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## Moral Dilemmas and Cases of Conscience : Trollope's Morality in The Warden and The Last Chronicle of Barset

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**Moral Dilemmas and Cases of Conscience:  
Trollope's Morality in *The Warden* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset***

By

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A Thesis submitted as Partial Fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Award of

**Bachelor of Arts (Honours),  
English**

at the Faculty of Arts, Mt. Lawley Campus,  
Edith Cowan University.

Date of Submission: 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1999

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I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does to contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: 

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## **Abstract**

This thesis offers an exploration of Trollope's morality in *The Warden* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. Existing critical work which explores Trollope's morality often argues either for or against Trollope's moral relativism. This thesis argues, instead, that Trollope's morality unifies aspects of both theoretical perspectives. It reconciles the polarisation of Trollope's moral absolutism and moral relativism, taking the middle-ground. In doing so, it makes evident the contradictions and extremes in existing Trollopian criticism.

The thesis places Trollopian morality within the historical and socio-cultural context of Victorianism. It focuses on the Victorian consciousness of change, securing a definition of Trollope's morality which brings to the fore the contradictions masked by complacent assumptions about Victorian moral conservatism. Incorporating primary and secondary literary sources, the thesis interweaves the man and his work in an original assessment of Trollope's personal and professional moral code.

## **Glossary**

***The Warden (1855) - W***

***The Clergymen of the Church of England (1866) – CCE***

***The Last Chronicle of Barset (1867) – LCOB***

***The Life of Cicero (1880) – LOC***

***An Autobiography (1883) – AA***



## **Introduction**

Goldberg has called Trollope the perfect exponent of the Victorian era (in Watt, 1971). His work has been described by Kucich as “the apotheosis of normality” (1989, p.593), and by Terry as a “celebration of placidity” (1978, p.3). Certainly, Trollope acquiesced with many of the standards, tastes and avoidances which characterised Victorian literature. But these assertions seem to depend on universalising assumptions about the Victorian era. The contention that Trollope’s ‘normality’ and ‘placidity’ make him a representative of Victorianism is simply not supportable. There is not *one* Victorian ideology, although there were predominant ideologies. The Victorian age is known as the ‘Age of Reform’, a label which indicates a special consciousness of the flux and perpetual readjustment necessary in the process of change. In 1855 John Grote coined the terms ‘relativity’ and ‘relativism’, which are an index of that consciousness of change, and any attempt to secure a precise definition of Trollope and his work should take account of this. If Trollope was typically Victorian, he was only so in the sense that he embodies the contradictions and ideological extremes to which the Victorian era gave witness.

In a recent review, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, of Robert D. Hume’s book, *Reconstructing Contexts: The aims and principles of archaeo-historicism* (1999), Andrew Hadfield writes that Hume calls for the scholar’s awareness of the perspective of the original audience. In other words, the scholar should take account of the socio-cultural context from within which literature is produced. In modern literary theory, the relationship between text and society is secondary to that between text and reader, but I believe that, without due consideration of the Victorian social context, the ability to assess and appreciate a Victorian writer’s work is diminished. Victorians believed that literature had the power to produce and determine the national character, and this had a particular effect on the literature of the period. To ignore this is to the scholar’s detriment.

There was a prevailing tendency in Victorian England to view authors less as creative artists than as purveyors and protectors of common morality. The nineteenth-century critic, Hepworth Dixon, considered it a novelist's duty to "maintain the high majesty of virtue over the turbulence of vice" (in Dalziel, 1957, p.48). Dalziel observes that authors whose stories dealt with such 'subversive' subject matter as "the sensualities of the upper classes, the lust of the aristocracy, the men-about-town and the lowly maidens upon whom their affections are ill-advisedly bestowed", were charged with crimes as grave as "the demoralisation and corruption of the minds of girls", and "the commissioning of sins" (1957, p.51-52). Morality proved a fruitful source of fictional drama, and, while it helped to stabilise theme and character in many Victorian novels, it also helped to generate the complexities which make Trollope's novels so interesting. Trollope persistently rejected the conventions of textual moral drama, which called for linear moral progression, moral climax, and moral resolution. In Trollope's mind, morality was something to debate, to struggle with and interrogate. As Michael Sadleir suggests, Trollope engages with morality as if he were a spectator of an animated debate, "excited ...[and]...eager to applaud a brilliant piece of play or to shout against a blunder" (1961, p.155). And, while he believed moral certainty was possible, it was never his intention to resolve moral conflict. Accordingly, it is my contention that the assertions Kucich, Terry, and Tracy make about Trollope's work mask the author's sturdy moral independence.

Trollope was repulsed by moral narrowness and orthodoxy. This is why his fictional characters are so morally diverse. Trollope's multi-faceted sense of reality enabled him to examine and critique morality without slipping into dogma. And this was the author's supreme objective, both in life and literature. His moral method is clearly inspired by Cicero's notion of 'moral perception', which can only be achieved when a writer "meticulously examines the individual case, all sides of it, its history, the motivation of each agent involved, the results of action or inaction, repercussions in many directions" (in apRoberts, 1971, p.69-70).

In her book, *Trollope: Artist and Moralist* (1971), Ruth apRoberts argues her case for Trollope's moral relativism. She insists that Trollope endorses a flexible morality, "looking at the specific individual instances with a tender casuistry, in the spirit of what is now sometimes called 'situation ethics' (1971, p.42 & 55). Robert Polhemus differs from her only insofar as he finds moral relativism limited to the late novels. While apRoberts and Polhemus are not the first to recognise Trollope's sympathy for all, they are the first to argue that this tolerance, this regard for situation so characteristic of Trollope, amounts to fundamental moral relativism. Slakey and Kucich have refuted claims for Trollope's moral relativism. This thesis evolves from the juncture of these two theoretical perspectives. Trollope's pronouncements of honesty and individualism are evidence of his moral relativism; but these pronouncements are coupled with an insistence on the functional efficacy of religion, and the need for moral certainty. Thus, it is my premise that Trollopian morality unifies aspects of moral relativism and moral absolutism.

In chapter one I explore the Ciceronian concept of *honestum* from which Trollope derived his conceptions of moral honesty and individualism. My premise is that Trollope was concerned with the benefits and efficacy of experiential, or practical, Christianity, as opposed to literal, Biblical Christianity, with its concurrent adherence to doctrine and fixed moral laws. In experiential Christianity Trollope found a moral code which looked to the circumstances, and was thus adaptable and flexible, taking account of the variety and diversity in the human world. Yet it also provided him with the moral certainty he needed, because it offered a guide to life, in the form of exhortations to benevolent, altruistic conduct. This moral perspective is dependent more on Christ's commandment to 'love thy neighbour' than on literal, Biblical moral directives. Historical and dogmatic Christianity could not compel Trollope's belief, but *humanitas* or ethical Christianity, served as his supreme guide to life.

In chapter two I explore apRoberts' case for Trollope's fundamental moral relativism, and Kucich's case against it, and then argue my case for Trollope's reconciliation of both perspectives. I argue that the 'conscience' is the key to this reconciliation because, on the one hand, it is uniquely individual; and on the other hand, its revelations act as a guide to life, which unifies individuals. Thus, it is the key to Trollope's moral certainty. I contrast Trollope's humanistic morality with the moral tradition which has been dominant since ancient times, and which Shirley Letwin calls that of the 'self-divided man'.

In the third and final chapter I situate Trollopian morality within the context of Victorian philanthropy. I explore the opposing moral ideologies which underpinned philanthropic practices during the nineteenth century, comparing the scientific, professional approach to philanthropy advocated by the Charity Organisation Society, with the altruistic, personal approach proffered by private, random philanthropists. I argue that the aims and ideals of altruistic, as opposed to scientific, charity, are more closely connected with Trollopian morality, with its emphasis on charitable conduct and experiential Christianity.

## Chapter 1: Honesty

In Trollope's mind, an 'honest' literary style involved concealing or disguising one's artistry, to create an immediate, familiar and relevant literary effect. A self-conscious literary artist, Trollope declared in *An Autobiography*, "who thinks much of his words as he writes" (1883, p.162), was guilty of pretension, which the author regarded as the worst kind of literary dishonesty. In a letter to Henry Merivale in 1877, Trollope declared, "No doubt many a literary artist so conceals his art that readers do not know that there is much art" (in Tracy, 1978, p.1). By concealing his artistry, Trollope believed an author enabled his readers to recognise themselves in his books, and not feel that they had been transported amongst fictional creatures whose lives in no way paralleled their own. In Trollope's mind, concealing one's artistry was not nihilistic, but the supreme expression of literary honesty. It was also the manifestation of his own pragmatism, and his personal and professional belief in individuality.

Trollope interrogates notions of honesty which are dependent on uncompromising, inflexible moral directives. This is one aspect of his wider moral agenda, which is to encourage the reader to interrogate and understand his or her moral biases. apRoberts is right when she suggests that Trollope's casuistic method appealed to those "who liked to be able to explain things *to themselves*" (my italics) (1971, p.11). This is what I mean when I speak of Trollope's personal and professional belief in individuality. As apRoberts suggests, Trollope's casuistry demands the writer turn casuist in order to approach each case of conscience, or moral dilemma "with our utmost *honest* – and realistic – consideration" (1971, p.39). Trollope took a special interest in the history of moral philosophy, especially the Stoic and Judaic moral traditions. He was deeply influenced by the ethical thought of Cicero, and his conception of honesty borrows heavily from Cicero's *honestum*. Accordingly, this concept will inform my discussion of Trollopian honesty.

In *The Warden* (1855) and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), moral dilemmas, in which the concept of honesty is implicated, are often couched in terms of a debate between 'Principle' and 'Expediency'. Exploring the means by which individuals make judgements of honest and dishonest, good and bad, Trollope presents a debate in which 'principle' and 'expediency' are the two contenders. Trollope's characters often face decisions or situations in which they must engage in a kind of mental acrobatics to ascertain a favourable course of action, and Trollope's casuistry muddies the arena in which these mental processes take place. Trollope destabilises traditional moral analogies between honesty and principle, and dishonesty and expediency. Indeed, his main focus is the interplay of principle and practical exigency, which lures the reader away from the path toward moral resolution. With reference to *The Warden* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, I will show how the terms of the debate between principle and expediency are set within religious, legal and moral contexts.

Trollope's literary honesty is one key element in his writing, but one must not limit its application to this context alone. In Trollope's mind, honesty was a term with broad application; he liked to think it described his literary technique. But most importantly, honesty for Trollope was a way of life. Honesty is, therefore, intimately connected with the individual and society. And because it is firmly planted in the social world, it is connected to realism. Trollope rejects any definition of reality which posits unity or the absolute, inculcating newer, less simplistic ideas which better serve his sense of truth. He insists on paradox, and deflates monisms. In the words of apRoberts, "he deflates our pretensions to rationality and insists on the perverse and the absurd" (1971, p.191), all in the name of *honesty*.

Trollope's peculiar form of honesty, so closely connected to the unpredictable and often absurd contingencies of everyday life, depends on the assumption that virtue and vice are not mutually

exclusive, and that “no good is unalloyed” (*W*, p.142). Trollope’s pluralism challenges traditional moral directives which are imposed upon an individual and his actions; actions which, when violated, constitute an act of dishonesty. Trollope questions the assumption that such directives are universally applicable and consistently relevant. As apRoberts declares, “he insists on the significance of the exception to the generality, and he would protect the minority from the majority” (1971, p.40). By challenging absolute moral directives, Trollope is arguing that there can be no absolute basis for moral judgements. However, this does not mean that Trollope diminishes the importance of these judgements, quite the contrary, for Trollope, any admission of relativism makes the study of morals all the more urgent. Indeed, Trollope had such respect for the functional efficacy of conventional religion that he would not relax his support for it in any way. In Trollope’s mind, moral relativism was akin to moral nihilism, and he was too much the pragmatist for that.

apRoberts has argued that Trollope’s insistence upon flexible moral notions is evidence of a fundamental moral relativism. She insists that his “tolerance, sympathy and regard for situation...is in the spirit of what is now called ‘situation ethics’” (*CCE*, p.11), but her evidence is inconclusive. Trollope is certainly tolerant of his strays, sinners, and dogmatic ascetics, and he not only sympathises with them but also solicits his readers’ tolerance and sympathy. Yet, as Roger Slakey argues, if tolerance, sympathy, and regard for situation amount to moral relativism, “Thomas Aquinas and Jesus Christ would be relativists, for in moral questions Aquinas manifested both sympathy and tolerance and insisted upon considering situation, and Jesus not only refused to condemn the woman caught in adultery but gave his life for sinners” (n.d, p.306). One need only consider Letwin’s definition of relativism as “the state in which it is impossible to discover any stable grounds for human judgements...[and] impossible to make objective distinctions between truth and falsehood, virtue and vice” (1982, p.40), to realise that Trollope is far from the moral

relativist apRoberts and Polhemus profess him to be. Certainly, Trollope advances in his fiction a degree of moral relativity, but he never questions the possibility of finding moral certainty, or the value of moral judgement, as apRoberts would have us believe.

A moral relativist refrains from distinguishing between right and wrong, honest and dishonest, because he believes that there exists no foundation upon which a distinction may be made. Trollope does not refrain from distinguishing between right and wrong; indeed, he is certain of the distinction. But he will not make the distinction on the basis of absolute moral directives. In short, Trollope takes issue with *how* people make judgements, not the fact that they make them. Surely, then, Trollope is no relativist: moral judgements, he believes, are too socially beneficial to be deemed invalid. His position is this: moral directives must be flexible, and moral judgements should reflect the varied and diverse nature of humanity. Thus, he applies a kind of casuistry in his moral thinking. If they are to facilitate a harmonious and functional society, judgements of right and wrong, good and bad, honest and dishonest, must be more than ephemeral directives from a God distanced from the practical exigencies of real life: in short, they must be individualistic. I explore this idea further in chapter two.

In his philosophical text, *On Duties* (trans. 1991), Cicero advocates a specific moral code: he refers principle to particular cases, which are always moral dilemmas, where there is much to be said on both sides. Trollope repeatedly acclaims Cicero for this, and for his consonant rejection of systematic philosophy. He declares that Cicero's greatest achievement is that he brings us "out of dead intellectuality into moral perception" (in apRoberts, 1971, p.45). And this is what Trollope would do with his cases. When Trollope speaks of leaving 'dead intellectuality' behind and progressing forward into 'moral perception,' he is abandoning theory in favour of pragmatism. An



individual is 'intellectually dead' if he espouses the virtues of one philosophy to the exclusion of all others.

In Trollope's mind, this individual suffers a kind of mental tyranny which obscures his critical faculty, and deadens his desire to explore alternative systems of thought. He is no longer an *individual*, because he has isolated himself from the social world. Cicero was committed to no single school of philosophy because, in Trollope's words, he was "too honest, too wise, too civilised, too modern for that" (*LOC*, II, p.277). Like Cicero, Trollope will not follow the dictates of a single philosophy, because this would inhibit the pluralism at the heart of individuality. In short, Trollope and Cicero cannot conceive of a single philosophy covering all the contingencies of real life. As apRoberts suggests, "his novels do deflate intellectuality, by the presentation of actual cases which negate commonly accepted theories, or systems or precepts. Trollope demonstrates that absolutes can fail us in the affairs of life" (1971, p.69).

Yet it is precisely the affairs of life, the complex affairs of living, which motivate individuals to seek absolutes. Traditionally, philosophical, scientific, or religious absolutes have provided the building-blocks with which human beings have created a formula for living. Seeking absolutes has traditionally been associated with seeking meaning and control in one's life. In short, absolutes have often been synonymous with stability. With this in mind, early Victorian moral philosophers, including Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill, put existing morality, which, Nardin suggests, they called "a jumble of more or less irrational prejudices inherited from the past, and in drastic need of reexamination" (1996, p.3), under the philosophical microscope, in the hope of clarifying and systematising it. As Mill asserts, "for morality to be made of reason... is essential to the very idea of moral philosophy" (1987, p.257). They hoped to eliminate any elements contingent upon

individual interpretation, to produce an absolute and irrefutable system of moral reference. I explore this morality further in chapter two, and contrast it with Trollopian morality.

Trollope shared with these philosophers a belief in the importance of moral certainty, and for this reason I have refuted apRoberts' argument for Trollope's 'fundamental' moral relativism. But Trollope differed radically from these philosophers in his ideas about how moral certainty should be achieved. Victorian philosophers sought to achieve moral certainty by systematising common morality to create a cogent set of absolute directives. But Trollope believed individuality was the only true guide to moral life, and this depended on the flexibility which moral philosophers sought to eradicate. apRoberts observes that Trollope believed these elements helped develop the individual's moral perception, enabling him to "hold in suspension the multiple view of things... to explore the world in a more discursive fashion, and to [explore] wider and deeper" (1971, p.82-83). In Trollope's morality, individuality and diversity are not the enemies of knowledge. As Letwin suggests, "the untidy human world is the real world. Instead of being an arena of conflict, the human world is a web of responses" (1982, p.60). Of course, this morality is not Trollope's alone. It is inspired by the Ciceronian concept of *honestum*, which Cicero described as "all that is manly, honourable, graceful, honest and decorous" (in Terry, 1977, p.207).

*On Duties* focuses upon the relationship between conduct based on principle (*honestum*), and conduct based on expediency (*utile*). In his fiction, Trollope explores those cases which destabilise the connection between honesty and principle, and dishonesty and expediency. As *The Last Chronicle of Barset*'s Mark Robarts insists, "you must look to the circumstances" (LCOB, p.464). And Trollope would have agreed. His casuistry demands the most careful, detailed consideration of the circumstances, even those of a 'crime', for, in Trollope's mind, moral evaluation cannot

occur without considering the circumstances. Similarly, Bertrand Russell argues that “it is impossible to judge before-hand what our moral opinions of a fact will be” (1967, p.230-231).

The notion that, in obeying a set of moral rules, men and women could avoid sin, is not Trollope’s conception of Christianity. He warns that sensitive moral judgements require more than conclusions drawn from simple moral rules. Trollope believed that there will always be circumstances in which men will be motivated to act according to arbitrary moral maxims; and there is no need to lament this fact, for it is simply the result of man’s individuality and ‘imperfection’. Josiah Crawley, the blighted clergyman in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, offers this moral insight on the occasion of Mrs Proudie’s death:

No doubt the finite and meagre nature of our feelings does prevent us from extending our sympathies to those whom we have not seen in the flesh. It should not be so...but the man with whom it would not be so would simply be a god among men. It is in his perfections as a man that we recognise the divinity of Christ. It is in the imperfection of men that we recognise our necessity for a Christ. (*LCOB*, p.594)

Trollope’s deflating of ‘thought’ and ‘reason’ in his novels is not merely the effect of a scepticism: it is part of Trollope’s belief that human behaviour tends to the irrational or absurd; what Cicero called “man’s inability to govern himself by the wisdom which is at his fingers ends” (in apRoberts, 1971, p.114).

Trollope’s special interest in the “cross-grainedness of men” (*LCOB*, p.549), is evident in his drawing of clerical characters. In *The Last Chronicle of Barset* Trollope turns his attention to the problems manifest in the clergyman’s attempt to reconcile his divinity with his humanity. Crawley persistently denies common sense and courts destruction. As apRoberts suggests, “we find [in Crawley] all wonderfully indicated complexity....the more agile the mind, the more ingenious to find new ways of unreason” (1971, p.104). It is precisely the contrariety of human beings which

invalidates the distinctions between principle and expediency in which the former is honest, and the latter dishonest. Humans and their actions are too complex to be judged via easy definitions of principle and expediency. The agent's motives must be considered, along with the context in which the action takes place. In short, circumstances thwart attempts to judge agents and actions definitively. In such instances, the only thing clear is the *lack* of clarity. Undeniably noble motives can result in unpleasant effects, and deceitful intentions can effect good, by some unforeseen twist. In these cases, 'dishonesty' is acceptable because it serves a useful purpose. The touchstone is *humanity*: if sacrificing personal principle will effect greater good, then it is not only condoned, but encouraged. I explore this idea further in chapter three.

Cicero spent much of his career in law, a profession where the terms of the debate between honesty and dishonesty are muddled. In *The Life of Cicero* (1880), Trollope expresses his admiration for Cicero's flexible conceptions of honesty: "[Cicero] sees the necessity of a compromise for the good of many. He will tell himself that if the best cannot be done, he must content himself with the next best. He must shake hands with the imperfect, as the best way of lifting himself up from a bad way towards a better" (*LOC*, II, p.51). The lawyer's dilemma was Cicero's, and is summed up by apRoberts: "Can the lawyer in good conscience undertake the defence of the man he knows to be guilty?" (1971, p.64). To answer in the affirmative would appear to signal the negation of the lawyer's principles, but if his principles are conceded for humanitarian reasons, they are conceded with honour. Trollope exalts the Senator because "he will temporise, and finding no other way of achieving good, will do even evil so that good may come of it...*in obedience to his very conscience*" (my italics) (*LOC*, I, p.22-23).

In his *Methods of Ethics* (1874), Sidgwick also tackles the problem of truthfulness. Trollope would have agreed with him that "the blunt announcement of disbelief may do much more harm than

good. Truth is not the only ideal; men live by their beliefs, and one who cannot accept a doctrine which is precious and inspiring to others should think twice before helping to destroy it....Even if he be wholly right, it may not be wise to thrust his truth upon those whom it may discourage or morally paralyse” (in Drake, 1921, p.251). Like Trollope, Sidgwick advocates a casuistical approach: “Should [the clergyman] be strictly truthful?...The cost of maintaining [a strict requirement of truth] is very great. For, first, no human institution is perfect, and it is inevitable that the formularies of any church will have faults offensive to some of its ministers” (in Schneewind, 1977, p.50).

We must therefore choose, Sidgwick thinks, between two evils: loss of veracity or absolute unchangeability. His view is that we must condone some insincerity. Trollope would agree with Sidgwick’s belief that a very strict interpretation of clerical engagements would be intolerable to a well-educated clergy: “supposing a precise credal definition to be reached, we would have to suppose that we could teach those training for the ministry to believe exactly what it says, and then never to think again, lest they change their minds. No one will venture to be ordained except those who are too fanatical or too stupid to doubt that they will always believe exactly what they believed at twenty-three” (in Schneewind, 1977, p.50).

The theoretical casuistry of Cicero, Trollope, and Sidgwick reminds us that the more we concede the complexity of morality, the more redundant the terms ‘honest’ and ‘dishonest’, as we traditionally understand them, seem to become. Indeed, many critics have questioned the assumptions of inherent gallantry and weakness in the terms, and have taken issue with their polarisation. Recognising the complexity of moral judgements, these critics have coined new phrases which unite ‘honest’ and ‘dishonest’ aspects. For example, situations which demonstrate credible, even noble, ‘dishonesty’, are referred to by Drake as “courteous untruths” and “gallant

falsehoods" (1921, p.246); by apRoberts as "examples of benign hypocrisy" (1971, p.125); and by Kucich as "deceitful innocence" and "licensed violations of earnestness" (1989, p.611-12). Trollope himself suggests, in *Dr Wortle's School*, that "there are circumstances in which a lie can hardly be a sin" (in Letwin, 1982, p.226). Consider Lucy Robarts' act of furtive charity toward the Crawleys: "Was she not deceiving the good man – nay, teaching his own children to deceive him?" the narrator asks, then answers his own question: "There are men made of such stuff that an angel could hardly live with them without some deceit" (*LCOB*, p.239). Lucy knows that her clandestine charity preserves Mr Crawley's dignity, and her noble intentions therefore negate her dishonest actions.

The same intentions motivate Mrs Crawley's act of concealing the Robarts' charity from her husband. On a prior occasion, Mark Robarts had offered Crawley financial assistance, and had been rebuked. Crawley's refusal of Robarts' patronage strained future relations between the families, and produced the need to conceal from Crawley further assistance. In her article, 'Ecclesiastical Patronage in Trollope's Novels and Victoria's England', Jill Durey asserts that Trollope was "adamant that ecclesiastical patronage prevented merit from being rewarded in the Church" (1995, p.250). Trollope drew attention to the financial disabilities of the Curate in *Clergymen of the Church of England* (1866), which was followed closely by *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. Crawley wanted to be praised for his own merits, and found Robarts' gesture deeply humiliating. In this fictional context, Trollope critiques ecclesiastical patronage because it fails to address the fundamental iniquities in the Church hierarchy, and removes the need to financially reward clerical merit.

Similarly, the motives of *The Warden's* Archdeacon Grantly are noble, even if his inner aspirations are not. While we recognise that the man at his father's deathbed, hands clasped in prayer, is a

hypocrite because his thoughts are with the members of parliament deciding his clerical future, we cannot help but smile because we know that his temptation is tempered by a good heart. The Archdeacon knows his ambition is dishonourable, and this saves him from ignobility. The oleaginous Mr Slope fails where Grantly succeeds, because, unlike the Archdeacon, he is not awake to the hypocrisy of his actions.

Through all this, we relearn a Trollopian truth: the interdependency of good and evil. And we are reminded of a point Trollope stresses over and over:

It is very hard to come at the actual belief of any man. Indeed how should we hope to do so when we find it so very hard to come at our own? How many are there among us who, in this matter of our religion, which of all things is the most important to us, could take pen in hand and write down even for their own information exactly what they themselves believe? Not very many clergymen even, if so pressed, would insert boldly and plainly the fulmination clause of the Athanasian Creed; and yet each clergyman declares aloud that he believed it a dozen times every year of his life. (*LCOB*, p.124)

Yet, from a writer with so vivid a sense of man's irrationality, we should hardly expect much importance to be attached to 'beliefs.' As apRoberts suggests, Trollope might be expected to say "I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning" (1971, p.106). *The Warden's* John Bold laments towards the end of the novel, "Truth! It takes an age to ascertain the truth of any question!" (*W*, p.149).

If honesty is always relative, where is certainty? The certainty has to be *experiential*. In Trollope's mind, the *experience* of beneficence is the only determining factor. If society is to be healthy and harmonious, we need good will put into practice. Experience alone is the judge; the *experience* of the beneficence of the Christian ideal. As Drake asserts, "The Way of Life that Christ taught verifies itself *when tried*; that it is the supreme ideal for man is proved by the transfiguration of life it effects" (my italics) (1921, p.151). Trollope found in Cicero a statement of this sole certainty.

Cicero's 'true philosophy' was, for Trollope, the essence of an honest life. He called it Cicero's 'real guide of his life'- I think it was also his own:

Among things which are honest,' Cicero says, 'there is nothing which shines so brightly and so widely as that brotherhood between man, that agreement as to what may be useful to all, and that general love for the human race....It matters little how we may have been introduced this great secret which Christ afterward taught....It comes here simply from Cicero...and gives the lesson which had governed his life: 'I will do unto others as I would they should do unto me.' In this is contained the rudiments of that religion which has served to soften the hearts of us all. It is of you I must think, and not of myself. (*LOC*, II, p.289)



## Chapter 2: Personal Morality

From Cicero's humanistic creed, Trollope draws his own religious 'guide to life', which, Letwin suggests, teaches of "life with its sorrow, and vices, and chances of happiness and possibilities of goodness" (1982, p.220). It is earthly existence, and the dignity that attends an act of benevolence, that provides the framework for Trollope's morality. He would have agreed with Letwin when she argues that arbitrary rules cannot cover every contingency in the rich tapestry of mortal life:

Men live in a world of constant change and they can never know all that they would need to know in order to discern perfectly what they ought to do....Therefore men cannot foresee all the consequences of their choices or be certain even about which outcome would have been best....All this obliges men to recognise that, however well they may have tried to judge, though they have precepts and examples to guide them, they can never be sure that they have made the one and only right choice because, even if it is the best possible one, it will necessarily have some defect. (1982, p.221)

In short, rules are *not enough*. This leads us to the question I posed at the close of the first chapter: does moral certainty exist, and if so, where and how is it evident in Trollope's work? I have argued that, in Trollope's mind, it *was* possible to attain moral certainty. Trollope's moral certainty was an experiential one, the essence of which he found in Cicero's *honestum*. I explored the Trollopian conception of 'honesty' which he derived from Ciceronian philosophy to introduce my argument for Trollope's moral relativism.

In his complicating of traditional notions of morality, Trollope insists on the need for individual moral insight, and this has led apRoberts and Polhemus to conclude that Trollope's moral relativism is unequivocal. However, I believe that Trollope's morality evolves from the tensions that arise from the conflict between what had to be accepted as part of the Church's moral authority, and what one's own experience made evident; between what was commonly accepted as biblical truth, and what a thinking person could see for himself to be true. Thus, it combines elements of moral absolutism (such as the need for moral certainty), with elements of moral relativism (such as the

need for moral individualism). His morality depends upon the symbiosis of absolutism and individualism. To demonstrate this, I will compare Trollope's morality with the morality described by Letwin as that of the 'self-divided man', and explore the implications of this comparison for Trollope's conceptions of the 'conscience'.

"Properly speaking," Aquinas observed, "conscience is not a power, but an *act*...It is the act of applying one's own moral knowledge to one's own conduct" (in Donegan, 1977, p.132). That is, the verdicts of a man's conscience are confined to his *own* actions. As Ryle asserts, it is absurd to say, "my conscience says that you ought to do this or ought not to have done that" (in Donegan, 1977, p.132). Thus, the conscience relates absolutely to the moral *individual*; it cannot be used to coerce or control another's actions. I have already suggested that Trollope used the concept of *honestum* as a 'guide to life'. The notions of honesty which he based upon this moral code are connected with the social world, intimately connected with the individual and his conduct in society. And if, as Aquinas suggests, the conscience is also an 'act', it too is connected to the social world, helping the individual to understand his or her moral biases, and direct his conduct toward the most desirable ends.

apRoberts quotes Trollope's statement in *The Life of Cicero* that the human intellect has not been able to establish 'a theory of truth' when she argues that he believed no moral certainty existed. Yet John Kucich argues to the contrary in 'Transgression in Trollope: Dishonesty and the Antibourgeois Elite' (1989), stating that Trollope's novels are the work of a man and author committed to moral absolutes; he also sustains his argument with statements from Trollope. Trollope's remark in *An Autobiography* that "a novelist...must preach his sermons with the same purpose as the clergyman, and must have his own system of ethics" (1883, p.202), is used by Kucich to argued against Trollope's moral relativism. This seems plausible, since Trollope often

boasted of the moral guidance he had offered youth in his novels, and took great pride in his belief that he had “never taught any youth that in falseness and flashiness is to be found the road to manliness” (AA, p.134).

Indeed, to many critics and readers of his day, it seemed obvious that Trollope was writing as a moralist, intending to teach his readers how to know, and do, what is right. Respected Victorian journals found his novels to be full of ‘health and manliness’, ‘civilising influence’, and ‘principle’ (passim Smalley, 1969). And this accords with the many pages in Trollope’s *An Autobiography*, devoted to explaining that he wrote as a moral teacher: “I have ever thought of myself as a preacher of sermons, and my pulpit as one which I could make both salutary and agreeable to my audience” (1883, p.134). According to Trollope, a novelist should aim, just as a clergyman does, to “make virtue alluring and vice ugly” (AA, p.202).

Yet, if we turn once more to apRoberts, and combine her arguments with what we already know about Trollope’s artistic method, and indeed, about the pluralistic politics of the man himself, it would seem that Trollope is anything *but* a preacher. And again, there is an abundance of critical comment testifying to this. A reviewer for the *Spectator*, writing about *Is He Popenjoy?* (1878), declared that Trollope refused to admit into his novels “even a breath of the sweet breezes of heaven” (in Smalley, 1977, p.444). *The Way We Live Now* (1875), was said to be polluted by “an unrelieved atmosphere of sordid baseness” (in Smalley, 1977, p.397). Each critic identifies in these novels a *lack* of moral rectitude. Their comments certainly complicate Kucich’s claim that Trollope shares the moral purpose of a preacher. For what preacher lacks moral rectitude? Indeed, as apRoberts suggests, “the whole weight of Trollope’s novels leans toward the dismissing of matters of dogma and theology as non-essential” (1971, p.15), and what preacher would subscribe to this? apRoberts and Kucich produce compelling arguments for and against Trollope’s moral relativism.

Both perspectives are valuable, and, as I have argued, Trollope reconciles aspects of both arguments in the formulation of his moral code.

Let us consider the following statement the narrator makes in *Barchester Towers*: “I trust I shall not be thought to scoff at the pulpit, though some may imagine that I do not feel all the reverence that is due to the cloth. I may question the fallibility of the teachers, but I hope that I shall not therefore be accused of doubt as to the thing taught” (1857, p.40). In this remark, Trollope states that he reserves the right to question the religious instruction of clergymen, but never the religion itself. Whatever reservations Trollope might have had about the wisdom of hierarchical practices and the preservation of what he calls “picturesque absurdities” (*CCE*, p.27), he was not sceptical of the basic tenets of the Church of England. Quite the reverse, in fact. George Lewes noted in his diary for June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1866, a dinner party attended, among others, by Trollope and Alexander Bain: “Bain startled us by his anti-Christian onslaught and Trollope amused us by his defence” (in Kitchel, 1933, p.238). Trollope steadfastly refused to enter into any theological controversy centring around faith, but never hesitated in denouncing clerical practices.

Trollope maintains that a clergyman’s professional intimacy with the Bible does not eliminate the difficulty of deciding what the words mean, for that difficulty attends any human utterance. Just as the clergyman cannot claim his own personal biblical interpretations as absolute truth, so the novelist cannot peddle his own moral beliefs in his work, as though he possesses special insight into God’s will. In *An Autobiography*, Trollope explains his perspective: “It is not for the novelist to say...because you lied here, or were heartless there...you shall be scourged with scourges either in this world or in the next; but it is for him...to leave the reader to feel ‘let me not be like that!’ (1883, p.203). Trollope teaches a moral lesson, for indeed, he believes there is one to be taught.

But, as I have argued, Trollope teaches us by enlarging our understanding of the varieties of conduct so that we might recognise the right course of action.

Michael Sadleir has joined apRoberts in praising Trollope's moral relativism. In his book *Trollope: A Commentary*, Sadleir claims that Trollope was "fundamentally disinterested and detached...[he] never pretended to know the true paths of virtue or of social decency" (1961, p.369). But is this really the case? I think Sadleir, along with apRoberts and Kucich, underestimates the complexity of Trollope's moral method. Consider, for example, the moral situations in *The Warden* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. In each of these novels Trollope presents a moral dilemma; and, while creating a sense of the moral and human complexities involved, and evoking the utmost sympathy for the characters, he nonetheless maintains that the act committed by each is wrong. This is precisely what Trollope meant when he wrote in the *Fortnightly Review*, "The work of removal has to be done; but it must be done tenderly, not ruthlessly. With loving hands must the old timber be dragged away, and the ground cleared for purposes of new utility" (in Hagan, 1959, p.2). In other words, the sin must be acknowledged, but the circumstances must be considered. *The Warden's* Septimus Harding is Christian virtue personified, yet the injustice of his exorbitant sinecure is never in doubt. Josiah Crawley is diligent and well-meaning, but the narrator never tells us explicitly that he did not furtively secure the cheque. Indeed, in the conversation that takes place in the book's opening page, the reader is invited to consider that, given Crawley's intolerable poverty, it is a distinct possibility:

'A clergyman, - and such a clergyman too!'

'I don't see that that has anything to do with it.'....'Why should not a clergyman turn thief as well as anybody else?

'Their conduct is likely to be better than that of other men, I think.'

'I deny it utterly,' said John Walker....'Mr Crawley is not more than any other man just because he's a clergyman....There are a lot of people here in Silverbridge who think that the matter shouldn't be followed up, just because the man is in a position which makes the crime more criminal in him than it would be in another'.

(*LCOB*, p.3)

By the novel's sixtieth chapter the reader is no clearer as to the origins of the cheque: "The position of [Crawley's] own mind in reference to his own guilt or his own innocence was very singular. It was simply the truth that he did not know how the cheque had come to him" (*LCOB*, p.530). The concatenation of events late in the novel finally reveal that the cheque arrived in Crawley's hands through honourable circumstances.

Trollope wants the *reader* to decide the most virtuous course of action. When Harding resigns his sinecure because he believes "a man is the best judge of what he feels himself" (*W*, p.170), the reader shares his sense of relief and release, and a moral lesson is learned. Having listened to his conscience, Harding is, in Slakey's words, "on the way to becoming whole" (n.d, p.308). Then, Trollope says in *An Autobiography*, "will not the novelist have preached his sermon as perhaps no clergyman can preach it?" (1883, p.203). Here Trollope compares the teaching role of the novelist and the preacher, suggesting that the novelist teaches moral virtue by example, through the actions of his characters; while the clergyman teaches moral virtue by commanding blind adherence to intangible directives. It is clear that Trollope prefers his own moral method.

Trollope refers to human behaviour as 'conduct' because a human being *leads himself* to do everything that he does. Thus, an individual cannot be forced into moral lucidity; Harding and Crawley can only be redeemed through their own actions. Even when those actions are painful, as in the cases of Harding and Crawley, each subject connects his experience with his awareness of selfhood, and learns a valuable moral lesson. As Letwin asserts, "[the individual] is all one, an intelligent being....all the feelings, imaginings, memories, and reasonings sit in conclave to determine the meaning of his experience" (1982, p.59). The cases of conscience and moral dilemmas drawn in Trollope's two novels evince repeatedly the insistence on the practical as

opposed to the theoretical. Life obliges us to be practising psychologists and moralists: in the words of apRoberts in her introduction to Trollope's *Clergymen of the Church of England*, "we are all behavers" (1866, p.11).

Trollope's understanding of the human condition contrasts with that of the 'self-divided man', a system of thought which has dominated civilised thought since ancient times, and which proposes that man is a self-divided being, with 'higher' and 'lower' parts. This morality negates individual agency in moral decision-making, so a moral 'choice' becomes a redundant concept. Which path he must take is decided according to rules to which he unremittingly submits. The morality of the self-divided man equates moral certainty with order, unity, and fixity, and this renders change and variety inseparable from irrationality and disorder. Letwin argues that exponents of this morality acknowledge that a morally virtuous life may be realised in different ways, but "because they equate moral quality with the triumph of spirit over matter, they rank men according to their degree of emancipation from the material world (1982, p.39). And, on this point, Trollope disagrees. The miserable Josiah Crawley is a good case in point for the absurdity of any philosophical perspective which negates the value of material pursuits. In *An Autobiography*, Trollope sharply denounces "that high-flown doctrine of the contempt of money" (1883, p.100). The demands of daily survival keep Crawley's mind from matters of religion, and this is personally and professionally detrimental. I explore the interdependence of poverty and moral inefficacy further in chapter three.

Trollope's life-long interest in human beings in a social world so varied and unpredictable, clearly clashes with the morality of the self-divided man. Indeed, as Letwin observes, while Trollope is painstakingly exploring all the intricacies of mortal thought and conduct, "the reader who is waiting for eternity to break through is bound to wilt with boredom" (1982, p.51). The human element in morality fascinated Trollope. He believed the shape of moral excellence was personal, not generic.

Hence we can identify moral worth in characters as diverse in temperament as Proudie, Grantly, Harding, and Crawley. Each of these characters uses their conscience as the yard-stick by which they measure the moral value of their own actions. The moral revelations of the conscience are uniquely individual, and yet they are the key to Trollope's moral certainty, for they serve as each individual's *honestum*, or 'guide to life'. The experience of moral revelation enlightens some characters, and cripples others. But Trollope would defend each moral revelation as valuable in its individuation. When *The Last Chronicle of Barset*'s Mark Robarts attempts to convince Crawley of the trustworthiness of his own counsel, Crawley replies "I cannot trust to any one, - in a matter of conscience. To do as you would have me is to me wrong....I can trust no one with my own conscience" (*LCOB*, p.171). And Bold cannot in good conscience continue with his investigation when he realises the devastating effects it has had on Eleanor and her father. Perhaps the most significant crisis of conscience is that of the infamous Mrs Proudie. Her death follows a devastating moment of self-realisation; she is killed by the revelations of her own conscience:

As she looked at [her husband] a hundred different thoughts came into her mind. She had loved him dearly, and she loved him still; but she knew now, - at this moment felt absolutely sure, - that by him she was hated! In spite of all her roughness and tempter, Mrs Proudie was in this like other women, - that she would fain have been loved had it been possible. She had always meant to serve him. She was conscious of that! conscious also in a way that, although she had been industrious, although she had been faithful, although she was clever, yet she had failed. At the bottom of her heart she knew that she had been a bad wife. And yet she had meant to be a pattern wife!....Her heart was too full for speech; and she left him, very quietly closing the door behind her. (*LCOB*, p.580)

For Trollope, moral certainty is not determined by 'blind obedience', but by the individual and his conscience; and it is not shaped by the intangible promise of eternal grace, but by the immeasurable diversity of life on earth.



### Chapter 3: Philanthropy

‘It must, I think, be painful to all men to feel inferiority. It should, I think, be a matter of some pain to all men to feel superiority....Why should so many have so little to make life enjoyable, so much to make it painful, while a few others, not through their own merit, have had gifts poured out to them from a full hand? We acknowledge the hand of God and His wisdom, but still we are struck with awe and horror at the misery of many of our brethren. We who have been born to the superior condition cannot, I think, look upon the inane, unintellectual, and frost-bound life of those who cannot even feed themselves sufficiently by their sweat, without some feeling of injustice, some feeling of pain.

This is the consciousness of wrong.’ ~ ‘*An Autobiography*’, *Trollope*.

In the England of the 1830s, the ostentation of the Regency was juxtaposed with the squalor and misery generated by the new industrialism. Richard Altick observes that the ‘silver fork’ novels of the late twenties and thirties were superseded by novels of social protest, which called overdue attention to the desperate state of the poor in factory and slum (1973, p.10). In Disraeli’s novel, *Sybil* (1845), one of the characters describes the Queen’s nation as “two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are...fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws...THE RICH AND THE POOR” (in Altick, 1973, p.11). As Altick suggests, the gulf was widening year by year, and the search for the means of narrowing it “constituted the great challenge of the time” (1973, p.11).

Many considered philanthropy to be a key element in the search for material solutions to the social problem of poverty. As if in recompense for the disintegration of traditional faith, the last doubt-ridden decades of the century saw a heightening of the sense of responsibility, and charitable conduct became the supreme moral imperative. The establishment of ‘The Charity Organisation Society’ (or ‘COS’) in 1869, marked the beginning of ‘organised’ philanthropy, and it was important not only for what it tried to do, but also for what it symbolised. The COS was confident that under its influence, scientific investigation and co-ordination would soon become hallmarks of a composite, national relief system. The COS epitomised the spirit of individualism which, to a

varying extent, underpinned the ideology of the entire period. Peter Mandler asserts that the COS were convinced that pecuniary assistance interfered with survival strategies, and would generate dependence and indolence (1990, p.23). Of all the maxims in the pedagogic Victorian phrase-book, 'Heaven helps those who help themselves' is perhaps the one which best exemplifies COS principles.

In COS definitions of charity, Samuel Smiles' "fellow-feeling" (1892, p.181), or the altruistic spirit of *giving*, is absent. Indeed, the very idea of 'giving', without thorough 'scientific' investigation, was anathema to the COS. Charles Loch Mowat asserts that they criticised 'The Poor Law' precisely because of "the obligation imposed on it of *giving necessary relief in all cases*" (my italics) (1961, p.35-36). Whereas the COS clung to the idea that abuse of relief could only be stopped, in Mowat's words, "by making [the application for charity] as distasteful as possible" (1961, p.36), their opponents took the contrary view that it was detrimental to the poor to make 'hem feel their poverty.

Chapter I will explore the character of Crawley in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* to support the argument that Trollope was among those critical of the methodology and moral ideology of the COS and its affiliates. With the help of Mullin's text, *Present Alms: On the Ideology of Philanthropy* (1980), I will define 'charity' and explore the implications of this for Trollope's *The Warden*. It is my premise that the moral ideologies which underpin *The Warden* contrast with Trollope's humanitarian life-philosophy. With reference to *The Last Chronicle of Barset* I will demonstrate this premise, examining the assumptions of Trollopian morality for the concept of philanthropy.

Armed with the conviction that random benevolence did nothing for the poor but weaken morals and nurture sin, the COS worked towards, what Perkin calls, “social efficiency and the avoidance of waste” (1989, p.8-9). They believed their superior social status gave them the right to categorise the impecunious into the ‘worthy’ and the ‘unworthy’. Humphreys states that those judged worthy, or deserving, would receive scientifically measured assistance, whereas those deemed undeserving would be despatched to the nearest workhouse (1995, p.5). In his article ‘The Idle Poor’, Norman Pearson warns that paupers are ‘social menaces’, “contaminated in their blood and bones” (1911, p.917). At the root of this attitude is the certainty that the poor were lazy, and lacked moral fortitude. As *The Last Chronicle of Barset*’s Crawley reminds us, “when did not the world believe the worst of the poor?” (*LCOB*, p.99). The poor were ‘contaminated’, and the COS were convinced that they would look for any means of existence which did not require them to participate in genuine waged work. Accordingly, the COS recruited vigilantes to keep the poor in check.

These vigilantes were middle-class volunteers, who penetrated into the homes of relief candidates, and made first-hand judgements about the advisability of granting aid. Visiting loomed large in the middle-class vision of charity, but, as Mandler suggests, it was the most problematic form of charity for the poor themselves (1990, p.21). The ‘friendly-visitor’ label belied the uncomfortable and awkward reality of these visits. By making these visits as humiliating as possible, the COS stigmatised its recipients and made the acceptance of charity an immediate disqualifier in the race for respectability. They hoped that the stigmatisation of relief would deter any undeserving applicants, but in reality, it had the far more deleterious effect of deterring many of those whose needs were genuine. Ironically, the COS alienated the very people it professed to be helping. Chalmers’ assertion that, for the poor, there was “a substantial though unnoticed charm in the visit of a superior” could not have been further from the truth (in Humphreys, 1995, p.145). In his study of nineteenth-century working-class survival strategies, *Saving and Spending: The Working-Class*

*Economy in Britain 1870-1939*, Paul Johnson points out that those deterred by the thought of prying strangers in their homes, sought the landlord's indulgence on rent arrears, and turned to the pawnshop to secure immediate cash-flow which was often the only effective means of survival (1985, p.170). The following extract from *The Last Chronicle of Barset* makes absurd any assertion that daily survival requires only moral fortitude and courage, for the Crawleys have endless supplies of both:

There are pangs to which, at the time, starvation itself would seem to be preferable. The angry eyes of unpaid tradesman,... the gradual relinquishment of habits which the soft nurture of earlier, kinder years had made second nature...the rags of the husband whose outward occupations demand decency; the neglected children who are learning not to be the children of gentlefolk; and, worse than all...the waning pride, the pride that will not wane. (*LCOB*, p.74)

After the 1890s it was no longer an acceptable ingredient for social harmony that the COS should decide that so many of those unemployed, underemployed or underprivileged people were also 'undeserving' of assistance. There was growing agreement that the poor were not inherently lazy, and that Sturt's Fred Bettsworth typified agricultural workers with his opinion that "a man's never so happy, to my way o' thinkin', as when he's goin' to his day's work reglar" (1902, p.x). Thomas Hill Green, and other Idealists, were instrumental in the debate about whether environment or morality was predominant in building individual character. Idealists insisted that the development of individual character among the poor would proceed with more speed with the improvement of physical environments. The COS, however, were not inclined to accept that character faults may not be inherent, and may even disappear under less harsh environmental pressures. As Humphreys observes, the crux of the debate was deciding "at what point the sacred tenets of individualism were to be transgressed" (1995, p.151).

Michael Freeden has argued that the process by which people learned that there are two facets to human improvement, physical and spiritual, was gradual (1978, p.170). When Alfred Marshall

suggested to Helen Bosanquet that the disequilibria of social conditions may diminish an individual's opportunities for personal advancement, she replied, pertly, "it is a vain and idle hypothesis. The social conditions will permit them" (in Bosanquet, 1903, p.208). It is hard to conceive of a time when the relevance of physical factors to total individual development had not been widely recognised. Harrison suggests that the COS "seldom had the time to reconsider their fundamental assumptions" (1966, p.360). But, I see little reason to doubt that most COS members were sincere, both in their belief that individual morals were moulded by character, and their disbelief that, in Coit's words, "anything is wrong with the general working of the industrial system" (1900, p.84).

*The Last Chronicle of Barset's* Perpetual Curate, Crawley, is Trollope's case in point for those who will not recognise that moral fortitude and environmental conditions are intimately linked. In his book, *Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioner, and the Church of England* (1964), Geoffrey Best provides a comprehensive study of the material conditions of clergymen after the seventeenth century, to show the interdependency of poverty and moral inefficacy. He makes clear that a clergyman's poverty was not simply a personal matter, for it also affected the material and spiritual welfare of his pastorate: "His poverty would cripple the pastorate in many obvious ways. He would lack books and the society of educated persons; he would have nothing but words to give to the afflicted; he would be driven to supplement his inadequate income by taking on other jobs" (1964, p.13). Lacking tithe rights and adequate glebe, the real-life perpetual curate could never hope to increase his income, even when fortified with COS exhortations that, with hard work, riches can be attained. Best describes the peculiar disabilities of the perpetual curate: "the chief characteristic of a perpetual curacy was, that its...tithes were completely appropriated and the incumbent was supported by a fixed money payment of 'pension' payed to him by an impropiator. The amount was usually very small" (1964, p.17).

The Perpetual Curate's financial disability was terrible, but the lack of respect and confidence from his parishioners was insufferable. As Nelson reminds us, clerical poverty ultimately meant "that their labours had no influence upon the Minds of Men, except it be those very few that were able to distinguish their Characters from their circumstances" (in Best, 1964, p.14). Indeed, the fact of his spiritual impotence was more distressing for Crawley than his poverty:

St. Paul, indeed, was called upon to bear stripes, was flung into prison, encountered terrible dangers. But Mr Crawley, - so he told himself, - could have encountered all that without flinching. The stripes and scorn of the unfaithful would have been nothing to him, if only the faithful would have believed in him, poor as he was, as they would have believed in him had he been rich! Even they whom he had most loved treated him almost with derision because he was now different from them. (LCOB, p.94-95)

Even fellow clerics alienate the unfortunate curate: "Mr Thumble called to mind the fact that Mr Crawley was a very poor man indeed...and the other fact, that he, Mr Thumble himself, did not owe any money to any one...and, strengthened by there remembrances, he endeavoured to bear Mr Crawley's attack with gallantry" (LCOB, p.102).

Crawley is Trollope's study of the emotional and material effects of poverty, and his warning to the COS that no man can focus on being moral when he is close to starvation. In this state, his actions will be motivated by a desire to fill his stomach, not fortify his spirit. Addressing his parishioners for the last time, Crawley confesses that "poverty makes the spirit poor, and the hands weak, and the heart sore, - and too often makes the conscience dull" (LCOB, p.600). And, while Trollope conceded the importance of 'character', he did not believe this alone was the key to prosperity. Through Crawley, Trollope shows that the quality of 'character' can only benefit society when it is sustained by spiritual and financial comfort. Trollope declares in *An Autobiography* that men may "without disgrace, endeavour to fill their bellies and clothe their backs, and also those of their

wives and children as comfortably as they can... They may be as rationally realistic as the butchers and bakers" (1883, p.96). It is all very well, he continues, for clergymen to preach against the love of money, but they must know that it is "so distinctive a characteristic of humanity that such sermons are mere platitudes called for by customary, but unintelligent, piety" (44, p.96). With this point Trollope challenges the old adage that poverty breeds humility and makes the spirit strong. In the case of Crawley, poverty crushes the human spirit, and even the will to live.

Mowat asserts that the COS's insistence on self-support and condemnation of pecuniary relief derived partly from Charles Loch's theory of the 'economics of charity' (1961, p.69). The basic premise of this theory is that wages are always adequate if properly spent. This is part of the broader COS philosophy which draws on the Malthusian idea that the fear of want will compel an individual toward abstinence and thrift, and finally to self-reliance. This clearly contravenes Trollope's philosophy of altruism and charitable conduct. He would have agreed with Arnold Toynbee's assertion that the only liberty the poor enjoyed was "a liberty to starve" (in Humphreys, 1995, p.150). Trollope's portrait of poverty in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* invalidates Loch's claim that money can be saved when there is almost none available to spend:

None but they who have themselves been poor gentry... can understand the peculiar bitterness of the trials which such poverty produces. The poverty of the normal poor does not approach it; or, rather, the pangs arising from such poverty are altogether of a different sort. To be hungry and have no food, to be cold and have no fuel, to be threatened with distraint for one's few chairs and tables, and with the loss of the roof over one's head, - all these miseries... are, no doubt, the severest of the trials to which humanity is subjected. They threaten life, then liberty, reducing the abject one to a choice between captivity and starvation. (*LCOB*, p.73-74)

The Luftons' charitable assistance makes Mrs Crawley only more determined to break the cycle of poverty that has engulfed her family. The prospect of a better future makes sacrifice and thrift all the more bearable: "If it were written in the book of fate that one of her children should be exempted from the serious of misfortunes which seemed to fall... upon her family; if so great good

fortune were in store for her Grace as such a marriage as this which seemed to be so nearly offered to her, it might probably be well that Grace should be as little at home as possible” (*LCOB*, p.73). Through the Crawleys, Trollope refutes the COS idea that random charity discourages thrift.

The COS were preoccupied with what Beatrice Webb called “the consciousness of *sin*” (1838, p.209). Webb coined this phrase to make the rich aware of their moral obligation to purge the poor of sin and immorality. ‘Sin’ is defined as the contravention of a religious moral law. The COS blamed poverty on personal immorality, assuming that pauperism was the end result of ‘sinful’ actions. In the extract from *An Autobiography* cited at the beginning of this chapter, Trollope refers to the consciousness of ‘wrong’. This term is used as a means for judging an action (which may or may not be a sin). Because a ‘wrong’ action is not necessarily a ‘sinful’ action, it has no necessary connection to religion. Thus, Trollope does not equate poverty with sinful action. Rather, he locates the cause of poverty in social inequality. Trollope believed the *rich*, as well as the poor, should feel the pain of their situations, because wealth and destitution are two sides of the same coin. In Trollope’s mind, it is morally wrong that the rich enjoy wealth and prestige by virtue of ‘high’ birth, while those of ‘low’ birth carry the burden of destitution.

The rich have not had to engage in the sweat of waged work to achieve their wealth; and, most importantly, the poor, in spite of endless daily toil, cannot hope to achieve the wealth and privilege of the rich. Trollope asserts in *North America* that those in positions of power must recognise the ‘wrong’ inherent in social iniquities; only then will the pauper “become more of a man. He [will] assume a dignity which he never has known before... walk like a human being made in God’s form” (1862, p.136-137). The poignant exchange between the Archdeacon and Crawley, towards the close of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, is the manifestation of the Archdeacon’s realisation of ‘consciousness of wrong’:



‘I told [the Archdeacon] that in regard to money matters, as he called them, I had nothing to say. I only trusted that his son was aware that my daughter had no money, and never would have any. “My dear Crawley,” the archdeacon said, I have enough for both.” “I would we stood on more equal grounds,” I said. Then as he answered me, he rose from his chair. “We stand,” said he, “on the only perfect level on which such men can meet each other. We are both gentlemen.” “Sir,” I said, rising also, “from the bottom of my heart I agree with you. I could not have spoken such words; but from you who are rich to me who am poor, they are honourable to the one and comfortable to the other’. (LCOB, p.708)

This exchange is an expression of Cicero’s *humanitas* of ‘charity’, and a good example of experiential Christianity. Trollope believed Christ’s commandment of the ‘neighbourly love’, shared here between Grantly and Crawley, was, in Slakey’s words, “the watershed of history” (n.d, p.307). In *The Life of Cicero* he asserts that “the way to heaven must be found in good deeds here on earth; and...the good deeds required...[are] kindness to others” (LOC, II, p.324-325). In practical Christianity, we find the clearest statement of altruism, and expect the purest practice of philanthropy. In Mullin’s terms, “the regarding of ourselves – our time, our talents, and our money – as a trust from God to be utilised in his service” (1980, p.32). Jeremy Taylor crystallises the pure motive: “Give, looking for nothing again: that is, without consideration of future advantage: give to children, to old men, to the unthankful, and the dying...for else your Alms or courtesy is not charity, but traffic and merchandise” (1650, Chapter IV, paragraph 11).

The aims and ideas of altruistic, as opposed to scientific, charity, are more closely connected to Trollopian morality, with its emphasis on charitable conduct and experiential Christianity. *The Warden* is an exploration of what comprises charitable conduct, and the moral dilemma at the centre of the novel brings to the fore considerations about what decency demands, and about the ways in which the actions and motives of the parties involved should be judged. Trollope confesses in *An Autobiography* that he was drawn to the subject which inspired the events in *The Warden* by the wish to “expose, or rather to describe, two evils” (1883, p.86). It was not Trollope’s

aim to redress social injustices, but neither was he trying to argue that none existed. Hagan has called this “ambivalence of attitude” a symptom of the author’s ‘Divided Mind’ (1959, p.2). I agree with apRoberts, however, that this ambiguity is not a failing on Trollope’s part, but rather, a distinct and conscious artistic strategy (1971, p.35). *The Warden* involves both sides in a demonstration of incongruities.

Readers newly acquainted with Trollope might be surprised to find the author writing so knowingly about ecclesiastical matters, without writing about religion. Trollope denied that he had any real knowledge of the Church or of its officials, but Durey’s study of Trollope’s ancestors and relatives shows that “Trollope had several living clerical relatives, and also came from a family whose connections with the Church had extended as far back as the fourteenth century” (1997, p.441). If Trollope was interested in clerics away from their pulpits, it may have been because he witnessed first-hand their human foibles. This helps explain why Trollope concerns himself with the Church, but is not pious. Kitson Clark reminds us that, in an age when the claims of religion occupied so large a part in the nation’s life, “ecclesiastical matters were often influenced more by politics or economics, than by religion” (1962, p.20). Acutely aware of this, Trollope separates church concerns from religious concerns. *The Warden* is a manifestation of this achievement. Although the novel is set in a cathedral town, with all the concomitant scenes of clerical life, the religious landscape is unemphatic. Trollope declared in *An Autobiography* that the characters in *The Warden* were conceived through an “effort of my moral consciousness” (1883, p.85). Trollope turns his attention away from religion *per se*, towards a broader moral landscape; and charitable conduct is his primary focus.

But how do we define ‘charitable’ conduct? The *OED* (1984) defines charity as “being liberal in giving to the poor”. This definition is open to interpretation: it can be translated as an obligation of

the rich, or, 'Noblesse Oblige'; or it can be interpreted as a statement evoking the spirit of generosity in the act of giving. In his article, 'Our Medical Charities and their Abuses, with some suggestions for their reform' (1873), William O'Hanlon explores these interpretations. He suggests that Manchester's hospitals and dispensaries are evidence of the "generosity and large-heartedness of the middle classes" (1873, p.41). Clearly, O'Hanlon perceives the provision of subsidised medical services to the sick and destitute, as testimony of the magnanimity of the middle-class. In short, he believes the provision of services as a privilege, not a right.

Whether charity is a 'privilege' or a 'right' is a fundamental question in *The Warden*, and is one of many complex, multi-faceted ethical questions that inform the novel's philanthropic theme. The endearing Mr. Harding is Warden of Barchester's almshouse, home to twelve elderly bedesmen. The novel's aptly named agitator, John Bold, finds the circumstances of Harding's sinecure perfectly suited to his reforming zeal, and turns his attention to the will left by the benefactor of the almshouse, John Hiram. The will stipulates that Hiram's wealth should posthumously support twelve "superannuated woolcarders, all of whom should have been born and bred and spent their days in Barchester" (*W*, p.4). It also stipulates that the almshouse should be placed under the ecclesiastical government of a Warden, whose annual income would come from the rental of Hiram's estate. These instructions are simple enough – but here consensus ends. The profits from the rental have increased manyfold, and now yield a substantial income for the Warden. Here is the focus of the book: is it morally acceptable that the Warden, designated protector and advocate of the bedesmen, receive a salary plumped by ever-increasing rental profits, while allowance of the bedesmen remains static?

Hiram's Hospital is a charity, in the sense that it satisfies Mullin's requirement of inequality between donor and recipient (1980, p.28). And Bold's machinations are motivated by his sense that

this inequality is unjust. As custodian of the almshouse, Harding is responsible and legally accountable to the twelve bedesmen residing there. Harding is a kindly, mild-mannered gentleman, and enjoys a gentle reverence from the bedesmen, despite the fact that he receives an income grossly disproportionate to that received by the old men. He believes they enjoy listening to him play the violoncello as much as he enjoys playing it for them, so convincingly do they seem to attend to the music. The narrator tells us, "I will not say that they all appreciated the music which they heard, but they were *intent on appearing to do so*; pleased at being where they were, they were determined...to give pleasure in return; and they were not unsuccessful" (my italics) (*W*, p.22-23).

The fact that the bedesmen have never conveyed to the Warden expressions of discontent suggests that they perceive the provision of the almshouse to be a privilege, rather than an entitlement. Yet even before Bold's machinations, there had been murmurs in Barchester "that the proceeds of Hiram's property had not been fairly divided" (*W*, p.6). The narrator makes no mention as to whether the bedesmen heard these concerns, but the dissension came to Harding's attention. He responded by supplementing the bedesmen's income by two-pence each per day "out of his own pocket" (*W*, p.7). Henceforth, Harding was satisfied that his pecuniary offering had amply discharged his obligations. He impressed upon the bedesmen that his generosity must not be taken for granted, as 'personal gifts' were unlikely to become statutory. If ensuing harmonious relations between Harding and the bedesmen are any indication, his gesture was gratefully received, that is, until Bold turns the incipient disquiet into a chorus of dissent.

The issue of income, and what constitutes a fair and reasonable amount, divides not only the wider Barchester community, but also the bedesmen themselves. It is interesting that the old bedesmen who reject Bold's call for change do so because they perceive it to be a betrayal of the Warden's friendship. In fact, Harding's most ardent defender, Bunce, regards his fellow bedesmen's interest

in Hiram's financial legacy as "a foolish and wrong thing", and accuses fellow bedesman, Skulpit, of "turning his back upon one who is his best friend; playing the game of others, who care nothing for him" (*W*, p.41). Bunce retires to his room after a fruitless attempt to convince his seditious brethren of their 'unthankfulness'. Whether an injustice has occurred is irrelevant to Bunce. The bedesmen are locked into a deferential relationship with their benefactor, because they are the recipients of charity. Thus the necessary expressions of gratitude are incompatible with self-interest.

But the suggestion that those who seek the money to which they are legally entitled are grasping and 'self-interested' is problematic. Regardless of what the bedesmen want or expect by way of pecuniary assistance, Bold's findings conclusively establish that "each bedesman is clearly entitled to one hundred pounds a year by common law" (*W*, p.35). Old Handy is pleased: "We wants what John Hiram left us... We want what's ourn by law; it don't matter what we expected. What's ourn by law should be ourn" (*W*, p.41). Given this fact, how can the 'dissenting' bedesmen be accused of 'self-interest'? Bunce defends the provision of one-shilling and sixpence per day to each bedesman, because this amount satisfactorily meets their 'needs': "Are the lot of you soft enough to think that if a hundred a year be to be given, it's the likes of you that will get it?... Did any of us ever do anything worth half the money?" (*W*, p.41). Following the logic of this argument, any income which exceeds the amount required to meet one's basic needs, must, therefore, be deemed gratuitous. Harding's allowance of eight-hundred pounds per year clearly has no relation to his level of need, and is certainly not given in accordance to his labours as Warden, and yet he has never been accused of self-interest. The level of need is the yard-stick by which Barchester determines the worth of the bedesmen's claim to an increase in allowance, but Harding is subject to different standards.

Bold's investigation affects much more than the incomes of Barchester's future precentors. It threatens to make extinct many of the traditions upon which Barchester's clerics depend. This brings us to the issue of tradition, and the extent to which it should be venerated. Mullin asserts that "it is not the task of charities to enshrine moribund traditions and uphold spent principles" (1980, p.1). This statement has important implications for a study of philanthropy in *The Warden*, because it points to the often antagonistic relationship between charity and tradition. A charity is, by definition, a non-profit organisation, existing solely to make an adequate and relevant response to need within the community. It must be relevant and useful, otherwise it will become merely symbolic. A charity must also adequately serve the need, otherwise it fails in its mission to help, and might as well not exist at all. Often, the dedication to keeping the philanthropic activities of a charity relevant conflicts with the concurrent commitment to tradition. The doctrine of *Cy Pres* has resolved this difficulty, somewhat; and, thanks to this doctrine, the guardians of Hiram's Will, when faced with the obsolescence of 'woolcarding', had only to redirect Hiram's pecuniary legacy towards other elderly, infirm gentlemen, born and bred within the Barchester precinct.

However, a charity exists in response to a perceived need within a community, and of course, needs change and evolve over time. As Raymond Williams suggests in the Foreword of a revised edition of Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London*, "the ideas of what constitutes adequate conditions of human life are continually changing – we indicate health and happiness, as well as mere survival; we add education, literacy, freedom, opportunity, security to our basic needs" (1889, p.10). It is imperative that the charity responds to change, keeping its philanthropic activities relevant. In his article, 'The Use and Abuse of Endowed Charities', L. R. Phelps calls this perceptivity to change the "duty to look before and after" (1892, p.88). He compares the charity benefactor to the life tenant of a property, and thus declares that his duty is two-fold. Firstly, he has a duty to the charity's founder and his wishes, ensuring his endowment is utilised with the utmost

sensitivity and efficiency, “without waste or diminution” (1892, p.88). Secondly, he must adapt the endowment to meet current needs, also with the utmost sensitivity and efficiency, so as to ensure that it “yields a maximum of good, or, at least, a minimum of harm” (1892, p.88). Thus it follows that a charity which does not ensure its charitable resources are being used efficiently, to yield a maximum of good, is, therefore, producing a maximum of harm. As Trollope suggests in *Clergymen of the Church of England*, a charity must “seek the useful”, and in doing so, is “compelled to abandon the picturesque” (1866, p.27). Once an institution has been called picturesque, Cockshut tells us, “its existence is seriously threatened” (1968, p.70).

As the appointed benefactor of Hiram’s Hospital, the responsibility for keeping the charity responsive to changing needs, whilst respecting the founder’s wishes, falls to Harding. Yet Harding has never even seen Hiram’s will, let alone read it. Grantly would have him believe it is futile to do so, now that the almshouse has been under ecclesiastical control in excess of four hundred years: “God bless my soul! How odd it is that you will not see that all we are to do is do nothing: why should we say anything about the founder’s will?” (*W*, p.86). In the following conversation between Bishop Proudie and Harding, we see that the Bishop concurs:

‘But, bishop,’ said he, ‘did you ever read John Hiram’s will?’ The bishop thought probably he had...but could not state positively....‘But, bishop, the question is, who has the power to settle it? If, as this young man says, the will provides that the proceeds of the property are to be divided into shares, who has the power to alter these provisions?’ The bishop had an indistinct idea that they altered themselves by the lapse of years; that a kind of ecclesiastical statute of limitation barred the rights of the twelve bedesmen to any increase of income arising from the increased value of property. He said something about tradition; more of the many learned men who by their practice had confirmed the present arrangement; then went at some length into the propriety of maintaining the due difference in rank and income between a beneficed clergyman and certain poor old men who were dependent on charity. (*W*, p.30)

The bishop is unsure whether Hiram’s will has ever come into his hands, and, like the Archdeacon, feels this it is not of much moment. It seems a long tradition of non-intervention exempts the

church from the responsibility of keeping Hiram's will relevant and perceptive to changing needs. The bishop's position calls to mind the absurd response the Dean of Lincoln gave, when asked by a real-life John Bold if the Warden of Meer Hospital performed the duties of his office. The Dean replied, "as he did not know what those duties were, he could not undertake to say whether they were performed or not" (in Best, 1961, p.140). No act of charity is neutral in its effects, and no inherited charitable legacy is neutral in terms of responsibilities. As Mullin asserts, any protector of a charitable legacy has a duty to ensure the gift is dispersed for the recipient's *sole* benefit, "and is in no way personally materially rewarding" (1980, p.28). The fact that the bedesmen's pecuniary entitlement is determined by a literal reading of Hiram's will, while the Warden's income is determined by a symbolic interpretation, negates any claim the church might make to the fair and equitable dispersal of funds. On this account, Trollope draws directly from Ralph Arnold's *The Whiston Matter* (1961), which explores the implications of a symbolic and a literal interpretation of a charity founder's will. In this text, the Dean and Chapter of Rochester, like those of Barchester, based their recipient's incomes on figures explicitly stated in the founder's will, but their own stipends were not determined by the same method, and, like Harding's, were bolstered by increasingly favourable economic circumstances.

In the Rochester and Barchester cases, a surplus of funds became available as each charity evolved. According to Mullin's terms under which a charity exists, these funds should be reabsorbed by the charity, thus increasing its scope and effectivity. The fact that, in each case, these funds are being channelled into the pockets of the charity's benefactors, shows a blatant disregard for the founder's wishes, and represents a distortion of the terms under which a charity exists. The anonymous author of an article on charter-house charity, published in Dickens' *Household Words*, in 1855, warns of the tendency of a charity to become morally destitute when placed increasingly under ecclesiastical control. Using an existing charter-house to validate his hypothesis, the author alleges



that “after the appointment of the third master it was ordered that the office should thenceforth be held by a minister of the church, who, however, “shall neither have nor accept of any place of preferment or *benefit* in church of commonwealth, whereby he may be drawn from his residence, care, or charge” (*Household Words*, p.207). The author adds, with no small note of sarcasm, that this order “has remained to this day”; along with that other fantasy, the master’s “fixed salary of eight hundred pounds a year in the time of his predecessor” (*Household Words*, p.207). There can be little doubt that the precentorship at Hiram’s Hospital is managed in such a way as to secure the Warden’s financial benefit. Church charities should be the expression of altruism, and the fact that they derive monetary benefit directly contravenes the moral laws of philanthropy.

The case of Trollope’s Hiram’s Hospital is a reminder that, unless checked, a charity may grow corrupt, inept, self-seeking, and contradictory of its original idealism. As Mullin suggests, “there must be a system within the charity for identifying and curing abuse, or removing decayed corpses” (1980, p.40-41). Trollope is sure that church reform will act as such a system, purging the church of corruption and antiquated traditions. However, he insists that this is best achieved by Bold’s brand of systematic, impersonal, investigative reform. *The Warden’s* narrator explains his perspective:

In former times great objects were attained by great work. When evils were to be reformed, reformers went about their heavy task with grave decorum and laborious argument. An age was occupied in proving a grievance, and philosophical researches were printed in folio pages, which it took a life to write, and an eternity to read. We get on now with a lighter step, and quicker: ridicule is found to be more convincing than argument, imaginary agonies touch more than true sorrows, and monthly novels convince, when learned quartos fail to do so. (*W*, p.150)

Grantly personifies the need for reform. Trollope confessed in *An Autobiography* that he felt “all a parent’s fond affection” (1883, p.85) for the Archdeacon, but his endearment is tempered by criticism of that character’s single-minded veneration of tradition. Grantly has not Trollope’s

pluralistic life philosophy; he will not, cannot, embrace change. But while Trollope feels a touch of nostalgia for tradition, he welcomes the new relativism. This is clear when he writes in *Clergymen of the Church of England*, “If one could stay, if one could only have a choice in the matter, if one could really believe that the old shore is best, who would leave it?...But this new teacher, who has come among us with his ill-defined doctrines and his subversive smile...have made it impossible to stay....With hearts we still love the old teachings which the mind will no longer accept” (1866, p.128). One catches the Victorian note of nostalgia for the old faith here, but it quickly passes. As I have already suggested, religion with Trollope is not a matter of abstract truth; it is a fact of the human psyche: “Men talk of belief as though it were a settled thing. It is so but with few; and then only with those who lack imagination” (in apRoberts, 1971, p.109). Returning to the concerns of chapter one, the issue of honesty is important here: Trollope believes an emotional inclination toward the ‘old faith’ is not enough to justify continued adherence to its doctrine. One must be ‘honest’ with oneself and embrace change, because anything else would be a falsity. Furthermore, because matters of doctrine and belief do not much matter; because the Christian spirit remains even after literal truths are eroded by challenges to Biblical fact, one need not lament change and renewal.

Archdeacon Grantly’s sole concern is finding “a screw loose in [Bold’s] case” (*W*, p.79); in finding out what can be legally construed to favour the claims of the benefaction as it is now interpreted and discharged by the bishop and his representatives. Grantly gives no thought to the moral implications of Bold’s claims, simply because he believes there are none: “That he was fully confident of the justice of his cause let no one doubt....He did not believe in the Gospel with more assurance than he did in the sacred justice of all ecclesiastical revenues” (*W*, p.42). The narrator rouses our comic sense when he describes the Archdeacon as “an indomitable cock preparing for the combat,...arranging his weapons for the coming war without misgiving and without fear” (*W*,

p.42), and the fact that he enlists the help of lawyer, Abraham Haphazard, draws our attention to the similarity between cleric and lawyer, which, although humorous and irresistibly ironic, is still cause for concern. Haphazard also cares nothing for the justice of the matter; and the matter of Hiram's intentions is incidental: "A legal victory over an opposing party was the service for which Sir Abraham was, as he imagined, to be paid" (*W*, p.81).

Grantly is the very personification of church militancy, always ready to rise in his wrath to defend morally-impoverished, but time-honoured, clerical traditions. The narrator tells us that Grantly's motto was "no surrender; he would still fight it out; he believed confidently in Oxford, in the bench of bishops, in Sir Abraham Haphazard, and in himself" (*W*, p.73). The principles of right action and charitable conduct are lost in Grantly's endless exhortations to uphold "the interests of the order, gratitude to the bishop, the wishes of his friends, a sense of duty" (*W*, p.100). He is the archetypal cleric, "looking heavy, respectable, decorous, and opulent" in his "shining new clerical hat, black clerical gloves" (*W*, p.181). 'Moral' qualities are noticeably absent from this description. But easy assumptions about character are not Trollope's style. In Geoffrey Tillotson's words, he is the 'master complicator' (in apRoberts, 1971), and he complicates any one-dimensional interpretation of Grantly. Indeed, all Trollope's characters are far from clear-cut. As Letwin observes, "right and wrong, prudence and folly regularly get scrambled" (1982, p.34). If we are to understand Trollope's characters, we must first understand Henry James' assertion that "the *type*, impartially considered, is detestable, but the *individual* is full of amenity" (my italics) (in Wright, 1983, p.33).

The complex relationship between actions and individuals is an important part of Trollope's characterisation, and Grantly is not the only case in point. In an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, Trollope asserts that "a man no doubt may teach virtue and live viciously" (in Terry p.206).

Actions often conflict with principles. This is a problem faced by many of Trollope's clerical characters; the irony of moral dereliction among the clergy was a favourite theme. Harding is often regarded as the exception, however. Bradford Booth has even called him "the very heart of incorruptible integrity" (1958, p.35). Certainly, Harding has not lived 'viciously'. But neither has he put his principles into practice. Harding's beneficence is always passive. Goldberg describes Harding as the embodiment of the quieter spirit of Victoria's age: "peace, quietude, equipoise, stability, compromise" (in Watt, 1971, p.339). Throughout the novel Harding prefers compromise to strife, gentleness and quietude to upheaval:

His life had hitherto been so quiet,...his prosperity had never forced upon him any active cares...it was so hard that the pleasant waters of his little stream should be disturbed and muddied by rough hands; that his quiet paths should be made a battlefield...Mr. Harding felt little doubt but he should be left for life in quiet possession of the good things he had, if he chose to retain them. No; he would have done so from the sheer love of quiet, and from a horror of being made the subject of public talk. (*W*, p.52-53)

We suspect Trollope is humouring us with his understated irony when he insists that Harding "can hardly be called an idler" (*W*, p.8), but are left with no doubt when the Warden's 'clerical' achievements are listed: "he has published... a collection of our ancient church music... has greatly improved the choir of Barchester... and has played the violoncello daily to such audiences as he could collect" (*W*, p.8). In all difficult matters, the Warden chooses to defer responsibility: "All these things he knew the archdeacon would do on his behalf... 'I'd so much remain quiet in the matter,' said he, in an apologetic voice" (*W*, p.46-47). The rector in *The Claverings* (1867), is described by the narrator as "awake, though not widely awake to the responsibilities of his calling" (in Cockshut, 1968, p.67). So it is with Harding, who, we are beginning to suspect, is not quite so exceptional, after all. Certainly, Harding is not vicious or grossly selfish, but neither are Trollope's other clergymen. But they dream the time away in pleasant surroundings, made possible by an even more pleasant income. In short, they are not concerned with *practical* Christianity.

Nardin asserts that Harding's resignation is an example of practical benevolence, because he refuses to continue as Warden even though the position is his by law (1996, p.16). But perhaps the catalyst for Harding's resignation is the more immediate concern of removing himself from public attack. When he returns to his hotel, following his resignation, it is with no great moral exaltation, but "quietly, and with a palpitating heart; he almost longed to escape round the corner, and delay the coming storm" (*W*, p.172). And, in his last farewell, urging his bedesmen "to raise no further questions among yourselves as to the amount of [the new Warden's] income," Harding admits, "I cannot say what should be the disposition of these moneys, or how they should be managed, and I have therefore thought it best to go" (*W*, p.197-198). Harding's departing sentiments are hardly those of a man motivated by moral conviction.

As I have already suggested, Trollope was an advocate of church reform, and my exploration of the philanthropic issues Trollope deals with in *The Warden* make clear his belief that tradition must be useful if it is to be preserved. Trollope voiced the concerns of wider Victorian society when he called for a commitment by the Church to self-sacrifice and to the service of the community. By the end of the eighteenth century, the movement for church reform was gaining momentum. Bold's real-life counterparts brought the Church's moral deficiencies before the public, and, by exposing the damage they did to the entire ecclesiastical establishment, made it clear to all but the most reactionary churchmen that the argument advanced in palliation of abuses would not be tolerated. Certainly, Harding's gentleness endears him to the reader, but the fact remains that he is a product of what Best calls "the old unruffled church" (1961, p.150). He has never seriously considered his assumptions, his duties, even his vocation, until now. But his capacity for questioning had not died; rather, it lay dormant. Trollope reserved his more 'deadly, stinging birdshot' for those "tens of thousands" of cases "about which we have been hearing" (*W*, p.125). We assume that the

Rochester case is one example. But, by way of reminding us that the Warden's case is still noteworthy for its injustice, Trollope adds, "if the Warden be so much to the church, let the church pay him out of funds justly at its own disposal" (*W*, p.125).

Harding's sentiments expressed to Haphazard in defence of his resignation also make clear that Bold's revelations, although painful, have set the wheels of progress and positive reform in motion: "Sir Abraham, it is strange to myself, that it should have been ten years in that happy home, and not have thought to these things till they were so roughly dinned into my ears. I cannot boast of my conscience, when it required the violence of a public newspaper to awaken it; but now that it is awake, I must obey it" (*W*, p.171). For all his magnanimity, Harding is nonetheless party to an injustice through his own ignorance. Trollope cannot excuse the fact that he has never given any consideration to whether he is morally justified in receiving a wage entirely disproportionate to his duties, and the allowance received by the bedesmen under his care. So he must suffer the stings of slander, and resign the sinecure. Trollope does not offer the Warden easy solutions, simply because there are none. There is no honourable way for him to continue at the Hospital, and there is no perfect comfort in escape: his newly awakened conscience will always remind him that he had been drawing eight hundred pounds a year for a decade, without having been entitled to the stipend. So his resignation does not exculpate him, in his own eyes at least; and yet his standing up to the Archdeacon's tirades surely constitutes a kind of victory, though on another battlefield.

One cannot help but acknowledge the discrepancies between the financial conditions of Harding and Crawley. Harding is in receipt of a generous income, and enjoys the comforts of financial security, with little exertion. Crawley, conversely, is paid barely enough to sustain his own or his family's health, and, despite great exertion, enjoys no security. Both men have pledged their service to God and their Church, yet, as the excerpt from Trollope's *An Autobiography* at the

beginning of this chapter makes clear, one has “so little to make life enjoyable, so much to make it painful”, and the other, “not through [his] own merit, has had gifts poured out to [him] from a full hand” (1883, p.266-267).

## Conclusion

The body of critical literature on Trollope is massive. It is also extraordinarily diverse. For example, where apRoberts and Polhemus see moral relativism, Slakey and Kucich see only moral absolutism. And, while Hagan finds Trollope's morals and politics profoundly ambivalent, Nardin identifies a clarity of perspective and intent, asserting that his moral method is 'philosophical'. Booth referred to the chaos of criticism in Trollope studies this way: "If there is someone to declare that a given novel is certainly Trollope's best, there is someone to retort that it is without the slightest doubt his worst" (in Halperin, 1982, p.x).

Through my study of Trollope's particular moral code, and the individualism and absolutism which give it life, I have tried to make evident the contradictions and extremes of Trollopian criticism. There has been heavy critical emphasis on Trollope's ambivalence of attitude, and I have redressed this by showing that there is stability and certainty in Trollope's relativism. I have reconciled the polarisation of Trollope's moral absolutism and moral relativism, and have taken the middle-ground. In his own political life Trollope reconciled political conservatism and political radicalism, calling himself a 'Conservative-Liberal'. In *An Autobiography* Trollope called his political perspective "rational and consistent" (1883, p.266), and I have tried to show that his defence of both moral absolutism and moral individualism is also rational and consistent. Uniting the experiential Christianity in Trollope's moral relativism, with the moral certainty he derived from Ciceronian moral philosophy, I have produced an original assessment of Trollopian morality.

A study of Trollope and morality might begin with apRoberts' seminal text, *Trollope: Artist and Moralist* (1971), where she makes the case for Trollope's moral relativism. I have used this text because apRoberts has shown the comprehensiveness and adaptability of Trollope's morality, whilst keeping in sight his deeply felt religion. In *Trollope and Victorian Moral Philosophy*



(1996), Nardin also conveys a sense of the flexibility of Trollopian morality, but her focus is secular. She emphasises only the philosophical tradition from which Trollope's morality derives. Thus her text has been of little significance in this study.

In this thesis I have shown something of the man as well as his work, for the two cannot be separated. Trollope's morality came to life in his fiction, and both were shaped and inspired by Victorian society. I restricted my study to two of the Barchester texts, but many of the forty-seven novels, not to mention the works of non-fiction, could provide the basis for a fruitful study of Trollopian morality. Such novels as *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870), and *An Eye for an Eye* (1870), are explicitly moral, and both were highly controversial in their own time. An interesting study could be made of the ways in which Trollope's call for moral tolerance in these novels complicates easy assumptions about his conservatism.

As I stated in the thesis introduction, Robert Hume calls for the scholar's awareness of the perspective of the original audience, so that they might bridge the gap between past and present reader. But we do not need a critic to help us feel what Trollope's original audience felt when reading his books. His novels speak for themselves. As Victoria Glendinning wrote in her biography of Trollope, "Those who read his books know him best" (1992, p.513). In *An Autobiography* Trollope declared that his books had been the source of his greatest happiness: "I have been able to imbue myself thoroughly with the characters I have had in hand. I have wandered alone among the rocks and woods, crying at their grief, laughing at their absurdities, and thoroughly enjoying their joy. I have been impregnated with my own creations" (1883, p.161). Anyone who has read a Trollope novel will know what he meant.

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