If we were to go by the sequence in which the twelve monologues of *The Ring and the Book* are arranged, we have to analyse the Pope's monologue after discussing the arguments of the lawyers for and against Guido in Book VIII and IX. In the discussion of the poem as a whole, in terms of character and motive, a certain amount of shuffling of the sequence appears to be useful just for exploratory convenience and analytical clarity. To have a complete picture of Guido's character in the earlier chapter, we have taken his two monologues (Book V & XI) together. In this chapter we propose to discuss the Pope's monologue without touching Books VIII and IX, for the simple reason that he throws invaluable light on the three central characters of the poem, Guido, Capanschi, and Pompilia. He seems to give more importance to the motive behind a man's action than to the act itself. The rightness or wrongness of an act may be established by legal hair-splitting argument and counter-argument. But, in the process, there is every possibility of wrong
becoming right and right becoming wrong. A much better way to arrive at a judgement in these matters is to analyse the motive behind the action. So the Pope says:

For I am ware it is the seed of act,
God holds appraising in His hollow palm,
Not act grown great thence on the world below,
Leafage and branchage, vulgar eyes admire,
Therefore I stand on my integrity,
Nor fear at all and if I hesitate,
It is because I need to breathe a while,
Rest, as the human right allows, review
Intent the little seeds of act, my tree,-
The thought, which, clothed in deed, I give
the world
At chink of bell and push of arrased door.

(X. 271-281).

But the implicit point behind the Pope's words is that unless one has integrity in himself, he cannot evaluate the integrity of others. Standing on his own integrity, the Pope could cut through the irrelevant mass of evidence, legal and quotational evidence, argument and counter-argument that piles up on the Roman murder case, and reach the code. He analyses the motives of
Guido in murdering Pompilia and her parents and reaches the following conclusion:

All is the lust for money, to get gold,—
Why, lie, rob, if it must be, murder! Make
Body and soul wring gold out, lured within
The clutch of hate by love, the trop's pretence.'

(X.540-543).

Examining the entire evidence, the Pope doesn't endorse Guido's point that he murdered Pompilia in order to vindicate his honour. Although the Pope doesn't exonerate the Commarini couple, he seems to agree with Pompilia that their sin is not so enormous as to deserve such a death at the hands of Guido. The verb 'find' and its analogues punctuate Pope's assessment of Guido's motive and character. For example, he says, "This is why Guido is found reprobate" (X 398). "I find him bound, then, to begin life well" (X.476). "For I find this black mark impinge the man," (X. 509). This suggests that the Pope doesn't merely go through the record of the case placed before him but interprets it, and while interpreting, completely relies on his intuitive under-
standing of God and man. He sees divine intervention in bringing Caponsacchi on to the scene so that the wife might be rescued. He expresses this insight with great lucidity in the following passage:

Such was this gift of God who showed for once
How He would have The world go white: it seems
As a new attribute were born of each
Champion of truth, the priest and wife I praise,—
As a new safeguard sprang up in defence
Of their new noble nature: so a thorn
Comes to the aid of and completes the rose—
Courage, to wit, no woman's gift nor priests,
I, the crisis; might leaps vindicating right.
See how the strong aggressor, bad and bold,
With every vantage, preconcerts surprise,
Leaps of a sudden at his victim's throat
In a byway, — how fares he when face to face
With Caponsacchi? Who fights, who fears now?
There quails count Guido, armed to the chattering teeth,
Cowers at the steadfast eye and quiet word
O' the Canon of the Pieve! There skulks crime
Behind Law called in to back Cowardice.'
While out of the poor trampled worn the wife,
Springs up a serpent! (X. 678-697).

(Emphasis added)
The above citation makes it clear that Guido, in spite of his aggressive attitude and armed strength, vilts before the steadfast eye and the quiet word of the Canon, thereby once for all demonstrating that he is a coward seeking the protection of the law to conceal his crime. He has only contempt for people like the Archbishop and Girolamo. He sees through the character of Archbishop and says:

Ah, but I save my word at least for thee, Archbishop, who art under, i' the Church, As I am under God, - thou, chosen by both To do the Shepherd's office, feed the sheep— How of this lamb that panted at thy foot While the wolf pressed on her within crook's reach? Wast thou the hireling that did turn and flee? With thee at least anon the little word.'

(X. 981-987).

In the above lines we notice that Guido is compared to a wolf. The wolf image which occurs in the crucial context throughout the poem, which the Pope also uses, doesn't require any further elucidation. Although
Victorian critics thought that Pompilia was a soft and delicate heroine—wife, mother, fiancee—daughter, all rolled into one, they could not encapsulate Pompilia's motive behind her flight as the Pope did. According to the Pope, Pompilia accepts the obligation in which God places her and is guided by natural instinct which she shares with all God's creatures. Pompilia flies from her wicked husband to save her babe. Recognising the youthful enthusiasm and the consequent bungling it may lead to, the Pope admires Caponsacchi and says in memorable words:

Well done!
Be glad thou hast let light into the world,
Through that irregular breach o' the boundary, —see
The same upon thy path and march assured,
Learning anew the use of soldiership,
Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,
Loyalty to the life's end! Ruminante,
Deserve the initiatory spasm, — once more
Work, be unhappy but bear life, my son!

(X. 1198-1206).
This reminds us of the Pope's earlier pronouncement on Rompilia in whose dark life divine intervention manifests itself in the form of the priest. The integrity of the Pope is such that he never lets us forget that Caponsacchi transgressed the code and limits of his profession in being a Good Samaritan to a victim of unwarranted cruelty and wickedness.

In giving an adverse judgement against Guido and his companions, the Pope places the Roman murder case and characters involved in it in a human and Christian perspective. His conviction is that, "white shall not neutralize the black, nor good/Compensate bad in man, absolve him so;/Life's business being just the terrible choice (X.1230-1232). From the Pope's monologue we gather the knowledge that he is aware of life's business and that it evolves the terrible choice. He meditates on the spiritual and intellectual equipment necessary for making the choice. If the source of all intelligent judgement and power is God, His whole creation seems to reduce itself in its physical embodiment as the Church,
and the Pope is God's representative. So the Pope says that "Incomprehensibly the choice is Thine!/
I therefore bow my head and take Thy place./ There is, beside, the works, a tale of Thee/In the world's mouth, which I find credible:/ I live it with my heart: unsatisfied,/ I try it with my reason, nor discept/From any point I probe and pronounce sound."/ (X. 1340-1346).

But as the passing events suggest and especially as the Roman murder signifies, something is lacking and what is lacking is the "perfection fit for God." The Pope considers life as a training and a passage and feels that the moral sense grows but by exercise. He seems to feel that the meaning of Christianity and the machinery through which it is supposed to realise its goal are at variance with each other. The conduct of Caponsacchi and Pompilia suggests that the essentials of Christianity can be kept alive. As Robert Langbaum shrewdly observes, "The Pope comes to see that the truth is something other than the machinery by which men try to understand it."¹

The aged Pope, as the foregoing observations suggest, is surprised and agonised not by the behaviour of Guido but by the behaviour of Christians like the Archbishop. In this context he is reminded of Euripides whose plays dramatise a pre-christian vision of the Christian morality which expresses itself in the following lines:

Thus bold
Yet self-mistrusting, should man bear himself,
Most assured on what now concerns him most—
The law of his own life, the path he prints,
Which law is virtue and not vice, I say,—

(X. 1746-1750).

But the virtue enshrined in Christ's sacrifice proclaiming for all time to come, the sanctity of humility, meekness, innocence, and purity symbolised by the Lamb is at stake and exposed to the wolves like Guido. And the Pope feels that those who with all the aid of Christ succumbed/How, without Christ shall they unaided sink?" (X. 1903-1904). Slowly and steadily advancing in his
vision of man, nature and God, and how these are institutionalised in the form of the Church and how the church is used for private gain and personal revenge, the Pope unhesitatingly confirms the death sentence passed by the court on Guido and his four companions. He sets aside all pleas of pardon on grounds that Guido may repent if he is pardoned, that he killed his wife to vindicate his honour and that a husband is superior to a wife and husband rules and wife submits.

From the foregoing analysis of the Pope's monologue, what emerges is that experience of the ways of the world, the mental furniture necessary to analyse one's experience and the integrity to abide by what one realises as truth, the foresight and the intuitive perception that are absolutely necessary to place the truth in the broader perspective of one's faith, characterise the personality of the Pope. Taking their cue from the observations of Henry James, a few critics feel that the Pope is so authoritative and commanding in his judgement that his clinching decision makes the poem apparently didactic. But as we
have noted earlier, the Pope's monologue places the Roman murder case in its proper perspective. The arguments of Archangelis and Bottinius are saturated with logic, rhetoric, sophistry, and unimaginative sense of the priorities which distort character and motive. Although the Pope is old, he is not senile and his imagination and reason are in such a unified state that it makes the reader like the Pope as a supremely intelligent man. His intelligence is in harmony with his intuition, Diagnostic and penetrative, his interpretation of the facts of the case raises a number of moral and philosophical issues that create cultural framework which helps the reader make sense of *The Ring and the Book*. Since we have discussed these points in an earlier chapter, suffice it to say here that instead of being an authoritative and a final pronouncement on the intrinsic norms of the poem, the Pope's monologue makes what is implicit explicit, and thereby contributes to our own assessment of the intrinsic norms of the poem.