthermore, we can see in his sermons a seminal orthodoxy. He believed in God and in Christ as divine redeemer of man. He believed in divine grace as instrumental in the salvation of man's soul, which salvation is man's most important goal. And while he had nothing to say in his sermons about the English Church's sacramental system, there is evidence on record that as a priest he faithfully executed his duties pertaining to that system.¹
The basic elements of his orthodoxy are belief in God and the redemptive powers of Christ, the Anglican ecclesiastical structure, and the Ten Commandments. The latter element, however, needs some clarification. We must remember that while the sermons are fundamentally orthodox, they are not by any means doctrinaire or polemical in what they profess, nor are they rigid or negative in what they advocate. This, of course, is crucial to Sterne's Latitudinarianism, the tendency of which led him to focus in the sermons on love of man rather than fear of God or of God's laws. Generally when one or another sermon condemns a sin or enjoins against some kind of behavior, the grounds for doing so are that the sin or behavior is harmful to the interests of someone else or society as a whole. Sterne's religion, then, is not a "thou-shalt-not" orthodoxy. Rather, while it retains an orthodox basis, its emphasis is on, to use Sterne's word, philanthropy. The Ten Commandments are to be kept, but the ones whose violation is most injurious to man—murder, theft, cheating, adultery, and the like—are more grievous than those dealing with, say, idolatry or the preservation of the sabbath.

A corollary of Sterne's Anglicanism is the anti-Catholicism evident both in the sermons and *Tristram Shandy*. This is part of his religious attitude apparently for political reasons as well as spiritual, despite the broad tolerance which his point of view allows. He disdains Methodism, or "enthusiasm," as well (though not so vehemently as Catholicism) because of the extravagance of its extra-rational
emphasis. But a spirit of benevolence in situations that do not, by the letter of moral church law, demand it is the essential manifestation of Sterne's Latitudinarianism. If the sermons, as Sterne says in his preface to them, "turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it," philanthropy turns upon benevolence, which can be defined as the motivating spirit which urges man to philanthropic action, the most virtuous human activity, and which is recognizable by the warm emotions and feelings of sentiment which such activity quickens. In the sermons, there is frequently an objective correlative for sentiment in the form of a helpless orphan or widow who, because of his or her particular plight, is especially in need of benefaction and especially grateful for it.

But while benevolence is an essential part of Sterne's religion, its function in his novels needs to be analyzed closely. This is so because its religious basis in the novels is not always clear, due to the multiplicity of its roles. We have already seen, for example, that while benevolence is favored in Tristram Shandy, it is often used by Sterne for comic effects. We need, therefore, to relate benevolence and concomitant sentiment as systematically as we can to Sterne's religious principles. In many instances this can be done directly and clearly; in other instances we must work by analogy and parallels between religious principles and benevolence in the novels.

We must work occasionally by parallel only because Sterne forces us to do so. He does not, of course, provide each benevolent
or sentimental scene in his novels with a religious exegesis, even though such exegesis often may easily be supplied. There are, we might say, a number of frameworks of thought to be considered: the orthodox, the Latitudinarian, and (for want of a better term) the humanitarian. Or to change the metaphor, we may think of Sterne's Anglican orthodoxy as the nucleus of an atom, around which revolve, first, in the orbit closest to the nucleus, religious benevolence, and second, in the outer orbit, benevolence not overtly motivated by religious principle but clearly in a course that follows such benevolence.

Latitudinarian benevolence, based, as we can see in the sermons, on a few orthodox absolutes, then itself becomes a pattern for a general humanitarianism—sentimentality or warm benevolence are often the more accurate terms—in situations outside the pale of moral or church law. The pale within which these situations fall may be merely that of social tradition; the confrontation with the jackass in Volume VII of Tristram Shandy is such an instance. At any rate, the conflict, when comedy or surprise or some such dynamism is involved, is between absolutism in one sphere or another—e.g. people do not converse with jackasses—and personalism or what may loosely be called existentialism—e.g., a person may very well find that the demands of benevolence, combined with certain circumstances, make it desirable and pleasant to befriend a jackass.

Often, of course, Sterne's comedy deliberately subverts the
framework of "non-religious" benevolence by thwarting expectations of sentimentality or benevolence on the part of the reader, as we see with the death of LeFever. At other times, and this is equally important, we see the subversion, or at least the pretended subversion, of the directly moral or religious framework, as with such audacities as his sober discussion of the rights of the homunculus. Thus religion and the benevolence that naturally accrues to it and the sentiment that naturally accrues to both all play varied roles and demand careful analysis.

Throughout Tristram Shandy we can see a consistent and usually clear dichotomy between episodes directly involving Sterne's Anglican orthodoxy--episodes represented by the inner orbit around the orthodox nucleus--and those which only indirectly involve the principles espoused in the sermons--represented by the outer orbit. The former includes direct religious statements and what may be most accurately termed religious audacities. The latter includes episodes involving benevolence, deflated benevolence, and deflated expectations in general. Occasionally the two orbits cross, when religious and secular attitudes are involved in the same episode, as for instance in the death of Bobby Shandy.

Keeping the dichotomy in mind will enable us to see both the parallel between the so-called orbits and the dependency of the "outer" on the "inner" as a pattern of action. Thus we shall begin our analysis with an investigation of episodes involving religion or
religious comedy.

In Chapter IV of the present work, we have already referred to the absolutist concept of ethics in the "conscience" sermon in *Tristram Shandy*. The "eternal measures of right and wrong" (II, 17, 135) clearly indicate the orthodox Christianity which it was Sterne's duty as priest to uphold. These measures, however, exist, according to the sermon, as a protection for the vulnerable against the inhumanity of other men, rather than as abstractly conceived principles to be followed for the sake of following them. "Calm reason and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth" (II, 17, 132) must guide conscience, if man's obedience to the "eternal measures of right and wrong" is to be proper. And religion is "the strongest of all motives" (II, 17, 136)—since its principles are absolute—for human behavior.²

The sermon is the most overt expression of religious thought in *Tristram Shandy*. It comprises the two most essential principles which Sterne espouses in the sermons: the existence of God and a moral law which man must obey. Inherent in this latter principle, of course, is the concept of the immortality of the soul. We have seen already that the sermon also serves as a dramatic moral catalyst that quickly puts the Shandy household--with its Protestant, Anglican affiliations--into conflict with the Papist Dr. Slop.

Another episode, as rich in comic overtones as the reading of the sermon is in religious endorsement, is the Visitation dinner
gathered to debate the validity of Tristram's baptismal name. The scene in itself is steeped in Anglican tradition, and the Shandys' attendance clearly affirms the authority of that tradition. But the scene must be considered comic because its ends are clearly comic: Sterne exploits the pomposity of the scene, not the institution of Visitation gatherings, for its humor. Thus the episode is an example of Sterne's audacity within a religious framework and not a devastation of the very principles of that framework.

The episode, though, subverts extremes of religious argumentation and as such is part of the recurring theme of anti-casuistry mentioned in Chapter III of the present work. Walter Shandy "delighted in subtleties of this kind," we are told (IV, 29, 326), and he becomes, at least in spirit, party to the hairsplitting buffoonery.

Uncle Toby and Yorick become Sterne's spokesmen for common sense:

--Now, quoth Didius... had such a blunder about a christian-name happened before the reformation--(It happened the day before yesterday, quoth my uncle Toby to himself) and when baptism was administer'd in Latin--('Twas all in English, said my uncle)--many things might have coincided with it, and upon the authority of sundry decreed cases, to have pronounced the baptism null, with a power of giving the child a new name--Had a priest, for instance, which was no uncommon thing, through ignorance of the Latin tongue, baptized a child... in nomine patris & filia & spiritum sanctos,--the baptism was held null--I beg your pardon, replied Kysarcius,--in that case, as the mistake was only in the terminations, the baptism was valid--and to have rendered it null, the blunder of the priest should have fallen upon the first syllable of each noun....

....
Gastripheres, for example, continued Kysarcius, baptizes a child... in Gomine matris, &c. &c. instead of in Nomine patris, &c. Is this a baptism? No, say the ablest canonists; inasmuch as the radix of each word is hereby torn up, and the sense and meaning of them removed and changed quite to another object; for Gomine does not signify a name, nor matris a father—what do they signify? said my uncle Toby—Nothing at all—quoth Yorick—Ergo, such a baptism is null, said Kysarcius—In course, answered Yorick, in a tone two parts jest and one part earnest—[IV, 29, 326-27]

While the ratio of jest to seriousness cannot be plotted with such precision, this is a fair estimation. The representatives of the clergy, for instance, are surely a burlesque of ecclesiastical pomposity. Their names alone indicate this: Gastripheres (big belly), Somnolentius (sleepy one), Ogelastes (one who never laughs), and Phutatorius (lecher). Didius is apparently a satirical portrait of Dr. Francis Topham, the Yorkshire lawyer whom Sterne had already ridiculed in his Political Romance. "Kysarcius" speaks for itself. 3 So the Visitation as a kind of ecclesiastical court of appeals is neither questioned nor satirized; Sterne does, however, staff this court with pompous and foolish personnel who serve three major comic ends—humor for its own sake, the frustration of Walter's theory about names (which we shall discuss later), and the deflation of pomposity. There is no evidence that the Church, Church doctrines, or ecclesiastical procedures are anything more than an incidental target of the humor here.

An episode such as that of the hot chestnut falling in Phutatorius's
codpiece is an example of the overlapping of comic intentions. It is impossible to establish the "primary" purpose of such a scene, though a clear diversity of purpose is apparent. In and by itself, it is a comic scene in the most primitive sense; it is, in this respect, a practical joke played on a character, and it does not matter very much which character it happens to be, since it would be funny no matter who were involved. However, the comedy is heightened because it does involve Phutatorius; as a supposedly lecherous clergyman he seems peculiarly deserving of this stroke of fate. But what colors the scene, of course, and perhaps heightens the effect of its humor most of all is its indelicacy as an incident.

The chestnut episode may be considered a religious audacity in two respects: its humor as an incident subverts rigid moral sensibilities--such things are indecent and not to be discussed at all--and it involves a clergyman of Sterne's church. It borders as well on social indecorum, of course, and as such we may regard as at least part of the basis of its humor its shock value: the scene not only involves somebody's sudden surprise, as with a chair being pulled out from under him, but it involves his surprise in an intimate anatomical area. And the cure, which involves wrapping the affected part in a printed page fresh from the press (from his own book on concubinage), is peculiarly appropriate to the humor of the rest of the scene.

Comedy based upon the thwarting of rigid doctrine--or more
properly, rigid interpretation of doctrine—may reasonably be classified as "Latitudinarian" humor. That is, what Sterne accomplishes in a scene such as the chestnut episode is not the destruction of orthodox Anglican dogma, which here would by extension be the seventh commandment (according to the Protestant decalogue), but merely a playful expansion of activity within the general restrictions of that commandment. It is not until Sentimental Journey that we are able to see sentiment as the justifying force in matters of adultery and other stages of philandering. It is in this sense, then, that we regard the sexually playful episodes of Tristram Shandy as Latitudinarian: Sterne preserves the orthodoxy while at the same time creating friction of sorts between the bounds of orthodoxy and the action of his novel.

We must remember that "Latitudinarian" as it is used here signifies a quality that is different from what it signifies about the theological position defined in the first chapter of the present work, though the theological position provides the moral basis of the literary position. The Latitudinarianism of Bishops Tillotson and Hoadly, as we have seen, was a "liberal moralism" that emphasized reason and de-emphasized rigidity of theological dogma. At the same time it retained the essential orthodoxy of traditional Anglicanism. Sterne shows the same willingness, in his use of religious audacity, to operate freely but within morally circumscribed bounds. He creates comic scenes when his freedom conflicts at some point with
accepted orthodox limitations. Thus the theological Latitudinarians provide the basis for his literary Latitudinarianism.

The moral bounds remain, and in fact without them the force of the comedy would be lost. This dependence of one on the other—comedy on orthodoxy—is analogous to the relationship of Latitudinarianism to the Anglican principles of The Sermons of Mr. Yorick. Moderation and pursuit of the spirit of the law, even personalist interpretation of it, are meaningful only in the light of the law's existence.

There is more bawdy humor in Tristram Shandy than a casual reading, or even a careful reading without the benefit of an unannotated text, might indicate. But throughout the novel, Sterne's basic orthodoxy is preserved to the degree that the Seventh Commandment is upheld. Our analysis here is, of course, based upon "official" standards of preservation: there are no adulteries, no scandalizing. The evidence, however, points to more than a technical chastity, despite Sterne's obvious proclivity for sly sexual allusions. There is wit in Tristram Shandy and its effect is often based on a supposition of the reader's a priori convictions about the place of sexual topics in human conversation and human activity. But there is no attempt evident on Sterne's part to subvert the most essential Anglican principles regarding adultery, seduction, or anything related.

The novel begins, in fact, in the marriage bed, or at least in a discussion of the Shandy bed, initiating not only the progressive-
digressive narrative but the sex humor as well. Mrs. Shandy's question that exasperates Walter is as good an example as any that Sterne might have used to illustrate the comic potential of lawful matrimonial activity. But this domestic comedy is quickly replaced in the second chapter with the mock bombastic discussion of the rights of the spermatazóon. This too is designed both to startle and amuse, but in a different way than the situational humor of Mrs. Shandy's question.

The disgression about the homunculus involves the same sort of solemn humor as seen in the lengthy dissertation by the Doctors of the Sorbonne (I, 20): a gravely stated, deviously reasoned dwelling on the ludicrous that D. W. Jefferson classifies as "learned wit." As a reductio ad absurdum of Roman Catholic hairsplitting, the doctors' pronouncement is Anglican at least in its bias; the injunction to consult the local bishop before baptizing the infant in utero is a particularly clear example of foolish absolutism in operation.

But the absurdity of what Sterne evidently regarded as Romish authoritarianism is only part of the humor of the episode. Judging from later humor in the book, we may conclude that the sexual indelicacy of the subject here is also intended as an important facet of the humor. The free discussion, addressed to "Madam" (I, 20, 56-57), assumes a tone of insinuation with a concomitant shock value when it discusses not only interuterine injection but pre-coital baptism of homunculi, in Sterne's polite French, "par le moyen d'une petite
canule, and *sans faire aucun tort au père*" (I, 20, 62).

Presumably "Madam" will be shocked at the indelicacy of reference here, whether for reasons of religious scruples or social tastes. The two overlap, and it is impossible, and probably fruitless were it possible, to probe Sterne's motivation in this episode. We may argue with some foundation, however, that Madam's social discretion originates at least indirectly from religious scruples. Sterne as a clergyman was expected officially to endorse sexual discretion, despite his age's general tolerance of clerical misbehavior in this area, and if there were an orthodox position on speaking thus (especially in Madam's presence) it would have enjoined against such jests. While such flippancy may not encourage or lead directly to adultery, its tendency is to dissolve behavioral inhibitions if only on the level of conversation, including fictional conversation.

The homunculus argument and the Sorbonne dissertation represent Sterne's toying with a religious principle rather than breaking it, thwarting it, or refuting it. Such episodes put Sterne in the position of audacious shocker (of the presumably decorous Sir and Madam) within the framework of his Anglican orthodoxy. And aside from any religious or sectarian considerations, of course, the Sorbonne doctors are models of pomposity easily devastated by Tristram's suggestion about homunculean baptism with a petite canule. The deflation of pomposity is the outer orbit in the atomic metaphor, paralleling the directly Latitudinarian themes. In this sense, pomposity of manner is
parallel to spiritual pride, which Sterne condemns in such sermons as "Self-Examination" (Sermons, II, 14, 160-68).

The Slawkenbergius Tale which prefaces the fourth volume is the most extended example of sexual comedy in the novel. It is not, of course, the first such instance in the narrative; we have already seen the arguments about the rights of the homunculus and foetal baptism. And in addition there are such minor thrusts as the reference to Dr. Richard Mead, a London physician whose foibles Sterne satirizes by naming him "Dr. Kunastrokius" and the "Argumentum Tripodium," a species of rhetorical argumentation "which is never used but by the woman against the man" (I, 21, 71). But the Slawkenbergius Tale--itself prefaced by the discussion of noses begun in Volume III, Chapter 31--is a systematic exploitation of phallic imagery, involving both anti-Catholicism and themes of bawdry.

Sterne prepares us for the phallic symbolism of noses by Tristram's vehement protestation that no symbolic value shall be attached to them; he beseeches both male and female readers

for the love of God and their own souls, to guard against the temptations and suggestions of the devil, and suffer him by no art or wile to put any other ideas into their minds, than what I put into my definition. -- For by the word Nose, throughout all this long chapter of noses, and in every other part of my work, where the word Nose occurs, -- I declare, by that word I mean a Nose, and nothing more, or less /III, 31, 218/.

The subsequent discussion of noses in the Shandy family then goes on to reinforce the phallic suggestivity. The conversation between
Tristram's great grandparents about his great grandfather's nose makes it clear: "'Tis a full inch longer, madam, than my father's.—You must mean your uncle's, replied my grandmother" (III, 32, 219). And the scholars whom Walter Shandy consults about the subject are indicative of Sterne's purposes: Prignitz and Scroderus, as well as Hafen Slawkenbergius. 10

The difference between the sexual humor we have discussed up to this point and the Slawkenbergius tale is of degree and mode of humor. The tale is longer than the previous episodes and is more patently sexual in its themes. It is suggestive humor in contrast to the farce of Phutatorius and the chestnut. But its comic effect is the same: surprise, on the reader's part, at the sexual meaning behind the apparently innocuous content. It is a twofold surprise, actually: first that there is a secondary level of meaning at all, and second, that it is a sexually titillating meaning. That is the extent of the difference, however. The episode does nothing more subversive to Sterne's orthodoxy than amuse the reader who can discern the levels of meaning and shock the reader whose moral scruples are vulnerable to this kind of humor. In a very broad sense we may call such humor satiric in that the sensitive, scrupulous, or prudish, "Sir" or "Madam" whom Tristram addresses are made to feel some ridicule. Those on Tristram's side are not necessarily on the side of bawdy humor, but they are on the side of wide (latitudinarian) interpretation of what is "proper" entertainment. Thus, along with the ribaldry is a thrust at
those, mentioned by implication in Tristram's protestation (III, 31, 218), who would disapprove of ribaldry.

The most sympathetic reader, of course, supports not only Tristram's freedom of humor within the orthodox Anglican scope but the anti-Catholic humor as well. These two areas of sympathy are actually intertwined rather intricately. Thus, the townsfolk in the tale who are so awestricken by the stranger's nose are identified at the same time as Catholics; their being drawn into the phallic jest is simultaneous with their identification as papists. The innkeeper's wife swears by Saint Radagunda, an allusion itself having phallic overtones. And the tale mentions the canonical counsel gathered at Strasburg "to consider the case of butter'd buns" (IV, pp. 254-55), which, along with the Abbess of Quedlingberg's placket holes, provides a further involvement of Roman Catholicism with indecency. The counsel which gathers to discuss Martin Luther's damnation--on the basis of astrological signs--is evidence of papist foolishness, about as intellectually unrespectable as the arguments of the Sorbonne doctors.

The basic premiss of the bawdry in the Slawkenbergius episode, and in the other ribald episodes in Tristram Shandy for that matter, is that sexual activity is as potentially comic as any other kind. It is, in Walter Shandy's metaphor--itself sexual--"big with jest." Neither Anglican doctrines nor traditional principles of behavior suffer as a result of this comedy, whose victims are enemies of Latitudinarian
Anglicanism—prudishness and, on occasion, papistry—not moderation or Anglicanism itself.

The fragment upon whiskers (V, I, 343-48) is based upon the same sort of comedy as is the Slawkenbergius tale. Although it is a shorter digression, it employs the same sort of suggestive ribaldry and prevailing tone of anti-Catholicism as its predecessor.

Whiskers, like noses, have a symbolic sexual meaning in Sterne's fragment. The symbolism is not as clear, however, in the case of whiskers as it is with the obviously phallic noses. In the Tale of Slawkenbergius the reader embarks already having been prepared to find symbolic meaning; in the fragment on whiskers the symbolic meaning is more slowly manifested to the reader as it dawns upon the characters in the tale. The comedy at the expense of Catholicism is based mostly upon the involvement of the pious ladies with the indecent symbolic value of whiskers.

The indecency, of course, is part of the recurring theme of audacities within the moral-religious framework of Anglican orthodoxy. Three things contribute to the effect of the comedy: its indecorousness as a subject at all, the involvement of papists with the indecorum, and its relative subtlety—that is, the maintaining of the symbolism to keep the sexual referent submerged. The coyness of La Fosseuse prevents the other ladies from understanding what she means by "whiskers" and also causes them to supply their own meanings.
The point of the tale, of course, is that such coyness is the basis of indecency, since what the imagination supplies for what is not known is generally worse than the thing itself. We see the ladies desperately praying for guidance in the matter, the Lady Carnavallette--in a kind of submerged-erotic scene--"counting her beads with both hands, unsuspected under her farthingal" (V, 1, 346) and supplying every saint she prays to with whiskers. The point is reinforced when we are reminded that "Noses ran the same fate some centuries ago in most parts of Europe" (V, 1, 347). The fragment is thus clearly Latitudinarian in its intentions; not only is it a comic episode, combining ribaldry and burlesqued papistry, but is is based upon a moral precept of sorts which might be worded "Do not become so preoccupied with decency that you lead yourself to indecency." Or in Sterne's words, "the extrems of DELICACY" are the "beginnings of CONCUPISCENCE" (V, 1, 348).

Such a principle is concerned with the ultimate upholding of decency and so "Sir" or "Madam" cannot be offended at the momentary upsetting of their sensibilities by the sexual indecorum of the tale. In fact, the fragment indicates the central moral purpose of the religious audacity in Tristram Shandy: latitude within the framework of orthodox principles is needed if the spirit of the principles is to be maintained. And of course this, as we have seen, is the spirit of theological Latitudinarianism as expressed by men like Tillotson and Hoadly.
While, to the conservatively orthodox reader of the sort that Sterne parodies in his addresses to "Sir" and "Madam," this is perhaps a difficult principle to appreciate, Sterne offers a degree of mollification by including anti-papist comedy. We cannot of course speculate on Sterne's motives here, but we can perceive the effects of what he has written. The humor at the expense of Catholicism does reveal, at least in part, his Anglican position; the comedy in all of the major episodes in the novel that can be classified as religious audacities is Protestant comedy at the same time that it is audacious.

This anti-papist bias, echoing the sentiments of the "Conscience" sermon (II, 17, 137-40) and other of Sterne's sermons, may be seen, for example, in the anecdote of the Abbess of Andouillets (VII, 21-25). Strictly speaking, the anecdote is an illustration of the absurdity of papist casuistry, since the two nuns absolve themselves of individual indelicacy by each uttering only a syllable of the mild obscenities to the mule. But of course, there is an element exclusive of anti-Catholicism, namely obscenity, the effect of which is heightened by the involvement of Catholics, especially nuns, with it. But the essential principle remains that too-fine reasoning in moral matters can represent too easily an evasion of moral principles or at best can lead to the sort of foolishness in which the nuns become embroiled. The incidental obscenity that the companion nun utters merely adds to the general situational comedy of Catholic nuns forced into what is to them at least an indecorous situation: "O my finger! my finger! cried
the novice...why was I not content to put it here, or there, anywhere rather than be in this strait?" (VII, 23, 508).

We should emphasize here that anti-Catholicism provides extra dimension and mollification, or at least balance, for the indecency in the major incidents of religious audacity in Tristram Shandy. There are numerous jests made in passing which do not include the extra flavor of antipapistry. Among these are the reference to "Tickletoby" and his mare (III, 36, 226); Tristram's "circumcision" by the falling window sash (V, 17, 376); the "old hat cock'd" and the "cock'd old hat" (VIII, 10, 549); the reference to keyholes, "the occasions of more sin and wickedness, than all other holes in this world put together" (IX, 1, 600); and Yorick's concluding pun about the cock and bull story (IX, 33, 647). The specific religious audacities that do include anti-papistry are such major episodes as the defense of the homunculus, the chapter on the Doctors of the Sorbonne, the Slawkenbergius tale, the Visitation dinner, the fragment on whiskers, the Abbess of Andouillets, and Trim's tale of the Fair Beguine.14

This last episode (VIII, 20-22, 570-75) is situational comedy based on Trim's combined discomfiture and feelings of love and the Beguine's piety combined with the sensuality of her actions. Catholicism does not come in for ridicule until Dr. Slop inquires rudely (VIII, 34, 590) about Trim's knowledge of women and Toby informs him that Trim was once in love "with a papist clergy-woman." But if her
papistry is not ridiculed, her religious zeal, which increases at a
rate proportional to that of Trim's passion, provokes the comedy of
the situation. The rubbing of Trim's wounded leg becomes increas-
ingly fervent and while Trim's amorous feelings increase, she claims
"I would do a thousand times more for the love of Christ" (VIII, 22,
574).

The Beguine adventure, like the rest of the seven major epi-
isodes we have classified as religious audacities, depends upon
unexpected and indecorous sexual activity for its basic comic effec-
tiveness. This free play, if we may call it that, does not controvert
any of the basic elements of Sterne's orthodoxy. Rather, it comple-
ments Sterne's Latitudinarianism by subverting rigidity in the
application of orthodox principles, such as represented by the hypo-
thetical "Sir," "Madam," and "your Reverences" whom Sterne seems
interested in shocking at various times throughout the story. And
often, as we have indicated in our above analysis of the Whiskers
episode, Sterne explicitly points out that prudery very rapidly reaches
a point of diminishing moral returns.

The stretching of principle (moral or otherwise) for purposes
of comedy or for the illustration of a higher or equally important
principle or for both is fundamental to Tristram Shandy. And while
religious motivation does not directly govern every such instance--
comic surprise is often of paramount importance as in the case of
Phutatorius's chestnut--the morally-religiously audacious keeps the
stretching of principle continuous and constant. The frequent references throughout the novel to Uncle Toby's groin, especially in the eighth and ninth volumes, are one indication of this. Sterne, in fact, personalizes "Madam" in the character of the Widow Wadman, as in the scene wherein Uncle Toby promises her that she "shall see the very place" and "shall lay...[her] finger upon the place" where he received his wound. Mrs. Wadman's reasoning approximates what Sterne presumably supposed any normal woman's thought processes would be, stripped of prudish decorum:

L--d! I cannot look at it--
what would the world say if I look'd at it?
I should drop down, if I look'd at it--
I wish I could look at it--
There can be no sin in looking at it.
--I will look at it /IX, 20, 623/

There are, of course, incidents in the novel that rest on bases of humor other than hypothetical principles of discretion and decorum in sexual matters, but these often involve other principles of Sterne's Latitudinarian Anglicanism. Such incidents cannot, strictly speaking, be classified as "religious audacities," however, because they do not depend on shock value to any significant degree for their effectiveness. Rather, they involve a broader kind of comedy whose tendency is to uphold some orthodox principle directly instead of showing the implications of its logical extremes, as with the fragment on Whiskers, for example.

The Curse of Ernulphus, read by Dr. Slop against Obadiah (III, 11, 171-79) belongs in this category, which we may call "orthodox
comedy. "It is orthodox in that it involves a clear upholding of Sterne's religious principles unlike scenes wherein the element of surprise may on the surface appear to work against those principles, for instance, as with Tristram's comments about homunculean baptism. The mode of the curse scene is satirical without being ironic; that is, Sterne displays Slop's papist vices for ridicule, but the dramatics of the setting make Sterne's orthodox principles clear without masking any secondary intentions on his part. Sterne allows Dr. Slop to make a fool of himself, and he allows the Curse of Ernulphus to ridicule itself and anyone or any institution associated with it.

The deliberate and systematic curse is anti-Anglican in more than one respect. First, it is a pronouncement from the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and the medieval hierarchy at that. In this respect, its authoritarianism is contrary to the Protestant spirit of Sterne's Anglicanism, which concentrated (as the sermon on conscience indicates) on the forming of one's own conscience according to "calm reason and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth" (II, 17, 132) instead of the caprice of Romish authority. In another respect, it is surely contrary to Sterne's Latitudinarianism which preached, as we have seen, love and mercy rather than fear and justice. The God of this curse, who in the company of his angels and saints joins in damning Obadiah, is far removed from the "infin-

ity kind" protector and "Best of Beings" in the sermon on "The
House of Feasting and the House of Mourning" (Sermons, I, 2, 14).

Dr. Slop becomes in this scene an objective correlative for the evils of the Church of Rome; he is its living representative, preaching a burlesque of its gospel amid unsympathetic Anglicans. We have already examined the dramatic disadvantage to which he is put, especially by Uncle Toby, during and after the reading of the curse: Toby whistles his surprise, groans his empathy when Obadiah's groin is cursed, and claims that he, Toby, would not curse his dog so vehemently, or even Satan himself. It is a reversal of the roles played by these characters during the reading of Yorick's sermon, although their religious sympathies remain the same. In the earlier scene, the Anglican-Latitudinarian point of view is manifested and hence receives the focus of our attention; Slop then is the listener, who punctuates the reading with his derisive remarks.

Despite the shift of Dr. Slop from audience to limelight, however, the Anglican advantage is preserved. Slop is not only outnumbered by the Shandy circle, but he is allowed by Sterne to make nothing but the most ludicrous of statements, from his disapproval of Yorick's "snappish manner" of addressing St. Paul at the beginning of the sermon to the reading of the curse, which is detailed enough to include the victim's toenails. In every instance where attention is called to Slop, he is made to appear either foolish or reprehensible. Sterne succeeds in making him fail in both his positive and negative roles: as a Catholic he is arrogant and authoritarian; as a non-
Anglican, he causes Latitudinarian Anglicanism to seem reasonable and benevolent.

As an anti-benevolent force—having defended the Inquisition on one occasion and cursed Obadiah on another—Slop's disadvantage furthers not only the cause of religious latitude, that is, a spirit of tolerance, personal moral responsibility, and a sense of God's mercy, but it furthers the cause of non-religious latitude as well. To revert to our earlier metaphor, we find ourselves in the outer orbit around the orthodox nucleus. Dr. Slop's religious vices have their secular counterparts: he is personally arrogant and intolerant as well as religiously so. In this light we can see how the religious vice is a pattern for the personal vice or at least that the two are analogous.

Another episode that we may call orthodox comedy, although with some reservation, is the death of Bobby Shandy (V, 2-14, 348-70). The reservation is simply that there is "unorthodox" comedy in the episode as well as the upholding of orthodox principles. Since the "unorthodox" does not involve the degree of surprise that the sexually titillating episodes exploit, we shall not classify Bobby's death as a "religious audacity."

Whatever audacity the episode achieves is based on the irreverence with which death is treated. In terms of Sterne's Anglican orthodoxy, death is a serious transitional event, traditionally regarded with solemnity. Though it is so regarded by some characters in
this instance, there is still considerable comedy attendant upon
Bobby's dying, not in the act of his passing away but in the reactions
of the Shandy household.

Walter's response is perhaps the most surprising, since as
Bobby's father he might be expected to express more sentiment than
most, though we have certainly been made aware by now of his
eccentric nature. But his philosophizing, based at first on a series
of quotations from Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, 17 is arcane and
as such is unexpected. The comedy of this scene is complex in that
the seriousness of death is upheld by the interplay of reactions and
the structure of the scene. The reader expecting sentimentality is
thwarted by Walter's philosophizing and the selfish reactions of
Susannah, who hopes to be given Mrs. Shandy's non-mourning clothes;
Uncle Toby's genuine grief (which we can take as a standard for
mourning) is thwarted by Walter's ramblings; Trim's sorrow, also
genuine, is thwarted by his own pomposity. But after the confusion,
the scene ends dramatically with the focus on death: Walter's exit
and Mrs. Shandy still left uncertain as to what has happened. Toby
is left with Mrs. Shandy,

and taking my mother most kindly by the hand, with-
out saying another word, either good or bad, to her,
he led her out after my father, that he might finish
the ecclairs cissment himself \[\text{V, 14, 376}\].

Thus the traditional is upheld dramatically, as well as by ex-
plicit statement (that is, in Trim's speech to the servants, where,
however, his pomposity creates comic tension with his subject). At
the same time there is both comedy based upon the very seriousness of death and comedy based--like that of Dr. Slop's disadvantage--upon secular "principles." This comedy is the result of deflated benevolence on the part of the reader expecting a sentimental treatment of death and inadequate pomposity on the part of Walter. The "principles," if stated as such, would be that benevolence is a social virtue and pomposity a social vice. As a social virtue, benevolence (or sentiment) is analogous to religious sentiment, Sterne's prototype for which is the Good Samaritan who weeps for the wretch in need of succor. As a social vice, pomposity is analogous to religious pride, as exemplified by enthusiasts who are satisfied with purely personal spiritual insights.  

Tristram's personal encounter with Death, who knocks at his door at the beginning of Volume VII, prompts him to travel to the continent and also inspires comedy despite the traditional solemnity which death is supposed to inspire. Tristram disarms Death, who has caught him exchanging anti-Catholic ribaldry with Eugenius, and later refers to him as a "son of a whore" (VII, 1, 479-80). It is an apt title, Eugenius agrees, "for by sin, we are told, he enter'd the world." Tristram resolves to flee, and should Death follow him, Tristram says "I pray God he may break his neck," because he, Tristram, has "forty volumes to write, and forty thousand things to say and do, which nobody in the world will say and do for me..." (480). Thus this brief episode treats with irreverence man's ultimate
physical threat and, in terms of religious orthodoxy, his most serious spiritual transition.

The concept of vitality and dynamism in the face of death is partially of religious significance and partially of purely secular significance. From an orthodox point of view, the greatest fear prompted by death is lack of spiritual preparation; the greatest secular concerns, and for all intents and purposes we may consider them exactly parallel, are fear of the unknown and sorrow upon leaving the known. Sterne's comedy in these "death" episodes touches on both religious and secular aspects; Bobby's death provokes a discussion by Trim of the religious implications of death, and Tristram's encounter demonstrates the tenacity of vitality. As such we may categorize Tristram's brush with Death with those themes not directly religious but which parallel religious ones.

This latter category comprises many, if not the majority, of the incidents and episodes in Tristram Shandy. While they do not involve essentially religious subjects or themes, they are related to the religious and religiously associated episodes in that they too involve freedom, comedy, or surprise within the context of given principles. The principle, for instance, behind Tristram's bravado in the face of Death is that Death is a frightening phenomenon; Tristram's behavior qualifies that principle: death seems less menacing if you treat it as though it were not frightening at all.

As a religious virtue, benevolence, as we have seen, is the
motivating spirit behind acts of charity, the most important activity endorsed by Sterne's Anglican Latitudinarianism. As a social virtue, benevolence can be extended in its interpretation to include cheerfulness and joviality and a spirit of sympathy without any direct religious motivation (causing our investigation to focus now on the outer orbit around the orthodox nucleus). The first clear example of such benevolence in Tristram Shandy is the life of Yorick, which is offered as a kind of objective correlative for the "good life" in the secularly virtuous sense of that phrase.

Yorick, a descendant of the famous jester at Hamlet's father's court, is a man whose "gaite de coeur" makes him as guileless and naive as a "romping, unsuspicious girl of thirteen" (I, 11, 25-26). He is cheerful--"gravity [in non-grave contexts] was an errant scoundrel" (I, 11, 26)--and he is, in fact, possessed of all of the social virtues. He is virtuous in the religious sense of the term as well, and in fact, the line separating the kinds of virtue in him is thin. He is "unhackneyed and unpractised in the world" (I, 11, 26-27), leading to habits of "unwary pleasantries" (I, 12, 28) that catch up with him. His orthodoxy is evident in the principles stated or implied in the sermon; his Latitudinarian position may be seen in his combined benevolence and social ease. Socially (and with the strong implication of morally as well) he speaks his mind in any matter involving "a pitiful or an ungenerous proceeding" (I, 12, 28) that this frankness will be forgiven.
But his defense of pity and generosity is rewarded with bitter recrimination. Yorick is hounded to death by his enemies, making him, in a loose sense, a kind of Christ-figure, certainly a martyr in the cause of benevolence. It is significant that our sympathy for Yorick is evoked early in the story; we are told about his death before we hear the sermon or such pointed remarks as he makes at the Visitation dinner or in the last chapter of the story. Our knowledge of his benevolence, of course, puts the orthodoxy of his sermon in a kind of Latitudinarian perspective; we already know, when he is identified as the sermon-writer, how unpolemically his religious principles are executed. His life, or his mode of living, serves therefore as an exemplum in itself and as a sort of background testimonial to what we see subsequently of Yorick as a character. 21

We have touched upon the Uncle Toby-fly incident in Chapter IV of the present work. While it is clear from our brief investigation of this scene that Sterne, implicitly at least, endorses Uncle Toby's benevolence, we must examine Uncle Toby's disposition here in the larger context of Sterne's orthodox principles. The basic question is whether this benevolence can be considered religious or not—that is, does it proceed from or uphold one or another element of Sterne's Anglicanism?

Essentially it does not. Uncle Toby's benevolence in this episode is the sort whose effect is a kind of social harmony with no particular spiritual implications. To elevate tenderness shown a fly
to a deed of spiritual meritoriousness is not only to elevate the pathetic fallacy to no fallacy at all but to misunderstand the absolutes of Sterne's Anglicanism. The episode makes it evident that Sterne does none of these. It is clear, of course, that Sterne believed that the application of religious virtues led to temporal happiness, and thus the distinction between social and religious virtue is a hazy one. For instance, his sermon "Temporal Advantages of Religion" (Sermons, V, 2, 83-91) claims that pity, generosity, sympathy, temperance, meekness, justice, and honesty, if all practiced, bring about not only general harmony but specific individual advantages often of a tangible kind (as opposed to a purely interior satisfaction). Uncle Toby's kindness to the fly perhaps proceeds from his religious principles--he "reverenced religion" (III, 41, 240)--but his benevolence here is merely analogous to, or an extension of, the benevolence associated directly with those principles. In fact, the evidence, such as Toby's bombast, that Dilworth finds to support his claim of anti-sentimentality in this scene merely indicates that it is not sentimentality of a fundamentally religious sort but a manifestation of Uncle Toby's personal good nature.

It is, so to speak, "secular latitudinarianism." Tradition decrees that man need show no mercy to flies, since flies are obviously lesser creatures. Toby shows mercy to one, and Tristram owes "one half of my philanthropy to that one accidental impression" (II, 12, 114). But no orthodox religious principle is involved. Thus
we see again the secondary consequence of Sterne's Latitudinarianism, the primary involving religiously motivated benevolence and this, the secondary, involving benevolence merely analogous to the religious.

We see social virtue praised in Uncle Toby and his companion Trim on two occasions later in the novel. In the first of these (III, 34, 224) especially, their philanthropy is honored. Toby's philanthropy is singled out in particular; he is free from envy, individualness, calumny, and greed, and speaking positively, Tristram finds him gentle, humble, sympathetic, and generous. Trim is "faithful;" and in the later passage (VI, 25, 451-52) he is a man with a "warm Heart," a "faithful servant." It is difficult in either of these passages to see a clear distinction, in the appraisal of these men, between religious and non-religious benevolence. Basically, however, unless the motivation behind these virtues is discernible, we cannot reasonably infer motivation only from the effects of activity. Toby's and Trim's benevolence conduces to social harmony, and so it serves the same purpose that Sterne says religiously based virtue should serve, but this does not prove that they are one and the same. It is sufficient to our purpose here to observe not only the difficulty of distinguishing the kinds of benevolence when manifested in particular acts but the fact that, in terms of Sterne's Latitudinarianism, they serve the same purpose.

Like Uncle Toby's kindness to the fly, Tristram's benevolence toward the jackass cannot strictly be called philanthropy. It is, in
Tristram's vocabulary, a "bagatelle," and we have already seen that the novelty of the ass eating a macaroon is as significant to him as the benevolence which prompts the act (VII, 32, 522-24). But as we indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the episode does involve an expansion of a principle, in this case a "social," rather than "religious," one. Jackasses, like flies, are not traditional objects of benevolence. But benefaction towards them can cause a warm response on the part of the benefactor or whoever (including the reader) may be party to the act, and besides, it is more conducive to general social harmony for people to be kind in these situations than unkind or even indifferent.

The brief recollection Tristram has of Maria is perhaps more complex in its benevolence. This is not so entirely because of the difficulty of analyzing what kind of benevolence it is, but because there is comedy involved in the episode as well as benevolence. The description of his encounter with the girl is couched in idyllic pastoral terms: Maria, the virginal milkmaid, with her goat playing at her side, piping songs for her departed lover. She is an objective correlative not only for helplessness, but for innocence and Tristram's sense of the gratification with which benevolence is rewarded. In short, Maria is a sufferer whom Tristram believes it would be most pleasant to help, like the orphans of some of Mr. Yorick's sermons.

In the sense that Tristram attempts, briefly, to comfort the afflicted, we may consider this an example of vaguely religious
benevolence, but we must consider other factors as well. Tristram focuses on more than her affliction, for instance:

...she was in a thin white jacket with her hair, all but two tresses, drawn up into a silk net, with a few olive leaves twisted a little fantastically on one side—she was beautiful; and if ever I felt the full force of an honest heart-ache, it was the moment I saw her—[IX, 24, 630]

Her beauty and such pastoral details as the olive leaves in her hair are extra-religious elements in Tristram's motivation.

The comedy is important in this scene, too, because its tendency is to thwart the effect of the benevolence. The scene is reminiscent of Le Fever's death. Tristram describes how he sat next to her "betwixt her and her goat":

MARIA look'd wistfully for some time at me, and then at her goat—and then at me—and then at her goat again, and so on, alternately—
--Well, Maria, said I softly—What resemblance do you find?

His protested regret over his levity is neither convincing nor does it diminish the effect of the levity:

...I own my heart smote me, and that I so smarted at the very idea of it, that I swore I would set up for wisdom and utter grave sentences the rest of my days—and never—never attempt again to commit mirth with man, woman, or child, the longest day I had to live.

In fact, Tristram deliberately breaks the spell after he gets up "and with broken and irregular steps walk'd softly" to his waiting chaise by suddenly breaking off: "--What an excellent inn at Moulins!"

(IX, 24, 631). Thus we have benevolence, proffered ostensibly toward
almost the very prototype of helplessness; we have some degree of prurient, or at least non-benevolent interest in the girl; and we have comedy that deflates whatever effects the benevolence may have had on the reader who expected a sentimental scene. Sterne's Latitudinarian Anglicanism serves only as a point of departure here for his virtuosity which creates the idyllic picture, which in turn is a point of departure for his comedy.  

Deflated benevolence plays a part in Trim's remarks about his brother Tom, both throughout the reading of the sermon (II, 17) and later as he tells Uncle Toby the full tale of his brother (IX, 5-7). Trim's feelings are, of course, sincere; Sterne allows the deflating, or more properly, the subverting. Trim's reactions during the reading of the sermon are part of a complex network of comic relationships: between Yorick (the sermon-writer) and Trim; between Trim and the company; and in a sense, between Sterne and himself (embodied in Yorick, who as sermon-writer is Sterne's alter-ego). Trim's tears are prompted by the sermon's graphic description of the hypothetical victim of the Inquisition and his insistence, finally, that this victim is his brother Tom. His reaction is therefore an illustration of the logical extreme of sentiment of any kind; he is, in effect, so benevolent that as a moral force he is powerless, since he cannot distinguish fact from fiction.

Sterne includes himself in the humor here. While benevolent inclinations and Anglican orthodoxy are both endorsed in the sermon,
which all but Dr. Slop enjoy, Trim, the person most ignited by the
sermon's objective correlative for pathos (the prisoner of the Inqui-
sition), is inflamed beyond rational bounds. So Sterne's-Yorick's
objective correlative is either too effective or else illustrates an
inherent danger in such objective correlatives. In any case, the
benevolence endorsed by the sermon and that felt by Trim are sub-
verted, whether as religious inclinations toward benefaction of the
suffering or mere humanitarian leanings.

Trim's later account to Uncle Toby about his brother's mis-
fortunes completes the devastation of that history as any kind of
sentimental objective correlative itself. Tom's love for the Jewish
widow becomes associated in the reader's mind with the sausages
that she sells, and the story becomes Sterne's phallic jest:

There is nothing so awkward, as courting a
woman, an' please your honour, whilst she is mak-
ing sausages--So Tom began a discourse upon them;
first gravely, --"as they were made--with what
meats, herbs and spices"--Then a little gayly--as,
"With what skins--and if they never burst--Whether
the largest were not the best"--and so on--taking
care only as he went along, to season what he had
to say upon sausages, rather under, than over;--
that he might have room to act in--[IX, 7, 608]

Later as Tom and the widow approach a stage of greater intimacy,

Trim says that

She made a feint however of defending herself, by
snatching up a sausage:--Tom instantly laid hold
of another--But seeing Tom's had more gristle in
it--She signed the capitulation--and Tom sealed it;
and there was an end of the matter [IX, 7, 609].
Thus Sterne begins with a situation that clearly is capable of eliciting benevolence. It does so—from Trim—but in excess. Then the story is probed even further later in the novel and it is even more thoroughly reduced to absurdity by the barely submerged sexual comedy. This latter qualifies as a religious audacity as we have defined it earlier in this chapter; it has been included here, rather than with the others, because its effect is included as part of an episode dealing with deflated or frustrated benevolence.

We have seen Uncle Toby's benevolence in a number of situations. The death of Le Fever (VI, 10, 426) does not diminish our appreciation of Toby as a benevolent moral force in Tristram Shandy, but the pathetic treatment by Tristram of its dénouement draws our attention from him. Toby's action is a corporal work of mercy in effect, though there is no evidence that he acts from consciously religious motives. We may for this reason consider his benefaction toward Le Fever and his son an instance of secular benevolence. In this instance, the reader is involved in the process of deflation more than he is in Trim's account of his brother. In the latter, we see very quickly that benevolence is going to be subordinate to other things, including over-benevolence, but with the death of Le Fever, the reader is drawn into the minute dramatics of the scene, the twitching of Le Fever's pulse and the action of his eyes, he anticipates a sentimental scene, and then he is brought up short by the realization of Sterne's joke played on his sentimental inclinations.
The same thing happens while Tristram is in France and searches through Lyons for the tomb of Amandus and Amanda. The reader who expects the visit to the tomb to parallel in some sentimental way the legend of the two lovers is disappointed; there is no tomb for Tristram to drop his tear upon, and Tristram's comment is "what would I have given for my Uncle Toby to have whistled, Lillibullero!" (VII, 40, 532). Secular benevolence, the analogue of religious benevolence, is involved here: the effect of religious benevolence (emotional gratification) without the execution of any religious principle. And it is secular benevolence, on Tristram's and the reader's part, that is thwarted.

Traugott defines Sterne's sentimentalism (both religiously oriented or secular) as a sympathy with other persons based on an affinity of their behavior, as we perceive it, with our own. It has "nothing to do with self-indulgence, nothing to do with a fatuous, uncritical benevolism, nothing to do with irresponsibility."²⁸ We can see this rejection of fatuous self-indulgence in Sterne's thwarting of it in episodes like those of Le Fever's death and the search for the tomb in Lyons. Thus, genuine benevolence, or "sympathy" in Traugott's sense, remains a constant force. Uncle Toby blunders and constantly frustrates Walter, but his acts of benevolence are not devastated. The one who is disappointed is Tristram's hypothetical sentimentalist reader who wants more from a scene, like, say, Le Fever's death, than the bare endorsement of sympathy. This
"reader," whom Sterne seems to have regarded as part of every reader, wants his emotions indulged, and they are not.

The frustration of expectations, benevolent or otherwise, is a major theme in _Tristram Shandy_. Traugott interprets this theme as Sterne's working out in fiction of the logical (or practical) shortcomings of Locke's epistemology, each character representing a concrete manifestation of the inability of some aspect of that epistemology to solve the problem of human understanding or communication. In this context, Walter is almost the epitome of frustrated communication, perhaps nowhere more obviously than in the bedroom scene which begins the narrative. Between his wife, his brother, and the simple course of events, he can neither exert his mind in the communication of ideas nor his will in executing them. Both his theory of the efficacy of Christian names--Trismegistus in particular--and his theory of noses are frustrated by fate in the form of Susannah's forgetfulness and Dr. Slop's forceps.

While this pattern of frustration can be related to Locke's epistemology, and Traugott's argument is convincing, we can also see it in the light of Sterne's Anglicanism, especially his Latitudinarian interpretation of it. This includes not only Walter's frustration as a would-be pedagogue but all of the frustrations, sudden reversals, surprises, and blocked paths of the novel. Frustration (including analogous phenomena like surprise, unexpected vitality, etc.) is, in fact, so essential to _Tristram Shandy_ that we must consider it more
than merely a motif. It is the most important thematic principle in
the novel and as such it is a literary analogue of Sterne's Latitudinar-
ian orthodoxy.

Frustrated expectations, whether on the part of characters or
the reader himself, always involve either an expansion of the bounds
of some "absolute" or else the replacement of that "absolute" with
another. (Quotation marks are necessary here in order for us to
distinguish Sterne's Anglican absolutist principles from those norms
which merely serve as absolutes in human situations and which Sterne
expands or shuffles, usually for comic effects.) Latitudinarianism,
especially as manifested in The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, does the
same thing with religious principles, sometimes replacing a social
(or secular) one with a religious one: we are inclined to be suspicious
of foreigners, for example, but we must also love our neighbors; the
Good Samaritan is both foreigner and neighbor. 30

We are able to trace this expansion of principle in the so-called
religious audacities of Tristram Shandy, wherein generally religious
principles are broadened (or waived) for purposes of comedy and in
the episodes centering on benevolence and deflated benevolence,
wherein social custom or simplistic sentimental expectations serve
as "absolutes" which give way either for "secular" benevolence
(Tristram and the jackass) or comedy (Le Fever's death). We have
also seen Dr. Slop serve as a sort of type of rigid pomposity who at
various times is disadvantaged by nearly every character in the novel,
including Susannah (VI, 3, 412-13). All of the major characters at one time or another are somehow frustrated or serve to frustrate others: the execution of Walter's theories of names and noses is thwarted; Mrs. Shandy thwarts her husband with her agreeable obtuseness (I, I, 4-5; VI, 18, 437-39; VI, 39, 472-73); Uncle Toby frustrates Walter, Dr. Slop, and Trim (from telling his tale of the King of Bohemia, VIII, 19, 560-69); Tristram is frustrated in his conceiving and "circumcision"; Yorick frustrates "dirty fellows" whom he comes across (I, 11, 27).

This pattern of hindered expectations reflects Sterne's Latitudinarianism and is the essential framework of the novel. Tristram tells us, in fact, that the progress of his story depends upon the interruption of apparent progress:

...the machinery of my work is of a species by itself; two contrary motions are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with one another. In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive too, --and at the same time /I, 22, 73/.

Remove digressions from his book, Tristram says, and "you might as well take the book along with them." In a Scriptural allusion, in fact, Tristram declares that his digressive narrative structure allows him as author to step forth like a bridegroom (I, 22, 73). It is an analogue to his Latitudinarianism which tended to replace dogma with the philanthropic considerations of a given situation; the pattern of digression replaces mundane expectations with the comic possibilities
of a given situation.

In this respect, Northrop Frye regards *Tristram Shandy* as a satire. The satirist, he says, is actively concerned with

the infinite variety of what men do by showing the futility, not only of saying what they ought to do, but even of attempts to systematize or formulate a coherent account of what they do. Philosophies of life abstract from life, and an abstraction implies the leaving out of inconvenient data. The satirist brings up these inconvenient data...31

Traugott sees the inconvenient data, left out of Locke's theories of communication, in the form of human beings, each with his or her foibles, each on a hobby-horse. In this respect, Uncle Toby, who is more solidly rooted to his hobby-horse than anyone, is a Lockean madman.32

The novel digresses because, in Walter's words, "Every thing in this world...is big with jest, --and has wit in it, and instruction too" (V, 32, 393). Progression lies in digression and instruction in jest. In fact, Sterne's consciousness of his approach to the novel is part of this framework of frustrations, since even the writing of a narrative has its hindrances and pitfalls. Frye compares *Tristram Shandy* to Byron's *Don Juan* in that both Sterne and Byron make fun of the very process of writing the work. Frye says that they "illustrate very clearly the constant tendency to self-parody in satiric rhetoric which prevents even the process of writing itself from becoming an oversimplified convention or ideal."33
Thus Sterne involves himself as well as the reader in the game of choosing a path only to find it is not the "right" one; a religious analogue is the situation wherein one believes one principle is sufficient when another is of greater importance--like some of the Christians exemplified in the Conscience sermon (II, 17, 127-28 esp.). The reader is perhaps more thoroughly embroiled in the comedy of the novel than Sterne, however, because Sterne is aware from the start of the comic potential of his position, whereas the reader only discovers it empirically. Thus surprise is the reader's first clue to Sterne's digressive progression which seeks to show that the world is big with jest and to attack the spleen (IV, 22, 301-302)--just as feelings of sentiment are a clue, though only that, to the rightness of an act of benevolence in the religious "orbit," as we have defined it. 34

The surprises which await the reader of Tristram Shandy are not all on the level of practical jokes like the death of Le Fever or social audacities like the mention of Didius's code de fartandi et illustrandi fallacis (III, 20, 193). They are built into the very structure of the narrative, which begins before its hero's conception and, in fact, abandons the hero for an investigation of his eccentric uncle's amours. 35 The narrative itself then becomes a kind of objective correlative for Sterne's Latitudinarian view of life: man (Sterne, the reader, Tristram, the other characters) cannot be sure of very much in life, even the efficacy of those absolutes he holds most sacred, because "God only knows who is a hypocrite, and who is not" (VI, 7, 421)
and because too often one kind of principle conflicts with another. In the religious orbit of activity this dilemma results in Latitudinarianism, a shunning of too much dogma and an emphasis on philanthropy. In the secular orbit, as seen in the novel, it results in the comedy of human conflict.

Tristram himself alludes to this analogy between religious and secular orbits of activity when he explains his father's attitude toward the concept of the devil: "'tis enough to say here, as he could not have the honour of it, in the literal sense of the doctrine--he took up with the allegory of it" (V, 16, 374). The doctrine serves, in other words, as a framework of thought for non-doctrinal concepts; Walter can talk about the devil and mean anything that vexes him, but not mean some supernatural principle of evil, namely Satan or Lucifer or any being of the kind. It is the sort of acknowledgement of structural similarity between sacred and profane that is made by the speaker in Wallace Stevens' poem "A High-toned Old Christian Woman," though Stevens' profane is the structure of poetic art rather than just secular activity in general.

Tristram protests that he has no artistic or philosophical intentions in writing his life and opinions, but this is only a small barrier to our discovery of the purpose that is clearly there. It is hard to take seriously, for instance, his claim that

...of all the several ways of beginning a book which are now in practice throughout the known world, I am confident my own way of doing it is the best--I'm sure
it is the most religious—for I begin with writing
the first sentence—and trusting to Almighty God
for the second [VIII, 2, 5, 40].

Coming in the eighth volume, as this passage does, we have to regard
this merely as an expression of Sterne's consciousness of his "di-
gressive progress" and of his pattern of thwarting expectations of
various kinds. Earlier in the story, in fact, we get more of an
overt clue to his ulterior motives when Tristram says

... I write a careless kind of a civil, nonsensical,
good humoured Shandean book, which will do all
your hearts good—
--And all your heads too, --provided you un-
derstand it [VI, 17, 436].

His implication is that there is significance, if not a rational and
systematic structure, in Tristram Shandy.

The significance lies in the novel's refusal to restrict itself to
a systematic structure. Here, to use Sterne's terminology, is the
"allegory" of his Latitudinarianism: as religious rigidity restricts
the possibilities of charity, the greatest of virtues, structural
rigidity in narrative art restricts the scope of that art, particularly
the scope of its commentary on the state of man's existence. The
squiggly plot-lines that Tristram provides are graphic evidence not
only of his professed intentions but of his actual accomplishments. 36

As Northrop Frye says, citing one example of Sterne's rejection of
conventional narrative progression,

A deliberate rambling digressiveness... is
endemic in the narrative technique of satire, and so
is a calculated bathos or art of sinking in its
suspense, such as...in the refusal of Sterne for hundreds of pages even to get his hero born. 37

Thus, Tristram's protestations of his own ingenuousness cannot be regarded as reliable. When he says, for instance,

all mankind should write as well as myself.

---Which they certainly will, when they think as little \( \sqrt{\text{IX}, 12, 6157} \),

we must remember that on the previous page he has been speculating aloud about the need for "a good quantity of heterogeneous matter" to be inserted at this point "to keep up that just balance betwixt wisdom and folly, without which a book would not hold together a single year."

There is evidence not only that Sterne knows in advance what Tristram will say next but that the reader's unawareness of what he will say next is the major tension of the novel; if the reader knew, then predictable, rigid systematizing would prevail and the satiric vision (in Frye's sense of satire) would be obscured. We should note B. H. Lehman's observation that "Sterne thought it time to revive the post \( \text{of jester} \) in the Christian world if not in the court." 38

The "jester" that Sterne becomes is not merely an incidental creator of diversions or "folly," or "civil, nonsensical, good-humoured" trifles---to use terms he applies to his work. While it is impossible to analyze his motives, we can analyze the implications of what he has written. The dimension of his comedy is greater than that of a jest made in passing, even though there probably is some sincerity in his comment on switching chapters, that it may serve as
a lesson to the world "to let people tell their stories their own way"
(IX, 25, 633). Sterne's comedy, rather, is based upon a distrust, inherent in his Latitudinarianism, of religious rigidity, which, as in the case of the Pharisee in Sterne's sermon, too often can hide "a black catalogue of vices" and stifle "the sentiments of candour and humility." As Uncle Toby indicates to Trim, there are higher laws than the ones men devise for their own mores—in Trim's case a soldier's mores (VI, 8, 424). Sterne's orthodoxy—his belief in God's and Christ's divinity, his Anglicanism—is not impaired in Tristram Shandy. Rather, the Latitudinarianism which augments it, and which is manifested in the sermons, is reflected in the audacities and deflated expectations which his comedy exploits.
NOTES

Chapter V

1 See Chapter II, part i, of the present work.


3 See Professor Work's notes for the significance of these names. See pp. 12, 193-94.


5 I am using wit here in the sense as defined by M. H. Abrams in his Glossary of Literary Terms (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965): "brief and deftly phrased expression, intentionally contrived to produce a shock of comic surprise."


7 Work's note (n. 3, p. 58) tells us that the passage is taken almost verbatim from the 1734 Paris edition of a manual by a Dutch physician, Heinrich Van Deventer.


9 See Work, p. 12, n. 2.

10 Ian Watt regards the latter name as Sterne's German for something like "chamberpot." See Tristram Shandy (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 168, n. 5.

11 Work's note, p. 251, mentions the legend of "the pricks which entered her flesh."

12 See, for example, the following sermons: I, 2; I, 6; II, 10; II, 14; VI, 10; VII, 16; and VII, 18. See also Chapter II, part ii, of the present work.
13. See Ian Watt's note to the Houghton Mifflin edition of *Tristram Shandy*, 388, for an analysis of the degree of indecorum represented by these words. He feels that Sterne probably has exaggerated the impropriety of using them.


17. Ibid., V, 3, 353, n. 5.

18. The episode begins, having had no forewarning, when Tristram tells us what his father was doing when he "received the letter which brought him the melancholy account of my brother Bobby's death" (V, 2, 348), not a likely foreshadowing of a comic scene.

19. See the sermon "On Enthusiasm," VI, 11, 186-98. Others which discuss the tyranny of religious pride are II, 14; IV, 10; and VI, 10.

20. Hammond comments in *Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick* that Sterne's interest, in his sermons at least, is primarily in the social virtues and vices. See p. 94. See also these sermons: II, 15; III, 1; III, 2; and III, 4.

21. For instance, his ribald pun about the cock and the bull in the last chapter is seen as proceeding from a man basically orthodox in his inclinations and, what is perhaps of even greater importance in making the reader sympathize with him, benevolent in spirit.


23. Even though philanthropy, in its etymological sense, is not involved in this "impression."


25. See, for example, "Evil Speaking" (II, 11, 127).
26 The scene can in substance be compared with Yorick's death which is partially subverted by the grotesquerie of the black page. Despite the page, however, Yorick's life remains as a moral exemplum; Maria doesn't nor do Tristram's reactions to her. But both episodes involve deflated benevolence.

27 See John Traugott, Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric (Berkeley, U. of California Press, 1954), 140, et passim. The effectiveness of the picture of the victim and Trim's confusion of the victim (fiction) with his brother (fact) certainly bear out Traugott's theory that the novel is about just that: the fact of a novel's creation. When Slop tells Trim "Tis only a description...there's not a word of truth in it," Walter replies, "That's another story" (II, 17, 139).

28 Ibid., 73.

29 Ibid., passim.

30 See the sermon "Philanthropy Recommended" (I, 3, 25-36).


32 Traugott, 47.

33 Frye, 234.

34 Traugott analyzes the "secular" importance of sentiment in Sterne as an overt means by which individuals overcome the many barriers to communication between them. See pp. 62-75. Cf. the interchange of sentiment and conciliation between Walter and Uncle Toby during the reading of the sermon (II, 17, 134).


37 Frye, 234.

38 "Of Time, Personality, and the Author," University of California Publications in English, VIII, no. 2 (1941), 238.
"Pharisee and Publican in the Temple," I, 6, 73-75. See also Ben Reid, "The Sad Hilarity of Sterne," VQR, XXXII (1956), 107-30, for a discussion of the philosophical significance of Sterne's comic vision.
CHAPTER VI

Sterne's Religious Position in
Sentimental Journey

The basic difference between Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy is that the latter makes the inherent conflict in the Latitudinarian viewpoint (formalism vs. personalism) less apparent. This is because the formal, aspect of the conflict is often submerged in Sentimental Journey, allowing the reader to see the results of the conflict—humor or sentiment, generally—without always allowing him to see the components of it: circumscribed boundaries and expansion of activity. Thus, unless we pay careful attention to clues to the contrary that Sterne leaves for us, we are likely to regard Yorick as an extension of Sterne's libidinous and zany inclinations and nothing more. But there are definite clues which, despite occasional ambiguities, enable us to place Sentimental Journey in the same Latitudinarian tradition as Tristram.

In Tristram we can see Sterne's progression-by-means-of-digression—which we may call Shandyism—as an objective correlative for Sterne's refusal to be strictly bound by system or code; in this respect it is an analogue to his religious Latitudinarianism which eschewed formalism for a personalist philanthropic ethic, though within the general framework of Anglicanism. In Sentimental Journey we see the same refusal to systematize experience, even within
fictional narrative. When there is mere self-indulgence on Yorick's part, as in the pulse-taking episode in the Grisset's shop (p. 54)\textsuperscript{2} we see an added dimension to Sterne's vision. To use the metaphor of the atom from the previous chapter, self-indulgence may be considered as the third and outermost orbit around the orthodox nucleus; when indulged, it has an existence of its own apart from the benevolence which causes it. We may define self-indulgence here as enjoyment of the feelings attendant upon benevolence as an end in itself. In \textit{Sentimental Journey}, when Yorick is the chief beneficiary of these feelings or when there is no other beneficiary, we do not have benevolence in Traugott's sense of the term: a bond of feeling that transcends the barriers to human communication.\textsuperscript{3}

For the purposes of our analysis in this chapter, we may then restate the metaphoric relationship between Sterne's religious attitude and his literary themes: his orthodoxy is a nucleus around which revolve in orbit, first, his religious Latitudinarianism; second, his "secular Latitudinarianism," which includes inclinations toward social benevolence and harmony, and refusal to systematize any approach to life; and third, as we shall see in \textit{Sentimental Journey}, the feelings attendant upon benevolence, indulged in for their own sake. Thus, there is some distance, even though there is a logical affinity, between Yorick the writer of sermons and Yorick the emotive hand-holder in \textit{Journey}.

The sentimentality of \textit{Sentimental Journey} must be regarded
carefully because its affinity with Sterne's religious orthodoxy can be
seen at times only by this extended analogy. Also, while there is
considerable activity that can be classified as self-indulgence, the
novel does not consist entirely of this, nor is there evidence that we
are supposed to take it seriously. 4 Luxuriating in feeling, such as
we see in Yorick's flirtatious colloquy with Lady de L-- (pp. 16-17),
clearly varies from universal norms of behavior; more than
Yorick's indulgence is needed for proof of Sterne's endorsement.
This seems especially reasonable when we consider Yorick's evi-
dent lack of consciousness of his own departure from these traditional
norms. As he holds Lady de L--'s hand, he describes his cumulative
impressions up to that point:

When the heart flies out before the understanding,
it saves the judgment of a world of pains. I was
certain she was of a better order of beings....

The impression returned upon my encounter with
her in the street; a guarded frankness with which
she gave me her hand, shewed, I thought her good
education and her good sense; and as I led her on,
I felt a pleasurable ductility about her, which spread
a calmness over all my spirits.

Good God! how a man might lead such a creature
as this round the world with him!

....  
[Her face] was not critically handsome, but... it wore the characters of a widow'd look, and in
that state of its declension, which had passed the two
first paroxysms of sorrow, and was quietly beginning
to reconcile itself to its loss------but a thousand
other distresses might have traced the same lines; I
wish'd to know what they had been and was ready to
enquire (had the same bon ton of conversation per-
mittet, as in the days of Esdras): "What aileth thee?
and why art thou disquieted? and why is thy under-
standing troubled?" In a word, I felt benevolence for
her; and resolv'd some way or other to throw in
my mite of courtesy, if not of service.
Such were my temptations—and in this dis-
position to give way to them, was I left alone with
the lady with her hand in mine, and with our faces
both turned closer to the door of the Remise than
what was absolutely necessary. [{pp. 18-19}\(]

The major episodes of *Sentimental Journey* may be roughly
categorized either as instances of genteel philandering, like the
above, or as episodes designed to evoke sentiments on the part of
the reader as well as on the part of Yorick. In either case we are
able to observe the part played by sentiment in Yorick's activities
and to distinguish, in most cases rather clearly, between Yorick's
sentimentalism and Sterne's orthodoxy. Arthur Cash's argument
that Sterne deliberately preserves this dichotomy to demonstrate the
ineffectuality of the former without the latter is cogent, especially
considering what Yorick reveals about his own motivations.

For instance, when Yorick considers traveling with Madame
de L--, he expresses some doubt:

> Every dirty passion and bad propensity in my nature
took the alarm.... It will oblige you to have a third
horse, said AVARICE, which will put twenty livres
out of your pocket. You know not what she is, said
CAUTION. Or what scruples the affair may draw you
into, whisper'd COWARDICE.

> Depend upon it, Yorick! said DISCRETION,
'twill be said you went off with a mistress, and came
by assignation to Calais for that purpose.
You can never after, cried HYPOCRISY aloud,
shew your face in the world. Or rise, quoth MEAN-
NESS, in the church. Or be any thing in it, said
PRIDE, but a lousy prebendary.

> But 'tis a civil thing, said I. And as I generally
act from the first impulse, and therefore seldom
listen to these cabals, which serve no purpose
that I know of, but to encompass the heart with
adamant, I turn'd instantly about to the lady [p. 24].

The lady, however, has disappeared, and the proposed journey
never comes about. But this is due to chance, not to Yorick's moral
principles. In fact, his "first impulse"--which tends basically
toward adultery--contradicts basic tenets of Anglican orthodoxy, and
in this sense makes the "outer orbit" independent of its nucleus. His
impulses to resist this temptation are "dirty" passions and "bad"
propensities. In the light of absolutist Anglican principles, then,
"good" passions or propensities are not necessarily reliable. But
Yorick feels these impulses, sometimes with considerable intensity,
and is strongly inclined to follow them, justifying his behavior, when
it conflicts with orthodox ethical norms, on the grounds that they
enable him to experience either pleasure or transport from ordinary
and indifferent human relationships.

The pulse-taking episode in the handsome Griseft's shop also
indicates this dichotomy, though the moral implications of the epi-
sode are perhaps less drastic. Yorick's intentions are not as overtly
adulterous as they are with Madame de L--., but he is clearly
interested in pleasure that, in terms of his religious Latitudinarian-
ism, is non-philanthropic. Yorick's prefatory remarks to the
episode are, in fact, sexually very suggestive:

Hail ye small sweet courtesies of life, for smooth
do ye make the road of it! Like grace and beauty which
beget inclinations to love at first sight: 'tis ye who
open this door and let the stranger in \([p. \, 54]\).

Yorick's response to Eugenius's hypothetical injunction is rationalization: "when my views are direct...I care not if all the world saw me feel it" (p. 56). His activity is obviously not motivated by his "views" but rather by the gratification of physical impulses.

The fruit of philanthropic action motivated by religious "views" or principles can resemble that of self-indulgent action, according to Latitudinarian precedent. The sermon by Charles Brent, referred to in Chapter IV of the present work, unites, in terms of our metaphor, the three orbits of religious activity: "doing Good," "Heavenly Pleasure" in doing good, and "downright Sensuality" which is a product of doing good and "epicuriz'd in" for its own sake. Yorick is not benefitting the handsome Grisset. The affair goes no further than the brief pleasures of hand-holding, but orthodox views play no part at all.

The affair entitled "The Translation" goes considerably further, apparently, than the incident with the Grisset. Yorick gives figurative expression to his tendency to regard sentimental or physical impulses as religiously or ethically valid:

There is not a secret so aiding to the progress of sociality, as to get master of this short hand, and be quick in rendering the several turns of looks and limbs, with all their inflections and delineations, into plain words \([p. \, 61]\).

The "short hand" is a physical communication between Yorick and any stranger he cares to espy on the street. But this is no more valid
according to Sterne's orthodoxy than the impulses which fight
Yorick's "dirty" passions in the affair with Madame de L--; the im-
pulses and the "short hand" end in philandering, not philanthropy.
The Marquisina di F--, with whom Yorick communicates via the
"short hand," leads him to a "connection which... gave me more
pleasure than any one I had the honour to make in Italy."

Yorick and the Marquisina go off in her coach to what we must
presume is an adulterous affair. But any argument that this kind of
activity in Sentimental Journey reveals either Sterne's pathological
state of mind or his endorsement of hedonism fails, because Sterne
does let us see Yorick's pursuits in the light of absolute moral
principles. As we indicated at the beginning of the present chapter,
the orthodox standard is not always obviously present as a gauge for
Yorick's actions, but it is there. We find it, submerged, in Yorick's
tendency to rationalize his actions and to exalt impulse, when the
results of his impulses almost always betray their allegedly virtuous
motives.

Yorick claims that passion is his guide to virtue:

...if ever I do a mean action, it must be in some
interval betwixt one passion and another: whilst
this interregnum lasts, I always perceive my heart
locked up, I can scarce find in it to give Misery a
sixpence; and therefore I always get out of it as
fast as I can, and the moment I am rekindled, I am
all generosity and goodwill again; and would do any-
thing in the world, either for or with anyone, if they
will but satisfy me there is no sin in it /p. 36;
emphasis added/7.
But of course he is discussing more than virtue here; giving Misery a sixpence, let us say, is virtuous. But doing anything "for or with anyone," presumably without restraints is neither in itself a virtuous course nor in line with the norms Sterne recognizes in his sermons. And there is no guarantee that the satisfaction Yorick might have that "there is no sin in it" is any more than the sort of hasty rationalization that we see in the Madame de L-- affair. Perhaps the best concretization of this disparity between theory and practice comes when Yorick has just arrived in Calais. He has eaten and drunk, and he feels expansive and benevolent: "I felt every vessel in my frame dilate, the arteries beat all cheerily together." He thinks, quite consciously, that his present mood makes him an ideal benefactor for whoever might come along. Then the mendicant monk arrives and Yorick predetermines "not to give him a single sous" because "no man cares to have his virtues the sport of contingencies." Passion is no help to giving Misery a sixpence, and even his later reconciliation with the monk serves as Yorick's way of impressing Madame de L-- (pp. 21-22). Sterne makes clear that while Yorick is sentimental, virtue is not an inevitable result of his sentiments.

Yorick's encounters with women provide the occasions of most of his passions and impulses and much, if not most, of his confusion between self-gratification and genuine benefaction. The encounter with the fille de chambre illustrates the confusion perfectly, since it is clear that the girl is a beneficiary only because Yorick confers the
role upon her. She is not a luckless orphan or widow or otherwise in need of Yorick's attention. He presses his attention on her; she neither seeks nor requires benefaction. Her curtsy upon receiving the coin he drops in her purse is for Yorick more "short hand," and he claims that "I never gave a girl a crown in my life which gave me half the pleasure" (p. 69).

The fille de chambre, in this scene outside the bookstore, becomes for Yorick a symbol without the reality that lies behind the symbol—or perhaps with only a subjective reality (provided by himself) behind it. His subjectivity in this situation is beyond doubt. When the girl thanks him, he responds:

It was a small tribute... which I could not avoid paying to virtue, and would not be mistaken in the person I had been rendering it to for the world. But I see innocence, my dear, in your face, and foul befall the man who ever lays a snare in its way! \( \text{[p. 70]} \). And instead of kissing her, he does "what amounted to the same thing—I bid God bless her" (p. 71).

There is no confusion evident on Sterne's part here between philanthropy related to religious orthodoxy and sentimentality. Yorick is not a type of the Good Samaritan, even as depicted (with interpolations) in Sterne's sermon. The "philanthropy" here is artificial, since there is no specific or immediate need for it; there is no virtue on Yorick's part in any religious or ethical sense, since his action is not meritorious according to religious (or even secular) norms; and in fact Yorick is the chief beneficiary, since he
deliberately secures the pleasure of the act for himself. Even the Good Samaritan as Sterne's sermon interprets him is more concerned with the wounded traveler than with his own admittedly sentimental feelings. Yorick's benediction upon departing, which is to serve as a kiss, is simply another manifestation of his confusion—to some extent deliberate—between religion and feelings.

Yorick states overtly that there is a sort of hedonistic advantage to this confusion, when the fille de chambre arrives at his hotel room to deliver a message. While she waits for him to compose a reply, he steals glances at her and becomes aware of a growing amorousness on his part:

There is a sort of a pleasing half-guilty blush, where the blood is more in fault than the man: 'tis sent impetuous from the heart and virtue flies after it—not to call it back, but to make the sensation of it more delicious to the nerves—'tis associated [p. 97].

Thus, without a restriction on behavior (which Yorick, even as a "lousy prebendary" would be aware of), represented here by "virtue," amorous feelings would lose their deliciousness. The reader cannot take seriously (nor could Sterne, since Yorick is so unashamedly interested in his own feelings) Yorick's admission that "I felt something within me which was not in strict unison with the lesson of virtue I had given her the night before" (p. 98). The night before, and during the present scene, we see the third orbit of action: feelings indulged in for their own sake. And they are not elicited by
philanthropy but by Yorick's anticipated enjoyment of them.

In the section entitled "The Conquest" Yorick argues his case in an address to the "great Governor of nature":

> Wherever thy providence shall place me for the trials of my virtue, whatever is my danger, whatever is my situation, let me feel the movements which rise out of it, and which belong to me as a man— and if I govern them as a good one, I will trust the issues to thy justice: for Thou hast made us, and not we ourselves [p. 100].

Even here, Yorick does not make the moral conflict clear, since it is not the validity of human passions that is at stake, but the part they play in his progress toward virtue. He wants the satisfaction of both passion and virtue, which is of course, morally impossible, at least in situations like the hotel scene. Gratifying feelings are not an infallible indication of virtuous activity; if Yorick conquers the temptation to seduce the maid, as his and Sterne's religion says he must, it is obvious that his enjoyment of the temptation does not help in resisting it.

Yorick's "revenge" upon the manager of the hotel for being a "dirty fellow" who pimps for girls pretending to be peddlers of ruffles is dissipated by feelings. He directs that a girl be sent up and plans to treat her harshly. But by Yorick's own admission, "there was more of spleen than principle in my project" (p. 103). And he sympathizes with the "poor creature" who is sent up and concludes by buying a pair of ruffles from her. The brief interlude exemplifies the amoral nature of Yorick's sentiments, which can tend toward
either virtue or vice. The moral outcome depends upon motivating principles rather than feelings. Without the absolutist concept of ethics implied in the sermon on conscience's insistence on "the eternal measures of right and wrong," Yorick's desire "to leave Paris, if it was possible, with all the virtue I enter'd it" is irrelevant, since he has substituted for virtue the enjoyment of sentiments that virtue is supposed to evoke.

The letter that Yorick copies to send to Madame de L-- states, ironically enough, what Yorick does not admit:

\[
\begin{align*}
L'amour n'est rien sans sentiment. \\
Et le sentiment est encore moins sans amour.
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{P. 51}\]

Sentiment is less than nothing without love (or in the religious sphere, charity or philanthropy) because it is the concomitant of love, not vice-versa. But it is significant that the letter does not represent Yorick's attitudes but someone else's. With some emending of facts, the letter suits his purposes but does not, by his own admission, necessarily reflect his mind. Not that it contradicts his views, but in his own words it is "neither right or wrong."

Yorick is quick to take up the French wigmaker's figure of speech to the effect that Yorick's wig-buckle will withstand immersion in the ocean. An Englishman, says Yorick, would have used a "bucket of water" as an extreme concretization. While the bucket is a sorry figure beside an ocean, at least a bucket is more readily procured. The fault that Yorick finds is that "the French expression
professes more than it performs" (p. 53). In theory, then, Yorick is aware of a possible dichotomy between theory and practice; in practice, however, involving application of religious principles, his talk of virtue and occasional rationalization of vice, show that his principles remain mere theories.

In the salon society of Paris, Yorick meets Madame de V-- who is fluctuating between what Yorick analyzes as the first two stages of a Frenchwoman's life: the coquette and the deist. His conversation with her is ostensibly devoted to arguing for religion; its effect is seductive flattery. The argument rests on a beautiful woman's need for religion as an "outworks" to defend her spiritual citadel: "there was not a more dangerous thing in the world than for a beauty to be a deist" (p. 119). In actual fact, however, religion serves Yorick as a respectable ticket of admission, so to speak, to the citadel:

...it was a debt I owed my creed, not to conceal it from her; that I had not been five minutes sat upon the sopha beside, but I had begun to form designs; and what is it but the sentiments of religion, and the persuasion they had excited in her breast, which could have check'd them as they rose up?

We are not adamant, said I, taking hold of her hand, and there is need of all restraints, till age in her own time steals in and lays them on us. But, my dear lady, said I, kissing her hand, 'tis too, too soon--

...I had the credit all over Paris of unperverting Madame de V--. She affirmed to Mons. D-- and the Abbie M--, that in one half-hour I had said more for revealed religion than all their Encyclopedia had said against it. I was lifted directly into Madame de V--'s Coterie, and she put off the epocha of deism
for two years \( p. 119 \).

Which means, according to Yorick's analysis, that she remained a coquette for two years longer.

Yorick, of course, contradicts his religious position as soon as he establishes it. The scene is narrated with no betrayal on his part of any sense of awareness of the insincerity of his motives. But the evidence is clear: his statement, made while kissing her hand, that age places restraints on amorousness "too, too soon" and his implied delight that Madame de V-- remained a coquette a while longer. Of the two inclinations, love (or sensual gratification) and religion, the latter falls victim to the former in Yorick's pursuit of Madame de V--.

The coterie in which Yorick finds himself serves to demonstrate his theoretical predilection for virtue. For Yorick the salon circle is an objective correlative for "Art" in the most opprobrious sense of the term, connoting artificiality of activity, artifice, and insincerity. Significantly, it is represented by the Count de Faineant (presumably a pun on "feigning.") Yorick achieves prominence in the circle for his agreeable wit, but he claims "'twas a dishonest reckoning" and "the gain of a slave--every sentiment of honour revolted against it" (p. 120). He wants to join the children of "Nature" and soon leaves Paris for the French countryside. But he merely exchanges the world of social artifice for that of moral artifice where, while he does not deliberately deceive, he is misled by feelings of
religious benevolence that are quite detached from religion. He is the same Yorick, leaving Paris, who said earlier:

Sweet pliability of man's spirit, that can at once surrender itself to illusions which cheat expectation and sorrow of their weary moments! Long, long since had he number'd out my days, had I not trod so great a part of them upon this enchanted ground; when my way is too rough for my feet, or too steep for my strength, I get off it, to some smooth velvet path which fancy has scattered over with rose-buds of delights; and having taken a few turns in it, come back strengthen'd and refresh'd [p. 92].

Yorick believes that "illusions" which "cheat" can provide him with strength and refreshment, though he rejects this concept when objectified in the Parisian coterie. The fault in the high social circles, presumably, is that their urbanity lacks the "rose-buds of delights" which are necessary for thos illusions. Since sentiment is vital to his religion, sentimental rosebuds can provide an illusion of religion, and the unsophisticated rural life can more easily supply Yorick with stimuli for sentiment: simple ingenuous people amid peaceful rustic settings. What is especially important to our appreciation of Yorick's religious values is that he rejects any rational means of distinguishing the essentials of religion from religious ephemera; he is admittedly disposed to indulge in illusions that delude him at the same time that they comfort him. "Calm reason and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth," the foundations of Sterne's Anglican orthodoxy, are obscured by quasi-religious feelings.
Leaving Paris, Yorick sets out for Moulins and along the way passes the neighborhood where Maria, made famous by "my friend Mr. Shandy," happens to dwell. An "impulse" prompts him to seek her out, even though she will probably have a sorrowful tale to tell:

'Tis going, I own, like the Knight of the Woeful countenance, in quest of melancholy adventures; but I know not how it is, but I am never so perfectly conscious of the existence of a soul within me, as when I am entangled in them.

But his consciousness of a soul is not a rational process nor is it, apparently, Yorick's chief goal, any more than it was Tristram's. What Yorick means, as far as we can judge from what he says, is that he is conscious that he can feel. If this is what he means by "soul," then he is departing from the orthodox definition of that word, which defines the soul as man's spiritual (not emotive) principle.

The "rosebuds"—objective correlatives which cause sentiments to dull Yorick's rational power in religious ethical spheres—are all present: Maria's "old mother," her dead father, her faithless lover (and goat), her dog on a string, her oaten pipe. And there is Maria herself, the central rosebud, so to speak. His pulse caused to "beat languid," Yorick, like Tristram, finds Maria in an idyllic pastoral setting, weeping for her dead father. Yorick's emotions are expressed with apparently no romantic irony, though it is difficult not to find comedy in the description of the shared tears and shared handkerchief:

I sat down close by her; and Maria let me wipe
them away as they fell, with my handkerchief. I then steep'd it in my own, and then in hers, and then in mine, and then I wip'd hers again, and as I did it, I felt such undescrivable emotions within me, as I am sure could not be accounted for from any combinations of matter and motion.

I am positive I have a soul; nor can all the books with which materialists have pestered the world ever convince me to the contrary [p. 122].

Maria is apparently more in need of benefaction than, say, the fille de chambre, but she does more to provoke feelings in Yorick for him to indulge in than he does to assuage hers. There is sympathy on his part, and to the degree that it operates in Yorick's motivations and actions, we may classify it in the first orbit of "religious" philanthropic activity. But we have seen in the previous chapter of the present work that Maria serves, in Tristram Shandy, as more than a type of helpless orphan in need of succor. In Tristram and in the Journey she is a comely maiden, with all of the "rosebud" trappings necessary to set Yorick's emotive impulses in motion.

The sentimentalism here which divorces Yorick's rational powers from his emotive ones is not the only clue that Sterne gives us to Yorick's religious inefficacy. Certainly there is comedy in the alternating tear-wiping and, as Dilworth observes, in Maria's description of her journey--on foot--to Rome, where she "walk'd round St. Peter's once and return'd back" (p. 123). As with the fille de chambre and Madame de L--, Yorick couches his address in vaguely religious language:

...God tempers the wind, said Maria, to the shorn
lamb.

Shorn indeed! and to the quick, said I; and wast thou in my own land, where I have a cottage, I would take thee to it and shelter thee: thou shouldst eat of my own bread and drink of my own cup. . . . When the sun went down I would say my prayers; and when I had done thou shouldst play thy evening song upon thy pipe, nor would the incense of my sacrifice be worse accepted for entering heaven along with that of a broken heart. \[pp. 123-24\].

Then with incisive timing, the sentimentalizing is undercut when Maria says of the handkerchief, "I'll dry it in my bosom...; 'twill do me good" (p. 124). We have to regard Sterne, not Yorick, as the romantic ironist here, since Yorick remains straightfaced throughout, betraying no comic awareness.

Yorick expects, and evidently enjoys, a "riot of the affections" (p. 125) in the French countryside. That his feelings of benevolence remain generally detached from religious principle, however, is indicated by their transitory nature. He claims, after departing from Maria in the Moulines marketplace,

in every scene of festivity I saw Maria in the background of the piece, sitting pensive under her poplar; and I had got almost to Lyons before I was able to cast a shade across her. \[p. 125\].

The transience of Yorick's feelings here is reminiscent of the transience of Tristram's, who was able to exclaim over the inn at Moulines immediately after leaving Maria's presence (IX, 24, 631). Having characterized himself as a type of the Good Samaritan who pours oil and wine on her wounds (p. 125), Yorick is able to forget her by the time he reaches Lyons.\[15\]
And after having made this admission (though it is made in passing and not as an admission), Yorick proceeds to eulogize his feelings: "Dear sensibility! source inexhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows!" It is here that Yorick most overtly makes sentiment a religious principle, whether deifying sentiment or sentimentalizing God. He addresses God as the "great, great SENSORIUM of the world! which vibrates, if a hair of our heads but falls upon the ground, in the remotest desert of thy creation" (pp. 125-26). But the disparity between his words and his deeds is too great for any discerning critic to regard his religious professions very seriously. The "eternal fountain of our feelings" which causes him to feel "generous joys and generous cares" beyond himself still does not suffice to let him remember Maria much beyond his encounter with her; it causes him to indulge the temptation with the fille de chambre; it causes him to confuse vice and virtue in the case of Madame de L--. It even causes him to sympathize with an unused chaise "standing so many months unpitied in the corner of Mons. Dessein's coach-yard" (pp. 14-15). The more he elevates feelings of benevolence as a valid indication of virtue, the less validly he employs them. And God as "sensorium" is re-created in Yorick's image: reacting indiscriminately to emotionally-charged stimuli.

In all of his philandering, Yorick seems to be the middle-aged sentimentalist, rather than the young rake. Although his age is not
specifically stated, there are certain clues. We know, for instance that he is already a clergyman, a "lousy prebendary" (p. 24) who has already, apparently, published sermons (p. 91) and who has, since this journey, traveled a number of times—usually taking the Monk's snuff box along (p. 22). He is not so old, of course, that he has lost a prurient interest in the opposite sex, but there is a paternalistic element in his relations with some women. For instance, his advice to the fille de chambre to guard her heart and his putting a coin in her purse (p. 69) are clearly the actions of an older person toward a younger. Even his conversation with Madame de V—intertwines the paternal with the prurient; Yorick tells her that he still has prurient feelings, but his advice is that of a preacher and is based on "sentiments of religion" (p. 119). And he wants Maria to be "as a daughter" to him (p. 125). Further, he is a friend and admirer of the Shandy family (pp. 60, 63, 121) and has outlived Uncle Toby, "the dearest of my flock and friends" (p. 60). 16

Yorick is not only middle-aged, but there seem to have been a few years between his journey and his writing about the journey. At first this does not seem to be the case. At the beginning he says of France "I have scarce set foot in your dominions" (p. 4), and he writes the preface to the journey while alone in the desobligeant (p. 9)—the most proximate Yorick the protagonist and Yorick the narrator ever become. After this episode (pp. 9-14), the narration is less and less proximate in time to the journey itself. In the chapter on
"Montriul" (p. 35) Yorick the narrator has completed the whole tour of France and Italy. The starling has changed hands several times (pp. 79-80), and Yorick appears at one point to be writing from his study when he blushes over the "Bevoriskius" anecdote (p. 94). But Yorick as narrator is unaware of his own moral contradictions while traveling. He blushes at the lecherous sparrows that Bevoriskius describes, but even removed in time from the personal adventures he narrates, he makes no comment about his confusion between morality and sentiment.

Yorick responds emotionally to the "Bourbonnois" (pp. 126-28) who become for him an objective correlative for pastoral innocence, just as Madame de V--'s coterie represented artificial urbanity. There is, of course, a polar difference between the two, and while the Parisian coterie does not seem extraordinarily corrupt, the peasant family seems to be a concretization of the ideals of Sterne's Latitudinarianism: they embody innocence, honesty, and generosity, and their danced grace-after-meal represents the filial devotion to God that Sterne endorses in his sermon "The Prodigal Son" (Sermons, III, 5, 233):

> When the affections so kindly break loose, Joy is another name for Religion. We look up as we taste it: the cold Stoick without, when he hears the dancing and the musick, may ask sullenly... What it means; and refuse to enter: but the humane and compassionate all fly impetuously to the banquet....

The supper and the grace are to Yorick's taste (p. 127) because
he sees "Religion mixing in the dance" (p. 128). The father of the family explains to him that he believes that a cheerful and contented mind was the best sort of thanks to Heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay.

Or a learned prelate either, said I [p. 128].

But what is crucial, to the reader if not to Yorick, is whether Yorick is able to distinguish between what is religiously valid (according to norms that Sterne has endorsed) and what is not. The peasant episode suits his taste, but we must remember that he has just finished telling us that he is interested in a "riot of the affections" and that Maria, over whom he sheds so many tears, is soon forgotten. "The Case of Delicacy" soon reveals Yorick in a more characteristic light—overtly expressing religious sentiments and, almost simultaneously, flirting.

The Piedmontese lady, "about thirty, with a glow of health in her cheeks," and her maid, "as brisk and lively a French girl as ever moved" (p. 131) provide him occasion for flirting, although presumably they do so unwittingly. The situation perfectly accommodates Yorick's prurient inclinations, and in fact he helps establish it. His room, the only one available, has three beds, two together and one in "a damp cold closet" off in a corner. When the lady and her maid are inspecting the closet and speculating about who should take the bed in the drafty closet, Yorick deliberately coughs to make sure that no one will expect him to give up his bed of the adjoining two. The lady may,
in his opinion, "sacrifice her health to her feelings," or she may not. In any case he is bound to enjoy the presence either of the lively girl of twenty or the healthy woman of thirty.

As it is, he enjoys the presence of both under the ostensible protection of "religion." They debate the conditions of the situation and conclude it with "religion and good faith on both sides" (p. 132). But Yorick is unable to sleep and when his restlessness—"whether it was the novelty of the situation, or what it was, I know not" (p. 133)—causes him to cry out "O my God!" the lady considers the pact broken. Yorick protests that this contingency is provided for by the clause in their agreement that allows him to say his prayers. The maid approaches silently and the story ends with Yorick (punning) reaching out "by way of asseveration" and taking hold of "the Fille de Chambre's—."

The scene serves, perhaps, as a corrective to the Bourbonnois episode in which Yorick's sentiments and religious values are attuned. The "Case of Delicacy" re-demonstrates Yorick's proclivity to abandon principle to inclinations, lest we forget that tendency. The point seems to be, especially in these philanderous episodes, that Yorick is basically neither virtuous nor vicious, because he is wont to follow his feelings which themselves are neither virtuous nor vicious but which need rational ethical direction. Yorick is aware of the need for rational guidance and religious norms; he is wont to discuss the need for religious principle, as we can see in the scenes involving Madame
de L--, the fille de chambre, and Madame de V--. But at the same time he is wont to regard reason as a "bubble" (p. 76) and seek instead a "riot of the affections."

In addition to the series of philanderous adventures in which Yorick indulges, there is, as we indicated earlier in this chapter, a series of non-amorous episodes which serve, for Yorick at least and perhaps for the reader, as objective correlatives for benevolent sentiments. Unlike the episodes with women, which inspire only Yorick's, and not the reader's, feelings, these are constructed to appeal to the reader as well as to the protagonist. Thus there is a difference in effect between Yorick's relationship with Madame de L-- and, say, with the Franciscan Monk. Of the former he can say:

> with what moral delight will it crown my journey, in sharing in the sickening incidents of a tale of misery told to me by such a sufferer! to see her weep! and though I cannot dry up the fountain of her tears, what an exquisite sensation is there still left, in wiping them away from off the cheeks of the first and fairest of women, as I'm sitting with my handkerchief in my hand in silence the whole night beside her? [p. 467].

The widow and her imagined griefs serve Yorick as an objective correlative for suffering; his feelings are evoked and he enjoys the "moral delight" of luxuriating in them. But the Monk is (to the reader) more obviously in need of benefaction than the lady, and the combination of his grave and the snuff box that he has given Yorick can be more evocative for the reader than can Madame de L--. 17

Yorick's "flood of tears" (p. 23) is a clue to the purposes of this
scene as is the admission that Sterne has him make that he is "as weak as a woman." His inclination is to follow the impulses of his feelings and, by his own admission, to over-react. We are not, of course, in a moral situation here. His reaction is expressed through ordinary human emotion which in itself is amoral, and there is no evidence that Yorick is reveling in it in this episode; this is "secular benevolence," not prompted by any religious principle and represented by the second "orbit" in our metaphor. But the scene is important as an indication of Yorick's sentimental propensities. He is "weak as a woman," and on the next page we see him struggling against his "dirty" passions which are arguing against his assignation with Madame de L--. Thus it is not Yorick's benevolent or pseudo-benevolent feelings which indicate the ineffectuality of his attempt to maintain religious principles. It is, instead, the degree to which he is inclined to act according to these feelings--a degree which often leads to activity beyond what the principles of Anglicanism will permit: most notably in matters bordering on adultery.

The seventh commandment is not the only religious principle that Yorick's impulses endanger, however. We have already seen, for instance, how Yorick harangues the Monk, the very picture of "Entreaty," after reflecting compacently upon his own benevolent feelings. Yorick not only refuses alms to the beggar, but he berates the supplicant for his sloth (p. 8); simple charity suffers here. And Yorick's feelings are clearly of little religious "use," since they fail
him at the crucial moment—when the Monk approaches—and smite
his heart the moment the Monk shuts the door (p. 8). Their recon-
ciliation, which turns out, apparently, to be genuine, is motivated
by Yorick's feelings for Madame de L--, which lead him insincerely
to initiate the reconciliation. Simple honesty suffers in this incident.

The encounter with the beggars of Montriul evokes Yorick's
benevolent impulses; he is as generous as can reasonably be expected
with the "sons and daughters of poverty" (p. 38). But Sterne allows
us to see Yorick as operating outside of any framework of religious
principles when he helps the beggars:

\[\text{[instead of cursing the beggars]} \quad I \text{ always think it}
\text{better to take a few sous out in my hand; and I}
\text{would counsel every gentle traveller to do so likewise; he need not be so exact in setting down his}
\text{motives for giving them— they will be register'd}
\text{elsewhere} \quad /p. \quad 38; \quad \text{emphasis added.}\]

But motivation determines the moral value of such an act; even if
they are not "set down," they are nonetheless vital. In the Anglican
framework of spiritual rewards and punishments, exactness is
crucial in the judging of motivation and the "registering" of good
deeds—which is the main point of the conscience sermon in Tristram
Shandy.

When Yorick notices the pauvre honteux, he digs deep into his
purse to give him money. At the time he "was ashamed to think how
little," though now, with the dispassion that comes with time, he is
"ashamed to say how much" (pp. 39-40). While in terms of religious
principles we can say that Yorick's objective acts here are good, it is clear that his motivation is made fuzzy by the sentiment that is, for him, a concomitant of the situation. The pauvre honteux, especially, is for Yorick an object of pity; Yorick's feelings prompt him to give more alms than he really cares to, and his feelings on seeing the man weep obscure the pecunioussness that he feels only later as he is writing his story.

Yorick and La Fleur, in the next episode, come upon the dead jackass in the road, and in that and the next two "chapters" the ass serves Yorick as a concretization, at least for the moment, of all that is pitiable. What we might tend to overlook in this stage of Yorick's travels, is that the first of these jackass chapters is entitled "The Bidet." This horse plays a more important part in this turn of the narrative than we are probably inclined to realize. For while our attention is attracted by the dead ass, and Yorick's by La Fleur's colloquialisms, La Fleur himself is beating and kicking his horse which is balking at the dead animal. Yorick's heart is "wrung with pity," not at La Fleur's maltreatment of the horse, but at the coarseness of La Fleur's language (p. 41). Thus a genuinely pitiable object, the horse, is overlooked in favor of an ephemeral issue, La Fleur's idiom.

Yorick then becomes acquainted with the owner of the jackass, who is mourning at the post-house in Nampont. His story is full of sentimental detail about the faithfulness of the beast and Yorick is,
according to Sterne's "secular" Latitudinarianism, properly moved—though not without some playing with the word "ass": "The ass had sought him as much as he had sought the ass," and "did we love each other, as this poor soul but loved his ass, 'twould be something" (pp. 43-44). It is reminiscent of Walter's and Toby's interchange about Toby's "Asse" (VIII, 32, 584-85). But then we become aware, in the section entitled "The Postillion," of the ephemeral nature of even Yorick's non-religiously based benevolence. He wants his driver to proceed slowly so he can "enjoy the sweets" of the ass's owner's story—showing no concern over the driver's "unfeeling lash" applied to his horses. Thus Yorick is disposed by his sentiments "to make the best of the worst, as ever wight was, and all runs counter." (p. 45). The episode is structured to illustrate Yorick's inability to determine a proper object for benevolence, an inability caused by the attraction that benevolent feelings have for him. The live, suffering horses are objects in practical need of benevolence here, more so than the dead ass and perhaps even its sentimental owner. But Yorick's determination to "enjoy the sweets" of the tale keeps him from establishing with the owner even that sentimental bond of sympathy which the Shandy brothers are constantly rebuilding; Yorick tries to delight in the "sweets" in the privacy of his carriage.

Yorick, in fact, regards Toby Shandy's philanthropy as a norm for philanthropy, but he is unable to use it as a norm. At the opera, he deliberately chooses to sit next to the old French officer to honor
the memory of "Captain Tobias Shandy, the dearest of my flock and friends" (p. 60). But Yorick's reaction to the memory of Toby's philanthropy, like his reaction to his memory of the Monk, shows him "weak as a woman": "I never think of his philanthropy at this long distance from his death but my eyes gush out with tears." This disposition to gush, combined with his self-proclaimed ability to "translate" the characters of people from their outward appearances, leads him to the fallacies of his "short-hand" system which we have already mentioned; the "connection" with the Marquisina di F--- and its at best dubious moral implications exemplify the results of such a combination. Philanthropy is his theoretical norm, but pleasure is eventually the standard when he judges the connection with the Marquisina.

But the major object of attention at the opera is the dwarf who is allowed, after several moments of frustration, to stand in front of the huge German who has been blocking his view. The dwarf, of course, is an objective correlative for pitiableness, analogous to the beggars in the earlier episode; perhaps, though, dwarves objectify pitiableness even more than the beggars, by virtue of their malformity:

I feel some little principles within me, which incline me to be merciful towards this poor blighted part of my species, who have neither size or strength to get on in the world. I cannot bear to see one of them trod upon... [p. 647].

And on the same page Yorick mentions having helped what he had thought was a small boy to overstep a gutter and finding it to be a
dwarf about forty years old. In any case, the dwarf at the opera is pitiable and there is satisfaction on Yorick's and the reader's part at seeing him helped. It is a twofold process: pomposity and arrogance, represented by the German, are deflated, and helplessness is assisted. It is a classic Latitudinarian situation, in that the letter of the law, represented by the German's legal right to stand where he was, is made to give way for a morally more equitable situation.

Yorick is interested, as his conversation at the opera with the old soldier indicates, in "mutual toleration" and "mutual love." There is no indication, for instance, of romantic irony on his part throughout the story pointing to a fundamentally insincere and non-benevolent attitude. He gives no indication of self-awareness in the scenes where sentiments lead him astray or where they lead him to contradict an earlier position, as when he refuses the Monk a sou. He believes theoretically, as we have said, in philanthropy; in practice he confuses benevolent sentiments with philanthropy too often to be a morally effectual agent. Sterne enables us to become aware of this ineffectuality by alternating episodes involving genuinely benevolent feelings on Yorick's part, such as with the dwarf, with scenes of misguided benevolence. His flirtation with the fille de chambre, for example, follows the episode at the opera.

An episode that demonstrates even more emphatically the unreliability of Yorick's feelings as a guide for conduct is that involving the caged starling. He encounters the bird after discovering that he
needs a passport, and he has been cavalierly dismissing fears that he
might be thrown in the Bastille: "Beshrew the sombre pencil! said I
vauntingly, for I envy not its power, which paints the evils of life
with so hard and deadly a colouring" (p. 75). Then the bird utters
its "I can't get out" and for Yorick becomes an objectification of
imprisonment and slavery. He cannot free the bird, but his feelings
are immediately changed. Comically (although apparently not con-
sciously so), Yorick kneels on the next-to-the-top step of the flight
he is mounting and cries

Gracious heaven!...grant me but health, thou great
Bestower of it, and give me but this fair goddess
[Liberty] as my companion, and shower down thy
mitres, if it seems good unto thy divine providence,
upon those heads which are aching for them [p. 77].

With his sentiments still his guide, Yorick sits in his room and
tries to philosophize about "the miseries of confinement" (p. 77). He
is in the "right frame for it" and his imagination conjures up a
prisoner whose sufferings he begins to consider. But it is emotional
self-indulgence of the sort he anticipates with Madame de L---:
"sickening incidents of a tale of misery." While thinking of the hypo-
thesical family, Yorick's heart begins to bleed, and so he goes on to
other facets of the prisoner's life:

As I darkened the little light he had, 19 he lifted
up a hopeless eye towards the door, then cast it
down, shook his head, and went on with his work
of affliction. I heard his chains upon his legs,
as he turned his body to lay his little stick upon
the bundle. He gave a deep sigh; I saw the iron
enter into his soul. I burst into tears. I could
not sustain the picture of confinement which my fancy had drawn. I started up from my chair, and called La Fleur... [p. 78].

The starling thus leads him first to abandon his careless disregard of possible imprisonment, then, for an emotional few moments, to contemplate an imagined prisoner. Then the prisoner is as quickly forgotten as he was created; Yorick calls La Fleur, not to do something for the cause of universal liberty but to get a coach ready to facilitate his quest for a passport.

This is, of course, what was most reasonable to do in the first place. But the feelings evoked by the bird do not lead Yorick to take this practical step, nor do they benefit anyone except Yorick, whose imagination is gratified. That he even thinks to help himself is merely a by-product of his imagination. The quasi-moral pursuit of freeing the bird is forgotten, although Yorick tells us that he purchased the bird and kept him as a novelty, spreading the tale of the starling's history to his friends and eventually giving him away. The bird and his "four simple words," therefore, lose importance to Yorick as an objectification of helpless confinement and a stimulus to benevolent sentiments: ironically, the bird serves indirectly as a stimulus to self-interest. Yorick seems to think that the unpredictable directions in which his sentiments cause him to swerve are the result of fatality: "I seldom go to the place I set out for" (p. 82). But Sterne has allowed Yorick to reveal here and on numerous other occasions his predilection to obey impulse and follow sentiment instead
of reason or the Anglican principles which even the "lousy prebendary"
would be expected to know.

In addition to the beggars, the dead ass, the dwarf, and the
starling, all of which may be said to be more or less integral to the
narrative progress of the story, Sterne has Yorick include two en-
tirely non-functional incidents in the story which serve to indicate
Yorick's emphasis on sentiment and his concomitant obliviousness to
absolute norms. The two incidents are "Le Patisser" (p. 82) and
"The Sword" (p. 85). Both serve to stimulate Yorick's sentimental-
ity to the point where he confuses moral goodness with the gratifica-
tion of sentimental feelings.

The "patisser" (Yorick's spelling) is the type of retired
soldier for whom Yorick has particularly warm feelings. His story
makes him all the more an object of Yorick's affective nature. He is
sedate and dignified, even selling pates, and he wears the gold cross
of a Chevalier de Saint Louis. At his wife's side, "he felt no dis-
honour in defending her and himself from want in this way, unless
Providence had offer'd him a better" (p. 84). In short, he is, like
the Monk, representative of dignity in humble trappings and is
obviously more universally appealing as a type than, for instance,
someone like Madame de V-- whose sentimental appeal does not
extend beyond Yorick to the reader. But Yorick's reaction indicates
that he interprets his own aroused sentiments as confirmation of his
own virtue; making the transition to the sentimental conclusion of the
episode, he says

It would be wicked to withhold a pleasure from the good, in passing over what happen'd to this poor Chevalier of St. Louis about nine months after p. 84; emphasis added.

The implication is that one is "good" if one feels pleasure over the compensation that the ex-soldier eventually receives; thus virtuous feelings are equated with virtue. 21

The incident of "The Sword" also demonstrates Yorick's tendency to focus on feelings and is equally irrelevant to the plot. He claims that the "patisser" incident was told "to please the reader" and that this is told to please himself. It is, generically at least, the same kind of tale as "The Patisser": deserved restoration of dignified status to someone who had lost it. But Yorick is not concerned with the justice of the situation, nor does he empathize, really, with the Marquis. When the man and his family walk out, carrying their newly-returned ancestral sword, Yorick's comment is "O how I envied him his feelings!" (p. 87). So it is not empathy that Yorick feels, nor is it even sentiment as defined by Traugott, such as we see so often in Tristram Shandy. Rather than constructing a bond between himself and the Marquis, Yorick envies the man's sentiments. This is neither Christian charity nor Latitudinarian philanthropy such as is endorsed in Sterne's sermons. It is the third orbit of benevolence, motivated by no orthodox principle, and represents feelings desired merely for the sake of enjoying them, a state of sentimental
anarchy as opposed to the rational anarchy which prevails at Shandy Hall. 22

Sentimental Journey, like Tristram Shandy, is (using Traugott's definition of the term) 23 an argument. While Tristram argues simultaneously for the need of a bond of sympathy between men and against the arbitrary imposition of systems on men's behavior, the Journey argues that benevolent feelings, as represented by Yorick, are not in themselves sufficient either as a norm for conduct or as an indication of virtue. The argument posited by Sentimental Journey complements the Latitudinarian Anglicanism of Sterne's sermons. Sterne gives us Yorick, his proclivities and his deeds as an objective correlative for a moral truth: that without orientation to reason and fixed principles, impulses frequently can cause one to mistake vice for virtue or what is amoral for what is moral.

As we have pointed out in the second chapter of the present work, Sterne claims frequently in his sermons that rewarding feelings often accompany acts of benevolence; see, for example, "Temporal Advantages of Religion" (Sermons, V, 1, 83-91). But nowhere does he claim that the reverse is true, that virtue accompanies feelings. In fact, he points out in the sermons again and again, as Cash has demonstrated, that "the moral worth of the act is determined by some standard outside the emotional constitution--by the law of God or the pronouncements of reason." 24 Yorick is seldom prone to consider either, although he is a clergyman and he professes more than once a
desire to be virtuous.

Sterne provides us in the Journey with clues to the standards by which we should judge Yorick's conduct. The very fact of the clues is dramatically ironic, since Yorick narrates his own story, yet betrays no awareness on his part of his moral inconsistencies, contradictions, and occasional vacuums. He makes numerous, apparently unreflective admissions that he is concerned with feelings, not principles, as when he flees Paris and the hypocritical adulation of the coterie and then tries to engage in a "riot of the affections" among the peasant society. It is clear to us as well that his attention to feelings often leads not toward virtue but toward vice. We see this particularly in the genteel philandering in which he indulges with Madame de L--, the fille de chambre, Madame de V--, and Maria. In all of these episodes amorous feelings disguise themselves as benevolent ones—he feels a need to "help" each of them, though his help usually revolves around creating a situation of greater intimacy for himself and the girl, from traveling with Madame de L-- to having Maria lie in his bosom.

Occasionally Yorick not only disguises amorousness as benevolence, but then disguises both as religion, with a religious cant of his own. He thinks, for example, that it is his vices and evil propensities that urge him not to travel with Madame de L--. He equates a kiss with a "God bless you" when he first meets the fille de chambre; flirting with her, he tells her to "be but as good as thou art handsome!"
(p. 69) and providence will fill her purse. During the "temptation scene" with her, he talks of the need to flee from combat with the devil but at the same time consciously enjoys the pleasurable rigors of temptation. His religious address to Madame de V-- is merely a prelude to flirtation and a means of keeping her a coquette for a while longer. He talks about Maria in scriptural jargon: he would have her "eat of my bread and drink of my own cup" and "lie in my bosom" and like the Good Samaritan, he wants to pour oil and wine on her wounds. But she is quickly forgotten as he travels in search of new riots for his affections.

Because of the meaninglessness of this jargon and his evident taste for flirtations and assignations, we cannot regard Yorick's benevolent feelings as reliable, especially when they merely serve to mask the true moral nature of the situation. He can state, as he does to the Count de B-- (p. 89), that he is less interested in the nakedness of French women than in the nakedness of their hearts; but in the light of his flirtations we can reasonably conclude that his sentiments often disguise an interest in them that is not entirely spiritual. Though he is interested in

a quiet journey of the heart in pursuit of NATURE, and those affections which arise out of her, which make us love each other, and the world, better than we do \[\bar{P}. 90\bar{7}\],

he has, at the time of this utterance, already described his flirting with Madame de L--, the Grisset, the Marquisina di F--, and the fille de chambre. The seventh commandment, as a guide to this area
of his life, is clouded over by his feelings and his jargon.

His cant about virtue does indicate that Yorick is theoretically interested both in it and probably in some standard that will, if heeded, lead him to it. It is his feelings that cloud the issue. When La Fleur asks for a day off on an occasion when Yorick needs him, Yorick says, "we must feel, not argue" (p. 107), and he then talks about the need for employers to remember the essential humanity of their servants. He is true to Latitudinarian benevolent principles here. But it is impulses, he says, "which generally do determine me" (p. 35). He can even appreciate, at least in theory, the need for a bond of sentimental benevolence among men; his attitude toward the bilious Smelfungus and Mundungus indicates this:

Peace be to them! if it is to be found; but heaven itself, was it possible to get there with such tempers, would want objects to give it. Every gentle spirit would come flying...to hail their arrival. Nothing would the souls of Smelfungus and Mundungus hear of, but fresh anthems of joy, fresh raptures of love, and fresh congratulations of their common felicity. I heartily pity them: they have brought up no faculties for this work; and was the happiest mansion in heaven to be allotted to Smelfungus and Mundungus, they would be so far from being happy, that /their souls/...would do penance there to all eternity /pp. 31-32/.

Smelfungus and Mundungus are anarchistic in that their splenetic nature cuts them off from common sympathy with mankind. Yorick feels that he participates in a sympathetic union with mankind, and in fact he does at times--e.g., by giving money to the beggars, feeling sorry for the dwarf, or eating with the Bourbonnois. But often his
"sympathy" is disguised moral or religious anarchy, involving no beneficiary but himself--e.g., his imagined solacing of Madame de L--, his sympathy for the prisoner in the Bastille, or, more ludicrously, his pity for the unused chaise.

In this sense, then, Sentimental Journey is an argument, developed by demonstration; Yorick is the chief exhibit. Sterne shows us the amoral nature of benevolent feelings by showing them operate in Yorick without the constant guide of moral principles. Yorick pays little attention to religious norms, whether they be the Ten Commandments or simple principles of charity, as his relationships with the various women and the Monk respectively indicate. There are too many reminders that Yorick is going morally astray for us to interpret the Journey as Sterne's endorsement of unrestrained sentimentality. There are genuine objective correlatives for philanthropic sentiments, such as the Monk's snuffbox or the caged starling. But there is also Sterne, the player of jokes on the reader (and on Yorick) as the unconcluded sentimental "Fragment" (pp. 108-13) indicates. And there is Yorick, always ready to undergo the illusions conjured by the "rose-buds of delights" which he is usually anxious to find in his path.
NOTES

Chapter VI

1 See, for example, Arie de Froe, Laurence Sterne and His Novels Studied in the Light of Modern Psychology (Groningen, Noordhoff, 1925). De Froe says nothing more incisive than that Sterne's mind was "unclean, tainted, and perverse" (p. 14).

2 All references to the novel will be to the Everyman's Library edition, London, 1927.

3 See previous chapter.

4 See Wayne Booth, Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, U. of Chicago Press, 1961), 316. Booth mentions that there is some difficulty, however, in determining Sterne's real attitudes toward sentimentality in Sentimental Journey precisely because of the paucity of direct evidence.

5 Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments: The Ethical Dimension of the Journey (Pittsburgh, Duquesne U. Press, 1966). I find certain areas of disagreement with Mr. Cash which will be made clear later in the chapter, but I agree with this basic premiss.

6 See R. S. Crane, "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'," ELH, I (1934), 229.


8 Cf. the "eternal measures of right and wrong" in the sermon on conscience (Tristram Shandy, II, 17, 135) or the "internal marks" of Christ's doctrine that "natural reason" finds worthy of God (sermon on "St. Peter's Character," V, 4, 121).

9 See Cash, 78-79.

10 We learn only later in the section that the conquest was of the temptation, not of the girl. Sterne obviously felt that his readers' anticipations, as in Tristram Shandy, could be proper subject for humor.


13 Graham Greene identifies Sterne and Yorick here, finding the emotion expressed disgusting; see The Lost Childhood (New York, Viking Press, 1952), 61. But the handkerchief passing is too reminiscent of the comic technique used in the death of Le Fever in Tristram Shandy to believe in the sincerity of its emotions, at least on Sterne's part. This is one point (whether comedy subverts pathos in the scene of Le Fever's death) whereon I disagree with Arthur Cash, as well as with Greene; see Sterne's Comedy, 24, 38-39n.


15 We may also regard with some skepticism the altruism of his wish for her to "lie in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter" (p. 125).

16 See Watt's chronology in the Riverside edition of Tristram Shandy (Boston, 1965), xxxviii-xxxix. According to Watt's calculations, Yorick apparently dies first.

17 Cash suggests that the graveyard scene has beguiled his own (Cash's) tears, which, while it may be true, does not substantiate the total objectivity of his analysis. In addition, he equates the scene with Le Fever's death in Tristram, ignoring the comic technique of the latter and the comic precedent of Yorick's death, with the black page. See Sterne's Comedy, 24.

18 Strictly speaking, no scriptural or ecclesiastical principle orders Yorick to give the Monk anything, though Sterne's Latitudinarianism would endorse it. But Yorick not only refuses benefaction, but he offers malefaction.

19 With unconscious sadism, Yorick, in his imagination, adds to the prisoner's suffering and then is able to sentimentalize all the more: a classic instance of what I categorize as the "third orbit" of activity--not motivated by any principle and not involving any
beneficiary but Yorick himself; feelings here have a separate existence of their own.

20 Nabokov, however, uses the starling and his words as such an objectification in Lolita (New York, Putnam's, 1955), 257.

21 See Sterne's sermon "The Character of Herod" (II, 9, 101-11) for a discussion of Herod as a sort of archetype of the dichotomy possible in one man between "benevolent propensities" and vicious actions. Yorick's actions here are not vicious but neither is his virtue guaranteed by his feelings.


23 Ibid., xiv, et passim.

24 Sterne's Comedy, 64-68.
CONCLUSION

Laurence Sterne's religious position is essentially a mixture, and it cannot be understood except in terms of its diversity. Probably anyone's religious attitudes, however dogmatic, will be seen as complex if they are analyzed carefully enough. But even the most casual reader of Sterne is aware of the complexity and, to some degree at least, the artistic intricacy of *Tristram Shandy*. That its author's attitude toward religion was not a simplistic one should be no surprise. Perhaps what is most arresting about Sterne's religion is that its apparently conflicting aspects are as deeply rooted as they are. One does not find Sterne, at the bottom of it all, essentially in one position to the exclusion of the other, although there are, indeed, variations in emphasis.

The two major aspects of Sterne's religion are his Anglican orthodoxy and his Latitudinarianism. Anglicanism requires of its members belief in certain absolutes and adherence to an established liturgy. The most basic beliefs are in God; in the redemptive power of Christ, the son of God; and in the divine authority of Scripture. The liturgical ceremonies, within a system of a consecrated priesthood and episcopacy, center about the Anglican Sunday service and sacrament of communion. Both in his espousal of doctrine and adherence to liturgy, Sterne was consistently orthodox.

Latitudinarianism blends with, rather than conflicts with,
Sterne's orthodoxy. The spirit of what Sterne calls "philanthropy," however, is opposed to a rigidity of doctrine that does not take into account personal frailty. And the benevolent ethic that Sterne clearly endorses is generally a spontaneous manifestation that does not concern itself with formalities or ceremonials.

Therein lies the potential conflict. To some degree it parallels the classic dichotomy between "justice" (orthodoxy, absolutism) and "mercy" (anti-legalism, individualism). Sterne endorsed a religious attitude that incorporated both and that essentially involved no real conflict: justice, that is, execution of official and established laws of behavior, defers to mercy, that is, benevolent regard for every individual. In cases of sinful transgression of accepted laws of behavior, which Sterne allows to be possible, \(^1\) mercy, in the form of benevolent (and sentimental) forgiveness, should be automatically forthcoming from every man.

The sentiment of Sterne's ethic is more than a quirk of his own personality, disposed as he evidently was to gusts of emotion. In his *Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, Sterne makes the affective element a vital part of his ethic. It is not merely a rhetorical device, although it can perform this function too; widows and orphans serve him well in both the sermons and novels. But sentiment for Sterne is of paramount human importance, because it sets man apart as a spiritual creature and distinguishes the really religious act from the merely perfunctory. \(^2\) Sentiment in this sense can best be defined as
the emotional impulse toward benevolence, normally prompted by a concrete situation involving some person or creature in need of assistance or mercy.

But we must remember that, despite its important place in Sterne's religious attitudes, sentiment is not, for Sterne, synonymous with religion. Nowhere in the sermons is there any indication that Sterne regarded benevolent feelings as an infallible sign of benevolence. The "conscience" sermon in Tristram Shandy, in fact, specifically enjoins against spiritual satisfaction based on what our feelings may prompt us to believe of our virtue. The sermons tell us, rather, that sentiment tends to be a concomitant of virtue; it is one of the "temporal advantages of religion," helping to make virtue its own reward, although not its only one, since social and economic harmony are others. But virtue does not inevitably accompany feelings, which in themselves are amoral and in need of religious norms if they are to result in virtuous action. Thus, sentiment is a characteristic of Sterne's Latitudinarianism, but it is not essential to those principles of his Anglicanism that form the nucleus of his religious thought.

Sterne's own life was a mixture of both orthodox and extra-orthodox elements. He was very much a product of his age, which was one that saw an increasing de-emphasis on religious doctrinal polemic and a growing emphasis on religious toleration. Latitudinarianism, an attitude within the English Church that tended to stress,
rather than dogmatic differences, the necessity of harmonious behavior and "reasoned" attitudes toward man's relationship with God, was a position toward which Sterne naturally gravitated. He was an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, but as a representative of that Church, he stressed in his sermons not the doctrinal uniqueness of Anglicanism but the need for bonds of sympathy between men. His adherence, however, to the great absolutes of his Church--God, the redemptive Christ, inspired Scripture--did not lessen.

There is an anti-papist bias in a number of Sterne's sermons; the best known example is, of course, the sermon in Tristram Shandy. The bias is expressed against the institution of the Catholic Church and its authorities rather than against individual members, whom Sterne tended to regard as victims of Romish tyranny.³ Politically, of course, the Roman Church was regarded at Sterne's time as inimical to British interests, and it is evident that Sterne's political environment had much to do with this negative element in his religious attitudes. He also deprecates Methodism, or "enthusiasm," but not nearly as strongly and on different grounds: that its motivations and spiritual insights were unfounded and unreasonable. Bias, both against Catholicism and Methodism, is lacking in Sentimental Journey, possibly because of his personal experiences in the Catholic countries of France and Italy.⁴

Sterne remained a priest all his life. As such, he was of course a spokesman for the Established Church and its practices, and
he seems to have carried out his official duties conscientiously.

There is no evidence, however, that he ever devoted any time to philosophical consideration of the doctrines that he upheld or that he ever put to rational scrutiny the authority of the Scriptures on which he based his sermons. In this sense Sterne can be called Latitudinarian, although surely not of the intellectual bent of the Cambridge Platonists, whom many regard as the initiators of Latitudinarianism, or of someone like Archbishop Tillotson, its eloquent spokesman from whom Sterne took much of the material for his sermons.

Sterne's novels endorse essentially the same religious and ethical values as his sermons. The novels differ from the sermons in artistic intentions and accomplishments, of course. But, while strictly speaking neither of his novels can be considered didactic, both embody observations on man's relationships with his fellow-men; Tristram tends to demonstrate the sentimental ethic in action and the Journey tends to demonstrate the consequences of sentiment when it is divorced from ethical norms.

Tristram himself says that his book will do readers' hearts good as well as their heads (VI, 17, 436), and when Walter Shandy observes that everything in the world is big with jest, "and has wit in it, and instruction too" (V, 32, 393), we can apply this to Tristram Shandy as a whole. The problem with finding the instruction is that the jest is nearly always there along with it, and the fact that there is a jest is itself often the instruction.⁵ Tristram is a comic novel, if
we are forced to categorize it, rather than a didactic one. Sterne's mode is comedy, and Walter's observation about the world is important, because it is clearly Sterne's too.

Thus the situations in *Tristram Shandy* involving either sentiment or expectations of it are consistently undercut by comic surprise or by some thrust that introduces the ludicrous to the situation. Yorick's death is sad, and Eugenius's sorrow is genuine, for instance, but the black page is grotesquely incongruous (I, 12, 30-34). Uncle Toby's treatment of the fly is touching, but the episode is filled with bombast on both his part and Tristram's (II, 12, 113-14). Trim's concern for his brother, while he is reading Yorick's sermon, is filled with benevolence, but the tension he creates with his subjective digressions is comic. (II, 17, 123-40). Trim's and Toby's sympathy for the lashed grenadier is genuine, but it conflicts comically with Walter's private sorrow (IV, 4, 275-76). Bobby's death provokes the sorrow of several persons, but Sterne allows us to see the ludicrousness of the cross-purposes everyone is at.

What is interesting about the comedy of *Tristram Shandy* is that continuous as it is, neither sentiment nor benevolence are negated by it. Sterne, for example, is clearly on Uncle Toby's and Trim's side, muddle-headed as the pair often are. If there is an "enemy," it is Dr. Slop, who represents a combination of elements hostile to Sterne's Latitudinarianism. He is an arrogant Roman Catholic whose obsession with hierarchy and impersonal, authoritarian
injunctions against various kinds of behavior make him ludicrous, especially in contrast to Uncle Toby's mild, personable Protestantism. Thus there are instances of what might be called the reverse side of the coin of the Latitudinarian ethic: the thwarting of pomposity and rigidity. We see this in Slop's reactions to the sermon on Conscience and in his foolishness in reading the Curse of Ernulphus (III, 11, 171-79). Walter's intense preoccupation with various theories such as those about noses and Christian names, makes his ruined expectations comic material as well as object lessons in the fallacy of expecting too much from abstract theorizing.

In the larger sense, therefore, the comedy of Tristram Shandy can be called the servant of Latitudinarianism. While a sentimental facade can be used to lure the reader into a comic trap—as in the death of Le Fever (VI, 10, 426) or the fruitless search for the tomb of Amandus and Amanda (VII, 31, 520-22, and VII, 40, 532)—it can be used with equal facility to devastate the enemies of Latitudinarian benevolence: rigidity, arrogance, pomposity, authoritarianism, pitilessness, and the like. As Arthur Cash points out, however, with the exception of Slop who is rather a straw man, Sterne is concerned not with major sinners but with the commonplace foibles of all men. And Sterne does not attack sentiment with the abandon with which he makes fun of rigidity. In fact, only the abuses of sentimental benevolence are mocked, not sentiment itself. This is part of the larger theme of deflated expectations which is an analogue to his
Latitudinarianism. Although he blunders, we are sympathetic toward Uncle Toby; his sentiments are always generous, even though his timing is (unconsciously) bad. Sterne shows Tristram's sentiments as ludicrous when he (Tristram) inserts the black page. But Eugenius is a sincere and not immoderate mourner. The reader is hypnotized by the stopping and starting of Le Fever's pulse, and this is Sterne's joke on the reader. But Toby's concern is with the sadness of the occasion and with comforting Le Fever's son.

Thus Tristram Shandy clearly endorses the same philanthropic benevolence as the sermons. This is evident, as we have seen, in the characterization and in the advantages and disadvantages that Sterne allows his various characters. Nowhere is this better illustrated than during the reading of Yorick's sermon when the rigid Roman Catholic, Dr. Slop is forced to sit among Latitudinarian Anglicans, Uncle Toby in particular, and argue his splenetic losing cause. And we should keep in mind that Sterne endorses benevolence in Tristram Shandy this way: through the technique of dramatic interplay between characters and through the comic surprise of incongruity (e.g., the marbled page) and deflated expectations (e.g., Walter's naming of Tristram). The digressive plot and constant thwarting of the reader's and the characters' expectations represents, as Traugott points out, the inability of reason to predominate in a world where men incline to follow their hobby-horses. The digressions and the thwarted expectations are, in addition, an analogue to
Sterne's Latitudinarianism which rejected rigidity of moral doctrine.

Because reason cannot predominate, benevolence is necessary to provide a unifying bond between men. Clearly, without it, the Shandy family will forever be in conflict and on bad terms; with it, they will be, as they are, in ultimate sympathy, despite their conflicting hobby-horses. If, in Traugott's terminology, we are to view Tristram Shandy as an "argument," then benevolence and comedy are, in that novel, two sides of the same human coin. Comedy is the tangle of cross-purposes men find themselves in; benevolence helps them bypass the tangle and commune with one another. We may finish reading Tristram Shandy feeling that it is, in Tristram's words, a "cock and bull story" (which the last chapter is); but in the sense we have described, there is "instruction" in the jest itself.

We find in Sentimental Journey a subtle amplification of the same religious principles that Sterne formulates in the sermons and exemplifies in Tristram Shandy. It is a more subtle manifestation of Sterne's position than Tristram in the sense that Tristram argues for a position and the Journey argues against one. But they are complementary arguments. Tristram, the earlier novel, demonstrates in its conflicts the need for human benevolence; Sentimental Journey shows that benevolence not grounded in reason and religious principle is meaningless.

Yorick and his attitudes and actions are the objective correlative for Sterne's argument in the Journey. He is clearly an ineffectual
moral agent, despite his professed fears of the devil and love of God and despite his status as a clergymen. His religious impotency, if we may call it that, is the direct result of his tendency to confuse the benevolent feelings which he is wont to have with benevolence, and to think that the activities to which his feelings lead him are virtuous simply because they are the fruit of virtuous-seeming feelings. His belief in the moral goodness of his actions is fallacious according to the norms of Sterne's religious creed, and, in fact, according to most traditional moral norms.

Yorick's benevolent feelings, for example, frequently center around young attractive women in little or no need of benefaction. Frequently his "benefaction" consists obviously in simple self-gratification on his part, as with the handsome Grisset or the fille de chambre. More than once he comes close to adultery, if not actually engaging in it, as with his near-assignation with Madame de L-- or with the Marquisina di F--. When he does encounter a young woman in need at least of sympathy, as he does in Maria, he lingers only long enough to shed a few tears, then leaves and soon forgets her. And simple human charity can suffer, as well as the seventh commandment. After luxuriating in feelings of benevolence, Yorick harangues the mendicant Monk and refuses him any offering. Their later reconciliation, which turns out, apparently, to be sincere, in initiated insincerely by Yorick to make a favorable impression on Madame de L--.
Yorick admittedly trusts his sentiments more than his reasoning faculties and in fact enjoys the illusions that his affective powers can create. Thus, if he is not led to violate religious principles, as he is in the philanderous episodes, he is led to ignore them. In either case, absolutist religious principles are not a norm that he customarily tries to follow. His benevolent sentiments are often indulged in for their own sake, independent of religious principle and irrespective of whether there is a recipient, outside of himself, for whatever benevolence is attendant upon his feelings. The result is a moral vacuum.

It is a vacuum because whether Yorick performs virtuously or viciously, his deeds are independent of the gravitational pull of any moral laws. Yorick the traveller is thus far removed from Yorick the writer of sermons. The nucleus of the sermons is a simple but absolute creed; in them we see Sterne's Latitudinarianism operating as an expansion of activity, generally philanthropic, but within the pale of orthodox Anglicanism. Yorick's adherence to sentimental inclinations causes him to act outside of that pale and consequently, from a moral viewpoint, his actions are directionless. Whether he acts virtuously, as with the beggars, or viciously, as with the Marquisina di F--, is left to chance. The benevolent activity of Tristram Shandy, although not always religiously motivated, is still an analogue to religious Latitudinarian activity. But in Sentimental Journey feelings are given free rein and religious norms have no
control. The reader can see the comic disparity that Yorick, despite his jester's name, apparently can not; we are aware of the numerous contradictions of religious principle that often follow so immediately upon his espousal of them, as when he claims that he tries to flee the devil's temptations, then indulges in his moral struggle with the fille de chambre.

Thus there is in Laurence Sterne's sermons and novels, as well as in his life, a clear and consistent manifestation of a religious position. He was a writer of comic novels who was at the same time an Anglican priest. And while he was not, as Hammond indicates, extraordinarily interested in uniquely Anglican doctrines, he expressed in his sermons a creed that his novels manifest in a uniquely comic way. The sentimental benevolence that his Latitudinarianism endorses does not negate the absolute principles of his Anglicanism but rather attempts to make relationships among men, like Walter and Uncle Toby, more peaceful and lasting. So far is his sentimental benevolence from negating his religious principles that he constructed, in Sentimental Journey, a novel which demonstrates the ineffectuality of sentiment not founded on absolute norms.
NOTES

Conclusion


2 Notice Tristram's comment on the sympathetic silence that greets Trim's tears over his brother Tom: "certain proof of pity!" (II, 17, 125).

3 See his sermons, "Pharisee and Publican in the Temple" (I, 6, 78); "Job's Account of Life" (II, 10, 122); and "Penance" (VI, 10, 179).


6 Cash, 402.


8 Perhaps the best example of chance determining his moral actions is the disappointment of his scheme to travel with Madame de L--. Before he can propose the idea to her and while he is fighting his "dirty" inclinations, she is taken away.

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