SWIFT AS CHRISTIAN SATIRIST

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by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis aims to examine the Christian foundation of Swift's satires with special emphasis on A Tale Of A Tub. Swift's special contribution to the Christian ironic tradition will receive attention along with the Christian framework in which the satires are set. In preparation for the thesis I have read and used the Hebert Davis edition of the complete prose works in fourteen volumes. As a supplement to, not a substitute for, the complete prose works, I have read the significant studies of Swift's satires from the eighteenth century to the present in conjunction with a wide cross-section of the most recent criticism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Norman Rosenblood for his excellent supervision of the thesis. His perceptive criticism, his sharp questioning and his cheerful encouragement have been much appreciated.

I should also like to thank Dr. Morton who provided the initial direction of the thesis and Dr. King for their guidance. Thanks must also go to my parents for their patience, to Mrs. Hopkins for her enthusiastic interest and my sister Caroline for her help.

NOTE: THE asterisk is sometimes mistakenly used for a footnote number.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Much valuable Swift criticism has been produced over the last few decades.[1] Studies by Louis Landa, Kathleen Williams, Ehrenpreis, Ricardo Quintana and Martin Price have restored positions held to by Swift's contemporaries that should never have been lost: that Swift uses the narrator for satiric purposes, the satire often revolving around the absurdity of the narrator; that Swift was a committed Christian. What has not been done clearly, and what this study makes a start towards doing, is to connect Swift's Christian outlook with his writing, seeing in the former the foundation of the latter. Swift's contemporaries, particularly his friends Pope, Arbuthnot and Gay who were also ironists, saw him as a Christian writer so much so that John Wesley quoted from Gulliver's Travels in The Doctrine of Original Sin 1756; and thanks largely to Landa's Swift and The Church of Ireland we are beginning to see Swift as a Christian, if not yet as a Christian writer.

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[1]Particularly outstanding critical works are:

Louis Landa, Swift and the Church of Ireland, (London: Oxford, 1954).
Kathleen Williams, Jonathan Swift and The Age of Compromise, (Lawrence and London: The University Press of Kansas, 1968).
Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Work & The Age, (London: Methuen, 1962, 1967, in two volumes).
Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, (London: Methuen, 1953).
Martin Price, Swift's Rhetorical Art: A Study in Structure and Meaning, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1953).

Swift of course can be seen from many angles. The one I have chosen to see him from is the Christian perspective. I believe that he can also be profitably scanned from biographical, psychological and rhetorical angles among others, but it seems to me that the Christian perspective does less violence to his intentions and his results than any other way of regarding his work. The first part of the thesis will deal with the Christian tradition of satire and irony and Swift's special reconciliation of "divinity" and "wit". The second part deals with the nature of Swift's contribution to the tradition of Christian satire, focusing mainly on his ironic manipulation of the narrator. The third part will elaborate on Swift's contribution to the tradition with emphasis on Christian values in the satires and his attack on modernity. In the conclusion I will summarize what I have tried to do in the main body.

The main concentration of the thesis will be on A Tale of A Tub and, to a lesser extent, Gulliver's Travels, but the whole body of Swift's work will be referred to, including letters, poetry, and non-satirical prose works.* Insofar as is possible, I think it is important to make an attempt to examine Swift's work as a whole rather than in fragments. Much distortion of his writing has taken place because of a tendency to consider fragments, however justly famous, out of the context of his whole corpus.

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*All Swift prose quotations are from The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed. Herbert Davis and others, 14 vols., Oxford (Blackwell), 1938-68, unless otherwise stipulated.

CHAPTER I

RECONCILIATION OF DIVINITY AND WIT

Swift declares his purpose in "The Author Upon Himself" to reconcile divinity and wit:

> Swift had the Sin of Wit no venial Crime;
> Nay, 'twas affirm'd, he sometimes dealt in Rhime;
> Humour, and Mirth, had Place in all he writ;
> He reconcil'd Divinity and Wit.[2]

I should like to look at Swift's "divinity", subsequently his "wit" and then see the ways in which he combines them in his writing.

That Swift was a dedicated clergyman who carried out his duties with vigour and diligence can no longer be disputed. The eighteenth-century biographers concur in regarding Swift as a loyal servant of the Church.* The most sceptical biographer, John Boyle, Earl of Orrery, who knew Swift in his declining years, remarks: "He performed his duties of the church with great punctuality, and a decent degree of devotion."* Deane Swift, Swift's cousin, viewed the Dean as "a watchman of the Christian faith" to which Dr. Delany, another of the Swift biographers would not contend.* And Thomas Sheridan in his dedication to The Life of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Swift 1784 writes this about Swift:

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[2]Herbert Davis, Swift: Poetical Works, (London: Oxford, 1967), p. 148.

> In acts of charity and liberality, in proportion to means, perhaps without an equal, in his days. A warm champion in the cause of liberty, and support of the English Constitution, A firm Patriot... Utterly free from vice, and living in the constant discharge of all Moral and Christian duties.[3]

Sheridan points to Swift's tendency to present himself in the worst possible light, a tendency which partly explains why subsequent generations less willing than Swift's to look behind the mask viewed him unfavourably. Sheridan remembers Lord Bolingbroke's words that Swift was a hypocrite in reverse, which is to say, that instead of presenting himself as someone less than he was:

> Though a man of great piety, and true religion, yet he carefully shunned all ostentation of it: as an instance of which, it is well known that during his residence in London, not being called upon by any duty to officiate publicly in his clerical capacity, he was seldom seen at church at the usual hours that pretenders to religion shew themselves there; but he was a constant attendant on early prayers, and a frequent partaker of early Sacraments.[4]

Unlike others of his age who entered the Church because there was no

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[3]The eighteenth-century biographers referred to are: John Boyle, Earl of Orrery, Remarks on the Life and Writings, of Dr. Jonathan Swift, 1752, Swiftiana XI, (New York: Garland, 1974), p. 3.
Patrick Delany, Observation upon Lord Orrery's Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, 1754, Swiftiana XII, (New York: Garland, 1974).
Deane Swift, An Essay upon the Life, Writings and Character of Dr. Jonathan Swift, and
Patrick Delany, A Letter to Deane Swift on His Essay, 1755, Swiftiana XIV, (New York: 1974).
Thomas Sheridan, The Life of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Swift, 1784, Swiftiana XV, (New York: 1974).

[4]Thomas Sheridan, p. 2,

sensible alternative, Swift willingly entered only when he had the choice not to do so. In an autobiographical piece entitled Family of Swift, Swift recalls informing Sir William Temple for whom he worked as secretary that "since he had now an opportunity of living without being driven into the Church for a maintenance, he was resolved to (go to...) Ireld and take Holy Orders."[5] Swift's letters abound in references to the Church and especially his own parish of St. Patrick's in Dublin. The letters illustrate a wide range of concerns regarding the Choir, monuments and tablets, bells, Vicars Choral, Deanery lands, power and house.[6] Swift's sermons also indicate a deep concern for the Church and its truths remaining the guide for people's lives. The sermons are models of homilitic simplicity, clarity and force. Ehrenpreis, the best of the modern biographers of Swift, has made a concise summary of Louis Landa's research in Jonathan Swift and The Church of Ireland:

> He reformed the worship in his cathedral to make it more regular and fuller than it had been for many years. He prayed in secret, went to Church early so as not to be seen, wrote for his dearest friend some prayers which are models in intense but traditional religious expression. He gave a third of his income to charity and saved half the remainder to leave a fortune for charity. His sermons, the remarks of his intimates, his own private papers, all confirm Swift's devotion to his faith and to his calling.[7]

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[5]Herbert Davis, The Complete Prose Works, V, 194, subsequent references simply state the volume and page number.

[6]H. Williams, ed., The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, 5 volumes (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1963).

[7]Ehrenpreis, as in Jeffares, Fair Liberty Was All His Cry, (London: MacMillan, 1967), p. 213.

That Swift was a loyal Divine is now beyond dispute; however, determining the shape of his belief is a more difficult task. Having almost no theological speculation, Swift's Christianity is almost wholly practical. He shares with Thomas à Kempis, Erasmus and Pascal a belief that the important thing in Christianity is not to speculate about the doctrine but to live it. In Thomas à Kempis The Imitation of Christ (1380-1471) "the emphasis is placed...upon walking in the steps of the Saviour...rather than upon theological formulations."[8] Concerning dogma Erasmus was also anti-speculative, "like the Brethren, maintaining that the essential of religion consists not in ratiocination but in piety and charity."[9] Pascal, in a spirit with which Swift would be in harmony, says it most succintly of all: "All the good maxims already exist in the world; we just fail to apply them"[10] Yet even a philosophy of action rests on some philosophic foundation of what a man is. An for all his practicality Swift does have certain beliefs concerning the nature of man that put him in the mainstream of Christian thought.*

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[8]R.H. Bainton, Chrisendom: A Short History of Christianity and Its Impact on Western Civilization, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), I, p. 284.

[9]Bainton, II, p. 4.

[10]Pascal, Pensées, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer, (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 218, No. 540.

*My concern is not to see Swift specifically as an Anglican, but as a Christian whose theology bears fruitful comparison with some of the finest Catholic and Protestant thinkers. Certainly Swift was an Anglican, but he has a great deal more in common with the Catholic Pascal than fellow-Anglicans like Shaftesbury who believed in man's natural benevolence or Tolard who believed in the greatness of man's reasoning.

Theologically Swift belongs to a central Christian tradition in stressing original sin or man's permanently flawed nature redeemed, but not altered, by Christ's sacrifice. Swift would have no quarrel with St. Augustine who "maintains that man has been so corrupted by the fall of Adam that he is bound to sin since even his virtues are tainted by his desire for self-aggrandizement. Sin is not merely the absence of good, as the Neoplatonists said, but rather, as with the Hebrews, it is a rebellion against the majesty of God."[11] Aquinas also outlines the long gap between humanity and Divinity. "The system of Aquinas assumed the shape of a pyramid. At the base is the natural, at the apex the supernatural. Below is reason, above revelation; at the bottom human endeavor, at the summit divine grace."[12] Pascal frequently refers to man's fallen state: "What amazes me most is to see that everyone is not amazed at his own weakness,"[13] which correlates with Swift's statement that "I never wonder to see Men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed."[14] Pascal goes on to say in the Pensées:

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[11]Augustine, in Bainton, I, p. 126.

[12]Bainton, I, p. 221.

[13]Pascal, p. 37, No. 33.

[14]Swift, IV, 251.

> Man is nothing but a subject full of natural error that cannot be eradicated except by grace...Man's greatness comes from knowing he is wretched...if his nature is today like that of the animals, he must have fallen from some better state which was once his own.[15]

Not only the Catholic thinkers, but also the Protestants like Luther and Calvin uphold the concept of original sin. There is no difference here between Catholic thinking and Protestant thinking. No theologian put more stress on man's natural depravity than Calvin and no thinker was more conscious of man's smallness before Divinity than Luther. For Swift the concept of original sin is the centre of Christianity: "the Doctrine of Original Sin; which is the Foundation of the whole Christian Religion."[16] There was probably no Article in the Anglican Church's Thirty-Nine Articles to which Swift ascribed to more fervently than Article IX "Of Original or Birth-Sin":

> Origional Sin standeth not in the following of Adam, but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation...[17]

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[15]Pascal, p. 59.

[16]Swift, IV, 34.

[17]W.G. Wilson & J.H. Templeton, Anglican Teaching: An Exposition of The Thirty-Nine Articles, (Dublin: Alex Thom & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 65.

Characteristically Swift reiterates the meaning of the article in a comic setting:

> I might have had my lease on much better terms, if it had not been the fault of my great-grandfather. He and his wife, with the advice of a bad neighbour, robbed an orchard belonging to the Lord of the Manor, and so forfeited their grand privilege; to my sorrow I am sure, however, I must do as well as I can.[18]

In contrast to Swift's stress on original sin, "the Golden Age of natural theology and deistical free-thinking"* posits an uncorrupted nature, even a divine nature. John Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious, 1696 goes so far as to deny the fall of Adam. Shaftesbury and Addison capture the mood of the age in their extollations of a divinized nature. "O Glorious Nature! supremely Fair and sovereignly Good! All-loving and All-lovely, All-divine!" says Shaftesbury.[19] Addison says simply in less flowery language: "The Creation is a perpetual Feast to the Mind of a good Man, everything that he sees chears and delights him."[20] No fall has taken place for Shaftesbury or Addison, or if it has, it has been forgotten. Much of Swift's writing, including his major satires, can be best understood within the context of his railing against the slippage of the doctrine of original

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[18]Kathleen Williams, Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise, p. 65.

*Willey's phrase.

[19]Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, (London: Penguin, 1940), p. 65.

[20]Willey, p. 67.

sin. Anglicans of deistic or free-thinking or non-orthodox tendencies -- all one in Swift's mind -- come under attack in Some Thoughts On Free-Thinking, Preface to Bishop Sarum's Introduction, Mr. Collin's Discourse of Free-thinking and marginalia on Tindal's work. Reason itself in the abstract may be all right, writes Swift, "but that of every man is faulty."[21] Reason and nature have fallen with the fall of man, and Deists not only have ideas contrary to the traditions of the Church, but have dangerously optimistic notions of man's capabilities.*

While the concept of original sin forms the base of Swift's thinking about man it is reinforced with other traditional concepts of Christianity. In a letter to Dr. Delany, Swift states that "the grand points of Christianity ought to be taken as infalliable revelations."[22] For Swift "the grand points of Christianity" include belief in the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the centrality of the Bible, an after-life, and punishment for sin. Swift admits in his sermon On The Trinity that the idea of three in one is a difficult one to grasp,

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[21] Swift, IX, 166.

*Swift was fiercely opposed to the Deists, Toland and Tindal especially. Toland's title for his book Christianity Not Mysterious would in itself be an anathema, since Christianity for Swift was in part mysterious and not reducible to logic or man's reason. D.D. Bicknell in A Theological Introduction to The Thirty-Nine Articles of The Church of England quotes Tyrrell on this: "Christian ethics are bound up inseparably with Christian mysteries. Clear away these...gives place to a vague amiability whose roots are nowhere and its branches anywhere." A.S. Neill in his admirable little book Anglicanism, (Middlesex, Penquin, 1960) makes a similar point that the mystery of revelation can only be grasped by faith.

[22] Swift, IV, XIX.

but he reminds his listeners that "it is an old and true Distinction, that Things may be above our Reason without being contrary to it,"[23] and that "raising Difficulties concerning the Mysteries in Religion, cannot make them more wise, learned or virtuous..."[24] For Swift one must submit to a higher power than one's own in matters that appear to run counter to reason:

> Faith, says the Apostle, is the Evidence of Things not seen: He means, that Faith is a Virtue by which and Thing commanded us by God to believe, appears evident and certain to us, although we do not see, nor can conceive it; because by Faith we entirely depend upon the Truth and Power of God.[25]

What cannot be believed by reason must be believed by a higher reason: faith.

Although Swift had a high opinion of the ancient philosophers, in A Letter to a Gentleman With Designs for Holy Orders he makes clear the superiority of Christianity to wisdom of the pagan ancients and rests the superiority on the Divinity of Christ:

> The system of Morality to be gathered out of the ancient Sages, falls undoubtedly very short of that delivered in the Gospel, and wants besides, the divine Sanction which our Saviour gave to His.[26]

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[23]Swift, IX, 164.

[24]Swift, IX, 167.

[25]Swift, IX, 164.

[26]Swift, IX, 73.

The Bible, a book which he boasts he could read by age three, he praises as much for its style as its content: "if it were not for the Bible and Common-Prayer Book in the vulgar Tongue, we should hardly be able to understand anything that was written among us a Hundred Years ago...For those Books...have proved a kind of Standard for Language..."[27]

The after-life and punishment for sin Swift supports primarily for practical reasons. In A Sermon Upon The Excellancy of Christianity Swift claims that "human nature is so constituted, that we can never pursue anything heartily but upon hopes of a reward."[28] This tells us why we believe in an after-life, but not whether there is one. However, on another occasion, the death of his mother, Swift says that if virtue gets one to Heaven, then his mother is there. [29] The doubt here is not whether there is a Heaven or not, but whether virtue gains one a place in it. Punishment for sin Swift also holds to for the practical reason that if there were no check to man's passion then one could do as one liked.

A theological outlook can be defined by what it stands for, but also what it stands against. It is clear what Swift stands for and

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[27]Swift, IV, 14.

[28]Swift, IX, 244.

[29]Swift, V, 196.

what he stands against. Christianity for Swift is a practical guide on how to conduct a life. In his sermon On The Testimony of Conscience Swift proclaims "there is no solid, firm Foundation of Virtue, but in a Conscience directed by the Principle of Religion."[30] "And that in the great multiplicity of ideas, which one's mind is apt to form, there is nothing more difficult than to select those, which are most proper for the conduct of life."[31] It was Swift's concern to find a philosophy that could be lived as well as believed. He found it in Christianity. Other systems of thought to which one could intellectually nod one's head could not be lived. Only Christianity was intellectually, morally and practically satisfying.

Stoicism, a strong threat to Christianity that was seeping through some Christian pores at the time, was impractical. "The Stoical Scheme of supplying our Wants, by lopping off our Desires; is like cutting off our Feet when we want Shoes."[32] Christianity, in contrast, does not deny man's passions or his physical nature, it simply seeks to channel them into constructive areas. Sir William Temple, Swift's patron, notes that to follow Stoicism one has to be something more or less than a man, something like a Houyhnhnm for example.[33] Swift views Stoicism as a fraudulent scheme concocted by

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[30] Swift, IX, 154.

[31] Swift, IV, 49.

[32] Swift, IV, 244.

[33] Sir William Temple, as quoted in Elliott's The Power of Satire, (Princeton: 1960), p. 216.

worshippers of human nature. "To talk of bearing pain and grief," as the Stoics did, "without any sort of present or future hope, cannot be purely greatness of spirit; there must be a mixture in it of affectation, and an allay of pride, or perhaps is wholely counterfeit."[34] Swift, who according to Martin Price has "one of the most frighteningly unsentimental minds in literature,"[35] objects to Stoicism on the grounds that it accomodates a much too lofty notion of human nature:

> The Motives of the best Actions will not bear too strict an Enquiry. It is allowed, that the Cause of most Actions, whether good or bad, may be resolved into the Love or our selves: But the Self-love of some Men inclines them to please others; and the Self-love of others is wholly employed in pleasoing themselves. This makes the great Distinction between Virtue and Vice. Religion is the best Motive of all Actions; yet Religion is allowed to be the highest Instance of Self-love.[36]

Swift and the preacher in Ecclesiastes are one in voicing that "all is vanity". Christianity for Swift is the only code for living that takes a realistic view of the person, sees him in his wretchedness and his potential greatness in Christ's redemption, sees even his best actions wrapped in pride.*

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[34]Swift, IX, 245.

[35]Martin Price, To The Palace of Wisdom, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1964), p. 180.

[36]Swift, IV, 243.

*Besides the preacher in Ecclesiastes the finest anatomization of man's pride is found in Rochefoucauld's Maxims 24, 117, 139.

If Stoicism is objectionable because of its overestimate of man's nature, Epicureanism, the first systematic philosophy of materialism on which Hobbes and Hume foisted their superstructures, was unsatisfying because of its depreciation of the human being. One could intellectually agree with Hume that man has no more significance to the universe than an oyster, but man could not live as an oyster.[37] Shopping, sleeping, thinking, eating and the gamut of human activity are all done under the auspices of humanity, the oyster state being as yet unknown to us. In A Tritical Essay Upon the Faculties of the Mind Swift sets forth his objections to Epicureanism and indeed any form of materialism whether Hobbesian mechanics of Newtonian physics: "that the Universe was formed by a fortuitous Concourse of Atoms; which I will no more believe, than that the accidental Jumbling of the Letters in the Alphabet, could fall by Chance into a most ingenious and learned Practise of Philosophy..."[38]

Deism, stoicism, Epicureanism, materialism, free-thinking of all sorts build supperstructures in the air without a firm supportive base. A philosophy for Swift must be undergirded with a sensible realistic view of what a man can do and what is beyond his grasp. In On Mr. Collins Discourse of Free-thinking Swift demonstrates again the

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[37]Alvarez in The savage god. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) quotes Hume to this effect.

[38]Swift, I, 246.

folly of free-thinking divorced from the Christian foundation and its notion of human self-sufficiency by taking on for satiric purpose the philosophic disposition of a "friend" of Mr. Collins. Swift takes the free-thinking position and stretches it to its logical conclusion, which, coincidentally is its breaking point. The speaker begins with question: "Why may not I be deny'd the liberty of Free-seeing, as well as Free-thinking?"

> Yet no body pretends that the first is unlawful, for a Cat may look on a King; though you be near-sighted, or have weak or soar Eyes, or are blind, you may be a Free-seer; you ought to see for your self, and not trust to a Guide to chuse the Colour of your stockings or save you from falling into a Ditch.

And concludes that "there is not the least hurt in the wickedest Thoughts, provided they be free."[39] Midway through the discourse the speaker conceives of objections being raised against his doctrine that everyone is a free-thinker -- Socrates, Cato, Cicero among the most illustrious -- and everyone ought to be. Here one should pause and note that the speaker ironically chooses very conservative thinkers who believe in order and tradition, but by taking out of context one or two of their ideas he can direct them to his own ends. The ironic use of conservative thinkers for a liberal cause is Swift's way of undercutting the free-thinking thesis that man can use anything for any purpose, however contradictory or ill-suited. The objection to

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[39]Swift, IV, 29-30.

free-thinking that the speaker thinks might trouble some people is this: "that the Bulk of Mankind is as well qualified for flying as thinking, and if every Man thought it his Duty to think freely and trouble his Neighbour with his Thoughts (which is an essential Part of Free-thinking) it would make wild work in the World." The speaker answers this charge by affirming the absolute right of every man to think what he please:

> Whoever cannot think freely, may let it alone if he please, by virtue of his Right to think freely; that is to say, if such a Man freely thinks that he cannot think freely, of which every Man is a sufficient Judge, why then he need not think freely, unless he thinks fit.[40]

The irony here is apparent to everyone except the unaware speaker. Free-thinking as an inalienable right is given to all persons, but not all persons are given to free-thinking. On Mr. Collin's Discourse of Free-thinking furnishes another example of what Swift does so brilliantly in A Tale of A Tub, demonstrating how a mind cut off from structure and tradition begins to prey upon itself, convoluting until it chokes itself.

My first task is now complete, that is, to set down Swift's allegiance to the Church and Christianity and to outline in brief some of the contours of his theological position. The second task will be to show the scope and shape of his "wit".

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[40]Swift, IV, 38.

"Not the gravest of Divines," as he mockingly describes himself, Swift possesses a wit widely acknowledged in his time. The core of his wit, understood by either Johnson's definition of "contrivance, ingenuity, sharpness"[41] or our more modern connotation of humour, pivots on a fulcrum which we tend to regard as ironic: ironic as understood in the Oxford Disctionary's definition of appearing to say one thing while implying the opposite, statement and then the subversion of the statement.[42] Lord Orrery speaks of a "peculiar vein of humour" in all Swift's writings. A sense of humour is discernible in Swift's life as well. Sheridan recounts stories of Swift's fondness for farce in which he would dress up as someone else and assume their manner and diction in order to make fun of those with an inclination to pomposity. On one occasion he dressed as a country parson lacking in manners and dignity before Gibbons, a man desirous of seeing the Dean. In the role of Jodrel Swift acts as a barbarian and then to Gibbons' chagrin when discovering that Jodrel is really Swift, invites Gibbons to the Deanery for dinner. Sheridan notes, "As he was an excellent mimick, he personated the character of an ackward Country Parson to the life."[43] On another occasion Swift wished to take part in a beggar's wedding and

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[41]S. Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language, (London: Plummer & Breis, 1822), Definition IX.

[42]The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. V, (Oxford at the Clare don Press), p. 484.

[43]Sheridan, p. 397.

"that he might enjoy the whole completely, proposed to Dr. Sheridan that he should go thither disguised as a blind fidler, with a bandage over his eyes, and he would attend him as his man to lead him."[44] This talent for impersonation was put to frequent use in Swift's writing where he often takes the voice and manner of another person such as Gulliver, the Grub-street Hack, Drapier, Bickerstaff and so on; Swift's masks were almost without limit, all classes and manifold ways of thinking and writing. Vanessa says simply, "never anyone living thought like him."[45] Steele refers to a "certain uncommon Way of Thinking, and a Turn in Conversation peculiar to that agreeable Gentleman...whose Imagination was to be continually employed upon obvious and common subjects, though...in a new and unbeaten method."[46] Pope twice tried to pinpoint the Swiftian essence, once alone, "Dr. Swift has an odd, blunt way, that is mistaken by strangers for ill-nature. 'Tis so odd there's no describing it but by facts,"[47] and once jointly with Arbuthnot, "In Politicks, his Writings are of a peculiar Cast, for the most part Ironical and the Drift of them often so delicate and refin'd as to be mistaken by the vulgar."[48] Swift's

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[44]Sheridan, p. 399.

[45]Vanessa, as in James Sutherland, English Satire, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 91.

[46]Steele, II, p. 172.

[47]Pope, as in Jeffares, p. 1.

[48]Arbuthnot and Pope, in Memoirs of ... Martinus Scriblerus, ed. Kerby-Miller, (New Haven: Yale, 1950), p. 169.

writings are "for the most part ironical" and in looking back at his achievement in "Verses On The Death of Dr. Swift" Swift self-ironically expounds:

> Arbuthnot is no more my Friend,
> Who dares to Irony to pretend;
> Which I was born to introduce,
> Refin'd it first, and shew'd its Use.[49]

Ironists themselves, Arbuthnot, Pope, Gay and other of Swift's friends have much insight into Swift's irony. But even they recognize that there is something "peculiar" about it. It seems to me that the "peculiarity" lies not so much in his impersonations since Pope and the rest also use impersonation as a satirical device, but in the intensity and power of the impersonation. Swift's masks take on a life of their own and we identify with them as if they were characters in a novel. The modern reader may laugh at the story of an eighteenth-century reader going out to check maps of Gulliver's travels, but this is no sillier than modern critics insisting that Gulliver is Swift rather than, as he very often is, the target of Swift's satire.

Swift's reliance on irony as the chief medium of his with is almost all pervasive. Seldom does he use a statement of fact without undercutting irony. His most characteristic style even in some of his apparently simple utterances gives and takes away, says yes and no simultaneously and fuses the positive and the negative. The intricacy of the style can best be isolated in the letters without the usual

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[49]Swift, "Verses on The Death of Dr. Swift," Davis' The Poetical Works, p. 498.

layers of ironic entanglement found in the satires. In a letter to Pope Swift makes this comment on their friend Arbuthnot: "So our Doctor has every Quality and virtue that can make a man amiable or usefull, but alas, he hath a sort of Slouch in his Walk."[50] In rhythmn and texture the sentence brings to mind the infamous line of A Tale of A Tub, "Yesterday I saw a woman flayed, and you would hardly believe how it altered her appearance for the worse."[51] The Arbuthnot comment is serious and humourous, complimentary in one part and less so in another, positive and negative. Certainly Swift believed Arbuthnot to be a fine man, but he also believed him to be human with faults like any other man, though to a smaller degree than most. As Swift was very much aware, "human Fraility will too often interpose it self among Persons of the holiest Function."[52] Swift is wittily reminding Pope that Arbuthnot is both fine and flawed. Laetita Pilkington recalls the Swiftian philosophy: "whenever I see a Number of agreeable Qualities in any Person, I am always sure, they have bad ones sufficient to poize the Scale."[53]

In another letter to Pope, Swift makes a perplexing remark on Rochefoucauld and mankind:

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[50]Swift, as in R.A. Greenberg & W.B. Piper eds., The Writings of Jonathan Swift, (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 585.

[51]Swift, I, 109.

[52]Swift, II, 16.

[53]Swift, as in Greenberg, p. 607.

> I tell you after all that I do not hate Mankind, it is vous autres who hate them because you would have them reasonable Animals, and are Angry for being disappointed. I have always rejected that Definition and made another of my own. I am no more angry with -- Then I was with the Kite that last week flew away with one of my Chickins and yet I was pleas'd when one of my Servants Shot him two days after, This I say, because you are so hardy as to tell me of your Intentions to write Maxims in Opposition to Rochfoucault who is my Favorite because I found my whole character in him, however, I will read him again because it is possible I may have since undergone some alterations.[54]

This remark carries the full weight of Swift's fluctuating irony. On the one hand, he claims not to hate mankind, and then humourously modifies the comment to read well maybe a little. He says he found his whole character in Rochefoucauld, then says it has been some time since he has read him and perhaps he has changed in ways foreign to the French writer. Swift leaves open both possibilities: one that he owes a great deal to Rochefoucauld and two that he owes very little. The truth would lie somewhere in the middle, for undoubtedly Swift found a thinker of like mind in Rochefoucauld, but he also writes very differently from him. Rochefoucauld writes in clear incisive prose; Swift can do that, but the work on which his reputation is based incorporates a cameleon-like irony in which he assumes the colour of an environment to expose its inadequacy.

Even on occasions when one would have thought solemnity the only appropriate disposition to confront correspondingly solemn events,

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[54]Swift to Alexander Pope, Nov. 26, 1725, as in Greenberg, p. 586, (New York: Norton, 1973).

Swift is not without levity and mirth. Over the proposed imposition of nearly worthless copper coinage on Ireland, a situation Swift took very seriously, he can still jest. After arousing public support for the relinguishing of William Wood's patent for the copper coinage, Swift in the person of M.B. Drapier, a middle class linen merchant, informs the public that it is his duty to remain faithful to the King and the law, but since the patent is unlawful ("The law of England gives the King all Mines of Gold and Silver but not the Mines of other Metals" HD. Vol. 10. letter I) he makes known his intention that he is prepared to go to war against England ("A Letter to The Whole People of Ireland"). Swift makes a nice distinction here between the Sovereign and his Subjects, but it was a distinction too subtle for the English ruling class and their Irish cronies who strongly objected to Drapier's inflammatory statement and issued a reward for his arrest. Swift begins to backtrack, still in humour and self-irony, in Drapier's "Seasonable Advice to the Grand-Jury...":

> And if such a Writer, in four several Treatises on so nice a subject, where a Royal Patent is concerned, and where it was necessary to speak of England, and of Liberty; should in one or two Places, happen to let fall an inadvertent Expression, it would be hard to condemn him, after all the Good he hath done...[55]

Again in "A Letter to Viscount Molesworth" Swift reiterates with a fine twist of "back-in-your-court" genius.

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[55]Swift, X, 69.

> I will now venture to tell your Lordship a Secret, wherein I fear you are too deeply concerned. You will therefore please to know, that this Habit of Writing and Discoursing, wherein I unfortunately differ from almost the whole Kingdom, and am apt to grate the Ears of more than I could wish; was acquired during my Apprenticeship in London...[56]

Drapier goes on to plead in the same letter: "But I shall in Time grow wiser, and learn to consider my Driver, the Road I am in, and with whom I am Yoked." And as a final summation of the whole affair Drapier writes "An Humble Address to Both House of Parliament":

> Some would have it, that I WENT TOO FAR: But I suppose they will now allow themselves mistaken. I am sure I might easily have GONE FURTHER: And I think I could not easily have FARED WORSE.[57]

Swift's sermons are usually without irony. He comments to Stella that "those who think to hear something wonderful will be plaguily balked, for I shall preach plain honest stuff."[58] Swift does that for the most part. He grasps the simple truths of the gospel and delivers them to the audience in simple plainness. There are times, though when Swift is outrageously funny in the sermons, particularly so in Upon Sleeping in Church which begins: "I have chosen these Words with Design, if possible to disturb some Part of this Audience of half an Hour's Sleep, for the Convenience and Exercise whereof this Place,

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[56] Swift, X, 86.

[57] Swift, X, 123.

[58] Swift, IX, 97.

at this Season of the Day, is very much celebrated" and concludes: "Opium is not so stupifying to many Persons as an Afternoon Sermon."[59] Mirth not confined to sermons, Swift can even introduce jest in a mock-prayer to Henry VIII: "I wish that he had been flead, his skin stuffed and hanged on a Bibbet, his bulky guts and flesh left to be devoured by Birds and Beasts, for a warning to his successors forever. Amen."[60]

In a work collaborated on with Pope, Arbuthnot and others in the Scriblerian Club, called the Memoirs of The Extraordinary Life, Works and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus, fun is made of theologians' tendencies to speculate on matters that cannot be proved or disproved. In a hilarious outline of theological mumbo-jumbo, so very Swiftian in tone, these points are made:

> VI Whether God loves a possible Angel better than an actually existent flie?
>
> VII If Angels pass from one extreme to another without going through the middle? Aquinas.
>
> VII If Angels know things more clearly in the morning? Aquinas.*

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[59] Swift, IX, 212.

[60] Swift, as in McHugh and Edwards, Jonathan Swift: 1667-1967 A Dublin Tercentenary Tribute, (Dublin: 1967), p. 58.

* Beckett continues this tradition of making fun of theological speculation in Molloy: 1. What value is to be attached to the theory that Eve sprang, not from Adam's rib, but from a tumour in the fat of his leg (arse?)? 3. Did Mary conceive through the ear, as Augustine and Adobard assert? 4. How much longer are we to hang about waiting for the antichrist? 6. What is one to think of the Irish oath sworn by the natives with the right hand on the relics of the saints and the left on the virile member? 7. Does nature observe the sabbath? 13. What was God doing with himself before the creation? 14. Might ;not the beatific vision become a source of boredom, in the long run?...p.167. S. Beckett, Three Novels by Samuel Beckett: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958).

IX Whether every Angel hears what one Angel says to another? deny'd. Aquinas.

XI Whether one Devil can illuminate another? Aquinas.

XII If there would have been any female born in the state of innocence? Aquinas.

XIII If the creation was finish'd in six days, because six is the most perfect number: or if six be the most perfect number because Creation was finished in six days? Aquinas.[61]

Even on the coming of death Swift chooses to be cheerful. In The Last Will and Testament he offers his money for the founding of St. Patrick's hospital for idiots and lunatics: "And, if a sufficient Number of Idiots and Lunaticks cannot readily be found, I desire that incurables may be taken into the said Hospital to supply such Deficiency..."[62] The statement carries Swift's usual number of ironic qualifications. He will found a hospital if the right number of idiots can be found -- understood in the light of his view that Ireland houses more idiots per square yard than anywhere in Europe -- if not, then a general hospital for incurables, but not quite that either, only certain types of incurables, not those suffering from self-inflicted diseases. Looking back on his will in "Verses on The Death of Dr. Swift" writes:

He gave the little Wealth he had,
To build a Hourse for Fools and Mad:
And shew'd by one satyric Touch,
No Nation wanted it so much:[63]

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[61] Kerby-Miller, ed. Memoirs of The Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950 (reprint), p. 123.

[62] Swift, XIII, 150.

[63] Swift, as in Davis, p. 513.

The jest is not confined however to the Testament but extends to his rewarding of gifts. Lord Orrery makes these observations:

> Dr. Swift's Will: which, like all his other writings, is drawn up in his own peculiar manner. Even so serious a composition he cannot help indulging himself, in leaving legacies that carry with them an air of raillery and jest. He disposes of his three hats (his best, his second best, and his third best; beaver) with an ironical solemnity, that renders the bequests ridiculous. He bequeaths "to Mr. John Grattan a silver box, to keep in it, the tobacco which the said John usually chewed, called pigtail." But, his legacy to Mr. Robert Grattan is still more extraordinary. "Item. I bequeath to the Reverend Mr. Robert Grattan ... my strong box, on condition of his giving the sole use of the said box to his brother, Dr. James Grattan, during the life of the said Doctor, who hath more occasion for it." There are so many last impressions of his turn, and way of thinking: and I dare say, the persons thus distinguished, look upon there instances, as affectionate memorials of his friendship, and as tokens of the jocose manner, in which he had treated them during his life time.[64]

Swift lived a life of acute self-awareness and self-irony, aware of his own inclinations and limitations as well as those of others. Very early in his career he recognizes the importance of irony as a check against man's pride and a check against his own pride. In a charming piece of 1699 Resolutions When I Come To Be Old he sets up an elaborate list of all the things he will not do when he is old:

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[64]Lord Orrery, p. 162-163.

not marry a young woman, not seek young company, not give advice, not boast of former glories and so on before giving the final resolution, "not to set up for observing all these Rules, for fear I should observe none,"[65] thus knocking down what he has been so carefully building up. Of course it is possible to take pride in one' self-irony, to be proud of one's humility, but that would be a turn not unfamiliar to Swift.

Most of Swift's work could take as its explanation what he said in The Second Volume Advertisement to his poems: "The following poems chiefly consist either of Humor or Satyr, and very often of both together."[66] Humourous satire is Swift's trademark, but there are times when he drops the ironic mask, as in a project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners, one of the few writings to which Swift signs his real name. The essence of what Swift has to say here is that virtue should be rewarded or at least the outward show of virtue should be necessary for political and economic advancement. To this end Swift proposes the setting up of "itinearary Commissioners" appointed to inspect men in office so that morality and religion would become fashionable court virtues. The modern reader would immediately think of a police state of at least a very rigid authoritarian one, but the only objection Swift voices is the charge that the scheme might encourage hypocrisy:

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[65]Swift, I, XXXviii.

[66]Swift, XIII, 184.

> Neither am I aware of any Objections to be raised against what I have advanced; unless it should be thought, that the making Religion a necessary Step to Interest and Favour, might encrease Hypocrisy among us; And I readily believe it would. But if One in Twenty should be brought over to true Piety by this...and the other Nineteen be only Hypocrites, the Advantage would still be great...it is often with Religion as it is with Love; which, by much Dissembling, at last grows real.[67]

There is no reason to think that Swift is being ironic here, though sounding a great deal like one of his despised projectors, and many reasons to think he is not. First, he signs his name. The only other time he does this in a major tract is in A Proposal...for Correcting the English Tongue, unquestionably not ironic. Secondly, the sentiment expressed is consistent with Swift's realism. He has no exalted view of the human being and intimates in other works that he would prefer hypocrisy to outright vice. Yet in spite of the solemn tone, Swift cannot prevent himself from giving the essay a final twist connecting religion with love in a rather unflattering manner to man's manipulation of both.

As there are times when little irony is used, so there are times when Swift deems it inappropriate to use irony at all. On the death of his mother, Swift writes: "If the way to Heaven be through Piety, truth, justice, and charity, she is there."[68] When he speaks

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[67]Swift, II, 56.

[68]Swift, VII, 196.

from the heart without intervening irony, Swift is brief and simple. In his poignant prayers for Stella, Swift says what he thinks needs saying with a minimum of rhetoric:

> I Give her a true Conception of the Vanity, Folly, and Insignificancy of all Human Things...
>
> II Give her a true sense of the emtiness and vanity of all earthly things...remember the good actions of this thy servant; that the naked she hath cloathed, the hungry she hath fed, the sick and fatherless whom she hath relieved...[69]

We have looked at Swift's "divinity" and the range and variety of his "wit", I should like now to look at the ways he "reconciles" them. There is an old tradition of uniting divinity with wit of which Swift is an outstanding contributor. When one thinks of the wits of the world, invariably one turns to religious men. Among clergymen who have written with mirth are Rabelais, John Donne, St. Jerome, Robert Herrick, Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne. Among comic-religious writers, by which designation I mean religious writers who use comedy as their form of address, number Molière, Cervantes, Erasmus, Sir

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[69]Swift, IX, 255-256.

Thomas More, Samuel Butler and Pascal at times.* So predominant have Christian writers been in the comic mode of expression that it is difficult to think of a major satirist, ironist, or wit from the medieval period to the eighteenth century who has not been either in the Church or loyally connected to it. In the medieval period in particular almost all major religious literature was filtered through the comic lens whether one thinks of Chaucer or the Everyman-playwright or the Gawain-poet. Some of the medieval religious writing such as that by Langland in Piers Plowman uses a serious satire to lay bare corruptions in the clergy and the society, but the bulk of the writing shares with Chaucer an inclination to treat the world lightly, unmasking man's serious pretensions and solemn pomposity.

The Church has never lacked adherents to the comic mode of perceiving man's reality from the beginnings to the present. Isaac

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*Most of these writers were familiar to Swift. In the correspondence Erasmus is referred to by Swift, Vol. iii, p. 401, Cervantes Vol. iii, p. 261, 94, 313, 506 and Vol. ii, p. 310, Rabelais Vol. iii, p. 261 & Vol. ii, p. 129, 312, Vol. ii, p. 384. Lord Bathurst in a letter to Swift refers to "our friend Cervantes". "Should he go into Spain, he would find that Don Swifto is in the highest estimation, being thought to be lineally descended from Miguel de Cervantes, by a daughter of Quevedo's." H. Williams, ed. The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, 5 volumes, (Oxford, 1963), iv, p. 390. In Vol. iii, p. 261, Pope quotes Swift lines from The Dunciad: "And Thou! whose Sence, whose Honour, and whose Rage/At once can lead, delight, and lash the Age!/Whether thou chuse Cervantes' serious Air,/Or laugh and shake in Rab'lais easy chair..." Swift had copies of Pascal, More, Molière, Cervantes and Rabelais' works in his library; see H. Williams, Dean Swift's Library, (Cambridge, 1932). In Herbert Davis' edition of the complete prose works St. Jerome is mentioned iv 38, xiv 17, Rabelais xii 32, Erasmus ix 262 and Cervantes xii 32.

Barrow, who had an honoured place in Swift's library, chooses for his sermon text "Rejoice Evermore": "It is a scandalous misprision, vulgarly admitted concerning Religion that it is altogether sullen and sour, requiring a dull lumpish, morose kind of life, barring all delight, all mirth, all good humour...a Christian...is the most jocund, blith, and gay person in the World..."[70] John Hacket, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, expounds: "they are not more religious and spiritual who are more austere and morose than others" and that "Christ Jesus refused not cheerful meetings, but condemn'd the sad countenances and sullenness of the Pharisses: and melancholy of all humours he held was fit to make a Bath for the Devil."[71] Tillotson, also in Swift's library (as was Andrewes), says wit "is a very commendable quality." And Lord Shaftesbury, who condemns satire as a too serious form of the comic and considers self-righteous Puritanical forms of religion immoral, underscores the point, "I very much question whether anything besides ill-humour can be the cause of atheism; and certainly nothing else can make us think the Supreme Manager sullen, sour or morose."[72]

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[70]Barrow, as in S.M. Tave's The Amiable Humorist, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 4.

[71]Hacket, in The Amiable Humorist, p. 7.

[72]Shaftesbury, as in Jensen and Zirker's The Satirist's Art, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 36.

*Tillotson, in Tave, p. 13.

Christian writers have been vigourously defensive of the comic being the most suitable lens through which to view reality. Erasmus in Preface to Thomas More summons to memory that "Saint Jerome indulged in this kind of writing, and with greater freedom and sharpness," and wonders "a little at the tenderness of ears in these times, which can tolerate nothing, almost, but solemn forms of address."[73] Sir Thomas More, according to Swift, "the finest man of virtue England ever produced,"[74] in a letter to Peter Gilles writes: "people are so humorless...some are so grimly serious that they disapprove of all humour...some are so literal-minded that the slightest hint of irony affects them as water affects a sufferer from hydrophobia."[75] If Swift was not "the gravest of Divines," neither was some of the finest Christian writers before him.

Herrick even exceeds Swift in bawdy verse. Lines such as "fain would I kiss my Julia's dainty leg/Which is white and hairless as an egge" or "I can play, and I can twine/'Bout a Virgin like a Vine" or "she throws; I cast, and having thrown, I got the Pit and she the Stone,"* reflect the same spirit of playfulness that Swift

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[73]Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 3.

[74]Swift, XIII, 123.

[75]More, Utopia, (London: Penguin, 1971), 31-32.

*Herrick, Hesperides, ed. Martin, (London: Oxford, 1956), pp. 139, 10, 19.

exhibits in some of his minor works. In A Modest Defence of Punning Swift remarks, "So it seems what is got by the Pox is lost by the Box ..."[76] and in A Discourse To Prove the Antiquity of the English Tongue Swift works out his own philological schema. He jokingly enlightens us that Ajax is from the English term "Age-aches," Alexander the Great means "All eggs under the Grate" and Aristotle derives from "Arise to tell".[77] Swift, like Herrick and a host of other Christian writers, chooses to treat the world lightly with the underlying premise that man is basically mediocre, takes himself too seriously and fails to recognize his own smallness in relation to the Divine.

With all his affinity to Herrick, the writer Swift most resembles is Samuel Butler. Swift knew Hudibras by heart, a great favourite of the Scriblerus Club, and often recited its lines. The similarities between the two comic-religious writers are widespread. Like Butler, and Eliot following, Swift is an Anglo-Catholic in religion, a Royalist in politics and a Classicist in literature. Both Butler and Swift's satirical works have the moral impetus of Job: 40:11-12: "Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold everyone that is proud, and abuse him. Look on everyone that is proud and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place." There are no

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[76]Swift, IV, 208.

[77]Swift, IV, 235-236.

earthly idols for Swift and none for Butler. When Gulliver summons Alexander in Glubbdubdrib and other of his heroes, inadvertently while seeking to magnify their stature, he diminishes them. Alexander was not poisoned, Gulliver relates, but "dyed of a Fever by excessive Drinkin," much less glamorous, and Caesar freely confesses that "the greatness/Actions of his own life were not equal by many Degrees to the Glory of taking it away."[78] Likewise a sustained verbal war wages in Hudibras against pride. Anamalia rationalis in Butler, as in Swift, is more anamalia than rationalia. Take, for example, this passage from Canto I, which reads very much like Swift's Tale narrator with complete faith in his mental agility to render all mystery explicable:

> He was in logic a great critic,
> Profoundly skilled in analytic:
> He could distinguish and divide
> A hair 'twixt south and southwest side'
> On either which he would dispute,
> Confute, change hands, and still confute:
> He'd undertake to prove, by force
> Of argument, a man's no horse;
> He'd prove a buzzard is no fowl,
> And that a Lord may be an owl... l. 65-75.[79]

Butler subverts the epic tone by ironic undercutting in which Hudibras' pretension is gradually unmasked. Pretension is also satirized in Butler's best short poem, "The Elephant In The Moon," an attack on the Royal Society that bears resemblance to Swift's attack in Book III of

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[78]Swift, XI, 180.

[79]Butler, as in Hudibras, ed. J. Wilders, (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 3.

Gulliver's Travels. Although Swift drew directly from the Transactions of the Royal Society for his satire, he may also have captured something of Butler's spirit. Butler's "learned society" think they see armies and an elephant at war on the Moon; but the elephant and armies turn out to be flies and assorted debris stuck in the telescope. In his prose writing in the Notebooks Butler records the message of the poem: "Immoderate Desire of Knowledge, has ever been one of the chiefest causes of Ignorance, for most men know lesse then they might by endeavoring to know more then they can,"[80] and again in Characters his description of an atheist: "he, that will venture to comprehend that, which is not within his Reach, does not know so far as his own latitude, much less the Extent of that which lies beyond it."[81] Butler's remarks bring to mind Swift's contrast between the practical science of the Broodingnagians in which that science is supported which brings two blades of grass or two husks of corn where only one grew before in contrast to the Laputian construction of theoretical models of little or no practical value. Both Swift and Butler believe in limits to human capability and advocate scepticism to Utopian schemes.

The strength of Swift's work, like Butler's, lies in its ability to find metaphors for thought. Swift, at his best, thinks in metaphor. When he want to draw attention to human pettiness, he thinks of high-

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[80] Butler, as in Samuel Butler: Characters and Passages from The Notebooks, (Cambridge University Press, 1908), p. 478.

[81] Butler, p. 112.

heels; a specific reference to high and low churchmen, but of universal applicability in describing any pettiness that thinks those who wear high-heeled shoes are superior to those who wear low-heeled shoes. Never content with one example, Swift extends the metaphor. Further pettiness he conceives of in terms of those who crack their eggs by the small end and those who, thinking themselves superior to their small-Endian brethern, crack their eggs by the big end. Butler thinks in metaphor too as his definition of satire will bear out: "It is a kinde of Knight Errant that goes upon Advertures, to Relieve the Distressed Damsel Virtue, and Redeeme Honor out of Inchanted Castles and Opprest Truth and Reason out of the Captivity of Gyants and Magitians."[82] This is surely the most wonderful definition of satire in the language not even equalled by Swift's: "Satyr is a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover every body's Face but their own..."[83]

It is worth noting how consistently Swift and Butler say important things in jest. Periodically when they do speak in grave tones, when the ironic mask drops, as in some of the minor prose tracts on government, they really have nothing important to say. Butler depicts himself and Swift well in Characters under the category of the Drole: "His Fancy is counter-charged between Jest and Earnest; and

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[82]Butler, Notebooks, p. 469.

[83]Swift, I, 140.

the Earnest lies always in the Jest, and the Jest in the Earnest."[84] When Butler has something important to say, as he has in the definition of satire as a moral force, he says it in comic camouflage. Examples of thought interweaving metaphor and jest abound. A striking example is his definition of the world: "The World is like Noah's Ark/In which few men buy many Beasts imbark."[85]

The reconciliation of divinity and wit, as we have seen, is an old tradition in Christian satire and irony. Swift was not unique in his trying to combine the two, but was, as our second chapter will show, unique in his contribution to the tradition. The greatest theoretician of Christian irony and satire, Søren Kierkegaard, a writer with whom Swift shares much in common in poses and pseudonyms, connects religious concerns with comic treatment in a way that I think would appeal to Swift:

> The comical always lies in contradiction...it is true without exception that the more thoroughly and substantially a human being exists, the more he will discover the comical.
>
> The religious individual is the highest of all resolves, infinitely higher than all plans to transform the world and to create systems and works of art: therefore must the religious man, most of all men, discover the comical--when he is really religious; for otherwise he becomes himself comical.

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[84] Butler, p. 175.

[85] Butler, p. 112.

> The religious discourse must, therefore, always be a little teasing just as existence is; for herein lies the teasing, that we human beings have our heads full of great imaginings, and then comes existence and offers us the commonplace.[86]

Both Swift and Kierkegaard wrote against the grain of their time, wrote "unscientifically" in multilayered works of Christian irony.*

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[86]Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 413, 414, 431.

*The Swift-Kierkegaard parallels are fascinating. Both writers wrote against system and systematizers; those who would solve the riddles of the universe and hand them to you in a neat ball. Swift had his Hobbes and Kierkegaard had his Hegel. Hobbes was the chief system-maker of Swift's time and Hegel was the chief system-maker of Kierkegaard's time. The personal parallels are notable too. Swift had his Stella, Kierkegaard his Regine Olsen; Swift never got Dublin out of his system, and Kierkegaard never got Copenhagen out of his. Both men railed against Church corruption and Christian complacency. John Updike in an excellent article called 'The Fork' in J. Thompson's Kierkegaard: A Collection of Critical Essays has said that Kierkegaard was really only interested in five things: Regina, his Father, Jesus, Socrates and Hegel. Swift too I think essentially was interested in five things, at least for the sake of the parallel, Stella, Ireland, the Church, the Tory Party, and his writing. This is not to deny that both Swift and Kierkegaard were not interested in Luther's "four last things": death, judgement, heaven and the eternal fire.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIAN IRONY AND THE NARRATORS AS MODERNITY

Swift's multilayered irony is based on the assumption that a workable degree of truth can be found by balancing two opposites. Tension as an approximation of truth, which Swift's fluctuating irony brings about, finds expression in his concepts of the person, the government and the Church. He conceives the person as an amalgam of matter and spirit, living in the present in which he looks back to a time of original sin and forward to fulfilling his divine potentiality in Christ. Swift could go along partly with what Hobbes says in his introduction to the Leviathan, but could not subscribe to it completely:

> For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within; why may we not say, that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body...[87]

The Hobbesian notion of mechanical man is too one-sided for Swift, lacking in tension, lacking in the conviction that man is composed of something quantitative that we call matter and something qualitative we call spirit. As far as government is concerned, in a 1701 essay A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome Swift

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[87] Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. M. Oakeshott, (New York: Colliers, 1966), p. 19.

conceives power to be naturally divided between "one Eminent Spirit:, "Men who have acquired large Possessions" and "the Mass, or Body of the People."[88] When the balance is disrupted tyranny results, either tyranny of the one, or the few, or the many. Finally, Swift's conception of the Church regards Calvinism as one extreme, Catholicism as the other extreme and the Anglican Church as the via media.

The Christian view of reality, crystallized sharply by Pascal, involves a fidelity to a conception of multidimensional phenomena. Pascal's Pensées regard reality as capable of being one thing and another or many things at once:

> Christianity is strange. It bids man recognize that he is vile, even abominable, and bids him desire to be like God. Without such a counterpoise, this dignity would make him horribly vain, or this humiliation would make him terribly abject.[89]

Synthesis of abjectness and divine potentiality, between brute and angel lies the reality of man; and in order that man arrives at an approximation of his true nature, he must not distort his reality by seeing himself too much the brute or too much the angel. For Pascal and Swift truth can only be approximated by tension, fidelity to a tension that allows for the partial validity of opposite points of view and amalgamates them into the truth of a fluctuating middle.

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[88]Swift, I, 221.

[89]Pascal, Thoughts, Harvard Classics, ed. Eliot, XLVIII, (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1910), p. 265.

In Pascal's view man must be aware of his wretchedness but not at the expense of losing sight of his salvation through Christ:

> The knowledge of God without that of man's misery causes pride. The knowledge of man's misery without that of God causes despair. The knowledge of Jesus Christ constitutes the middle course, because in Him we find both God and our misery.[90]

When man overemphasizes one side or another of a partial truth -- for example, Hobbes belief that man is a machine or can be made into one, or Shaftesbury's belief that rationality makes man significant regardless of original sin or ultimate redemption -- one distorts the true nature of oneself. In the Christian position man is both insignificant before Divinity and significant because of Divinity. Man is both machine and something more, both "wholly animal" in Pascal's phrase and something beyond anamality. Reduction of a multiple state into a single one leads to distortion as one "is unable to conceive the connection of two opposite truths, and believing that the admission of one involves the exclusion of the other, they adhere to the one, exclude the other..."[91]

In "a great age of irony," as Martin Price terms the period from Pascal to Blake, and especially in Swift, there is a working principle that only the complexity of a shifting irony can do justice

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[90]Pascal, Thoughts, p. 264.

[91]Pascal, as in Price, To The Palace of Wisdom, p. 20.

to a complex and multidimensional reality. Swift lives at a time when numerous thinkers are preoccupied with the reduction of many facets of reality into a single underlying phenomenon and transforming a both/and conception of reality by various either/ors. Blake, who writes passionately against linear vision, sharply complains against the prevailing tendencies of the age:

> May God us keep
> From Single vision & Newton's sleep![92]

Irony for many Christian writers of the eighteenth century seems to be the only way out of a Newtonian mechanical universe in which mechanics dominate over meaning. The Christian concept of the universe as a "realm of substances in qualitative and teleological relations" is being supplanted by "a realm of bodies moving mechanically in space and time."[93]

Swift's irony works by demonstrating the folly of single vision. Consistently the narrator picks up one side of a two-sided coin and distorts reality by overemphasizing one aspect of it. The reader must then redress the narrator's extremism by positing its opposite and balancing one extreme against another thus finding a fluctuating middle which can move a little to one side or the other

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[92]Blake, as in Ford's The Pelican Guide to English Literature: From Dryden to Johnson, (Middlesex, Penquin, 1975), p. 278.

[93]Burtt, Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), p. 161.

depending on which opposite appears temporarily to be gaining the upperhand. Swift takes hold of the philosophic tendencies of his age and recasts them into works of satire in which a shifting irony plays the major part. Between the Yahoo which is a close metaphoric equivalent of the "nasty, brutish and short" life of Hobbesian man in the state of nature and the Houyhnhnm which is a hybrid of ethical stoicism and Cartesian rationality, Swift places a surgeon turned sailor who resembles both in part; but given a choice between alignment with animality and rationality chooses rationality, thus eclipsing one side of his nature and over-stressing the other side. The satire is largely on Gulliver in Book iv and, insofar as we would behave similarly, on us. Gulliver has forgotten the Pascalian tension inherent in the Christian conception of man's reality, and in trying to imitate horses, Gulliver ceases to be a man. A one-dimensional view of reality, in Gulliver's case the worship of rationality at the expense of trying to eradicate his physical and emotional nature, leads to distortion and absurdity. Swift reminds us in A Discourse of the Contests and Dissentions in Athens and Rome that "... it is the Talent of Human Nature to run from one Extream to another..."[94] and running from extreme to the other is Gulliver's consistent pattern in the Travels.

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[94]Swift, I, 230.

The King of Brobdingnag's criticism of European civilization meets with a loyal patriot who answers every charge. When the Houyhnhnms engage in criticism of Europe Gulliver adds to the abuse. Gulliver has moved from patriotism to hatred of his country; he metamorphoses from a philantropist in Lilliput where he cannot do enough for the Lilliputians to a misanthrope when he returns from Houyhnhnmland who cannot abide his family. He is a sensible and dispassionate commentator on life in Laputa, but a passionate fool commenting on life in Houyhnhnmland. In Sentiments of A Church-of-England Man Swift summarizes Gulliver's whole tendency to avoid moderation, "for, it seems a Principle in human Nature, to incline one Way more than another..."[95]

If we might for a moment view reality as a balance between two opposite weights, the inclination of Swift's narrators is to lean their weight on one side or the other thus toppling a balance into disruption. What Swift philosophically maintains, he artistically embodies in the satires. One of the central philosophic tenets of his satires is that man has lost his balance, that he has gone over to one extreme or another, that he has forfeited the realistic view of man inherited from Christianity for the simplistic impractical view of the materialists and rationalists. The narrators of the major satires are not merely spokesmen for modernity, that tendency to expouse man's self-sufficiency, his reason, his progress and perfectability, they are embodiments of modernity itself.

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[95]Swift, II, 1.

Upon arrival in the land of the Houyhnhnms Gulliver sees the choice of alignment between filthy apes and clean horses who govern themselves solely on the basis of reason. Gulliver sees his choice in either/or terms, whereas Swift sees the choice as synthesis. Man is neither completely rational nor completely devoid of reasoning, neither horse nor ape, not "animal rationale" after the Deists, Lockians, and followers of Descartes but a creature "rationis capax".[96] Even the Houyhnhnms recognize that Gulliver has the "rudiments of reason", that he is "teachable", that he is somewhat smoother than the rough-skinned Yahoos. When the Sorrel Nag tries to feed Gulliver Yahoo food, a "piece of Ass's Flesh", he finds that Gulliver does not consider it palatable. Likewise when the Nag offers Gulliver oats, it observes that he does not eat Houyhnhnm food. "Neither of these were Food for me" says Gulliver and one would have wished that he had extended the logic of his tastebuds into the recognition that neither Yahoo nor Houyhnhnm provided him with an exemplar.[97]

The point of Book iv is that man is neither Houyhnhnm nor Yahoo, but he does share some similarities and differences with both. He does not have long claws, as Yahoos do, to enable him to climb well; he is

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[96]Swift to Alexander Pope, September 29, 1725, in Greenberg, p. 585. "I have got Materials Towards a Treatis proving the falsity of that Definition animal rationale, and to show it should be only rationis capax."

[97]Swift, II, 214.

less hardy and finds clothes a necessity; he prefers cooked food to raw food, according to anthcropologists, the mark of civilized man over animal-man. He is, however, similar enough to the Yahoos in physical appearance for a female Yahoo to embrace him while he bathes and he has a firm understanding of their petty quarrels having come from a society that behaves along similar lines. Gulliver is unlike the Houyhnhnms in that he is emotional and not outstandingly rational. Emotion is not rational so it is understandable at the time of Gulliver's departure that the horses indicate nothing other than curiosity at waving goodbye to a freak. Farcically Gulliver in the narrative tries to make much of the fact that his Master raises his hoof to be kissed rather than have Gulliver bend to kiss it. The only horse that shows the slightest interest in his leaving is the Sorrel Nag, a genetically inferior beast, who calls out for him to take care. On the other hand, Gulliver is capable of learning the Houyhnhnm language, something the Yahoos cannot do, and has a degree of reason that the horses recognize shown by their putting him in his own private quarters between their dwelling and the Yahoo stable.*

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*T.O. Wedel in "On The Philosophical Background of Gulliver's Travels", 1926 argues convincingly that the chief difficulty of understanding Gulliver in the post-Augustan period is the shift in philosophic sensibility. "Pascal would have understood him, as would La Rochefoucauld and Boileau; so would Montaigne; so would Boyle. For the transition from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth was experiencing a revolution in ethical thought...The pessimism of Pascal has given way to the optimism of Leibnitz; the theory of self-love of La Rochefoucauld to the theory of benevolence of Hutchesan and Hume; the scepticism of Montaigne to the rationalism of Locke, Tolard, and Clarke..."

In the satires Swift's narrators, like Gulliver, tend to oversimplify reality, see in absolutes rather than degrees and identify themselves with partial truths. In A Tale of A Tub, for example, the narrator ransacks the universe trying to make it correspond with his own whims and waverings; the world becomes a word, or rather a whole jumble of words, which aim to reduce reality to whatever simplistic notion his mind becomes preoccupied with. The narrator's mind, completely free to run wild without any check by experience or tradition, rockets up and down, in and out, across and through, towards and away from, at the end of which he has discovered absolutely nothing, but has convinced himself that he has "included and exhausted all that Human imagination can Rise and Fall to." What happens in the Tale, in which I include the companion pieces of The Battle of the Books and The Mechanical Operation of Spirit, is precisely what Swift says happens in free-thinking in his history of Athens and Rome: "to fix one Foot of their Compass wherever they think fit, and extend the other to such terrible Lengths, without describing any Circumference at all; is to leave us, and themselves, in a very uncertain State, and in a Sort of Rotation...".[96]

In an interesting interpretation of the Tale called "With an Eye to the Bunghole: Figures of Containment in A Tale of A Tub", Eugene Korkowski considers the tub as a container, "as something to put things

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[96]Swift, I, 232.

in."[97] The narrator "imagines his body a container in which vapours mount up to his brain; he works in a garret where whispers mount up from the street. He is a member in the fraternity of both hack-writing and Bedlam; he encloses systems in a system, does projects on projects, collects the writing of crazy collectors, and digresses within his own digressions. His view of the world is obsessively "containerized"; he sees his readers as "brimful" of charity...The hack's great ambition is the "compleat Anatomy." The mind that sets out to fill the universe leaves us with sterility and emptiness. Everything it touches turns to base metal. It rummages the dregs of the world only to get tangled in its own "intellectual cobweb" as Swift phrases it.

Set against the Faustian display of the narrator, Swift places his conviction that only a mind tempered by experience and channeled through order and tradition can keep from being engulfed with its own venom. Swift preaches the gospel of the Bee, while spinning the gospel of the Spider. He arrives at positive affirmation of man's necessary dependence on God by demonstrating the failure of self-enclosed mind that for all its frantic effort cannot get outside itself, outside the "tub" or the enclosed container of its wanderings and speculations. Swift demonstrates through demolition of the contrary position what Michel de Montaigne, a favourite Swift writer, adheres to: "Man does not know the natural infirmity of his mind: it does nothing but

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[97] Korkowski, "With an Eye to the Bunghole: Figures of Containment in A Tale of A Tub," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, Vol. XV, No. 3, Summer, 1975, p. 392.

ferret and quest, and keeps incessantly whirling around, building up and becoming entangled in its own work, like our silkworms and is suffocated in it."[98]

The narrator of the Tale, as a spokesman for modernism, or as I have preferred to frame it, the embodiment of modernity itself, constantly tries to replace multifarious reality as conceived by Christianity by one linear interpretation after another. He searches for the one irreducible metaphor to which all of reality can be reduced. He first makes the world explicable by elevation: pulpits, ladders and stages are what make the world go round, "that for obtaining Attention in Publick, there is of necessity required a superior Position of Place."[99] It then enters his head that someone might propose the Bar and the Bench as alternative "Oratorical Machines", but he excludes this possibility since it would overturn the purity of the number three, a number of which he is extremely fond. In an essay to be published "next Term" the historian-narrator claims that he has not only "reduced the Senses and the Elements under its Banner, but brought over several Deserters from its two great Rivals Seven and Nine."[100]

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[98]Montaigne, as in Korkowski, p. 408; Montaigne is mentioned quite often in Swift's correspondence, iii, 264, 348, 378, Essais, p. 40-41.

[99]Swift, I, 36.

[100]Swift, I, 35.

In Section II the narrator drops his metaphor of elevation and number and picks up the metaphor of clothes, which later becomes the metaphor around which the history of Christianity is wound: Once upon a time there arose a sect:

> which held the Universe to be a large Suit of Cloathes, which invests Every Thing: That the Earth is invested by the Air; The Air is invested by the Primum Mobile. Look on this Globe of Earth, you will find it to be a very compleat and fashionable Dress. What is that which some call Land, but a fine Coat faced with Green? or the Sea, but a Wastcoat of Water-Tabby?...what is Man himself but a Micro-Coat, or rather a compleat Suit of Cloaths with all its Trimmings?[101]

There are, however, connections between the new metaphor and the two preceding ones. The sect described has a relation to the theory of elevation because "they worshipped a sort of Idol, who...did daily create Men, by a kind of Manufactory Operation...This idol they placed in the highest Parts of the House," and to the number three, "on an Altar erected about three Feet".[102] As fond as he is of altering metaphors, the narrator is reluctant to let go of them entirely. The number three, for example, recurs when three distinct attitudes towards clothing become distinguishable: Jack's barrenness, Peter's ornateness and Martin's in-between position, and in the division of critics into superficial, ignorant and learned. There is also an overall consistency about the narrator's choice of metaphor. They are all seen in mechanical

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[101] Swift, I, 46.

[102] Swift, I, 46.

terms; they all reflect an either/or structure of the mind in which reality must be one thing or another, never two or more things at once; and they all eventually break down from overextension. In the case of the clothes metaphor the narrator's insistence on seeing man, religion, wit, the universe and even his own writing within the veil of clothes renders the metaphor meaningless. What attempts to be descriptive of all things, becomes descriptive of nothing. The narrator tries unsuccessfully to prove that everything can be translated into anything, even if it is untranslatable in another tongue.

The clothes metaphor continues woven through with digressions enclosed in one another like a "Nest of Boxes", until the historian-narrator tires of it and introduces a new way of perceiving developments in history. The "learned Aeolists", he informs us, maintain "the Original Cause of all Things to be Wind".[103] This theory engages his intellect for a time until it is replaced by the theory of madness caused by blockage to the normal excretory channels, which seems to account for historical growth more accurately than either clothes or wind. After an excursion into considering history as a conflict between books, ancient and modern, who settle their differences by mechanical warfare, the narrator places another box within that box and links the ancients with the "sweetness and light" of the Bee and the moderns with the intellectual cobwebs of the spider and then picks up the metaphor of vapour again in A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical

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[103]Swift, I, 95.

Operation of the Spirit -- the metaphor on which he ends his meandering -- which is an expansion of Sect ix of the Tale proper, "Digression concerning Madness". We have run the gamut of historical explanation in this inventory of metaphor gathering and suspending, from elevation to number to clothes to wind to vapour to books back to vapour.

The historian-narrator of the Tale is a Hobbesian. The consistent undergirding and connecting metaphor is mechanics. All the metaphors that aim to make history explicable are couched in mechanistic terminology. There are according to Pinkus approximately 285 images of man as a machine in the Tale.[104] The mechanical frenzy of the Tale reinforces the overview of a Leviathan symbolizing a state of mind or a state of society in which there is only a mind preying upon itself without standard or tradition to restrain it; a mind absent a heart or a soul, a hollow vessel of words. Notably Hobbes' Leviathan is mentioned at both the beginning and the end of the Tale. The "whale" against which the "tub" is sent out is the Leviathan. The tale is a decoy, a diversion, literally, in which to save the ship or commonwealth Swift constructs a multilayered story transfused with irony, for irony is as we remember Kierkegaard, "the art of diversion". Swift explains the framework of his irony in the Preface:

> Sea-men have a custom when they meet a Whale, to fling him out an empty Tub, by way of Amusement, to divert him from laying violent Hands upon the Ship. This Parable was immediately mythologiz'd: The Whale was

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[104] P. Pinkus, Swift's Vision of Evil: A Comparative Study of A Tub and Gulliver's Travels, Vols. I & II, (English Literary Studies at the University of Victoria, 1975; monograph), I, p. 114.

> interpreted to be Hobbes's Leviathan, which tosses and plays with all other Schemes of Religion and Government, whereof a great many are hollow, and dry, and empty, and noisy, and wooden, and given to Rotation. This is the Leviathan from whence the terrible Wits of our Age are said to borrow their Weapons. The Ship in danger, is easily understood to be its old Antitype the Commonwealth. But, how to analyse the Tub, was a Matter of difficulty; when after long Enquiry and Debate, the literal Meaning was preserved: And it was decreed, that in order to prevent these Leviathans from tossing and sporting with the Commonwealth, (which is itself is too apt to fluctuate) they should be diverted from that Game by a Tale of A Tub. And my Genius being conceived to lye not unhappily that way, I had the Honor done me to be engaged in the Performance.[105]

In Sect. ii of the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit the narrator speaks of the brain being composed of little animals like "the Picture of Hobbes's Leviathan". In his satire Swift usually proceeds by parody, and the parody in the Tale is primarily of Hobbes' mechanistic philosophy, in a style partly reminiscent of Hobbes' vocabulary of "strings" and "wheels", yet without his calm relaxed conveyance. The narrator has the mind of a Hobbesian with the style of an "enthusiast" who wishes to bring all into the enlightenment.*

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[105] Swift, I, 24.

*The narrator is something of an "enthusiast" who wishes to inculcate the reader with the "light", a much repeated word in the first sections of the Tale, but he is principally a materialist, and a Hobbesian as the most renowned of the materialists.

The narrator has much in common with Bacon and Hobbes, and other materialists, in their drive to transform a multifaceted reality into a single ultimate base. For Hobbes man is essentially an animal and a machine: his animality makes necessary the relinguishing of his freedom in the authoritarian state and his mechanistic nature means that he can be persuaded or programmed to do so and reconstructed to fit a new pattern of behaviour. Man in Hobbes is first seen as a body, a physiological system that acts according to certain scientific laws. Hobbes' task is to transform natural man into social man in which social man is governed by political laws corrsponding to the physical laws that govern natural man. Just as the physiological system obeys natural law so social man must obey social law. Hobbes' goal, then, is to make life scientific, to make the person into a governable system. On the way to this governable system the person undegoes constant dimunition.

The favourite Hobbesian technique is to trace the origin of an idea, usually finding it less glamorous than one would have hoped, and then to dismiss it in a clear definition. For example, after tracing the origins of imagination, Hobbes concludes that it is nothing but decaying sense. He commits what modern philosophy terms genetic fallacy by the score. Also, his reasoning, which he defines as the addition or subtraction of parts -- a definition that would please the narrator's fondness for number -- is often fallacious. The conclusion does not always follow from the premises. Take his definition of religion as an illustration: "Seeing there are no signs, nor fruit of religion,

but in man only; and consistent in some peculiar quality...not to be found in any other living creature".[106] The definition completely omits the possibility of Christian revelation as a source of man's religiosity, which, interestingly, the Tale narrator also omits in his mechanical explanation.

For Bacon and Hobbes, as much for the narrator, there is no truth that is not reducible to a tidy definition or a well-formed aphorism, no truth that is not reducible to materialism, "for words are but the images of matter".[107] According to Bacon, logic and rhetoric in language are simply "the rules and directions how to set forth and dispose of matter".[108] "Real invention," says Bacon, "produces an addition to matter, not the images of matter; words can amplify matter only in the rhetorical sence...".[109] Bacon strives in his prose style to write nothing but content, nothing but solid indisputable fact, "for it is a rule, that whatsoever science is not connected to propositions must pray in aid of similitudes."[110] In contrast, Swift's use of multilayered irony relies heavily on similitudes (metaphors) and except when speaking through an ironic mask, and then

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[106] Hobbes, p. 87.

[107] Bacon, as in G. Williamson, The Senecan Amble, (Chicago, Faber, 1951), p. 153.

[108] Bacon, p. 154.

[109] Bacon, p. 154.

[110] Bacon, p. 158.

only to satirize it, no at all on propositions. The Hobbesian prose style, though predicatably akin to Bacon's, since he worked for a time as Bacon's secretary and translated at least three of his essays from Latin to English, is smoother and less curt, though as close to Sprat's dictum of "mathematical plainness" as one would dare to venture. It is a style that consists primarily of nouns and verbs; words tend to correspond to things, as Bacon advises. It is a style commendably suited for weighing, measuring, defining, calculating, and it does not much matter whether one is defining persons or marbles.

Irony is a perfect medium for Swift's Christian convictions regarding the complexity of reality and tension as an approximation of the truth concerning man. Swift's multidimensional irony reflects a belief in a multidimensional reality. No one image, no one character, no one voice speaks the whole truth in Swift or presents the full picture of reality; but rather, one image, one character, one voice must be set against another, tested by juxtaposition with its opposite in a narrative abounding in a kalidoscope of images, a museum of characters and a boy's playground of voices making it so very different from Bacon's New Atlantis, a testament of faith in technology's power to "Enlarge the Human Empire", and Hobbes' Leviathan in which truth is analysed and broken down into an indissolvable unit of simplicity.

In Swift there is a feeling similar to Cervantes' in Don Quixote that a complex reality can only be reproduced through a shifting irony that emphasizes one side and then another. Ultimately the norm in Don Quixote is neither Quixote nor Panza for Cervantes' point is

that man needs both realism and a touch of fantasy. Sometimes Sancho the realist sounds like bombastic Quixote, particularly so when proclaiming his desire to be governor of the isle: "I feel strong enough to govern it as well as any man who ever governed isles in all the world".[111] And Quixote can on occasion sound like the usually practical Panza: "Observe, brother Sancho, that this adventure and others of this kind are not adventures of isles but of cross-roads, from which nothing is to be gained but a broken head and the loss of an ear".[112] Panza, however, does not follow Quixote's advice and stumbles into the Governorship of the Isle where he ironically learns that his desire to eat all he wants is not allowed by the doctor who warns him of poisoning. Panza of course recognizes that on most occasions there is a difference between him and Quixote. Upon falling into a pit, he reflects, "There he saw beautiful and delightful visions, but here I truly believe I shall see toads and snakes".[113] Panza is not blind to the advantages of Quixote's gift to transform mundane reality into a delightful fantasy, and laments the jejune naure of realism: "This, though a misadventure for me, would be an adventure to my master Don

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[111]Cervantes, Don Quixote, ed. Cohen, (Middlesex: Penquin, 1975), p. 79.

[112]Cervantes, p. 79.

[113]Cervantes, p. 823.

Quixote. For he would certainly take these depths and dungeons for flowery garden and palaces".[114]

The layers and levels of Swift's irony have received scant attention. Unfortunately, Swift's work has suffered from a deluge of linear interpretations. Much of modern criticism has tended, for example, to equate the narrator of the satires with Swift even in so good an article as John Traugott's "A Tale of A Tub" in which the narrator's reduction of reality into simplistic units is taken to be Swift's own rather than the focus of his satire.* In a recent Swift biography A. L. Rowse views Swift on the evidence of Gulliver's behaviour as a monomaniac. Criticism has, of course, moved in the opposite direction from wholly identifying Swift with his narrators to completely divorcing him from them. Some critics have read the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of irony as the saying of one thing while meaning another and have therefore deduced that whatever the narrator says Swift must mean the opposite. Both views are distortions extreme and wrong. A close examination of how the irony actually works, and how it originates, is needed to prevent misreading.

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[114] Cervantes, p. 825.

*John Traugott's "A Tale of A Tub" in Focus, ed. Rawson, (London: Sphere Books, 1973), pp. 76-120.

*The Rowse biography has been reviewed for the Manchester Guardian Weekly by Paul Russell, Vol. 114, No. 25, 1976, and by Irvin Ehrenpreis in the New York Review of Books, Vol. XXIII, No. 11, 1976.

One of the main Swiftian techniques is what Sir Walter Scott discovered: "Swift seems...to have possessed the faculty of transfusing his own soul into the body of anyone whom he selected; of seeing with his eyes, employing every organ of his sense and even becoming master of the powers of his judgement".[115] Williams, Quintana, and Sutherland have written footnotes to Scott's observation. Williams says that for Swift "a way of writing is a way of thinking" and that thought is satirized through the satirization of another's language or terminology.[116] In other words, Swift's irony pivots on parody. Quintana furthers this point to say that most of Swift's irony derives from "some form of impersonation.":

> If we understand Swift at all, we recognize that he is seldom addressing us in his own person. It is Isaac Bickerstaff who is predicting the death of Partridge, a rival astrologer. It is a public-spirited citizen, an expert in economic statistics, who is modestly proposing that Irish babies by raised and sold for meat. It is an enthusiastic advocate of everything strictly modern and up-to-date who is holding forth in the Tale of A Tub. And it is Lemuel Gulliver, typical sea-going Englishman, who is giving us his sociological observations on the curious societies he has encountered in his travels. The essence of irony, which is double vision and double speaking, is that it places in opposition wholly different aspects of our experience and maintains a high tension between these.[117]

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[115] Scott, as in Denis Donoghue, Jonathan Swift, (Penquin, 1971), p. 100.

[116] Williams, Jonathan Swift, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 3.

[117] Quintana ed., Gulliver's Travels & Other Writings by Jonathan Swift, (New York, Random House, 1958), p. xiii-xiv.

Sutherland formulates the proposition that Swift uses a kind of jujitsu by which the enemy is thrown by his own weight.[118] Swift does not merely criticize some evil he wants removed, he becomes it in order to exorcize it; he does not merely censure a one-eyed rationalist or a virtuoso materialist, he embodies them. In an age when Devils pose as angels, angels must at times disguise themselves as devils. In a sermon On False Witness Swift, quoting Christ, urges Christians "to be wise as Serpents, as well as innocent as Doves."[119] At any rate, Swift was quite aware of his technique as can be shown by the hints he gives on how to interpret the Tale: "the Author begins in a way very frequent with him, by personating other WRiters."[120]

Swift's art is the art of the ventriloquist who can speak in many different tongues; he is also a keeper of hobby-horses in a world's fair. Swift has the speaker or narrator of his satire hop on the hobby-horse of his choice and ride him into the ground. But one is quite wrong to see the narrator as completely wrong in his outlook; even the blind in Swift tell us something about sight. The economic projector of the proposal may outline an extreme solution, a simplistic solution to a complex problem but he does at least point to the gravity of the situation. Nearsighted, singlesighted Swift's narrators most

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[118]James Sutherland, English Satire, (London, Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 90.

[119]Swift, IX,185.

[120]Swift, I, 18.

certainly are, but they do speak part of the truth some of the time. Where they go wrong is in mistaking their partial vision for a whole vision, and are therefore duped by their own enthusiasm. Popè, a wise reader of Swift, saw immediately the folly of Gulliver trying to imitate horses at the expense of his own family. In a delightful poem entitled "Mary Gulliver to Captain Lemuel Gulliver" Pope pokes fun at the whole ridiculous idea of a man choosing to sleep with a horse rather than his wife. The poem is masterful in its complete grasp of what Swift was doing in his most controversial writing, Book iv and for that reason merits quoting at some length:

> Welcome, thrice welcome to they native Place!
> -- What, touch me not? what, shun a Wife's Embrace?
> .....
> Hear and relent! hark, how thy Children moan;
> Be kind at least to these, they are thy own:
> .....
> Thy Christian Seed, our mutual Flesch and Bone:
> Be kind at least to these, they are thy own.
> .....
> What mean those Visits to the Sorrel Mare?
> Say, by what Witchcraft, or what Daemon led,
> Preferr'st thou Litter to the Marriage Bed?
> .....
> Some say the Dev'l himself is in that Mare;
> If so, our Dean shall drive him forth by Pray'r.
> Some think you mad, some think you are possest
> .....
> Nay, wou'd kind Jove my Organs so dispose,
> To hymn harmonious Houyhnhnm thro' the Nose,
> I'd call Thy Houyhnhnm, that high sounding Name,
> Thy Children's Noses all should twang the same.
> So might I find my loving Spouse of course,
> Endu'd with all the Virtues of a Horse.[121]

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[121]Pope, as in Greenberg, pp. 603-605.

But even silly Gulliver can at times be quite perceptive. Though somewhat out of character, Gulliver is quite sound in seeing the folly of the Lagado projectors pursuing barren tasks and in not envying the Strulbruggs.* The historian of the Tale also at times speaks a partial truth. As a statement of the way we perceive reality, his remarks are reasonably accurate:

> How fade and insipid do all Objects accost us that are not convey'd in the Vehicle of Delusion? How shrunk is every Thing, as it appears in the Glass of Nature? So, that if it were not for the Assistance of Artificial Mediums, false Lights, refracted Angles, Varnish and Tinsel; there would be a mighty Level in the Felicity and Enjoyments of Mortal Men.[122]

We do see through false lights, refracted angles, varnish and tinsel, but because we are not capable of living in absolute clarity does not mean that we cannot reduce the darkness.

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*There are certain cracks and corners of the narrative satires when Swift seems to be speaking directly to the reader, briefly, before hiding behind the mask again. Gulliver's criticism of the Lagado professors seems out of character, as a middleclass Englishman nourished on science and rationality in school, he ought to have approved of this Royal-society like society. That he does not indicates to me that Swift is doing the talking. The outraged indignation lurking behind the cool mathematically plain style of the projector in A Modest Proposal also hints of an outraged Swift lurking behind the mask. The Tale's historian periodically complimenting Martin over Peter and Jack seems too sensible for his usual behaviour. It seems fair to say that there are times when the mask drops and Swift speaks personally in the satires. However, the shifting narrator is defensible on artistic grounds, for in making his narrators anthropological recorders of fact and historians he is at liberty to alter the perspective of the narrator as new evidence surfaces.

[122] Swift, I, 109.

Swift's narrators think in absolute terms, in either/or terms. For the Tale historian either clothes or wind or something else will encapsule the ultimate irreducible level that undergirds the superstructure. For Gulliver either European culture must be the world's finest or it must be despicable. Either man is a Yahoo or a Houyhnhnm, either man is completely rational or completely irrational. Ironically, Gulliver regards the rest of mankind as irrational and himself as potentially rational. In contrast to his "either/or" narrators, Swift thinks in terms of balance, of both/and, of an "agile shifting of weights"* to effect tension as an approximation of truth.

Absolute truth does not exist for Swift, except in Heaven. "And if Truth be not fled with Astraea, she is certainly as hidden as the Source of Nile, and can be found only in Utopia."[123] It is worth noting here that the word Utopia means nowhere, no place. Truth in Swift can only be approximated by fidelity, as in Pascal, to opposing

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*Swift sympathizes even with his enemies. The Lagado professors, for example, are pitied more than scorned. There is something sad about a scientific society that fears the imminent destruction of its world and can find no solace in its philosophy.

[123]Swift, I, 248. Milton in the Aeropagitica says something similar. Truth has been like God Orrsis "hewed into a thousand pieces, and scattered to the four winds", as in Witherspoon's Seventeenth Century Prose and Poetry, (New York: Harcourt, Bruce & World, Inc., 1963), p. 411.

sides in which one aims for a balance through a shifting multilayered irony. The middle way, however, is not static, but is achieved through an "agile shifting of weights" brought about in Swift's satire by the interplay of conflicting ironic elements and stances. In interpreting Swift's narrators one must read them with scepticism: sometimes they are totally wrong, sometimes partially misguided and sometimes totally correct. In Sect. xi of the Tale, for example, the speaker makes the point that "it is the Nature of Rags, to bear a kind of mock-resemblance to Finery."[124] As is made clear in the Tale Jack and Peter at the opposite end of the spectrum have more in common with each other as fanaticks and extremists than they have with a fairly well-balanced Martin. Opposites unite at some indistinguishable point, and Swift is not to be found at either extreme but somewhere in the fluctuating middle.

The narrators tilt the balance in one direction or another and the reader must redress the balance. The narrator in A Modest Proposal, for example, outlines a simple economic solution to a problem that is more than economical. The problem of a starving Irish populace reduced to begging and prostitution, was a social problem, a political problem and a religious problem in addition to being an economic problem. On the level of sheer economics the projector's proposal is sound enough: in order that all do not starve, he suggests that young children be sold to the rich so that the older children and parents can survive. His solution is probably superior to letting the people

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[124]Swift, I, 128.

die from malnutrition and has the advantage of being systematic solution to begging, abortion and prostitution, but the minute one ponders the reality of boiled human flesh as opposed to boiled fish, the solution on a human level is horrifying. The error of the projector's way, therefore, rests on his bringing to bear on a multi-dimensional problem a one-dimensional solution.

One result of Swift's irony is to arrive at a Christian position of man's necessary humility in the face of a very complicated reality. There is the caution that one should not follow the narrators, enthusiasts for modernism, who embody the reductionist stances, poses and personalities of the age, into attempting to reduce a multiple phenomena into a single phenomenon. Kathleen Williams in the conclusion to her excellent work on Swift, Jonathan Swift and The Age of Compromise offers a similar interpretation to the one I have forwarded:

> The single truth can be neither grasped in thought nor embodied in words; singleness and simplicity now only exist in the false abstractions of modern thinking. But a modest approximation to the truth, a modest certainty, can be achieved and expressed by that strenuous and agile effort which issues in the serious Augustan wit. Positive truth is now best presented by implication, through the development of negative materials...We see that the attack is also a defense, that tools of destruction are being employed for a positive and constructive purpose. The inventiveness and resourcefulness of his satiric method is seen as arising directly out of the necessities of his mind and his age; the changing complications of his irony are

> the necessary expression of an untiring devotion to the few certainties that life affords... Balance in the state or in the individual mind could be kept only by an agile shifting of weights.[125]

There is a strong warning in Swift not to follow Bacon and Hobbes or any philosopher with a materialist base by probing for an ultimate irreducible level of reality, but to explore reality in its many facets. Swift's irony leads to a fragile balance that can be upset by leaning too far in one way or another. It embodies the Christian concept of reality as expressed by Pascal: the belief that reality can be both one thing and another, and does not have to be either one thing or another. The irony is also a useful tool for Christian purpose in that it reduces pride in our thinking that reality can be simplified to a formula. There is still mystery in Swift; nothing is fully explained or accounted for. The historian's drive to find the ultimate level of reality ends in absurdity. There is still room for faith in Swift: reason has definite limits and cannot penetrate very far beneath the surface of things as Gulliver gives proof of. One comes away from Swift with the feeling that Socrates was probably right that true wisdom lies in the recognition of our ignorance.

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[125]K. Williams, p. 211.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIANITY AND THE ATTACK ON MODERNITY

In our first chapter we saw how the concept of original sin formed the foundation of Swift's theological position. I should like to suggest in this chapter that the concept of original sin forms the foundation of his major satires. In addition to examining the Christian assumptions of Swift's satires, we shall look at the further use, begun in Chapter II, of the narrators as the embodiment of modernity and the ways in which their position is ironically subverted by the thrust of Swift's Christian satire.

Swift's friends recognized the Christian framework of the satires; the Christian values they upheld and the enemies of Christianity they sought to demolish. On receiving word that Swift had nearly finished Gulliver's Travels Viscount Bolingbroke writes to Swift: "I long to see yr travels, for take it as you will I do not retract what I said, and will undertake to find, in two pages of yr. Bagatelles, more good sense, useful knowledg, and true Religion, than you can shew me in the works of nineteen in twenty of the profound Divines and Philosophers of the age."[126] One of Swift's own sermons is an excellent guide to the meaning of the Travels:

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[126]Bolingbroke, The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, II, p. 416.

> The Holy Scripture is full of expressions to set forth the miserable condition of man during the whole progress of his life; his weakness, pride, and vanity, his unmeasurable desires, and perpetual disappointments; the prevalency of his passions, and the corruptions of his reason, his deluding hopes, and his real, as well as imaginary, fears...his cares and anxieties, the diseases of his body, and the diseases of his mind...And the wise men of all ages have made the same reflections.[127]

The best guide to Swift's satires is Genesis' theme that all is fallen and the reinforcement of the same theme in Ecclesiastes that all is vanity. Appropriate supplementary reading is provided by Boethius' The Consolation of Philosophy which illuminates a common notion in medieval Christian writing that those who put themselves on the "wheel of fortune" are subject to its rise and fall. The mind in A Tale of A Tub believes that it has exhausted "all that Human imagination can Rise or Fall to" flows up into rhapsodies of faith in its ability to solve the world's riddles and falls down into the humble realization that "too intense a Contemplation is not the Business of Flesh and Blood."[128] Gulliver moves from a society to where he is everything, Lilliput, to a society where he is nothing, Brobdingnag. He expects to find that longevity is a blessing with the Strulbruggs and learns that it is a bore. He expects marvels from the clever Laputans and is disappointed to see a society in shambles. Gulliver's imagination throughout the travels rises to high expectation and falls to low realization that things are much less grand than one had expected.

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[127] Swift, IX, 190.

[128] Swift, I, 189.

Another useful guide to the meaning of Swift's work is Saint Augustine's writing. The Augustinian emphasis on man's natural depravity and original sin, brought back into Europe so powerfully by Calvin, forms the framework, the assumption and major premise of Swift's satiric scaffold. There is an Augustinian strain running through the Tale and Gulliver so pervasive that one could justly argue that both works are studies of religious alienation; man cut off from the "shade and shelter", "sweetness and light" of ancient wisdom and Christianity as an essential part of the ancient heritage.

> In essence, Augustinianism affirms strongly the fact of original sin...To be alienated from God results in the human tendency toward self-asse rtion in contradiction to the will and plan of God. Man is therefore helpless to "save" himself, since his will is perverted at the very root.[129]

Pinkus underlines the same point in Swift's Vision of Evil: "The point of Swift's satire is to present man isolated from his God, in the fly-blown consequence of his depravity, empty babbling or in sinister pursuit of the wrong things."[130]

What was happening in Swift's time, of which he was very much aware, was that man had begun to relegate religion to a minor place in his hierarchy of values. With the deification of nature by Shaftesbury

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[129]Donald Greene, "Augustinianism and Empiricism" Eighteenth Century Studies, Vol. I, 1967-68, p. 67.

[130]Pinkus, "Sin and Satire in Swift", Bucknell Review, 13, 1965, p. 195.

and the Desits, the assertion of man's rationality, there was really no need for religion.* Tolard and other Deists denied original sin, as did Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity and a host of other marginally Christian writers who were de-emphasizing it. John Wesley, whatever his Chruch differences with Swift, shared with Swift a concern for the rising influence of free-thinking in the century. Wesley complains in sermon xxxviii, "Original Sin" that "not a few persons of strong understanding, as well as extensive learning, have employed their utmost abilities to show, what they termed, "the fair side of human nature in Adam's posterity. So that, Wesley continues, it is now quite unfashionable to say anything to the disparagement of human nature; which is generally allowed, notwithstanding a few infirmities, to be very innocent, and wise, and virtuous."

> But how much more knowing than these old pagans are the present generation of Christians! How many laboured panegyrics do we now read and hear on the dignity of human nature...I cannot see that we have much need of Christianity. Nay, not at all, for "they that are whole have no need for a physician!"...Nor can Christian philosophy, whatever be thought of the pagan, be more properly defined than in Plato's words: "the only true method of healing a distempered soul; But what need of this if we are in perfect health.[131]

Swift's satires show that we are sicker than we think, more corrupted than we think and in urgent need of nourishment from religion. Not

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*Willey in The Eighteenth Century Background credits science with the divinization of nature, "rescued from Satan and restored to God", p. 12.

[131]Wesley, in Wedel's "On the Philosophical Background of Gulliver's Travel", p. 90.

accidentally when Wesley points to the deep nature of the century's sickness, he quotes profusely from Gulliver's Travels focusing on Book iv, which he says is written by "a late eminent hand" and leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that Swift's view of man is a great deal more realistic and much more in the central Christian tradition than the optimistic theories that were gaining ground.

Wedel notes that "human nature was being absolved of corruption. The ancient Christian faith, in the words of Pascal, had rested on but two things, the corruption of nature and redemption by Jesus Christ. Half at least of Pascal's formula is seldom spoken of after 1700."[132] Swift, like Wesley, is one of the few Christian writers to defend consistently the concept of original sin. His correspondence yields numerous hints that Swift maintained the validity of the concept against the optimism of friends like Pope and Bolingbroke. Pope proposed to him that he wished to refute La Rochefoucauld's technique of dissolving virtues in vices by the reverse procedure of dissolving vices in virtues. Swift follows the technique of Rochefoucauld that was later articulated by Nietzsche: "It is to break down all the concepts and qualities in which mankind takes pride and pleasure into a few simple qualities in which no one takes pride or pleasure and to see in the latter the origin of the former."[133] If there is no

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[132]Wedel, p. 88-89.

[133]Nietzsche, as in Introduction by R.J. Hollingdale, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, (Penquin, 1969), p. 12.

original sin, if man's nature is not fallen, then, obviously, the concept of the redemption has very little significance. What is the point of redemming that which has no need of redemption?

Significantly when Swift comes to treat of Christianity directly in the satires in Against Abolishing Christianity he assumes the voice of a nominal Christian, a Christian in name only, who sets forth some of the climate of the age concerning the place of Christianity in men's lives. The narrator ironically defends what does not exist. He admits that what he defends is not real Christianity because that "would be to dig up Foundations; to destroy at one Blow all the Wit, and half the Learning of the Kingdom; to break the entire Frame and Constitution of Things; to ruin Trade, extinguish Arts and Sciences with the Professors of them." He says that he does not "yet see the absolute Necessity of extirpating the Christian Religion from among us...with the utmost Deference to that great and profound Majority, which is of the other Sentiment."[134] He recognizes that the majority do want to get rid of Christianity, but he does not see the necessity of it because it never existed in England anyway, wits love to revile a God, nobody believes it anyway, inconvenient to dispose of, free-thinkers need forbidden fruit, it is "difficult to get rid of a Phrase, which the World is once grown fond of," and other assorted reasons. In essence, the narrator defends Christianity as one would imagine a Shaftesbury or a Locke or a Tolard would defend

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[134]Swift, in Quintana's Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings, p. 438.

it, purely for practical reasons. It costs more trouble to remove it than it does to keep it; and as long as it is diluted sufficiently it will provide no strong opposition to the life of good-natured people rationally pursuing the enlargement of the human empire.

Swift's affirmation of Christianity as the only realistic, practical and worthy philosophy and way of life comes through his denial of opposing philosophies and ways of life. Swift's satires demonstrate failure, failure of the modern mind, separated from the tempering influence of tradition and the toughening influence of Christian experience, to be self-sufficient. The narrators, as representatives of modernity reduce life to one thing after another, but offer nothing that can be used in the conduct of a life. The economist of The Modest Proposal reduces the world and human beings to the law of profit or loss. The good is that which is profitable; the bad is that which brings financial loss. Given such an assumption, it is reasonable, ever modest, to propose selling poor infants to be eaten by the wealthy. Man can conceptualize anything, as the Tale makes abundantly clear, but finding thoughts that can be lived provides him with an insurmountable problem. Narrator Gulliver, patriotic knight of rationality, pursues the idols of his century; but, ironically when he finds real rationality it belongs to horses and it irrationally launches his isolation from his family.

By becoming modernity in the form of the economist, the mechanist, the rationalist, Swift demonstrates the collapse of modernity. The rationality of Descartes, Locke, and the Deists propounded as man's

chief characteristic is a sham. Hobbesian mechanics is in shambles; the wheels go round, but their is only the spinning, only spokes without a hub. All the sacred idols of the century lie strewn over a scortched landscape. There is no progression in Swift's satires, only regression. Gulliver thinks he has found Utopia in Struldbrugg society and wishes to pass his life "here in the Conversation of those superior Beings the Struldbruggs."[135] But the Struldbruggs decay and are miserable in their immortality, "envy and impotent Desires, are their prevailing Passions." Gulliver's other cherished idol, the Houyhnhnms, are horses and, therefore, represent a Utopia unattainable for men. Like Voltaire's Candide in which the paradisal Eldorado is surrounded by unscalable rocks or like Johnson's Rasselas in which the Edenic Happy Valley, once left cannot be returned to, Swift has pushed Utopia out of reach.

Modernity does not work in Swift. Swift's work contrasts sharply with arch-modernist, arch-capitalist, whig and dissenter, Daniel Defoe. Defoe in Robinson Crusoe has created the prototype of capitalism and the precursor of self-sufficient, industrious, progressive, technological man. Religion recedes further and further in Defoe as economics becomes the centre of Crusoe's life. Prayers and Bible readings become less frequent in the novel as Crusoe spends more time tending his garden and building up his island empire after the

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[135]Swift, II, 192.

Baconian fashion. Crusoe recognizes the conflict between time spent in productive activity and time spent worshipping God, and devotes more time to economics than to religion, though not without periodic conscience pangs. The conscience is pacified, however, by Crusoe's rationalization that economics and religion are compatible after all. Defoe's articles in The Review read like philosophic justification for his artistic exploration in Crusoe. Defoe recalls that Genesis, in his interpretation, sanctions exploitation of the earth, hence Crusoe only does what any other Christian ought to do. Economics is deified in Defoe, sanctioned by the Divine, it becomes the symbol of God's blessing on man. When Crusoe sees his crops growing, he believes that God's providence has bestowed its bounty on him. Economic growth proves religious merit.

Middle-class Gulliver makes an interesting foil to that other middle-class knight, Robinson Crusoe. Which is the representative Englishman, which the real European? Crusoe lands on an uninhabited island and through ingenuity in a few days has a boat, a yacht, and a summer cruiser along with a house, a servant, and a garden. If we look through Defoe's lens, we will see the economic nature of man in story form under the Divine sanction of Genesis, which, Defoe tells us, urges us to exploit the earth for our gain; our being able to do so indicates God's wish that we continue to do so. Defoe, however, forgets the other part of Genesis that the exploitation of the earth was to be for the glory of God, not the glory of man. If we look through Swiftian lens, we will see conspicuous consumption deified and man's

greed, selfishness and self-love responsible for economic miracle. If we look again through a Swiftian lens, we will see an author deluded into thinking that he has constructed a monument to God, while really constructing an idol of his own likeness. Swift, then, would probably agree with Defoe that Crusoe is a representative Englishman, doing what any other Englishman would do, but would interpret the significance of the story differently.

Gulliver starts off like Crusoe, has that same eye for detail and the same pride in his homeland, but he ends like Friday, infatuated with a false idol. At first Gulliver is aghast that the King of Brobdingnag cannot fathom the wonders of European culture: its navigational skills, its use of gunpowder, its sophisticated politics. But gullible Gulliver most unreasonably tries to imitate the rational horses and learns to despise his own culture, and his own family whose smell he cannot bear. Like Timon, once a lover of mankind, Gulliver turns misanthrope and retreats into a cave-like existence preferring dreams of the Houyhnhnms to reality with his family.

The end result of Gulliver's Travels is to illuminate the helpless condition of man. Robinson Crusoe glorifies man's self-sufficiency; Gulliver mocks it. It man is self-sufficient he is lost, for his self-sufficiency clearly is not enough for survival. The human condition, as it is laid out in Gulliver, shows a weak physical creature, weaker than most other animals, a fidgety nature never satisfied with what he has, a frail reason always at the mercy of

passions even when passionately pursuing the false idol of rationality. Defoe tells us that we can get on by ourselves. Swift says if that is the case we are doomed.

What is man? A producer and a consumer in Defoe. That is what he is and what he ought to be. In Swift he is many things. He is a material body, as in Lilliput, that must be fed, housed, toileted, and cleaned. He is a commodity, a freak in a capitalist circus, as in Brobdingnag, a tradeable item controlled by the law of scarcity and demand. When he is in demand, as in Brobdingnag, he is a thing to be sold, bargained for, bartered off. When not in demand, he is caged and put on display. But if that is what man is in the first two books of the Travels, that is not what he ought to be in Swift.

Swift's satires are not works of nihilism. They may draw up a topography of hell, but they point to the way out. The underworld of modernity is not without its Christian signposts. Glumdalclitch does not betray Gulliver to the circus owners; she cares for him without hope of personal gain or advancement. Partly of course Gulliver is a novelty to her, but she does treat him with courtesy and respect. Lord Munodi encapsules simplicity and a virtuous life based on the land and the ancient values to the scorn of the Lagado zealots. Don Pedro, the Portuguese sea-captain who picks Gulliver up after his attempted suicide, goes the second mile for Gulliver and turns his cheek to Gulliver's absurd antics. These benevolent figures of Gulliver's Travels may not be overtly Christian but they do have values that we have long associated with the precepts of Christianity.

And, though the narrator prefers the "flashier" nature of Peter and Jack, most readers recognize Martin's modernation and capacity to forgive his brothers' wrongs as Christian.

However, the positive aspects of Swift's satires are not so much expressed though positive characterization, as they are through the demolition of false goals and idols. It is not the job of satire to set up ideals, only to show us what exists. Swift's satire attempts "to cleanse the windows of perception" and "cleanse the mind against sentimental impurities"* Swift's satires do not encompass Heaven, but by landscaping hell, they tell us about earth. Irony, says Kierkegaard, "is like the negative way, not the truth but the way".[136] Satire, and irony as the major vehicle of Swift's satire, is not the truth, but it points the way to the truth. Christianity is not positively asserted the way it would be in one of Swift's sermons, but it is confirmed negatively as the only way out of the haze of modernity. Melvyn New in a fine article "Sterne and Swift: Sermons and Satire" clarifies my point that Swift's satires affirm the Christian norm by illustrating the unworkability of the alternatives:

> ...acknowledgement of the limitations of man necessarily implies a dependence on the authority of the Church, so in all other realms of conduct authority of some kind is indicated. A rigid codification of that authority -- whether it be ecclesiastical, critical, or political -- is rarely attempted, the authority more often than not revealing itself by its expressed sensitivity to

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[136]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 340.

*Blake's phrase, in Price, p. 135. A phrase quoted by Williams, p. 69.

> deviation from its spirit rather than by a crystallization of its law...The authority or norm, in other words, is not so much abstractly defined as it is pragmatically revealed or exposed; in each sphere of human activity it emerges, characteristically, from the satiric consideration of deviations.[137]

Swift brings man to the point of absolute need of a realistic evaluation of what he can do and what is beyond his scope.

The religious nature of Swift's satire is being more and more achnowledged. Pinkus, for example, writes, "His satire seems to have almost a religious purpose. He presents a satiric vision of an irrational world, a vision that becomes his prelude to an act of faith".[138] Clearly man of his own volition will sink further into self-deception, grow in arrogance and move further away from sense and charity. The analytic calculator of the Tale pretends to know everything, but he does not know anything. If the narrator were posed the questions of Job, he would answer every question in the affirmative:

> Have you been to the spring in the depths of the sea?
> Have you walked on the floor of the ocean?
> Do you have any idea how big the world is?
> .....
> Do you know where the light comes from,
> or what the source of darkness if?
> Can you show them how far to go,
> or send them back again?
> .....

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[137] New, "Sterne and Swift: Sermons and Satire", MLQ, 30, 1969, p. 211.

[138] Pinkus, "Sin and Satire in Swift", p. 189.

> Have you been to where the sum comes up;
> or the place from which the east wind blows?
> .....
> Can you guide the stars, season by season,
> and direct the Big and the Little Dipper?
> Do you knw the laws that govern the skies,
> can you make them apply to the earth?
>
> Job 38: 16-33 (Today's English Version, American Bible Society, 1971).

As modernity's most gifted and most recent spokesman, all mystery is explicable.

Here it is worth drawing a paralell between Swiftian irony and Socratic irony. Socratic irony works by exploding conventional definitions of things and calling for the necessity of redefinition. Socrates asks a clever man to define justice for example. The man proceeds to get more and more tangled up and has to confess that his definition is incorrect. Through the demonstration of a series of definition failures, Socrates hints at a solution, though seldom comes out and gives it. Martin Price rightly states that Swiftian satire concerns redefinition.[139] A Tale of A Tub and Gulliver's Travels elucidate the human condition and pose a series of definitions of what it is to be truly human. Essentially Swift sets forth non-definitions and leaves it to the reader, by recognition of the various caricatures of man, and the opposing norms, to formulate his own definition. We see the impossibility of emulating the life of pure

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[139]M. Price, Swift's Rhetorical Art: A Study in Structure and Meaning, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1953).

animality or the life of pure reason in Gulliver. Man has too much reason to be a Yahoo and too much emotion to be a Houyhnhnm. In A Tale of A Tub the narrator enlightens us about mechanics, how things work and their function, but these are only non-definitons. He tells us what a man does, but not what he is. The implied solution to the extravagant wanderings of the Faustian mind is humility before a world that man must live in, but will never fully understand. Again we are left with unworkable definitions, and forced to redefine in the light of Swift's signposts to sanity, in the light of man's original sin and his divine potentiality. Swift maintains the tension of the Christian position; that we are neither so low as a Yahoo nor so high as a Houyhnhnm, neither so despairing as some the Tale's narrator's moods, nor so confident as other of his moods.

In A Tale of A Tub the Faustian mind is anatomized in the process of it anatomizing everything else. Swift ironically controls the mind, just when it is at the point of a final answer to the world's riddles, to pull up short. At the point of final and complete knowledge there are holes in the manuscript, or parts lost, or parts mutilated signified by "--------" or "*********". The mind itself believes that it has laid bare the workings of the universe, but has only laid bare its own restless nature and incomplete knowledge. The narrator, which I consider the Faustian mind on display, tries to dig beneath the surface, but he is condemned to tinsel and varnish. When he does manage to get beneath the surface of things, it is only to

discover that "the Defects encrease upon us in Number and Bulk".[140] The Beau, pretty on the outside, stripped of her clothes is found to be ugly. The flayed body of the woman is not nearly so appealing on the inside as on the outside. From this evidence the narrator concludes "that Wisdom which converses about the Surface" is superior to that "which enters into the Depth of Things," but acknowledgement of this never prevents him from digging beneath into the "Womb of Things".

The imagery in the Tale is, as Pinkus notes, heavily mechanical, and, to a lesser degree, bestial, but all imagery eventually leads to nothingness. The Tale properly ends on the note that the narrator's latest project, as the "last Writer" and the "freshest Modern" in a series of almost unlimited projects, is to write about nothing. The Battle of the Books ends as nothing in the form of *******. And the Discourse reduces everything to mechanics, spokes without hubs. The overall impact of the Tale is absolute nothingness; the narrator has led us into nihilism. There is a voice but it does not seem to be located anywhere. It speaks according to the latest fad, things that are true the minute he is writing. There are words in abundance but they do not seem to be grounded anywhere in a coherent structure or tradition. There are moods in evidence and tactics and shapes, but no supporting body. Limbs of words reach out to the length and breadth of the universe with no supporting base, no foundation, edifice

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[140]Swift, I, 110.

built in the air. A voice without location, words without connection or coherence, a tub that is filled to the brimful is paradoxically empty.

In the Tale Swift has demonstrated the dead-end nature of free-thinking as the core of the modern age. On Grub-street you can think anything and one thought is as valid or as meaningless as another, for there are no values, no standards, no reference point by which to compare them. There is no more effective critique of free-thinking, and hence of modernity, in Swift's corpus than the Tale. For Swift, free-thinking, and modernity that encourages it, leads nowhere and is based on nothing. On one level the Tale is a history or history, venting one historical era after another and exploring the underneath currents that make history flow. More specifically, it is a history of Christianity from its primitive origins to the Protestant rupture paralleled with changes in fashion: shoulder-knots to gold lace to satin to silver fringe to hidden figures. On another level it is a philosophy of historical causes, looking at one possible motive force of history after another, a history of theories about the origins of man and his world. On yet another level, the Tale is a psychology of the modern mind, for the mind is ultimately the motive force of the narrative and the world; a psychological study of a mind adrift in the universe, thinking all things imaginable, floating above the abyss, in and out of chaos, calculating, conceptualizing, theorizing, analysing, grasping, clinging; a mind that can entertain any and all

possibilities but can live with none, a mind that pulsates above a decaying body. Man is a broomstick in the Tale. "But a Broom-stick, perhaps you will say, is an Emblem of a Tree standing on its Head; and pray what is Man but a topsy-turvy Creature?"[141] Although, on the one hand, the Tale exudes one of the most brillant, breath-taking, and dazzling encyclopedic depositories of wit and learning ever imposed on history -- matched, if matched at all, only by Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy which is narrower in scope and in meaning -- it leads to failure: the mind does not work, cut off from structure and tradition, it goes nowhere, gets caught in the web of its own spinning and finally suffocates itself.

It is here again that we remember Kierkegaard that "irony is like the negative way, not the truth but the way". Swift in A Tale of A Tub, as in Gulliver's Travels, demonstrates the failure of modernity by taking on the attributes of modernity and running modernity to the ground. One has to face up to the fact that modernity, which we might consider as absolute faith in man's self-sufficiency removed from tradition and given over completely to the pursuit of change and newness, provides no guidance for man, no practical use, no hope, no peace. All is nihilism. Rationality is of limited use, commoner in imaginary horses than in real mean; progress, human perfectability, and human self-sufficiency are myths. And one does not have to wait until 1726 to get the message, for it is there in the 1698 Tale, and specifically in The Battle of the Books.

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[141] Swift, I, 240.

The spider of Modernity in the Battle has built a "large Castle (to show my Improvements in the Mathematics)...with my own Hands, and the Materials extracted altogether out of my own Person".[142] The Bee of the Ancients, the Bee of Christianity as an integral part of the legacy of the Ancients, even the Bee of Swift's own persuastion for if any figure anywhere in Swift speaks directly for him it is surely the Bee, answers that the Spider's problem is precisely his self-reliance and belief in its own self-sufficiency. "You, boast, indeed, of being obliged to no other Creature, but of drawing, and spinning out all from your self; turns all into Excrement and Venom; producing nothing at last, but Fly-bane and a Cobweb". The Bee explains his own position, "I am obliged to Heaven alone for my Flights and my Musick...".[143] Aesop elaborates on the argument of the Bee's to read: "As for Us, the Ancients, we are content with the Bee, to pretend to Nothing of our own, beyond our Wings and our Voice:...For the rest, whatever we have got, has been by infinite labor, and search, and ranging thro' every Corner of Nature: The Difference is, that instead of Dirt and Poison, we have rather chose to fill our Hives with Honey and Wax, thus furnishing Mankind with the two Noblest of Things, which are Sweetness and Light".[144]

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[142] Swift, I, 149.

[143] Swift, I, 149.

[144] Swift, I, 151.

Sir William Temple, in whose defence against modernists Bentley and Wotton, Swift wrote the Tale, contrasts the differences he sees between the ancients and the moderns:

> One great difference must be confessed between the ancient and modern learning; theirs lead them to a sense and acknowledgement of their own ignorance, the imbecility of human understanding, the incomprehension even of things about us, as well as those above us;...ours leads us to presumption, and vain ostentation of the little we have learned, and makes us think we do, or shall know, not only all natural, but even what we call supernatural things; all in the heavens, as well as upon earth; more than all mortal men have known before our age, and shall know in time as much as angels.[145]

Swift's own attitude to modernism is quite similar to Temple's. Upon hearing that the Royal Society would send its latest publication to him, "Scepsis Scientifica" Swift had this reaction: "If Scepsis Scientifica comes to me, I will burn it for a faustian piece of abominable curious virtuoso stuff".[146] The book set forth the credo and apology of the Royal Society virtuosi and Swift is singularly uninterested.

To understand Swift's major satires it is necessary to view them within the context of his Christian outlook. The targets of Swift's

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[145]Temple as in Tuveson's "Swift and the World-Makers", JHI, XI, (1950), p. 73.

[146]Swift, as in Tuveson, p. 73.

satire are the enemies of faith, the enemies of orthodox belief. The notion of human self-sufficiency whether in the form of the narrator's Faustian pride in his mental agility or the rational stoicism of the Houyhnhnms. The Houyhnhnms are not, as some critics have pronounced, Christian symbols.* If the Houyhnhnms were Christians of sorts, they would have to be judged by Christian standards. The basic Christian standard would be how they treat the poor, the stupid and the downtrodden. On that basis, the horses would be judged on how they treat the inferior Yahoos. True superiority in Christianity is not asserted through mind superiority, but by charity and forgiveness. On this front the Houyhnhnms fare badly. They despise their inferior brethern and vote to extinguish them. Both their hate and their wish to extinguish them are hardly Christian virtues. Pascal summarizes Christian doctrine well in the Pensées: "Truth apart from charity is not God, but his image and an idol that we must not love or worship".[147] If the Houyhnhnms were meant to be signposts to Christianity, Gulliver would have learned something about charity and respect for those less mentally gifted than himself. Instead he returns contemptuous of his fellow

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*Donald Greene, "The Education of Gulliver", in The Varied Pattern: Studies in the 18th Century, eds. Hughes and Williams, (Toronto: Hakkert, 1971), p. 13 believes that Gulliver has learned the Christian virtues of the Houyhnhnms and is rightly trying to convert his Yahoo friends.

[147]Pascal, p. 318, No. 926.

human beings, pridefully dissociating himself from among their ranks. Gulliver has followed a false idol and is blind to the positive figures such as Don Pedro who does live a Christian life. "We depart from him only when we depart from charity",[148] says Pascal. Houyhnhnmland is the Utopia of the Deists, or Cartesian rationalists, or free-thinkers or stoics, but it is not a Christian Utopia.

The implied norm of Christianity throughout the satires derives for the most part from negative destruction. The negative, however, does posit its opposite. By destroying the enemies of Christianity, Swift lends support to the Chruch. Christian satire can do no more than that. It can show man where he is, who he is and what he can realistically attempt. Montaigne, like Swift a Christian sceptical of human capability, delineates the range of what Christian irony can do:

> The means I use to suppresse this frenzy, and which seemeth the fittest for my purpose, is to crush, and trample this human pride and fiercenesse under foot, to make them feele the emptinesse, vacuite, and no worth of man: and violently to pull out of their hands, the silly weapons of their reason; to make them stoope, and bite and snarle at the ground, under the authority and reverence of God's Majesty.[149]

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[148]Pascal, No. 270, p. 112.

[149]Montaigne, as in Williams, Jonathan Swift and The Age of Compromise, p. 51.

At the point of Swift's uncovering of human inadequacy and helplessness, Christianity enters the satires as the only way out of an otherwise meaningless existence. There are of course "beams of light" in Swift's dark satires. As we have mentioned, Glumdalclitch, Lord Munodi and Don Pedro come to mind in Gulliver and Martin and the Bee come to mind in the Tale as upholders of values we have long associated with the Judaic-Christian tradition. There is an "open passage hereby made, for the letting in those beams of light, which the glorious sunshine of the gospel then brought into the world".[150]

Landa notes that Swift "had no faith in the existence of the benevolent man of Shaftesbury...the pround magnanimous man of the Stoics, or the rational man of the Deists; his man is a creature of the passions, of pride, and self-love, a frail and sinful being in need of redemption."[151] Melvyn New makes the same point concerning the fact that Swiftian satire arises from a strong Christian awareness of man's sinfulness and differs considerably from concepts of man severed from Christian structure:

> As Anglicans, Swift and Sterne accepted a view of man as not only susceptible, but indeed inclined, to sin, possessed of a positive tendency to do evil, a mysterious dynamic spirit of perversity "for which there is explanation in Genesis and remedy in the Gospel". Such

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[150] Swift, as in Williams, p. 52.

[151] Landa, "Jonathan Swift", in Gravil's Gulliver's Travel's: A Casebook, (London: MacMillan, 1974), p. 175.

> contrariness makes the teachings of the Christian church absolutely vital to man's ethical life; and thus, for Sterne and Swift, morality is never to be separated from religion, wisdom never to be divorced from revelation.[152]

Definitions of satire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stress the Christian thrust. Milton writes, "it has born out of a Tragedy, so ought to resemble his parentage, to strike high, and adventure dangerously at the most eminent vices among the greatest persons".[153] In Dryden the religious purpose is even more explicitly stated: "the true end of satire is the amendment of vices." Defoe writes something very similar in his Preface to The True Born Englishman, "the end of Satyr is Reformation...". And Swift considers the moral purpose in his definition: "to preserve well-inclin'd men in the course of virtue...". Pope refers to satire as a "sacred Weapon! left for Truth's defence".[154]

Although techniques used in satire cannot be considered exclusively Christian, belonging more to the level of art than to religion, satiric art can be grounded in a Christian bias. Such is the case in Swift's satires. The starting point for the satire, the

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[152]New, "Sterne and Swift: Sermons and Satire", MLQ, XXX, 1969, p. 210.

[153]Milton, as in Frye's Anatony of Criticism, (Princeton, 1973), p. 228.

[154]Quotations from Pollard's, Satire, (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 2.

underlying assumption of his work, is a firm conviction in the validity of original sin. Deane Swift, for example, takes for granted Swift's grounding of his satires in the concept of original sin. In cataloguing, not unlike Jonathan's own use of it, Deane Swift asks how a clergyman can hold his tongue when man's vice surrounds him:

> Ought a preacher of righteousness, ought a watchman of the Christian faith...hold his peace...when avarice, fraud, cheating, violence, rapine, extortion, cruelty, oppression, tyranny, rancour, envy, malice,... hypocrisy, infidelity,...and innumerable other vices are as epidemical as the pox, and many of them the notorious characteristicks of the bulk of mankind?[154]

Any one of Deane Swift's adjectives could be supported from the Tale or Gulliver. Both satires veer away from an exalted view of the person and what he is capable of. Swift sets solid limits to what the human being is capable of and on more than one occasion he reprimands his friends Bolingbroke and Pope for their overly optimistic view.

Swift's narrators, of course, set no limits to human capability. Gulliver, though he sees clearly enough the limitations of his friends, believes that he is capable of imitating the rational horses. The narrator of A Modest Proposal believes that all problems, including human ones, can be solved by applied economics. The narrator of the

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[154]Landa, "Jonathan Swift", p. 174.

Tale has absolute faith in his own mind to fathom and encompass all knowledge. As a "most devoted Servant of all Modern Forms" the narrator proclaims "Every man his own Carver" and his own "Lanthorn" and informs the public that he has "some Time since, with a World of Pains and Art, dissected the Carcass of Human Nature, and..." is "ready to shew a very compleat Anatomy thereof to all curious Gentlemen...".[155] Yet, ironically, for someone seeking to dissect the anatomies of others, the narrator houses a sick anatomy himself: it is a case of the sick analysing the healthy, disease examining health. The narrator whispers that he has been a hired hand, paid for supporting one cause or another and is in a state of confusion and disease "from an Understanding and a Conscience, thread-bare and ragged with perpetual turning; From a Head broken in a hundred places, by the Malignants of the opposite Factions, and from a Body spent with Poxes, ill cured, by trusting to Bawds and Surgeons...".[156] In Self-confessed madness himself the narrator wishes "to reduce the Notions of all Mankind, exactly to the same Length, and Breadth, and Heighth of his own...".[157] Suffering from madness himself the narrator imposes it on history and all

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[155] Swift, I, 77.

[156] Swift, I, 42.

[157] Swift, I, 105.

historical figures. We have noted before that the narrator toys briefly with other theories of accounting for historical movement such as clothes, wind and others. History as fashion even occupies his mind for a fairly long time. Peter is conceived to be the most fashionable dresser, putting on what has just hit the market or taking off what is no longer in repute. Jack, on the other hand, is the least fashionable of the brothers and goes against the grain by dressing in rags. Martin, being a moderate, and incidentally someone the narrator finds uninteresting and speaks of a great deal less than the other two brothers, tries to find a middle position of not being too far out of fashion and not being too much in it either. The clothes metaphor may be the narrator's longest, but it is not the latest for it is the theory of vapours on which he finally settles:

> Cartesius reckoned to see before he dies, the Sentiments of all Philosophers, like many lesser Stars in his Romantick System, rapt and drawn within his own Vortex. Now, I would gladly be informed, how it is possible to account for such Imaginations as these in particular Men, without Recourse to my Phenomenon of Vapours, ascending from the lower Faculties to over-shadow the Brain, and thence distilling into Conceptions, for which the Narrowness of our Mother-Tongue has not yeat assigned any other Name, besides that of Madness or Phrenzy.[158]

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[158]Swift, I, 105.

Madness, according to the narrator, accounts for "those two great Blessings, Conquests and Systems" without which "mankind would unhappily be reduced to the same Belief in Things Invisible".[159] What the Phenomenon of vapours" means specifically, as the narrator gives concrete examples, is that there is a certain energy, a certain vapour which is usually employed sexually, when blocked, as when a whore jults a military commander, the commander will use his energy to conquer kingdoms in compensation. Different quantities of vapour in the brain produce different sorts of individuals:

> It will be a very delicate Point, to cut the Feather, and divide the several Reasons to a Nice and Curious Reader, how this numerical Difference in the Brain, can produce Effects of so vast a Difference from the same Vapour, as to be the sole Point of Individuation between Alexander the Great, Jack of Leyden, and Monsieur DesCartes.[160]

Essentially Swift works with the same metaphors in both A Tale of A Tub and Gulliver's Travels. Gulliver, as a satiric anthropology in space, propels a body through space and the Tale, as a satiric anthropology in time, discharges a mind through time. The motion metaphor is common to both satires. Gulliver sets out in voyage after voyage seeking the "promised land" and the Tale narrator restlessly scans history from its beginnings to the modern period. Gulliver, though

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[159] Swift, I, 107.

[160] Swift, I, 107.

primarily a spatial exploration of perception and behaviour in different societies, also uses the time metaphor. Lilliputians once partook of a limited utopia of decency and justice before the onslaught of modern degeneration. Balnibarbi was once a sensible society before a group of noblemen visited Laputa and came back "full of volatile spirits acquired in that airy region" and began a scheme of useless projects. Gulliver calls up Alexander and other ancient notables in Glubbdubdrib and finds the heroes of antiquity a very ordinary bunch. The Struldbruggs degenerate in time, becoming more and more despicable. Things get worse in Swift's conception of time as against the more prevalent opinion of his age that things improve through time. The motion metaphors, whether of movement in time or space, indicate a fundamental restlessness at the heart of man. Happiness is indeed "a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived", Gulliver happiest pursing false idols and the Tale narrator happiest pursuing mistaken notions of history.*

The height metaphor is also central to both the Tale and Gulliver. Because of height Gulliver is superior to the Lilliputians and inferior to the taller Brobdingnagians. The flying island rules over the mainland below. The taller Houyhnhnms control both Gulliver and the Yahoos. The Tale narrator informs us that "whoever hath an Ambition to be heard in a Crowd, must press, and squeeze, and thrust, and climb with indefatigable Pains, till he has exalted himself

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*Pascal, as in John Traugott's "A Tale of A Tub", Focus, p. 91: "All man's misfortunes spring from the single cause that they cannot rest quietly in one room".

to a certain Degree of Altitude above them".[161] There are, in the narrator's perspective, three main ways of getting oneself heard: by pulpit, ladder or stage. Notably, the narrator uses all three methods himself in order to be heard. At times he exudes the enthusiasm for his theories of history reminiscent of a preacher. He climbs up steps to get to his garret from where he drops down his profundity. And he theatrically projects his words, as if from a stage, to enwrap the world.

The height metaphor often combines with the excremental metaphors. Dung and urine are usually let fall from a height. Gulliver is showered by a group of Yahoos in a tree. The Tale narrator tells us that Peter's bulls "would Roar and Spit and Belch, and Piss and Fart,..." from a height. The excremental imagery serves to satirize man's pretension to heights above his station. Gulliver, at the point of his recognition of his superiority to the Yahoos, is bombarded by their excrement. The lower faculties in the Tale really do govern the higher faculties. Man is first and last an animal in Swift built with depository equipment that makes a joke of any pretension to grandeur he may have or his own preference for the "airy regions".

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[161] Swift, I, 33.

Vapour works up from the lower regions in the Tale and Gulliver. A "vapour"* of sorts convinces Gulliver that he can be like the Houyhnhnms and brings him back to England intent on converting the Yahoos there to a new way of life. A "vapour" of sorts works in the body of the Tale narrator; the pox jars his brain into the feverish activity of theorizing. The inside literally becomes the outside. The narrator sees his condition as the condition of the world; his predicament influences the direction of his vision. And what distinguishes one person from another is the quantity and outlet of the vapour or the clothes they wear. Jack, Peter and Martin are first of all distinguishable by their dress and next by their zeal. Underneath everyone is the same. Gulliver is just one more Yahoo without his clothes in the eyes of the Houyhnhnms. In the narrator's Tale everyone is mad; though the madness may manifest itself differently.

To summarize the functions of Swift's varied metaphorical pattern, the metaphors of motion and height serve to depict the reality of human society. Constant motion indicates restlessness; power through a superior height gives premonition of a society manipulated by the elevation of the power hungry. The excerementa1 metaphors stress the animal nature of man regardless of the aerial pretension of his thoughts and actions. Vapour serves as a metaphor for the way in which man gathers up his enthusiasm for one cause or another and tries to inject his worldview into others. All the metaphors are metaphors of the human condition: they show us who we are and where we are.

The metaphors also satirize the faith in progress that Gulliver and the Grub-street hack maintain. Reasonable Gulliver very unreasonably forever leaves his wife and children to voyage out in search of newness. The Tale narrator believes by elevation and motion that he has a firm grasp of knowledge, but the knowledge does not do anything for him. It does not make him happier or more comfortable or secure; if anything, it makes him even more frenzied in his zeal to convert others to his life of perpetual motion in thought:

> And, whereas the mind of Man, when he gives the Spur and Bridle to his Thoughts, doth never stop, but naturally sallies out into both extreams of High and Low, of Good and Evil; His first Flight of Fancy, commonly transports Him to Ideas of what is most perfect, finished, and exalted; till having soard out of his own Reach and Sight, not well perceiving how near the Frontiers of Height and Depth, border upon each other; With the same Course and Wing, he falls down plum into the lowest Bottom of Things; like one who travels the East into the West; or like a strait line drawn by its own Length into a Circle...[162]

This statement, like most from the hack narrator, is about himself as well as a statement of the way things are, as it is intended to be. We have already seen that the narrator's mind can turn East into West, or high into low because he occupies a universe of matter in which East and West, high and low, outside and inside are all one: nothing. There is an emptiness in the narrator's Tale which is literally a tale

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[162]Swift, I, 99.

told by an idiot signifying nothing.* His vision is hollow; the Grub-street world he inhabits is hollow; and the "tub" in which he stores his words is hollow. All is matter and all is nothing. Human matter cannot be differentiated from non-human matter; it is all one. No one piece of matter is of any more significance than any other piece of matter. The "common Meaning of Words", has been forgotten and the Tale is only a noisey "Retainer of the Sound", sound and fury signifying nothing.

However, Swift does not leave the reader, as his narrators do, in a state of nihilism. One does not have to be either the fool or the knave of the Tale nor identify oneself with either the Yahoo or the Houyhnhnm. There is a way out of nihilism. Predictably, Swift gives the answer to his mad narrator of the Tale who remains ironically unconscious of the import of his words:

> The Brain, in its Natural Position and State of Serenity, disposeth its Owner to pass his Life in the common Forms, without any Thought of subduing Multitudes to his own Power, his Reasons or his Visions; and the more he shapes his Understanding of the Pattern of Human Learning, the less he is inclined to form Parties after his particular Notions....But when a Man's Fancy gets astride on his Reason, when Imagination is at Cuffs with the Senses, and Common Understanding, as well as common Sense, is Kickt out of Doors; the first Proselyte he makes, is Himself, and when that is once compass'd, the Difficulty is not so great in bringing over others...[163]

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*Pinkus uses this analogy with Macbeth.

[163]Swift, I, 108.

Throughout the satires Swift makes an appeal to the "common Forms", the "Pattern of Human Learning", "Common Understanding", and "common Sense". He makes an appeal to experience and tradition, and to Christianity, as an integral part of human experience and tradition.

CONCLUSION

Chapter One considered Swift as a Divine and a Wit. As Ehrenpreis says, "yoked with the clown in Swift there is always the preacher".[163] "Vive le bagatelle" was joined with "vive la religion". We saw that there is a tradtion of Christian writers who have conveyed their religious conviction through satire, irony or humour in English literature from Chaucer to Laurence Sterne and a great many comic writers outside the English tradition such as Erasmus' In Praise of Folly who have utilized some form of the comic for serious religious purpose. In Chapter Two we studied the nature of Swift's contribution to the Christian satiric tradition. We noted that the usual Swift technique involves the creation of a narrator who takes up a position independent of Christian tradition, replacing it by faith in man's rationality or self-sufficiency, and unknowingly to himself, demonstrates the unworkability of modernism. Swift makes clear too that in spite of man's tendency to reduce life to easy formula, it remains a mystery:

> So when Cartesian artists try
> To solve appearances of sight
> In its reception to the eye,
> And catch the living landscape thro' a scanty light,
> The figures all inverted shew,
> And colours of a faded hue;
> .....
> Such are the ways ill-guided mortals go
> To judge of things above by things below.[164]

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[163] Ehrenpreis, Focus, p. 206.

[164] Swift, The Poetical Works, ed. Davis, p. 25.

And that no modern scheme for human progress that does not take into account man's fallen nature or have its foundation entrenched in Christian experience and tradition will work. Chapter Three elaborated on the other two chapters seeing the essence of Swiftian satire grounded in the conviction of original sin and the positive affirmation of the Christian outlook by the demolition of opposing systems of thought and conduct. Always aware of human limitation, Swift does not confuse the earth with Heaven:

> For this inferior world is but Heaven's dusky shade,
> By dark reverted rays from its reflection made;
> Hence the weak shapes wild and imperfect pass,
> Like sun-beams shot at too far distance from a glass;[165]

In summary, Swift reconciles divinity and wit. His Christian view of reality is transmitted by a mirthful irony where the Hobbes, Shaftesburys and other modernists are diminished not least because they take themselves too seriously and go about building systems, which, no one could possibly live in. Trying to live as a Hobbesian, as the Tale narrator attempts, or trying to live like a stoical rationalist, as narrator Gulliver does, leads to distortion of the individual. If one cannot live as a mechanist or a rationalist or a stoic or a materialist of any sort, what other alternative is there but to live anchored to the best in tradition and experience, which, for Swift was Christianity.

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[165]Swift, as in Davis, p. 25.

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