THE REAPPEARANCE OF GOD:
MATTHEW ARNOLD AND T. S. ELIOT IN DIALOGUE

by

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Abstract

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Despite the fact that Matthew Arnold was a staunch humanist and T. S. Eliot a rather orthodox Christian, in their cultural criticism both offered surprisingly similar responses to the socio-cultural phenomenon of the crisis of religious doubt experienced by Western society during the late Victorian and Modern periods. The internal conflict each experienced in his personal religious crisis came face-to-face with his social responsibility as cultural critic. Arnold's desire to retain a standard of cultural perfection and Eliot's fear of the disintegration of society led them to literary-cultural efforts to re-Christianize Western civilization that involved social means for social ends; yet, their respective projects paradoxically and unwittingly emphasized the significance of the individual Christian and of a Christian *ethos*. Hence, their projects contained inherent contradictions that, in the end, brought their efforts to failure. Arnold insisted on freeing Christianity of all its supernatural qualities, and Eliot, in his turn, negated the relevance of the individual consciousness in religious matters; with both God and the individual conscience out of the picture, little remained to Christianity with which to re-enchant the world.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation marks the end of a story that began more than thirty years ago. Its first author is my father who placed in my hands a copy of *Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales* when I could barely read the English language. I witnessed his love of books; I read so he would love me even more. When I was a little older, my mother's aestheticism and unwavering passion for the arts stole the story and my heart together. Today, they are both still hers.

Long is the list of kind-hearted and brilliant humanists at Cal State, L.A. who fed the story on its way by diverting (and converting) me from my path in biology, and reminding me with the grace and generosity of the *unmistakably educated* that English was the suitable choice for the proper fulfillment of my spirit. (I would have made an awfully sappy physician.) I owe to them my lifelong gratitude: Professors Charles Beckwith, Alfred Bendixen, Peter Brier, Michael Calabrese, Henri Coulette, Steve Jones, Jun Liu, Elaine Osio, Ruben Quintero, Terry Santos , Carl Selkin, Andrew Stauffer, Timothy Steele, and John Weston.

The Graduate Center's chapter was surprisingly colorful and multifarious, its authors magnanimous and awe-inspiring. Among my peers several will remain dear to me as long as memory has a claim to my mind: Duncan Faherty, Vincent Bissonette, and James Hatch each in his turn, at a difficult moment, extended a kindness I hope will return to him tenfold; Peter Khost was a constant (albeit distant) reminder that I had an intellectual twin somewhere in the world; Andrea Parmegiani and Michele Rosa-Clot confirmed everything I love about Italians. Michele also helped me pass my French exam, uplifted my spirit with weekly conversations, and shared with me the phenomenal

gift of the Italian language. The companionship, encouragement, attention, humor, and affection of Ruth Garcia and Jody Rosen were equal to my sister's in her absence.

The gratitude I owe to the Graduate Center professors under whose wings I felt both nurtured and challenged for nine years is immeasurable. Special thanks to: Anne Humpherys, David Kazandjian, Joan Richardson, Donald Stone, and Gordon Whatley. Openhanded, big-hearted Gerhard Joseph introduced me to The Dickens Project, selflessly gave of his time, read my work with interest and care, broke bread with me, and walked with me along two bodies of water in California on a lazy afternoon I will never forget. He was instrumental in shaping my identity as a Victorianist, and in fostering my faith in the goodness of people.

Upon the shoulders of Fred Kaplan, Wayne Koestenbaum, and Joshua Wilner I placed the burden of serving on my dissertation committee. Fred's willingness in the first place to serve as my dissertation director was matched in its kindness only by his more surprising willingness to continue with me past his retirement. His involvement in my dissertation process was nothing short of a blessing. He called and wrote with encouragement and reminders whose regularity of occurrence, spirit of collegiality, and unconditional affection and good will astonish me still. He patiently waited for chapters, and just as patiently read through them over and over again. His concern never wavered; his counsel never failed me. His gentleness gave way only to his sensitivity, which gave way only to his constant reassurances. The tremendous support and guidance he provided for years was capped by an act most remarkable in its depth of generosity: near the end, he sat with me behind a two-and-a-half hour telephone conversation from three-thousand miles away with editing suggestions.

Wayne Koestenbaum openly and warmly undertook the reading of a dissertation whose subject lies well outside the range of his interests; I shall never forget that kindness. He welcomed conversations, offered encouragement and advice, and subjected my work to his characteristically sharp and thoughtful reading. Most significantly, probably without realizing it, he pushed me toward a vision of a future self as writer and thinker simply by a quiet but constant presence. When I grow up, I want to be some version of Wayne Koestenbaum. Josh Wilner, kindred spirit, was the reader in my head for whose approval I set down word after word. His is a giant's soul in the world; I'm honored to know him; I'm honored to have spent whatever little, precious time I've spent with him, and to have learned from him more deeply and more meaningfully than I have learned from any of my professors in the twenty-four years I've spent in higher education.

There are five gentlemen—real *gentlemen*—who graced my life in varied ways throughout these nine years in New York, and who contributed unexpectedly and indispensably to the completion of my dissertation. They are two Victorianists and three artists who deserve my heartfelt thanks: Joe Childers at UC Riverside and my dear friend Christopher Decker at UNLV; Ray Ring and Christopher Lowery in the Office of Building Design and Exhibitions at the Grad Center; and the good man, Andrew Goodman, the musician, from that sweet little office on 56th Street where all dark things turn to light.

St. Paul who figures so largely in this dissertation tells us that without love we are nothing. I am nothing without the family whose love allowed me this selfish and self-destructive absence from their lives while I worked toward my degree. Each year that

brought me closer to the end impressed more forcibly upon me the pain of distance; this last has been the worst. To Theo and Max, to Armen and Ani, to Frida, Nora, Jirair, Stefen, Peony, Uncle Hovik (whose spirit hovers above all the ideas contained here), Alex, and Tim, but most of all to my parents, Aida and Sevad, I acknowledge here not only my debt of gratitude, but also my debt of contrition. My siblings—reminders to me that I am but one-third a person in this world—continuously inspire and compel me, one with endless brilliance, the other with startling wisdom; their imagined presence—near and intimate—in my vision of the future urged the progress and completion of my work. Despite my absence from their sweet, young lives during the dissertation process, I hope that my two nephews, Theo and Max, will at least benefit from this dissertation's overarching gesture: to pay homage to something larger than oneself. I hope they will come to understand that the end of faith marks the death of imagination, and that man's greatest failure is to fail to believe in something greater than himself.

Steven Young, my constant companion, my rock, my godsend, and witness to my life, helped shape—with encouragement, love, patience, perseverance, and selflessness—every single word that appears in this work. The world does not—cannot—record the countless, daily acts of unconditional love that bring to fruition someone *else's* project. Only God sees these. I determined a course for our lives and Steven consented; I mapped out the journey and Steven consented; I authored the story and Steven still consented. For nine years Steven put his life into my hands; now, I promise that all my future courses and journeys and stories will be his. And with his permission I dedicate this dissertation to my parents.

If I have erred in my decision to have undertaken this work—an error only the years ahead will show—I hope my parents will forgive me. I entered upon this labor of love because all *their* labor was love; I chose to follow my spoiled heart because they always regarded mine before their own; this is my "baby," and it belongs to them.

Table of Contents

The Reappearance of God: Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot in Dialogue

When, in the nineteenth century, God disappeared and faith sounded its "melancholy, long withdrawing roar,"[1] what remained on the landscape of the English psyche, destitute and disconnected, was Victorian religious anxiety. In *The Disappearance of God* J. Hillis Miller characterizes this psychological landscape, bereft of God:

> The lines of connection between us and God have broken down, or God himself has slipped away from the places where he used to be. He no longer inheres in the world as the force binding together all men and all things. As a result the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seem to many writers a time when God is no more present and not yet again present, and can only be experienced negatively, as a terrifying absence…. Only if God would return or if we could somehow reach him might our broken world be unified again. (2)

Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot, who might readily figure among the writers in Miller's description above, expressed their terror over God's absence by poeticizing the fight for his return. Theirs is a continuous voice spanning roughly a century, articulating the pain over God being "no more present" in the nineteenth century and "not yet again present" in the twentieth. Situated as it is past the time of the "not yet again," this dissertation casts a retrospective glance at the first decades of God's "terrifying absence" from the English psychological and social landscapes by way of an examination of the prose of the two men who, to borrow from Miller, tried to unify our broken world—to deflect our

[1]From Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," line 25.

very own moment of the "never again"—by saving Christianity. The central argument of this dissertation is that the project of saving Christianity, which both Arnold and Eliot take up as the express purpose of their respective prose works dealing with religion, met with failure born, no doubt, of the unresolved, internal conflict each experienced over his personal religious crisis. The textual manifestation of this conflict is illogic, contradiction, and self-subversion. A careful, comparative consideration of the work of Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot sheds new light on the phenomenon of religious anxiety (defined here by its twin causes of cosmic isolation and fear of cultural decline) as it evolved from the Victorian to the Modern period.

Vincent P. Anderson, in his article, "Preserving the Faith: An Argument Between Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot," enumerates the many connections between Arnold and Eliot; he first claims that "[l]inking…Arnold and… Eliot is nothing new" (5), then proceeds to catalogue their many similarities. In his portrayal of a Freudian father-son relationship between the two in which Eliot sets out to "dethrone" Arnold, critic Adam Kirsch goes further than Anderson in representing one voice among several who note a deep and troubled connection between Arnold and Eliot.[2] J. I. Morse's is another such voice; he writes that "Eliot contended all his life with the [psychic] ghost of Matthew Arnold."[3]

Although their affinities are numerous and well established, Arnold and Eliot as critical subjects held in juxtaposition to one another suffer from a dearth of careful consideration by scholars. No book-length study exists in which the two are cast side-by-

[2]Adam Kirsch, "Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot," *The American Scholar* 67:3 (1998): 65-73.

[3]J. I. Morse, "T.S. Eliot in 1921: Toward the Dissociation of Sensibility," *Western Humanities Review* 30 (1976): 31-40.

side; such studies are limited to articles and a small handful of (largely unpublished) dissertations. Comparisons between the two are often confined to a treatment of their prose works or a consideration of their ideas as literary (and less often cultural) critics. Studies in which their respective religious ideologies are examined are difficult to come by; when these do appear, Arnold and Eliot are almost always assessed by way of contrast. Scholars point up the differences only, noting how the two "oppose one another decidedly in their convictions about what constitutes the core of Christianity,"[4] or how they "understand differently the central truths of Christianity."[5] Eliot's religious solutions are taken to be "rhetorical" and arrived at through "egotism," whereas Arnold's poetry of crisis rings compassionate and honest.[6] Of course, the fact of Arnold's humanism stands in direct opposition to Eliot's belief that man is sinful, and the former's denunciation of dogma is met by the latter's ostensible embrace of it. But if we consider, as Kirsch says, "Eliot [to be] Arnold's successor as a poet of religious crisis,"[7] and we examine how they dealt with this cultural crisis, their prose solutions are surprisingly similar, despite Eliot's own objections to Arnold's vision. A vision clouded in Arnold's case by the exhausting pursuit of perfection by way of culture, and in Eliot's by a debilitating need for order through external authority, produced only hollowed-out versions of Christianity for the modern world. Although they begin with religious premises diametrically opposed in Christian dogma, they arrive at the same place.

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[4]Vincent P. Anderson, "Preserving the Faith: An Argument Between Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot," *The Arnoldian* (1984): 5-15.

[5]Anderson 6.

[6]Kirsch 72.

[7]Kirsch 66.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief history of the phenomenon of Victorian religious anxiety and its evolution into the Modern period; hence, the chapter first serves as the necessary background to the proper cultural-historical contextualization of my argument as it evolves in the dissertation. The chapter then proceeds to examine Arnold's and Eliot's respective solutions to saving Christianity. Ultimately, the project of re-Christianizing Western society fails because Arnold's desire to retain a cultural standard and Eliot's fear of the disintegration of Western civilization culminate in solutions that, on the one hand, negate the supernatural, and on the other, efface the individual. The impossibility of an authentic re-enchantment of the world after God's disappearance as the 19th century experienced it, leads, I argue, to solutions that are strictly social in nature, and thus the individual's sense of cosmic isolation remains intact despite the effort toward recuperation of the kind Arnold and Eliot essayed.

The greater part of Arnold's religious prose is given across four books—*St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870)*, Literature and Dogma* (1873)*, God and the Bible* (1875), and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877). Together they cover 800 pages of theology rather dizzily rendered (and received) because it does not comprise a logical system of thought. Chapter 2 of the dissertation represents an attempt to consolidate the components of Arnold's religious ideology—to commit Arnold to coherent definitions of the religious terms and categories that appear repeatedly throughout the four works in question, so that an analysis of his religious discourse can ensue. Arnold's lapses in logic and contradictions are uncovered as I attempt to establish his humanistic, aesthetic, and empirical method, and to explicate the particularly vexed terms of his discourse—God, righteousness, and religion.

The argument in chapter 3 follows closely from the explanation of Arnold's theology contained in chapter 2. The chapter brings to light the fact that in its capacity to save the Victorian moral fabric by informing *conduct*, Arnold's Christianity is, at bottom, merely a tool for developing and maintaining a standard of human perfection—of contributing to Arnold's holistic philosophy of *culture*. By denying to Christianity almost all its claims to supernaturalism, by erecting a philosophy of the "two selves" that, I assert, has its source in Hinduism, and by rewriting Pauline doctrine, Arnold rarifies the religion into an all but unrecognizable shadow of its dogmatic self. Because his "theology" precludes the possibility of authentic belief, Arnold's call to inwardness and to the "sweet reasonableness" of Jesus that awakens the "inner man" rings not only with emptiness, but also with irony.

Chapter 4 turns its attention to Eliot's Christianity. The attempt to gather a picture of his theology from texts such as *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* leads to an examination of some of his literary theories as they apply to his religious thought. A close reading of his terms "orthodoxy" and "impersonality" contained in essays like "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *After Strange Gods,* and *The Function of Criticism* sheds light on the fear of internal, psychic space and the correlative need for external authority that Eliot expressed in his religious prose. His open derision of and disdain for the type of "hygienic morality" espoused by Arnold belie Eliot's own socio-politically driven agenda with regard to Christianity. The Christian Society he contrives to erect and the form of Christian culture he hopes to rescue from imminent disintegration together wholly obliterate the individual and his

consciousness, such that Christianity comes to mean only a repression of the believer under the reaffirmation of Church authority.

In addition to serving as the space where Arnold and Eliot are rejoined in dialogue over their respective Christianities, the epilogue prolongs the conversation to the consideration of other, more adequate means for the spiritual reinvigoration of society. In *The Study of Poetry* Arnold asserts that art can console and sustain us, and the humanistic and Romantic aesthetics of his religious prose reassert his claim. His privileging of intuition, imagination, and emotion in religious matters—an homage to the spirit of poetry—gestures toward the Blakeian possibilities that are arguably more alive in the social imagination today than they ever were for Blake's contemporary audience. And although Eliot meets with vehement opposition Arnold's prediction from *The Study of Poetry* that "what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry,"[8] his own poetry is the only vehicle by which the severity and sterility of his Christian vision melts away into a surprisingly soft humanity.

[8]Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism* 235.

CHAPTER 1

Social Christianity and the Christian Society: A Dialogue

The Cultural-Historical Context -

In his unequaled exploration of the causes and manifestations of the Victorian sense of loss entitled *Some Late Victorian Attitudes,* David Daiches declares that "what the Victorians produced in unprecedented quantities was *worry*" (30). Daiches quotes from Humphrey House's 1948 BBC broadcast in which House enumerates some of the sources of Victorian worry, listing among these immortality, sex, politics, and money, and concluding that the Victorians "were trying to hold together incompatible opposites, and they worried because they failed."[1] House believed that worry and anxiety constituted "a leading clue to understanding" the early and mid-Victorians. In various contemporary accounts, Victorian anxiety, which owed some of its life to religious doubt, loomed as a simultaneously amorphous and pervasive presence.[2] Victorian intellectuals and modern scholars alike variously describe the character of the Victorian mind as

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[1] David Daiches, *Some Late Victorian Attitudes* (London: Andre Deusch, Ltd., 1969, 32).

[2] The historical record on the socio-political, epistemological, and psychical circumstances that contributed to the anxiety expressed by Victorians is, of course, copious. In addition to the works mentioned here by Altick, Buckley, Daiches, Houghton, Lester, and Levine, see the following comprehensive studies: Arthur Bruce Allen's *Victorian England, 1850-1900: The Complete Background Book; 1859:Entering an Age of Crisis* by Philip Appleman, William Madden, and Michael Wolff; *Victorian People, a Reassessment of Persons and Themes: 1851-1867* by Asa Briggs; BBC's *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Reevaluation of the Victorian Age*; Callum Brown's *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularization, 1800-2000*; Richard Ellmann's *Edwardians and Late Victorians*; John Gardiner's *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect*; Robin Gilmour's *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890*; Antony Harrison's *Victorian Poets and the Politics of Culture: Discourse and Ideology*; Theodore Hoppen's *The Mid-Victorian Generation: 1846-1886*; George Levine's *The Emergence of Victorian Consciousness*; David Newsome's *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change*; Arthur Pollard's *The Victorians*; and Rick Rylance's *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*.

plagued by confusion, indecision, instability, disquietude, unrest, alarm.[3] Walter Houghton who, in *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, devotes an entire chapter to the subject of anxiety, claims that "we are still unaware of the degree to which the Victorian consciousness… was haunted by fear and worry… frustration and loneliness" (54). In *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress and Decadence,* Jerome Hamilton Buckley explains that "the Victorians found themselves living in a world whose novel demands they were wholly unprepared to meet" (73), and Richard Levine provides an especially succinct explanation for the condition of the Victorian mind in *Backgrounds to Victorian Literature*:

> Nineteenth-century England was an age of anxiety, an age of flux. Traditional institutions…were challenged from every corner. Individual man's relationships to his church, class, and government were coming under a new scrutiny. No longer sure of these relationships, Victorian man had to examine their very basis…. Never before in modern times had an age been forced to re-evaluate so thoroughly the very roots of its existence. Never before had a people been faced with so many disruptive shocks….[4]

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[3]Houghton quotes Bulwer Lytton as having said: "We live in an age of visible transition—an age of disquietude and doubt" in *England and the English*, 281; in John A. Lester's *Journey Through Despair: 1880 – 1914* he characterizes the "cultural mood of these years as a drift from unrest to an intense excitement, from excitement to bewilderment, and thence to a darkening disillusionment," and again writes that "unrest pervaded man's material life, his thought, and his imagination. I have met with no single study of man's spiritual condition in this period that does not openly recognize an instability which had entered into man's inner life… [disquiet, anxiety, and alarm] touch… the heart of every thinker and writer of the time" 4-5; and in *Backgrounds to Victorian Literature* Richard A. Levine writes that the charge of the Light Brigade was "symptomatic of a confused age groping for order" 8.

[4] Richard A. Levine, *Backgrounds to Victorian Literature* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1967). In *The Victorian Frame of Mind* Houghton writes that "Men felt divided by sectarian as well as business conflict; estranged from family and friends by intellectual differences; alienated by doubts from

In poetic expressions that ring at once piteous and stoical, Matthew Arnold captures the anxiety correlative to these novel demands and disruptive shocks by naming it "the sick fatigue, the languid doubt… [the] strange disease of modern life,"[5] and presenting his own explanation for the phenomenon:

> For what wears out the life of mortal men?
> 'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
> 'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
> Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
> And numb the elastic powers.[6]

Religious beliefs, too, wore away under the weight of rapid epistemological flux and its psychological consequence: incertitude. In language characteristic of Humphrey House's description of the desire to reconcile "incompatible opposites," statesman John Morley writes in *Recollections* that the Victorian age "was the age of science, new knowledge, searching criticism, followed by multiplied doubts and shaken beliefs" (100). The divisive influences of the Industrial Revolution—the economic realities of city life and factory work—which, in part, occasioned from Charles Kingsley the characterization of his contemporaries as "parts of the wheels of a vast machine"[7]—married themselves to the equally insidious results of intellectual discoveries and ensuing religious doubt. In sorrowful response to evolutionary theories from geology and biology, A. E. Housman

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parties or circles they might otherwise have joined…. [T]he longing for an earlier world of religious hope and the social communion of a common faith fastens on two images, historical and personal" 81 and 85.

[5]From "The Scholar-Gipsy," lines 164 and 203.

[6]From "The Scholar-Gipsy," lines 142-146.

[7]Quoted in Houghton from "The Meteor Shower," preached on November 26, 1866, *The Water of Life and Other Sermons*, in *Works*, 26, 179-80.

depicts the character of the Victorian mind as divested and destitute:

> It may be urged that man stands today in the position of one who has been reared from his cradle as the child of a noble race and the heir to great possessions, and who finds at his coming of age that he has been deceived alike as to his origin and his expectations; that he neither springs of the high lineage he fancied, nor will inherit the vast estate he looked for, but must put off his towering pride, and contract his boundless hopes, and begin the world anew from a lower level.[8]

The substantiation of evolutionary theories was not the sole contributor to Housman's notion of beginning "the world anew from a lower level." The formalization of biblical studies by the German Higher Criticism and the establishment of rationalistic, Benthamite objections to Christianity on ethical bases also threw into question man's sense of self in the cosmos.[9] Furthermore, Victorian pragmatism and materialism only aggravated the decline of spirituality, for, as Buckley writes, "their age was… in various ways devoted to the business of a material world which repeatedly denied the relevancy of their spiritual quest."[10]

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[8] Quoted in Daiches 12.

[9] In *The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold* William Robbins paints the picture of the Victorian epistemological landscape with regard to religious issues in the following way: "Cheerful optimism or serene tolerance… were hardly the distinguishing notes of the controversies over biblical criticism, Ritualist practices, and the claims of physical science…. [I]n the years around 1870 the amount of space given to all three by newspapers and periodicals, and the violence of the partisanship, suggest that there was still excitement for the general reader as well as a feeling of urgency in the devout and the informed. The champions of physical science were marching in step with the liberal and rationalist exponents of scientific biblical criticism, and the claims of orthodoxy and tradition were being countered with claims equally vigorous and much more confident" (5). With particular attention to Arnold's role in the controversy (especially those surrounding biblical criticism and evolutionary theory), Robbins writes that in Arnold's reinterpretation of the Bible and Christianity is contained his "effort to establish their unique claim to permanence as moral and spiritual guides, independent of the discoveries of physical science and the destructive results of historical and rational criticism" (7).

Buckley cites "a sad contemplation of withering faith and an unprecedented fear of encroaching materialism"[11] as substantial psychological effects of the skepticism and secularism that resulted from these epistemological changes. Nostalgia and concern, however, could hardly have competed with the psychological devastation of cosmic isolation. According to Houghton, the Victorians experienced "the sudden collapse of a philosophy or a religion which had been the motivation of action, with nothing to takes its place." Religious doubt left in its wake "the vision of a mechanistic universe without purpose or meaning," and the potential for "the destruction of all values whatsoever."[12] With sentiments in near perfect accord, Carlyle and Tennyson echo one another in their shared sense of despair in the face of God's nonexistence. In 1872 Tennyson said: "If I ceased to believe in any chance of another life, and of a great Personality somewhere in the Universe, I should not care a pin for anything."[13] His offhanded nihilism masks the dread to which Carlyle so graphically gives voice in *Sartor Resartus*: "To me the universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb."[14] A universe devoid of a beneficent personality at its helm meant the loss of "ultimate values and objectives."[15] Daiches explains: "One of the reasons why so many Victorians agonized about the existence of God was that all human values seemed to

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[10] Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* 109.

[11] *The Victorian Temper* 11.

[12] *The Victorian Frame of Mind* 73.

[13] Quoted in Daiches 9.

[14] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 133.

[15] Daiches 39.

depend on it…. They tended either to fight their way out of it… or torture themselves with their own irony… or gloom over the ebb of faith, as Arnold did."[16] Religious doubt seems to have been responsible for a great deal of both "intellectual and social"[17] isolation, since that doubt pervaded not only man's interrelationships, but also his relationship with himself.[18] Amidst cosmic isolation, the Victorian mind, itself tragically divided either between belief and disbelief, or the barrage of varying beliefs, or both, served as a microcosm of a society where men were further divided, this time from one another, by differing beliefs and the fear of giving voice to these. Here was the moment of "the dialogue of the mind with itself" when each man "half live[d] a hundred different lives."[19]

This dialogue must have asserted itself with a booming resonance in the psyche of the individual who lived past fin-de-siécle uncertainties, survived the further fracture of man from society, man from God, and man from self that modernity implies, and who was then propelled into the devastation that was The Great War. Walter Pater describes the psychological condition as that of a "quickened, multiplied consciousness,"[20] and

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[16] *Some Late Victorian Attitudes* 9.

[17]Houghton 81.

[18]Levine at length addresses the subject of doubt, helpfully explaining that "the Victorians were certain that truth existed and the mind could discover it, [but] they found themselves involved in two forms of doubt: either what is sometimes called negative skepticism, when the judgment is suspended between alternate conclusions, one of which is considered true; or the affirmation of a belief which they only half believed—and half doubted" (35). Quote from John Stuart Mill, Levine continues: " 'Scarcely any one, in the more educated classes seems to have any opinions [because he sees "too many sides to every question"] or to place any real faith in those which he profess to have' " (35). Characterizing the Victorian psyche as haunted by either indecision or suspended judgment, Levine writes that "what is constantly present, therefore, is the fear or suspicion, or simply the vague uneasy feeling, that one was not sure he believed what he believed" (38).

[19]Arnold, from *Preface to Poems (1853)* and "The Scholar-Gipsy," respectively.

[20]Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, 1873.

Arnold's characterization is that of a generalized anxiety in which are witnessed "the doubts… the discouragement, of Hamlet and Faust."[21] Already well-established in the psyches of Victorians was this sense of psychological fracture that Arnold knew to call "modern,"[22] and which grew increasingly worse in a progressively fragmented and pluralistic existence during the mechanized age of "disunity and lost wholeness."[23]

Certainly, the internal experience of modernity is, axiomatically, informed by the external condition of modernity. However, historical and sociological accounts of the phenomenon point to a psychological response to the outside world of modernity that seems often (and perhaps appropriately) paradoxical. The 20th century with its particular exigencies shaped the slow, progressive secularization of Western society from the Enlightenment onward.[24] To the 18th-century rationalistic and humanistic projects that mothered the Weberian "disenchantment of the world,"[25] the 19th century superadded the Industrial Revolution, and with it the alleviation of many social and social welfare functions previously astride the shoulders of the Church. With nature under human reigns, and technology and non-religious institutions sharing between them a considerable measure of the burden of social amelioration, the authority of formal

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[21]Arnold, *1853 Preface to Poems.*

[22]In arguing for Arnold's astute sense of the modern and his liberal, visionary tendency, David De Laura writes: "His politics was the liberalism of the future; his church was the religion of the future. The divided Arnold that criticism has made so much of is thus partly the honest Arnold who gave substance to a permanently available vision of painful modern dislocation" (*Matthew Arnold: A Collection of Critical Essays,* 3).

[23]Malcolm Bradbury. *The Modern World*. New York: Penguin Books, 1989 (7).

[24]Some of the more prominent (by virtue of the quantity and quality of their writing, if nothing else) figures in the controversy moving forward from Max Weber include Peter Berger (who can be argued to head the list of those who uphold the idea that secularization is a myth), Colin Campbell, Karel Dobbelaere, Richard Fenn, Anthony Giddens, Gordon Graham, Thomas Luckmann, Alasdair MacIntyre, Bryan Wilson, and others.

[25]See Max Weber's essay, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism."

religion fell further away. In modernity, what Durkheim calls the "collective conscience"[26] began to diminish, and the privatization of religion and the fracture of the areas of daily life from one another echoed in the outside world the internal, psychological fragmentation that gripped Victorian consciousness. (The causal relationship is, of course, bidirectional and reflexive.) This aspect of 20th-century secularization that sociologists term differentiation is a function of modernity that not only calls into question authority and old forms, but which also forces from the individual the establishment, maintenance, and perpetuation of a *compartmentalized* lifestyle in which no *one* element stands at the (moral) center. Sociologist Anthony Giddens explains:

> [D]ay-to-day social life tends to become separated from "original" nature and from a variety of experiences bearing on existential questions and dilemmas…. The sequestration of experience means that, for many people, direct contact with events and situations which link the individual lifespan to broad issues of morality and finitude are rare and fleeting.[27]

What Giddens describes can be understood as the modern process of the sterilization of the emotional and the natural, and the slow effacement of the spiritual from human experience. In modern existence, both the external and internal worlds of the individual represent chaotic places full of the dread expressed by Tennyson and Carlyle—a world in which, as E. M. Forster writes, "Everything exists, nothing has values,"[28] where "personal meaninglessness—the feeling that life has nothing worthwhile to offer—

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[26]From Emile Durkheim's *Sociology and Philosophy*.

[27] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Ages*, 8.

[28] From E. M. Forster's *A Passage To India*, 160.

becomes a fundamental psychic problem…."[29]

In modernity, the local becomes global—economically, politically, socially, and even culturally. Giddens writes that "the influence of distant happenings on proximate events, and on intimacies of the self, becomes more and more commonplace."[30] Modernity's tendency to close up gaps in time and space as never before in human history brings to the fore the paradox of globalization. Greater knowledge of and access to the world at large draw the world nearer, while the same body of knowledge and accessibility affirm the expansiveness of a world whose limitless possibilities forever elude the individual. The human psyche, bombarded by a barrage of possibilities, feels itself in crisis under the weight of multiplicity, plurality, incessant mutability.

Giddens' claim that "[m]odernity… breaks down the protective framework of the small community and of tradition, replacing these with much larger, impersonal organizations" (33) illustrates a paradox concomitant to the one above, involving the capacity of modernity to redefine the social in relation to the individual. When Woolf announced that "[o]n or about December 1910 human character changed," she was giving voice to an observation about human interrelationships—about the dance between the social and the individual. She writes in explanation of her announcement: "All human relations shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations shift there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature."[31] The plurality, relativism, and subjectivity inherent in the phenomenon of globalization demand of socio-political systems to bring daily life

[29] Giddens 9.

[30] Giddens 4.

[31] From Virginia Woolf's essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown."

under order by way of institutions that are more numerous, larger (and therefore more impersonal), and in possession of a more extensive influence and a greater measure of determination toward control. This social/institutional effort to unify people paradoxically results in the individual's psycho-spiritual withdrawal.

While an effort toward universalization intends to bring people closer, in modern life it seems tragically to encourage psychological distance. In a hyper-rational, institutionalized and mechanized world the individual is both lost and invisible. Neither individuality nor genuine affectivity is valued in modern existence. In the religious context (that is, in light of what Gunter Abramowski calls the "religio-cultural problematic of modernity"),[32] secularism compels an *institutional* effort in the opposite direction—toward sacralization. But because the work is often conducted in the interest of either reinstating a sense of *social* wholeness or reclaiming church authority, modern institutional gestures toward ecumenism and catholicity either tend to ignore the internal, spiritual world of the individual, or to stand sterile face-to-face with the possibility of effective, spiritual aid. Although the religious establishment may enjoy continued (albeit decreased) membership, the individual soul, having receded into a privatized space, is hence inaccessible to purely socio-religious efforts toward reinstating belief. Solipsism is the result. What remains to a social intellectual (or moralist) like Arnold or Eliot is, paradoxically and perhaps sadly, the same that remains to formal religion: a reinstatement of the social over and against the individual who is in actuality the one in need—in need of relief from cosmic isolation and spiritual aridity.

[32]Gunter Abramowski. "Meaningful Life in a Disenchanted World." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 10, 121-134, 1982.

Arnold and Eliot within the Context -

But the tension between the social and the individual—the tension *unresolved* and even *problematic*—reads apparent on the surface of their work, in their respective solutions to "saving" Christianity. Arnold's effort to rescue the practice of Bible-reading from peril by delivering it into the hands of rational Victorians on the grounds of the "verifiability" (and indispensible utility) of both its form and content involves liberating Christianity from the supernatural, the metaphysical, the numinous, even the transcendent. Removal of this "magico-mystical" [33] element in religion necessarily eliminates its spiritual element. What remains is religion's social aspect, only. Arnold advocates Bible-religion for its capacity to first inform and direct right conduct for contemporary Victorians, and next perpetuate cultural progress for the future of England (and for the world, more generally). In essence, his project, on the surface, addresses itself to a *social* concern with a *social* aim in mind. His solution, however, calls for *inwardness*, an awakening of the *inner man*, and *empathetic identification* with the figure of Jesus. Eliot's vision of a Christian Society, openly programmatic to the point of absurdity, involves a division of citizens into hierarchical categories, only one of which possesses members capable of Christian thought (and, by implication, belief). Despite his vehement objection to the use of Christianity as a tool for "hygienic morality"[34] and cultural progress (á la Arnold), Eliot envisions that Christianity will help reverse the entropic force of materialism, cure society of moral torpor, alleviate the fragmentation of modern life, and prevent the demise of (Western) civilization—all clearly socio-cultural

[33]William Swatos. "Enchantment and Disenchantment in Modernity: The Significance of 'Religion' as a Sociological Category." *Sociological Analysis,* vol. 44:4, 321-337, 1983.

[34]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 18.

objectives. He hopes, however, to affect the *spirit* and *attitude* of society—to effect a change in its *state of mind*; he also insists on the necessity of Christian "truth"—its "*supernatural* truth," that is—to bring about this change.

Arnold's repeated evocation of the zeitgeist and the constant reminders to his readers of the particular direction of its current ("people cannot any longer do with Christianity just as it is")[35] reveal his recognition of the impossibility of re-enchanting the world. He seeks, instead, pragmatically, to accommodate Christianity to the reader who can accept the religion only on rationally and empirically sound bases. Eliot's recognition of the same impossibility expresses itself in his conception of a highly-structured, socially rigid and emotionally sterile society in which *belief* is not requisite to the life he advocates for the majority. But neither seems content with a purely social solution; the "magico-mystical" *ethos* that bleeds through the solution for social structures cracks the controlled prose of the cultural critic, troubling the placid surface of Arnold's disinterestedness and Eliot's impervious disdain. References to inwardness, to the inner man, to the *epieikeia* of Jesus, to an attitude, a spirit, a state of mind, to "truth," implicate the *internal* world of the *individual*. Despite the ostensible recognition that God's return is an impossibility—that authentic belief cannot be reinstated—the discourse of both critics extends beyond the confines of the social aspect of formalized religion, seeking instead to address and influence the spiritual aspect of the privatized religion of the individual.

Both projects—the rhetorical rescue of Bible-religion and the conceptualization of a Christian Society and Christian culture—treat Christianity as a *civilizing tool*. Arnold divests the religion of all its mystery so as to render it palatable for the "rational" masses,

[35] *God and the Bible* 391.

while Eliot proposes a society in which belief in Christian mystery is superfluous. Calling upon that very mystery—in its humanized forms of conscience, empathetic identification, spirit, or "truth"—to help animate institutionalized projects of social amelioration becomes a self-negating act. If they had dealt more frankly with the fact of a disenchanted world, Arnold and Eliot might have embraced and addressed Christianity's strictly social aspect. But the former was in perpetual mourning—the grief still alive in his breast—over God's disappearance,[36] and the latter privately lived by the hope that God had only turned his face for a season.[37] Both undertook the self-imposed responsibility of the cultural critic to guide the public, so they offered up a public solution.

Their respective solutions failed because of self-negating propositions, but more importantly because the impossibility of re-enchanting the world meant that the reappearance of God could occur only in a compromised form, and most importantly because the individual's psyche remained untouched by their particular effort to save Christianity. Whether the medium of cultural criticism or the set of psychological circumstances personal to each writer was responsible for the unresolved tension between individual and social needs (expressed in the paradox at work in each of their solutions)

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[36]In *Matthew Arnold and the Romantics* Leon Gottfried notes that for Arnold who was "[b]rought up in a Christian tradition in which joy and salvation were contingent upon certitude of faith, the loss of certitude meant equally the loss of joy" (23).

[37]For all his self-professed orthodoxy, his formal conversion to the Church of England, his ascetic lifestyle of hours of prayer and devotion conducted daily in the Church, whether or not Eliot believed in dogmatic Christianity is open to question. For example, quoting extensively from Eliot's essays and letters, Peter Ackroyd writes in his biography: "In an essay on Bertrand Russell… [Eliot] remarked that, 'Mr. Russell believes that when he is dead he will rot: I cannot subscribe with that conviction to *any* belief'—and this was just before his conversion. In a discussion with Hugh Sykes Davies about Marxists, he said, 'They seem so certain of what they believe. My own beliefs are held with a skepticism which I never even hope to be rid of'. When Paul Elmer More asked him if his Christianity meant that he had abandoned poetry, he replied 'in that "I am absolutely unconverted" '. Which is another way of saying, 'That, at least, I *know* to be true' " (*T. S. Eliot,* 163).

can only be conjectured. Perhaps the poetic space served as a channel for the writer's spiritual self-expression and engagement of the reader's private, internal world because it was a more authentically personal space for both writers; too, in the poetic space, Arnold was not yet entirely disenchanted, and there Eliot managed to re-enchant the individual imagination, the individual spirit. In prose, they were cultural critics—public intellectuals—whose public they both imagined more or less in the midst of *crisis*.

The Crisis of Doubt -

Unlike Eliot, when Arnold writes of the zeitgeist, he writes, by and large, in terms oddly positive and full of the enthusiasm and spirit of progress conventionally attributed to the Victorian middle classes. The "modern spirit," according to Arnold, is given over to "habits of intellectual seriousness," and "deal[s] with this great matter of religion fairly."[38] The educated classes, he claims, demand the "renunciation of clap-trap"[39] from their religious leaders, and the "mere progress of time"[40] will push along the old religion into either extinction or reformulation. He cites a "loosening of authority and tradition" and an impatience with whatever "conflicts with common sense"[41] as features of the modern spirit.[42] The tone in which he characterizes his contemporary milieu in *God and*

[38]*God and the Bible* 391.

[39]*God and the Bible* 154.

[40]*God and the Bible* 369.

[41]*Literature and Dogma*, 364.

[42] Arnold predicted that the influence of the Victorian zeitgeist would extend into the future and pronounce against Christian orthodoxy: "[T]he *Zeit-Geist* or Time-Spirit is gradually becoming too strong. As we may say in general, that, although an educated Protestant may manage to retain for his own lifetime the belief in miracles in which he has been brought up, yet his children will lose it…. They will lose it insensibly, as the eighteenth century saw the gradual extinction, among the educated classes, of that belief in witchcraft which in the century previous a man like Sir Matthew Hale could affirm to have the authority

the Bible resounds with the cool disinterest of reportage rather than the concerned engagement characteristic of social criticism:

> Now, the old ways of accounting for Christianity, of establishing the ground of its claims upon us, no longer serve as they once did. Men's experience widens, they get to know the world better, to know the mental history of mankind better; they distinguish more clearly between history and legend, they grow more shy of recourse to the preternatural. (381)

Against the zeitgeist stands the force of "popular theology," which enjoys no end of Arnold's vitriol. Holding contemporary Christianity responsible for its own unraveling, he mercilessly berates the system, charging it with everything from unsoundness to mendacity. The miracles and metaphysics of popular theology and "learned theology," respectively, "dissatisfy and repel"[43] the public, and defame "the truth and permanence of Christianity."[44] He predicts that "future times will hardly comprehend [the] audacity [of popular religion] in calling those who abjure it atheists," because "so deeply unsound is the mass of traditions and imaginations of which [it] consists, so gross a distortion and caricature of the true religion…."[45] The intersection of the zeitgeist and popular theology is the locus of anxiety for Arnold.

The language of anxiety rather than an expression of crisis is more readily discernible in Arnold's prose; after all, his effort was preventive, whereas Eliot's was

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of Scripture and of the wisdom of all nations…. Nevertheless the forces of experience, which have prevailed against witchcraft, will inevitably prevail also against miracles at large, and that by the mere progress of time" (*God and the Bible,* 369).

[43]*God and the Bible* 143-44.

[44]*God and the Bible* 371.

[45]*God and the Bible* 142.

recuperative. He aimed to prevent the collision of popular theology with Victorian rationalism from obfuscating and eventually obliterating the incomparable value of the Bible. He depicts the "religious crisis upon which… [they were] entering"[46] in terms of distress, confusion, impatience, an "unsettled mental atmosphere."[47] These mark the presence of a threshold and connote *possibility*. Anxiety steps in with the desire to control (or perhaps merely guide) the outcome of that possibility. Occupying the core of his concern (a fact revealed in small part by his audience-identification) is the preservation of the Bible. At the exclusion of a line of self-professed Christians whose affiliations he names directly,[48] he addresses only the reader "who is more or less conversant with the Bible," who has "some familiarity with the Bible and some practice in using it."[49] More specifically, he tells us, his religious prose "was written for those who from dissatisfaction with [popular and metaphysical theology]… are inclined to throw the Bible aside."[50] Having censured popular Christianity for its retrogressive tendencies, having abandoned loyalty to "traditional religion,"[51] having as much as paved

[46]*God and the Bible* 154.

[47]*God and the Bible* 154.

[48] In full, Arnold's audience-identification in *God and the Bible* reads: "The reader whom a work like the present has in view is not, I have often said, the man still striving to be content with the received theology. With him we do not seek to meddle. Neither is it intended for a frivolous upper class in their religious insensibility, nor for a raw lower class in their religious insensibility, nor for Liberal secularists at home or abroad, nor for Catholics who are strangers, or very nearly so, to the Bible …. It is meant for those who, won by the modern spirit to habits of intellectual seriousness, cannot receive what sets those habits at nought, and will not try to force themselves to do so, but who have stood near enough to the Christian religion to feel the attraction which a thing so very great, when one stands really near to it, cannot but exercise, and who have some familiarity with the Bible and some practice in using it" (391).

[49]*God and the Bible* 393 and 391, respectively.

[50]*God and the Bible* 150.

[51]In *Last Essays on Church and Religion* Arnold's pragmatism and progressive spirit on religious matters emerge clearly in his effort to incite the English public to thought and action: "The partisans of traditional religion in this country do not know, I think, how decisively the whole force of progressive and liberal

the way in the 19th century to a heterodox Christianity accommodated to the "modern spirit," he fears still the loss of the Bible for the majority of society. He expresses what seems to have been a widespread concern among Victorians:

> [T]his is what everyone sees to constitute the special moral feature of our times: *the masses* are losing the Bible and its religion…. [O]f conduct, which is more than three-fourths of human life, the Bible… is the great inspirer; so that from the great inspirer of more than three-fourths of human life the masses of our society seem now to be cutting themselves off. This promises, if it does not already constitute, a very unsettled condition of things.[52]

For Arnold the potential loss of Bible-*religion* stirs up his anxiety over the possibility of society's moral demise: "[Rational people] get rid, to be sure, of a false ground for using the Bible, but they at the same time lose the Bible itself, and the true religion of the Bible: righteousness, and the method and secret of Jesus."[53] An end to the practice of Bible-*reading* threatens the loss of the Bible as a literary-cultural product—equally precious for Arnold in his endeavor to preserve and perpetuate cultural progress. In fact, Arnold's unique formulation of the "whole" of life—the marriage of *conduct* with *culture*—shares an interesting relationship with his advocacy of the Bible. Repeatedly he writes that conduct (Hebraism) comprises three-fourths of life and ascribes to culture (Hellenism) the remaining fourth. In the conclusion to *Literature and Dogma* he tells his

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opinion on the Continent has pronounced against the Christian religion…. [T]he religion of tradition, Catholic or Protestant, *is* unsound and untenable…. Rejecting, henceforth, all concern with the obsolete religion of tradition, the liberalism of the Continent rejects also, and on the like grounds, all concern with the Bible and Christianity" (151).

[52]*Literature and Dogma* 362-63.

[53]*Literature and Dogma* 362.

reader that "conduct comes to have relations of a very close kind with culture" (407), and proceeds to explain the connection as one that helps facilitate the *complete* development of human life. Although conduct is sufficient to occupy the better part of man's concerns, "still the neglected one-fourth is there, it ferments, it breaks wildly out, it employs itself all at random and amiss" (408). The explanation, anticipating Freud, touches on the notion of repression—of unmet needs whose satisfaction in this case requires occupying oneself with "art and science… with beauty and exact knowledge" (409). Because in *form* the Bible is literary and in *content* moral, it serves as the self-propagating nexus for the marriage of culture and conduct—for the progress and perfection of human life. While the cultural practice of Bible-reading can serve to broaden the public's literary-historical knowledge and exercise the public's flexibility of mind, the practice can also keep the content of the Bible alive as a guide for moral living.[54] The Bible's capacity to inhabit both the aesthetic and moral realms renders it doubly valuable for Arnold's purposes.

The zeitgeist that makes its appearance on the pages of Arnold's religious prose is quite a bit different from the zeitgeist that appears in *Culture and Anarchy* with its threatening middle-class materialism and machinery. This zeitgeist engenders anxiety only, and is not the source of his sense of crisis. Instances in Arnold's prose that can

[54]Arnold is never shy about emphasizing the importance of "letters" for cultural (both intellectual and spiritual) development. He was convinced that an approach to the Bible as *literature* would not only free the believer from the shackles of a superstitious religion (which would then enable him to understand the "real" value of the religion), but also recommend itself to the reader as an invaluable literary-historical artifact perfectly fit for the development of his mind. In *Literature and Dogma* he writes: "We can hardly urge this topic too much, of so great a practical importance is it, and above all at the present time. To be able to control what one reads by means of the discriminative tact coming, in a clear and fair mind, from a wide experience, was never perhaps so necessary as in the England of our own day, and in theology, and in what concerns the Bible itself" (157). And again in *Last Essays on Church and Religion*: "I am persuaded that the transformation of religion which is essential for its perpetuance, can be accomplished only by carrying the qualities of flexibility, perceptiveness, and judgment which are the best fruits of letters, to whole classes of the community which now know next to nothing of them, and by procuring the application of those qualities to matters where they are never applied now" (148).

rightly be called moments of crisis seem always to occur in language that implicates not society's condition, but his own personal, psychological state instead. In the last of his writings on religious issues—in *Last Essays on Church and Religion*—he alludes to a time when "the foundations of the great deep are broken up, and everything is in question" (33). The solitary man who "searches with passionate earnestness for something certain" (37) turns a stoic face toward the crowd in determining that he "can and will henceforth build upon facts only" (37). He is a man "in a time of great doubt and unsettlement, finding many things fail him which have been confidently pressed on his acceptance" (35). He finds for the public "something which he feels he can really go upon and which prove to him a sure stay" (35). *This* is the voice of Victorian religious doubt—of crisis—that found the words with which to comfort society while it rescued Bible-religion from certain peril. These moments in which Arnold's personal crisis rises to the surface of his prose remind us of the stark division between the private man—the poet—who forever stood before the knowledge of God's disappearance "in pity and mournful awe,"[55] and the public intellectual who brushed aside his grief in order to respond to the public's need with heroic stoicism.[56] With regard to the zeitgeist, he envisioned the possibility of its current creating a new form for Christianity: "And the new Christianity will call forth more effort in the individual who uses it than the old, will require more open and instructed minds for its reception; and this is progress."[57] He embraced the potential change in the religion because it implied progress; and ensuring

[55]From "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," line 82.

[56]In his study, *Some Late Victorian Attitudes*, Daiches provide a very satisfying exploration of the various responses offered by intellectuals to Victorian religious doubt. Among these he lists and discusses: agnostic heroism, endurance, stoicism, stoic activism, strenuousness, and (later in the century) aestheticism.

[57]*God and the Bible* 398.

progress, after all, rather than saving religion, was Arnold's ultimate goal. His anxiety concerned his recognition that he stood before a moment of transition in English (and perhaps human) history: "But we live at the beginning of a great transition which cannot well be accomplished without confusion and distress."[58]

Eliot, too, conceived of his particular moment as one of transition, but his was undoubtedly a moment of crisis, as well. In the sixty-two years that divide the publication of the last of Arnold's religious prose from that of Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), Western civilization was catapulted into a dark modernity Arnold could have experienced only as a nightmare vision. Two decades after the end of The Great War, modernity's burden—industrialization, urbanization, mechanization, gross materialism, psycho-social fragmentation—had grown too heavy for the cautionary words of an avuncular moralist and his *preventive* effort to suffice as social balms. Eliot's project had to be *recuperative* because he perceived the disintegration of Western civilization as already manifested in the daily lives of his contemporaries. His voice is more urgent, his concern more immediate; hence, his solution reads more programmatic, more aggressive, more doctrinaire than Arnold's. Although the articulation of the effort to save Christianity retains its general tenor (in so far as the effort concerns the perpetuation of a *social* Christianity), a shift in the socio-cultural circumstances between the Victorian and Modern periods seems to have generated a change in the shape of the effort from one that, in Arnold's case, adopts Bible-religion as the ostensible object of preservation, to one in which, where Eliot is concerned, Christianity is quite openly (and merely) the *means* to rescuing society.

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[58] *God and the Bible* 398.

The barrage of sociological changes that accosted the Victorian psyche and left in its wake the devastating sense of incertitude must have been particularly disturbing because it was an unprecedented sociological phenomenon. A different kind of anxiety attends the cultural critic whose public is so accustomed to psycho-social incertitude that the condition has become calcified into a way of life. While Arnold refers to "confusion and distress"[59] in writing of a transitional moment that possesses the potential of being "accomplished" (and, by implication, overcome), Eliot regards the transitional condition itself as a form of crisis. He reads his contemporary society as complacently "wandering between two worlds,"[60] and without any indication of an intention to move toward one or the other. In *The Idea of a Christian Society* the image of "the contemporary situation" (9) that comes to light is of a society stuck, floundering, without direction or resolve, in which "the great majority of people are neither one thing nor the other, but are living in a no man's land" (39). This is Eliot's waste land society: a society "negative" to the extent that it is unidentifiable as "positively something"[61]—a society in which nothing is *becoming*. For Eliot, transition in modernity connotes stagnation—a society "living… in

[59]*God and the Bible* 398.

[60]Lines 85-86 of Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse."

[61]*The Idea of a Society* 10. The passage, in full, outlines Eliot's position on "the contemporary situation," which, he concludes, is almost entirely "negative" (empty and directionless), and "positively" only in so far as it is still Christian: "Your opinion of what can be done for this country in the future, and incidentally your opinion of what ought to be the relations of Church and State, will depend upon the view you take of the contemporary situation. We can abstract three positive historical points: that at which Christians are a new minority in a society of positive pagan traditions—a position which cannot recur within a future with which we are concerned; the point at which the whole society can be called Christian, whether in one body or in a prior or subsequent stage of division into sects; and finally the point at which practicing Christians must be recognized as a minority (whether static or diminishing) in a society which has ceased to be Christian. Have we reached the third point? …I would remark that there are two points of view for two contexts. The first is that a society has ceased to be Christian when religious practices have been abandoned, when behavior ceases to be regulated by reference to Christian principle, and when in effect prosperity in this world for the individual or for the group has become the sole conscious aim. The other point of view, which is less readily apprehended, is that a society has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else. It is my contention that we have today a culture which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian" (9-10).

a kind of doldrums between opposing winds of doctrine" (15)—which, in turn, renders the society susceptible to mob-mentality, anarchy, arbitrary behavior, and unregulated political power.

An articulation of a sense of crisis occurs even more overtly in Eliot's allusions to the effects of living in modernity—more specifically, to the materializing and mechanizing tendencies of industrialization. He deems "a great deal of [contemporary] social practice"[62] dangerous to Christian principles because in its ostensible (religious) neutrality modern society is particularly insidious.[63] He clearly perceives a socio-political threat at work against the people in a highly industrialized society, for "unlimited industrialism," he writes, "create[s] bodies of men and women—of all classes—detached from tradition, alienated from religion and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words, a mob."[64] In echo of the biblical "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil,"[65] Eliot launches a particularly merciless attack against materialism. He holds material progress responsible for the social evils of "depopulation, malnutrition, moral deterioration, [and] the decay of agriculture," for which, he warns, "succeeding generations may have to pay dearly."[66] Materialism in the form of avarice

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[62] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 7.

[63]Eliot regards the apparatus of his contemporary society as inimical to Christian ethics. A Christian State, thus, becomes necessary not only for the maintenance and perpetuation of the Christian religion for believers, but also in the interest of ethical living for the whole of society: "…[A] great deal of the machinery of modern life is merely a sanction for un-Christian aims…. [I]t is not only hostile to the conscious pursuit of the Christian life in the world by the few, but to the maintenance of any Christian society *of* the world. We must abandon the notion that the Christian should be content with freedom of cultus, and with suffering no worldly disabilities on account of his faith" (27).

[64]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 17.

[65]1 Timothy 6:10.

[66]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 46 and 48, respectively.

represents "the dominant vice of our time,"[67] and occupies the heart of the division between Church and State, as (Western) politics, Eliot argues, is dominated by economics and finance.[68] In reference to the Munich Agreement of 1938, he offers his most scathing criticism of materialism in a simultaneous justification for his writing of *The Idea of a Christian Society:*

> Was our society, which had always been so assured of its superiority and rectitude, so confident of its unexamined premises, assembled round anything more permanent than a congeries of banks, insurance companies and industries, and had it any belief more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends? Such thoughts as these formed the starting point, and must remain the excuse, for saying what I have to say.[69]

Quite characteristically, he does not attempt to escape his own charge; instead, he acknowledges his complicity in the materializing tendencies of modern society, thereby giving further voice to the belief that, with respect to religion, ambivalence and antagonism are equally harmful: "I seem to be a petty usurer in a world manipulated largely by big usurers. And I know that the Church once condemned these things" (77). But the daily life of the world and the daily devotion of the spirit are not the only victims of materialism Eliot counts. The spirit of acquisition is not only self-motivated rather than other-centered and communal, it is also hostile to the spirit of creativity. He fears that the materializing effects of modern society will lead to an "apathetic decline" in

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[67]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 76.

[68]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 53.

[69]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 50-51.

which civilization lives "without art,"[70] because a "mass society organized for profit" is necessarily one organized "for the depression of art and culture."[71]

More urgent than Eliot's concern over industrialism's dehumanizing effects is his fear of modernity's tendency to fragment human experience in both the individual (psychic) and social spheres. The difficulty (or perhaps impossibility) of connecting meaningfully with others in the modern world (a theme emblematically portrayed by the figure of Prufrock) is at once the *cause* as well as an *expression* of the sense of alienation individuals feel from one another. Eliot's fear is that in the social sphere the sense of alienation will expand and eventually culminate in the breakdown of civilization. The specialization of knowledge, for example (a direct result of both industrial and epistemological technology), as a fact, provokes Eliot's misgivings about the possibility of successful communication and cultural coherence in the modern world:

> [T]hose who should be the intellectuals regard theology as a special study, like numismatics or heraldry, with which they need not concern themselves, and theologians observe the same indifference to literature and art, as special studies which do not concern *them*, so our political classes regard both fields as territories of which they have no reason to be ashamed of remaining in complete ignorance.[72]

The fear concerning the state of affairs described above is that a coherent socio-political philosophy and a "reliable behavior in fixed principles"[73] cannot persist in a society

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[70]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 18.

[71]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 32.

[72]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 32.

[73]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 32.

whose leaders are divided not by a legitimate difference of opinion over the same matters, but rather by different bases and scopes of knowledge—by the failure, in essence, to agree on what the matters *are*.

The selfsame fear of cultural disintegration lies at the heart of Eliot's denunciation of individualism (reiterated in his poetic theory of impersonality).[74] Because the ego seeks its own, it does not contribute to the ethos of communality; it works, instead, in the service of further socio-cultural fragmentation. Against individual personality, against the assertion of the ego—perverse because aberrant—Eliot erects the notion of *orthodoxy*, by which he means, quite simply, what Arnold means by *culture*: "the best that has been thought and said in the world."[75] Thus, he attempts to preserve for the present and transmit to the future a sense of wholeness and continuity expressed by way of what he considers the best cultural/historical material. His aim, identical to Arnold's, is the progress of civilization. For Eliot, Christianity's usefulness is twofold: firstly as a system of ethics in possession of a set of principles democratic, communal, and anti-materialistic; and secondly as a body of historical matter itself partly responsible for the development of Western civilization, and therefore worth preserving because of its claim to orthodoxy.

Arnold and Eliot shared a deep anxiety about society. A desire for wholeness and unification everywhere expressed in their respective religious prose intimates fear of the progressive fragmentation of society. They hoped, in response, to preserve socio-historical order and ensure the progress of civilization by affirming the value of culture

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[74]See Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of how Eliot's theory of impersonality relates to the argument at hand.

[75]The phrase occurs repeatedly in *Culture and Anarchy*. See, for example, the "Sweetness and Light" chapter, p. 31.

and orthodoxy. But their particular anxiety—with its particular fear and hope and subsequent solution—effaces the value of the individual, while it also paradoxically requires the individual's earnest engagement for its resolution. The problematic interplay of the social and the individual stands at the heart of an inherently flawed solution to saving Christianity in the modern world.

Christianity: a Social Salve -

Given Eliot's intimate knowledge of Arnold's work, one wonders about a line like "what is worst of all is to advocate Christianity, not because it is true, but because it might be beneficial"[76] in juxtaposition to Arnold's "that is just what we all ought most to desire: to make men embrace religion, which we may see to be full of what is salutary for them."[77] That the relationship of the two lines is purely coincidental is unlikely. But while Arnold's claim openly reveals a view of Christianity as socially useful, Eliot's claim disguises his equally social motivation. (A point which will receive further attention ahead is that Eliot's vision of a Christian society is informed by at least as social an agenda as any of Arnold's ideas about using Christianity for socially ameliorative purposes.) Arnold's entire religious ideology involves Christianity's facilitation of righteousness.[78] From the sober recognition and its equally stark expression concerning the material world of the present moment ("the idea of the working classes is a future,—a future on earth, not up in the sky—which shall profoundly change and ameliorate things

[76] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 46.

[77] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 48.

[78] In his article, "Matthew Arnold and 'The Author of *Supernatural Religion*': The Background to *God and the Bible*," Jerold Savory claims that Arnold's "fear of moral anarchy seems to underlie [his] defense of religion and the Bible. He wants a basis for moral authority that will be as 'solid' as that which supernaturalism had once provided" (688).

for them; an immense social progress…"),[79] to the vague and utopian conception of the spiritual/moral possibilities of the future ("a transformation of this present world through the victory of…virtue… and righteousness, and what in general religious people call goodness"),[80] Christianity is implicated in Arnold's rhetoric as a tool for effecting a *social* end. For Arnold, Christianity's promise of eternal life consists of "virtue and goodness… finally com[ing] in this present world so as to transform it,"[81] and Christian living, by extension (according to Jesus' example and reinforced by the empirical evidence of personal experience), involves the individual's effort to bring to fruition Arnold's version of eternal life:

> [W]ho[ever] believes that they are even now surely though slowly prevailing, and himself does all he can to help the work forward,—as he acquires in this way an experimental sense of the truth of Christianity which is of the strongest possible kind, so he is, also, entirely in the tradition and idea of the Founder of Christianity.[82]

The affiliation of "virtue and goodness" with "the Founder of Christianity" so boldly stamped at the end of the statement sanctions righteousness as occupying the center of the religion, and the evocation of experiential evidence further confirms its place.

As aids to moral conduct, Arnold cites the importance of the Church, the principle of unification, the inheritance of tradition, the utility of habit, the need for form, all based on his belief that "the need in *human nature* for a moral rule and bridle… such as

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[79] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 71.

[80] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 61.

[81] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 61.

[82] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 61.

religion… affords"[83] is strong.[84] These function to facilitate public Christian worship, unify Christian sects, fortify the authority of the Church, inform and guide the direction of Christian conduct, but what do they do for the individual? Insisting that outward, social modes of being are "natural" to mankind and therefore possess the power to influence internal, individual existence is characteristic of Arnold's thought and rhetoric. But the truth of the matter (empirically observed) is that neither the authority of the Church, nor the weight of tradition, nor even the force of habit are sufficient to address the psychological phenomenon of a crisis of faith and its concomitant sense of cosmic

[83]*Last Essays on Church and Religion* 79. (The italicized emphasis is mine.)

[84]In support of the urgency for religious congregation, Arnold writes in *St. Paul and Protestantism*: "It is quite clear that the more strongly Christians felt their common business in setting forward upon earth, through Christ's spirit… the more they would be drawn to coalesce into one society for this business, with the natural and true notion that the acting together in this way offers to men greater helps for reaching their aim, presents fewer distractions, and, above all, supplies a more animating force of sympathy and mutual assurance, than the acting separately" (94). In his advocacy of unification he writes of the necessity of unifying not only Protestants, but, eventually, Catholics, too, to the larger body of the "Church"—of universal Christianity: "Who cannot see that the power of joint life already spoken of [for Protestants] would be far greater and stronger if it comprehended Roman Catholics too? And who cannot see, also, that a movement is possible which may at last bring about a general union of Christendom? (*St. Paul and Protestantism,* 106). In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold emphasizes the importance of the church: "[N]ot only is Christianity necessary, but the Church also. The Church is necessary, the clergy are necessary; the future of Christianity is hardly conceivable without them" (146). Again writing of the importance of unification in *Last Essays on Church and Religion,* he asserts that "the right settlement was to be reached in one way only: not by disestablishment, but by comprehension and union…. Unity and continuity in public religious worship are a need of human nature, an eternal aspiration of Christendom; but unity and continuity in religious worship joined with perfect mental sanity and freedom. A Catholic Church transformed is, I believe, the Church of the future" (86 and 110). Tied to the notion of religious form and tradition is how these influence the "sentiments" of the religious and their habits of lifestyle. Form and tradition also contribute intimately to the continuation and development of civilization. Arnold addresses form and tradition variously throughout *Last Essays on Church and Religion*: "[I]t is certain that here as elsewhere the wonderful force of habit tells, and that the power of religious ideas over us does not spring up at all, but is intimately dependent upon particular names and practices and forms of expression which have gone along with it ever since we can remember, and which have created special sentiments in us…. [S]o prodigious a revolution does the changing the whole form and feature of religion turn out to be, that it even unsettles all other things too, and brings back chaos. When it happens, the civilization and the society to which it happens are disintegrated, and men have to begin again…. So immense is the sentiment created by the things to which we have been used in religion, so profound is the wrench at parting with them, so incalculable is the trouble and distraction caused by it. Now, we can hardly conceive modern civilization breaking up as the Roman did, and men beginning again as they did in the fifth century. But the improbability of this implies the improbability, too, of our seeing all the form and feature of Christianity disappear,—of the religion of Christendom. For so vast a revolution would this be, that it would involve the other" (134-35).

isolation. What these "institutions," as it were, achieve is a sense of social wholeness and continuity; they are merely reflections, and often inaccurate ones; they only provide a sketch of the spiritual world of the individual they are meant to serve.

In Arnold's recurring articulation of his purpose for writing his two longer works (*Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible*) we read the overtly social agenda for saving Christianity, which without fail involves, to one degree or another, a reassertion of the value of the Bible. As a historical testimony to the "grandeur of righteousness,"[85] the Old and New Testaments together provide the clue to right conduct. Assuring his readers that "the Bible is really based upon propositions which all can verify,"[86] Arnold recommends the book for its ability to "deal, in a way incomparable for effectiveness, with facts of experience most pressing, momentous, and real,"[87] by which he means to indicate the serious matter of daily life—conduct. Furthermore, the Bible serves to "animate and fortify faith,"[88] and Bible-religion is "true, winning, and commanding,"[89] and Arnold hopes to help his readers "surmount their difficulties, and… enjoy the Bible."[90] He makes no secret of his recognition that the Bible requires accommodation to

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[85]In *God and the Bible* Arnold tells his readers the purpose of his current undertaking: "We seek… to help… readers to see what the Bible really is, and how very much, seen as it really is, it concerns them. So we sought to show that the Old Testament is really a majestic homage to the grandeur of righteousness, or conduct, and a sublime witness to its necessity; while the New Testament, again, is really an incomparable elucidation by Jesus Christ of what righteousness in fact and in truth is" (338). Again, in reiteration of the above, but with greater and more enthusiastic detail, he writes less than 60 pages ahead: "I write to convince the lover of religion that by following habits of intellectual seriousness he need not, so far as religion is concerned, lose anything…. [T]he Old Testament [is] Israel's sublime establishment of the theme: *Righteousness is salvation!* …the New [is] the incomparable elucidation of Jesus of what righteousness is and how salvation is won…" (393).

[86]*God and the Bible* 144.

[87]*God and the Bible* 143.

[88]*God and the Bible* 231.

[89]*God and the Bible* 202.

modern readers, as he makes no secret of his amenability to making such accommodations. (We can hardly suppress the echo of Eliot's indirect disapproval: "I am alarmed by… the possibility of gradually adapting our religion to fit our secular aims—*some* of which may be worthy aims, but none of which will be criticized by a supernatural measure.")[91] In *Literature and Dogma* he seeks to "recast religion," to "find for the Bible some other basis than that which the churches assign" (150). Nor does he shy away from a more blatant expression of his aims: "So there is no doubt that we get a much firmer, nay an impregnable, ground for the Bible, and for recommending it to the world, if we put the construction on it which we propose" (376). In *God and the Bible* he writes of recommending the Bible to readers "on new grounds"—of finding "sure and safe grounds for the continued use and authority of the Bible,"[92] without the least regard for its historical reception as a text sacred because divinely inspired. More interestingly, the intellectual pursuit of discovering the "right construction" of the Bible for modern readers depends for its success on the simultaneous pursuit of culture: "And this is the aim of the following essay: to show that, when we come to put the right construction on the Bible, we give to the Bible a real experimental basis…. And this aim we cannot seek without coming in sight of another aim too, which we have often… pointed out, and tried to recommend: *culture*…."[93] The process by which we "acquaint… ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human

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[90]*God and the Bible* 150.

[91]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 66. We come to see in chapter 4 of this study how orthodoxy stands in for "supernatural" in Eliot's philosophy—how what he intended was a standard established by an orthodox measure which, in the end, has nothing whatsoever of the "supernatural" about it.

[92] *God and the Bible* 149 and 146, respectively.

[93]*Literature and Dogma* 151.

spirit"[94] facilitates the discovery of how best to adapt the Bible to the zeitgeist so as to preserve it, just as the process of that discovery reflexively feeds the pursuit of culture.

Also in reference to his purpose for writing both *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible,* Arnold addresses the psycho-social benefit of Christianity as a stay against the difficulties of modern life. In this context, he cites Christianity's capacity to be recommended on the basis of existential truth—insists on what he calls "the natural truth"[95] of Christianity. He proclaims that "the end for which both books were written" is "to show the truth and necessity of Christianity, and also its charm for the heart, mind, and imagination of man…."[96] But the seemingly modest purpose of "restor[ing] the use and enjoyment of the Bible [and, by implication, Christianity] to plain people"[97] was controversial not only in the minds of many of his contemporaries, but clearly for a modern reader like Eliot as well, on the basis of its unorthodoxy—in its tendency to trample over dogma and openly use Christianity as merely a means to a socio-cultural end. What Arnold deemed the "truth" of Christianity was diametrically opposed to Eliot's purported conception of religious truth; and in this fact lies the most significant and entirely irreconcilable difference between the two thinkers.

That any portion of Arnold's religious ideology shares common ground with Eliot's is surprising when we consider that the ontological premise with which each begins—a premise fundamental to religion, generally—is inimical to the other's. For one thing, Arnold's position on human nature is firmly humanistic; as such, it advances the

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[94]*Literature and Dogma* 151.

[95]*Literature and Dogma* 142.

[96]*God and the Bible* 377.

[97]*God and the Bible* 244.

idea that humankind is perfectible. The proclamation that "the fundamental thing for Christians is not the incarnation but the imitation of Christ"[98] pithily encapsulates the difference in their respective viewpoints. For Eliot, the reality of human existence is so inextricably bound to post-lapsarian ideas about original sin and the "intense moral struggle"[99] between good and evil, that life ceases more and more to be "real," the more it loses sight of this perspective. With respect to the ontology of religion itself, a view of religion as a sociological category rather than as a human response to the numinous clearly emerges on the pages of Arnold's books from his treatment of Christianity. Where Eliot is concerned, Christianity is a matter of supernatural truth—a revealed religion; Arnold places his emphasis instead on Christianity's natural, empirical truth, resting on his conviction that Christianity borrows its strength from and depends for its survival on man's rational experience.[100]

On the surface, Eliot objects vehemently to the practice (even if only an intellectual one) of using Christianity as a social tool on the basis of its morality: "To justify Christianity because it provides a foundation of morality, instead of showing the necessity of Christian morality from the truth of Christianity, is a very dangerous inversion."[101] The "truth" of Christianity is, for him, clearly a transcendent truth that stands apart from and is not subject to (individual) human experience: "The Church exists

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[98] *Literature and Dogma* 146.

[99] *After Strange Gods* 42.

[100] "[T]he final triumph of Christianity, the Christianization of the world… [has] all the necessity and grandeur of a natural law" (*Last Essays on Church and Religion,* 146). Again, a few pages onward: "I believe that Christianity will survive because of its natural truth" (161). And in *Literature and Dogma*: "but the great work to be done for the better time which will arrive, and for the time of transition which will precede it, is not a work of destruction, but to show that the truth is really, as it is, incomparably higher, grander, more wide and deep-reaching, than the *Aberglaube* and false science which it displaces" (384).

[101] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 46.

for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls: Christian morality is part of the means by which these ends are to be attained."[102] (But in his own critical practice this "truth" is discriminative and exclusionary, extending its benefit to a small coterie of believers, in addition to being socio-culturally [rather than supernaturally] determined.) In direct contradistinction to Arnold's opinion that Christianity's "charm lies in its grace and peace"[103] and in its being a source of strength and joy, Eliot also objects to the use of Christianity as a means to achieving "happiness and well-being."[104] Eliot insists that "[i]t is not enthusiasm, but dogma, that differentiates a Christian from a pagan society" [105] to indicate that Christianity's truth is contained in its dogma,[106] which also provides mankind with a clue to "eternity and universality." [107] This is the very dogma (of orthodox Christianity) that Arnold denounces at the end of *Literature and Dogma,* and from which he usurps Christian "truth" and delivers it into the hands of existential truth, instead: "Christianity is immortal; it has eternal truth, inexhaustible value, a boundless future. But our popular religion at present conceives the birth, ministry, and death of Christ, as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle;—*and miracles do not happen*" (146).

In relating his purpose for writing *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot tells his readers that his "primary interest is a change in our social attitude" (8). Thus he hopes to

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[102]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 72.

[103]*Literature and Dogma* 144 and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 84, respectively.

[104]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 73.

[105]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 47.

[106]By which, in actuality, he means to indicate the doctrines and traditions of the Church, rather than theological dogma.

[107]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 63.

address not just society's "difficulties of the moment," but rather the "difficulties of every moment" (5). The claim bespeaks Eliot's desire (an echo of Arnold's) to affect society in fundamental and permanent ways—ways that take a wide view of history and are therefore mindful of the future. The statement also captures the dialectical tension for Eliot between social and individual needs. The phrase "social attitude" teeters on the brink of contradiction if we take "attitude" to mean a change from within—a change that requires the mental/emotional assent of individuals. Just as easily he might have targeted social *behavior*, instead. Again, a few pages later, he calls for society's "change of spirit," (8) careful not to allow "spirit" to conjure ideas of an empty revivalism. He announces that he is "concerned with a state of mind," (13) and hopes to inspire the development of an Aristotelian[108] "political philosophy" in possession of permanent value. He defines political philosophy as "the substratum of [the] collective temperament" of the people—"not a programme for a party, but a way of life for a people" (14). Without being too reductive by drawing dichotomies and claiming that "social" is tantamount to "outwardly observable" while "individual" connotes "internal," we can conclude, nonetheless, that what Eliot sought for society—as socio-politically articulated as it may have been—required the engagement of the individual's "spirit." To suggest social change of a kind that calls for a shift in attitude, in spirit, or in mind, and to desire that change to be authentic and carried out with cognizance and in earnest is to demand of society something different from merely an adherence to social conduct, a conformity to habit, a commitment to tradition for its own sake. Unless the cultural critic expects individual members of a society to be psychologically engaged in the work of social change, his references to attitude, spirit, mind, or temperament ring empty. Eliot's

[108]Arnold cites the attitude and philosophy articulated in both *Politics* and *Poetics.*

solution to saving modern civilization by means of constructing a Christian society reveals his recognition of the indispensability of the individual's internal engagement to the success of his vision. No wonder, then, that his vision fails, for the model of the Christian society he proposes disparages two-thirds of the individuals it addresses.

Stratified into three categories of citizens—the Christian State, the Christian Community, and the Community of Christians—Eliot's Christian Society reads like an Orwellian remedy to the chaos of modernity. The implement with which Eliot delineates the boundaries of the categories is the concept of belief. The Christian State consists of "men of state"—those who hold government offices—from whom Eliot's scheme requires a minimum of "conscious conformity of behavior" (23) without the need for actual Christian belief. The Christian State rules the Christian Community, comprised of the unthinking masses in whom belief "would be ingrained," but from whom "only a largely unconscious behavior" (23) is required, since, after all, their "capacity for *thinking* about the objects of faith is small" (23). Finally, the "much smaller number of conscious human beings" (23) forms the elite group called the Community of Christians from whom is expected "Christian life on its highest social level," (23) for they are the ones capable of conscious belief.

In essence, Eliot recommends a life grounded in Christian principles to a society two-thirds of which he cavalierly excuses from the necessity of religious belief: a State that can't be bothered with believing the principles it upholds, and a Community that can't bring itself consciously to understand these principles, in the first place. What's more, driven by an antipathy to and fear of heterodoxy, Eliot thinks nothing of sacrificing

the individual's spiritual needs in support of the community's institutional ones.[109] He hopes that his Society will consist of "men whose Christianity is communal before being individual," (47) and offers his support to "a national Church against sectarianism and private Christianity" (62). The model not only ignores the fact of the individual's internal existence (while it simultaneously hopes to affect his attitude, his mind), it also denigrates the spirit of the very principles it advocates. If he insists on the truth of Christian dogma, berating those like Arnold who use Christian morality as a means and not an end, how, then, can Eliot justify recommending a Christian life without the co-requisite of Christian belief? If Christianity is to stand on the truth of its dogma, then belief in that dogma as true is indispensable. If we take Eliot at his word—that he believes Christianity is not Christianity without dogma—if only the "much smaller number of conscious human beings" is engaged in the exercise of actual religious belief, then Eliot's model seeks solely to serve this group. Of greater probability is that Eliot considers Christianity, even when abstracted from its dogma, a sufficient social tool. In fact, he says as much: "It would be a society in which the natural end of man—virtue and well-being in community—is acknowledged for all…" (27). He reserves the "supernatural end [of man]—beatitude" (27) for the elite Community of Christians.

But here is not a long way from Arnold's "strength, joy, and peace" as the end product of Christianity (and how different, after all, is Arnold's "grace" from Eliot's "beatitude"?). Nor is there a discernible intellectual distance between the desire on the one hand to preserve culture, and on the other to rescue civilization. The very shape of the crisis Eliot depicts—captured in the question "what can be done for this country in

[109]In support not only of his aspiration to effect a change in attitude, but also in the hope of preserving orthodoxy, Eliot writes that he hopes his Christian society "would not be the result merely of the sum of individual belief and understanding" (28).

the future?"[110]—points to the fact of an anxiety about *society,* and not the state of religion. The fear of the demise of civilization—of the possibility of social chaos and anarchy—by which we might "merely sink into an apathetic decline: without faith… without a philosophy of life… without art,"[111] is not rooted in concern over religious dogma. Nor does the hope kindred to that fear embrace as its aim the preservation of religious dogma: "[T]he only hopeful course for a society which would thrive and continue its creative activity in the arts of civilization, is to become Christian."[112] Even when the preservation of the religion itself is the issue, Eliot's interest in Christianity is cultural-historical: as an institution that has contributed to the development of Western civilization, as a marvelous representation (at least in its Anglo-Catholic form) of orthodoxy:

> I am not so much concerned with the communion of Christian believers today; I am talking about the common tradition of Christianity which has made Europe what it is, and about the common cultural elements which this common Christianity has brought with it…. [W]e can at least try to save something of those goods of which we are the common trustees: the legacy of Greece, Rome and Israel, and the legacy of Europe throughout the last 2,000 years. In a world which has seen such material devastation as ours, these spiritual possessions are also in imminent peril.[113]

A similar interest in Christianity involves its tendency to combat secularism.

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[110]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 9.

[111]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 18.

[112]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 19.

[113]*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* 200-202.

Eliot claims that "a thoroughgoing secularism would be objectionable, in its consequences, even to those who attach no positive importance to the survival of Christianity for its own sake."[114] Reinstating religion in order to resist the consequences of secularism is a strangely tautological project. Also, his statement raises the question: *which* consequences? If the object is to recommend Christianity to "those who attach no positive importance to… [it] for its own sake," then belief in the supernatural is not at issue here. He hopes to effect agreement from non-believers on altogether *other* grounds. The consequences to which Eliot refers point a finger at modernity, such that Christianity now saves civilization from the consequences of modernity, and is itself—"for its own sake," as a body of dogma—incidental to that task. A degree of duplicity is involved in recommending Christianity to non-Christians on the basis of its capacity to remedy the consequences of secularism, while censuring those who justify Christianity "because it provides a foundation of morality."

One particular consequence of modern existence that might be corrected by way of re-Christianizing society is the compartmentalization of life into disconnected aspects. Eliot is disturbed by the fact that in modernity "the religious and the secular life" tend to form "two separate and autonomous domains,"[115] and argues for their harmonization,[116] again, not because such harmonization ensures the preservation of doctrinal Christianity as supernaturally true, but because it serves to keep modern fragmentation at bay.[117]

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[114] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 20.

[115] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 40.

[116] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 44.

[117] Writing poetically about Arnold's grief over the disappearance of God, J. Hillis Miller touches on a closely related notion: "When man dwelt in the divine kingdom he could reconcile opposites, for all qualities existed together in harmonious tension. When the world exploded into multiplicity the opposites

(Eliot's desire for the unification of Church and State, for a "Universal Church on earth,"[118] for an end to sectarianism, and his related distaste for Protestantism, partially all stem from the need [the selfsame need as Arnold's] for wholeness and harmony—a Greek remedy to modern fragmentation.) If Eliot's concern had been the preservation of Christianity as a system of thought that is supernaturally true, he hardly would recommend it on any ground other than that supernatural truth. He would not resort to condoning Christian practice for non-Christians simply because it inspires "respect for the religious life, for the life of prayer and contemplation."[119] For the non-believer these are but the empty vestments of a system of *belief*; the collective value of religion, prayer, contemplation in this particular context is exclusively *social*.

The Christian Ethos and the Individual -

Although among Eliot's prose works *The Idea of a Christian Society* is one among a very few that adopt Christianity as their ostensible, primary subject, here his view of Christianity qua religion is adumbrated vaguely, and even then only by way of a collage of his ideas expressed in snippets. The piece is much more an articulation of his future vision for society than for Christianity—a vision tragically rigid and misguided by an attendant anxiety. What can be surmised with any degree of certainty is that he believes in the truth of Christian orthodoxy—in "essential Christianity"[120]—as a source

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were divided from one another. Man hungers for unity, for totality. His exploration of the world leads to the discovery that this need must be frustrated." Man yearns, Miller argues, for "the plenitude of an undivided life" (*The Disappearance of God,* 257-58).

[118]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 43.

[119]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 47.

[120]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 65.

of inspiration. He desires to compel "a basis of conviction in the heart of the individual"[121]—to stimulate a temper of mind—by virtue of Christian *ethos*. In *After Strange Gods* he writes that "the perception of Good and Evil—whatever choice we may make—is the first requisite of spiritual life" (53). He regards this question of good and evil as essential—that is, as constitutive of the "essence" of human nature. As such, religion is neither purely psychological nor purely sociological for Eliot, but rather a system of belief that binds man to the numinous: permanent and essential, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries. Orthodoxy is the measure of that which is permanent and essential in human experience, so that when Eliot alludes to James Joyce as "the most ethically orthodox of the more eminent writers of [his] time,"[122] he means to say that Joyce takes a view of human nature similar to his own.

Eliot derives an example from Joyce's *The Dead* with which to illustrate Joyce's orthodoxy that brings us full circle to Eliot's need, in the final analysis, for the engagement of the individual in the more complete picture of Eliot's Christianity. He summarizes the final scene of the short story,[123] quotes the very last passage with which Joyce brings the story to a close, tells us "we are not concerned with the author's *beliefs*, but with orthodoxy of sensibility,"[124] and then makes the pronouncement above regarding

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[121]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 41.

[122]*After Strange Gods* 38.

[123]Following is Eliot's summary in *After Strange Gods* of the last scene of Joyce's *The Dead:* "In Mr. Joyce's story… the wife is saddened by memories associated with a song sung at an evening party…. In response to solicitous questions by her husband, she reveals the fact that the song had been sung by a boy she knew in Galway when she was a girl, and that between them was an intense romantic and spiritualized love. She had had to go away; the boy had risen from a sick bed to come to say goodbye to her; and he had in consequence died. That is all there was to it; but the husband realizes that what this boy had given her was something finer than anything he had to give" (37). The last paragraph of Joyce's story is then quoted.

[124]*After Strange Gods* 38.

Joyce's ethical orthodoxy. In *After Strange Gods* a larger examination involving the nature of humankind and the nature of religion envelops the literary discussion from which the above is extracted. The fact of that examination sheds light on Eliot's choice of excerpt. He quotes the last paragraph of Joyce's story:

> 'Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead.'[125]

Given Eliot's context (the examination of human nature and religion), the excerpt is particularly rich in its evocation of the human capacity for empathetic identification with another. Past jealousy, past possessiveness, past the possibility of countless other emotions and consequent responses, Joyce's protagonist feels deeply (and generously!) with his wife's ex-lover. Gabriel's recognition that "such a feeling must be love" is not limited (as the line might suggest on the surface) to his understanding of the love young Michael Fury once felt for Gabriel's wife; the line resonates with the possibility of Gabriel's *own* love as he identifies with another's suffering and loss. As the "tears gather… more thickly in his eyes," they conjure in Gabriel's mind the image of Michael Fury "standing under a dripping tree," while Gabriel himself has all but melted into the background. If this stands as the excerpt by which Joyce earns his crown of orthodoxy in Eliot's eyes, then orthodoxy—at least in its spiritual manifestation—is tantamount to self-renunciation and self-sacrificing love, in this case not just Michael Fury's but Gabriel's

[125]Quoted in *After Strange Gods* 37.

too.

The assertion that Gabriel's empathetic identification with Michael Fury is what marks Joyce's orthodoxy in this passage is supported by Joyce's definition of pity in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* (As the example will illustrate, "pity" for Joyce carries none of the connotation conventional to its use in English—as collateral to a feeling of condescension toward the object of pity. It is closer to "sympathy," but also closer [more intimate] *than* sympathy, and closer, even, than empathy.) In the novel, Joyce's protagonist, Stephen Daedalus, proclaims: "Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human suffering and unites it with the human sufferer."[126] That Gabriel's feeling is an example of Stephen's definition of pity is confirmed by the fact that upon his contemplation of Michael Fury's love and suffering, Gabriel's "soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead"—the region, that is, where his mind is united with the human sufferer.

Eliot's choice of excerpt is significant for our purposes because it points to the fact that for Eliot the question of good and evil—the question most fundamental to human nature—the question that determines what is permanent and essential for Eliot—depends in large part on the individual's internal world, on what Arnold calls "the awakening of the conscience"[127]—on Arnold's concept of inwardness. Joyce's profound feeling of pity in which the individual's mind apprehends the suffering of another and, by extension, the suffering of humankind in general, resides in the private space of conscience. By implication, unless the individual is involved in this capacity, whatever is permanent and essential for Eliot—whatever is spiritually orthodox—cannot come to

[126]From James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

[127]*Literature and Dogma* 299.

fruition. As a system of thought that deeply engages the question of good and evil, Christianity shares a close affinity with orthodoxy; Eliot is alive to the personal side of Christianity and its significance in the establishment and preservation of orthodoxy. The application to the emotion of pity as a means of achieving orthodoxy, the address to Christian dogma as a source of inspiration, the intention of affecting the mind and compelling the heart to action, point to the instrumentality of the personal side of Christianity in the success of Eliot's vision for a Christian society.

The case is no different with Arnold. In *God and the Bible* he argues that the power of Christianity "has been in the immense emotion which it has excited; in its engaging… the mighty forces of love, reverence, gratitude, hope, pity, and awe—all that host of allies which Wordsworth includes under the one name of *imagination*" (377). Christianity (a "religion of the heart"[128]) borrows its remarkable power of influence from Jesus' ability to inspire affection: in *St. Paul and Protestantism* Arnold writes that "[a] penetrating enthusiasm of love, sympathy, pity, adoration, reinforcing the inspiration of reason and duty" (49) is the singular achievement of Jesus, unmatched in history by any other teacher. According to Arnold, that affection (what he calls the "immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion"[129]) is secured by way of the love expressed for mankind in Jesus' self-sacrifice. Through empathetic identification with Jesus—that is, through the apprehension of his self-sacrificial act, emotionally moved by "the person and character of Jesus"[130]—man lives in accordance with Jesus' example. By virtue of this

[128] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 69.

[129] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 43.

[130] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 49.

"attachment" to Jesus, man becomes capable of self-renunciation. Hence does man live "in the law of the spirit"—in the solidarity of mankind—rather than "in the law in our members"[131]—in selfish pursuit of one's own desires. Arnold's vision of universal Christianity is an extension of a similar vision for the individual, one in which "man sincere, man before conscience, man as Jesus put him, finds laid down for himself…nothing but an infinite dying, and in that dying is life;"[132] once this state of existence is established for the individual, it then extends, one person at a time, to mankind generally: "[c]onscience and self-renunciation, the method and the secret of Jesus, are set up as a leaven in the world, nevermore to cease working until the world is leavened."[133] The process entails an internal stirring over which we have no control, a "salutary emotional force of incalculable magnitude,"[134] which Arnold calls *faith* made possible by the fact that "by sympathy [one] enter[s] into another's feelings," and "suppress[es] quite easily…[the] impulse of selfishness."[135] The vision flows forward, rippling toward Joyce, toward Eliot, where it is gathered up by them in near-imitative language.

Advocating the construction of a Christian society on the strength of its morality is one thing; advocating the construction of such a society while also insisting that Christianity should be recommended on the basis of its absolute, supernatural truth is another altogether. Dismissing categorically as unethical the notion that Christianity

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[131]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 43.

[132]*God and the Bible* 145.

[133]*God and the Bible* 371.

[134]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 49.

[135]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 48.

might survive by being adapted to social ideals, Eliot assures us that "Christianity itself can play a part in shaping social forms"[136]—in other words, that the truth contained in its principles will bring 'round the public's attitude and lifestyle into conformity with those principles. Indeed, Eliot takes Christian dogma—as it is given him by the orthodox authority of the Church—to be true. At the heart of his project is the pursuit of a Christian *ethos*. Thus, to propose a society of the kind he envisions—in which the majority is absolved of the need to believe in Christian dogma—is self-defeating. If it were to succeed (and what a compromised "success" that would be!) the society would resolve itself into little more than hollow institutions, thoughtless rituals, and mechanical behavior. If the "truth" of Christian dogma is to be upheld and Christian ethos to be transmitted, then Eliot requires first neither Church, nor State, nor a Society, but rather the authentically engaged, inspired psyche of the *individual*. A complex aversion to heterodoxy, to sectarianism, to eccentricity, ego, and personality seems to have confounded Eliot's ability to see the importance (particularly in the modern world) of the individual's role in religious matters.

Arnold, too, subverts his own project on numerous counts. Having denied Christianity any credible relationship to the numinous, having also divested its spiritual claims of their mystery, Arnold guts out the religion such that its social (over and against both the individual and the private) side remains its only viable one. His heavy reliance on the Bible as a guide for conduct and a literary-cultural record further undermines a solution to saving Christianity that unequivocally requires emotional engagement on the part of individuals. Exhortations to preserve Christianity by living righteously dissolve into vague suggestions to possess "sweet reasonableness," to apply to "a method of

[136]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 25.

inwardness, a secret of *self-renouncement,*"[137] so that the reader is left to bridge the chasm between the pragmatics of biblical conduct-worship and the heady mystery of Jesus' epieikeia.

Literary expressions of the dialectical tension between the social and the individual can bring to the surface of the text a related tension at work in the mind of a writer who divides himself between the critical faculty that produces (critical) prose and the creative impulse that gives birth to poetry. In *After Strange Gods* Eliot admits that "in one's prose reflections one may be legitimately occupied with ideals, whereas in the writing of verse one can only deal with actuality" (28). If we take him at his word, we find his Christianity somewhat liberated from the disturbing inflexibility to which his prose commits it; this is especially true in light of its poetic expression—so much more humane—in a poem like *Four Quartets*, particularly if "actuality" is what we're reading on the page there. Because of his deep distrust of individual consciousness, his direct, public articulations concerning religion ring hollow; his message lacks not only cogency, but more importantly, humanity. But since Eliot values tension[138] for its creative

[137]*Literature and Dogma* 299.

[138]For example, the tension between the Church and the State, or the tension between tradition and orthodoxy, or the internal tension that gives rise to poetic expression, and so on. In *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* he writes: "And just as the functions of individuals become hereditary, and hereditary function hardens into class or caste distinction, and class distinction leads to conflict, so do religion, politics, science and art reach a point at which there is conscious struggle between them for autonomy or dominance. This friction is, at some stages and in some situations, highly creative…. The tension within the society may become also a tension within the mind of the more conscious individual" (97). Further ahead in the text he references the "diversity, tension, etc." that should exist beyond the "common ground of understanding and knowledge" in a community (123); he calls upon "the vital importance for a society of *friction* between its parts," and upon "conflict favorable to creativeness and progress" (132). In *The Aims of Education* he writes about the division and checks and balances between Church and State: "We need a Church capable of conflict with the State as well as of co-operation with it. We need a Church to protect us from the State, and to define the limits of our rights, responsibilities, and duties of submission in relation to our rights, and to our responsibility and duties to ourselves and towards God. And, owing to human fallibility, we may sometimes need the State to protect us against the Church. Too close identification of the two can lead to oppression from which there is no escape" (113).

potentiality—for its capacity to compel individuals to aspire to their best selves and even drive epochs toward progress—he has at his disposal a means of negotiating the public and the private. Arnold's honest expression of agnosticism renders improbable the success of a project based on the advocacy of a private, internal Christianity—of a religion that has its ground in authentic, dogmatic belief. However, since he accords to poetry—to the poetic imagination and to emotion and intuition—the power to attain "truth," he allows room in his theology for the possibility of a "new kind of spirituality."[139] Residual Romanticism and humanism work hand-in-hand to rescue Arnold's religious thought from the sterility to which Eliot's is doomed. Nonetheless, having self-destructively and sorrowfully abandoned his poetic practice before he has done with religious matters, he circumscribes his religious discourse to the public realm of cultural criticism, leaving generations of future readers interested in his religious thoughts to wonder what might have been, had he not "thrust his gift in prison till it died."[140]

[139]Ruth apRoberts, *Arnold and God* 214.

[140] From line 12 of W. H. Auden's poem, "Matthew Arnold."

CHAPTER 2

Arnold's Christianity: An Explication

More than forty pages into *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, Arnold declares that "[r]eligion must be built on ideas about which there is no puzzle" (53). Ironically, Arnold's four prose works that deal directly with "questions concerning religion and Church"[1]—namely, *St. Paul and Protestantism*, *Literature and Dogma*, *God and the Bible*, and *Last Essays on Church and Religion*—are riddled with the author's misgivings and confusions about the very subjects he treats. Perhaps because Arnold felt not only deeply but also urgently the burden of his responsibility for society's moral welfare, his highly programmatic solution to the crisis of Victorian religious doubt reads, in part, as an attempt to repress the fog that pervades his thinking. The general shared and ostensible "object" of the four works, Arnold declares, is "to reassure those who feel attachment to Christianity, to the *Bible*, but who recognize the growing discredit befalling miracles and the supernatural."[2] To reassure them, that is, of the indispensability of the *Bible* for the purpose of moral living. The claim, however, belies the actual, overarching object of the works: the pursuit of human perfection. Muddled and at times contradictory principles, a tortured solution, an object only indirectly revealed—these are the players of Arnold's religious works, the first two owing their existence to the third.

Arnold's specific solution in response to the problem of Victorian religious doubt (self-renouncement á la St. Paul and Christ) does not lend itself readily to some of his

[1] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 148.

[2] *Literature and Dogma* 142.

most fundamental principles. That being said, Arnold might have avoided falling into the greater part of his equivocations throughout the four texts in discussion by admitting more openly that the preservation of Christianity was undertaken simply as a *means*. But an admission of that kind would have put too much in jeopardy for a cultural critic—for a moralist—especially in the hands of a Victorian public for whom the orthodoxy and "truth" of Christianity were not as easily dismissible as they were for Arnold. Hence, he hedges, is indirect, and conflates issues and aims, as he walks the tightrope of Victorian Christianity. Arnold's vision is deeply teleological, his bent staunchly humanistic, both directed assertively at the fulfillment of that "one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves,"[3] and for which Christianity, then, is the perfect tool. Quite openly in *Literature and Dogma* he admits that his "greatest care is… for human perfection"[4] and that "Christianity is truly… the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection."[5] He advocates the "moral perception" gained through religion (through Judeo-Christianity, more particularly) that aids in the evolution of humankind by "emancipat[ing] man… [from] the bondage of that old, chaotic, dark, almost ante-human time, from which slowly and painfully he had emerged when the real history and religion of our race began…," ascribing to that moral perception the capacity to "tend to man's freedom, safety, and progress." [6] Not just "culture-conquest,"[7] but peace through

[3]Alfred Tennyson's "In Memoriam," lines 143-44.

[4]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 124.

[5]*God and the Bible* 381.

[6]*God and the Bible* 228-9.

[7]Quoting Goethe on marriage (as an example of a civilizing institution founded by Christianity), Arnold writes: " 'What culture has won of nature we ought on no account to let go again, at no price to give up. In the notion of the sacredness of marriage, Christianity has got a culture-conquest of this kind, and of

righteous conduct, as well, figures among the rewards of Christianity, which he defines, at one point, as "the firm foundation for human life… and the true source for us of strength, joy, and peace:"[8]

> Every lover of art knows that perfection in art, salvation in art, will never be thus reached, will never be reached without knowing Greece. So it is with perfection and salvation in conduct, men's universal concern, *the way of peace*; they are not to be reached without the *Bible* and Christianity.[9]

Thus, with conduct comprising, for Arnold, "three fourths of human life," [10] he renders Christianity almost wholly responsible for human progress and perfection. Even the expression of a desire for unification among the Protestant, Anglican, and Catholic Churches stems, at base, from a desire for human progress.[11] His preference for the Church of England seems to derive from the Church's superior understanding of and subsequent relationship with the historical flux. Its tendency to incorporate changes as

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priceless value, although marriage is, properly speaking, unnatural.' Unnatural, he means, to man in his rudimentary state, before the fixing of moral habits has formed the right human nature. Emancipation from the right human nature is merely, therefore, return to chaos. Man's progress depends on keeping such 'culture conquests' as the Christian notion of the sacredness of marriage" (*God and the Bible*, 229).

[8]*Literature and Dogma* 144.

[9]*God and the Bible* 395.

[10]The phrase that conduct is "three fourths of life" occurs repeatedly in Arnold's religious and cultural criticism. One such example occurs early on in *Literature and Dogma*: "Yet surely the difficulty of religion is great enough by itself, if men would but consider it, to satisfy the most voracious appetite for difficulties. It extends to rightness in the whole range of what we call *conduct;* in three-fourths, therefore, at the very lowest computation, of human life" (173).

[11]In the chapter entitled "Puritanism and the Church of England" in *St. Paul and Protestantism* Arnold writes: "The national Church would grow more vigorously towards a higher stage of insight into religious truth, and consequently towards a greater perfection of practice, if it had these elements [those of Puritanism]; and this is why we wish for the Puritans in the Church" (75). And in *Last Essays on Church and Religion* he writes: "Unity and continuity in public religious worship are a need of human nature, an eternal aspiration of Christendom; but unity and continuity in religious worship joined with perfect mental sanity and freedom. A Catholic Church transformed is, I believe, the Church of the future" (110).

Christianity progresses—that is, its ability to "proceed by development"[12]—is the quality which most recommends the Anglican Church to Arnold's preference, because this quality honors the natural trajectory of *human* development.

Humanism and Empiricism -

Arnold's humanism[13] extends beyond the ultimate purpose of his project to include some of the basic principles of his theology. The tendency toward righteousness rests with man himself; the law of "the moral order"[14] resides in the individual; he is himself the spring of his ability to achieve Christ-like perfection. Part of Arnold's rant against Methodism and Calvinism is directed at their anti-humanistic inclination to "lay…all stress on a wonderful and particular account of what God gives and works for us, not on what we bring or do for ourselves."[15] When he cites St. Paul as the exemplar of righteousness, he points up Paul's very human, tireless effort toward his own "salvation."[16] He privileges instinct, the human spirit, the human heart as loci of "true

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[12] *St. Paul and Protestantism* (85).

[13]If for nothing other than pure interest, it may be worthwhile to remember Eliot's words on Arnold's humanism from his essay entitled *Arnold and Pater*: "[Arnold] is at least a forerunner of what is now called Humanism…. How far Arnold is responsible for the birth of Humanism would be difficult to say; we can at least say that it issues very naturally from his doctrine, that Charles Eliot Norton is largely responsible for its American form, and that therefore Arnold is another likely ancestor…. From one point of view, Arnold's theory of Art and his theory of Religion are quite harmonious, and Humanism is merely the more coherent structure" (12).

[14]Arnold's references to righteousness throughout *St. Paul and Protestantism* and *Literature and Dogma* are countless and occur in similar terms. For example, in *St. Paul and Protestantism* righteousness is called "the moral order" (23), "the universal order, the law of God" (23), the "clue of moral order" (30), the "central moral tendency" (32), "the moral order in human nature" (36), "the eternal order" (44), and so forth.

[15] *St. Paul and Protestantism* (17). Regarding the Arminian doctrine of the "covenant of free justification by faith," Arnold asserts: "This doctrine, like the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, involves a whole history of God's proceedings, and gives, also, first and almost sole place to what God does, with disregard to what man does" (17).

religion" and righteousness, and "inwardness" as their method. He takes as given the humanity of Christ, sans divinity: Christ is simply man, perfected; and "eternal life" is conceived as the state of Christhood potentially attainable by all.[17]

In these four texts, the Bible functions as the nexus of Arnold's humanism—the vehicle by which his subject, object, and method meet. Divorcing, for the Victorian public, the Bible from its talismanic quality and figuring it instead as a literary text whose gradual and palimpsestic formation was susceptible to historical circumstances[18] serves a twofold humanistic purpose. [19] Stripping the Bible of its supernatural associations grounds it as credible and therefore useful, while it also privileges and pays tribute to the human effort responsible for its formation.[20] Arnold treats the content of the Bible not merely as practical matter for moral living, but cherishes it, as well, for its poetic

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[16] Arnold writes of Paul that: "The sterner virtues and the gentler, his conscience will not let him rest till he has embraced them all. In his deep resolve 'to make out by actual trial what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God,' he goes back upon himself again and again, he marks a duty at every pint of our nature, and at points the most opposite, for fear he should by possibility be leaving behind him some weakness still indulged, some subtle promptings to evil not yet brought into captivity" (*St. Paul and Protestantism*, 25).

[17] "And when, through identifying ourselves with Christ, we reach Christ's righteousness, then eternal life begins for us;—a continuous and ascending life, for the eternal order never dies, and the more we transform ourselves into servants of righteousness and organs of the eternal order, the more we are and desire to be this eternal order and nothing else" (*St. Paul and Protestantism*, 53-4).

[18] In *Literature and Dogma,* for example, Arnold writes that the scripture cannon "got placed there by the force of circumstances, by chance or by routine" (160).

[19] In the "Preface to the First Edition" of *Literature and Dogma*, in the midst of a discourse on the importance of culture, Arnold writes: "For the right understanding of the *Bible* itself, the discriminative experience, so much required in all our theological studies, is particularly indispensable. And to our popular religion it is especially difficult; because we have been trained to regard the *Bible*, not as a book whose parts have varying degrees of value, but as the Jews came to regard their Scriptures, as a sort of talisman given down to us out of Heaven, with all its part equipollent" (159).

[20] In his study called *The Cultural Theory of Matthew Arnold* in which Joseph Carroll argues that Arnold's cultural theory proceeds by "phases," he identifies a particular stage of Arnold's career during which Arnold turned aggressively toward writing religious criticism, characterizing it by Arnold's "single-minded concentration on moral salvation" (39), and writes: "In the second phase of his career Arnold occupies himself almost exclusively with reinterpreting the Bible and traditional religion in such a way as to preserve their moral and literary content while discarding their supernatural dogmas" (39).

expression and as a record of the human spirit,[21] which treatment is meant to act as an example to Victorian Christians in their respective approaches to the Bible. In the various chapters dealing more intimately with the text itself of the Bible,[22] Arnold brings the literary-critical process to bear on the biblical criticism of the Old Testament and the gospels in order to rescue the Bible from the confusions caused by the popular Christianity and popular science of his day. This methodology, then, serves to demonstrate to his readership the influence of "letters,"[23] and to recommend, again by representative demonstration, the importance of *culture* in the pursuit of human perfection.[24] The Bible's twin capacity for moral guidance and transmission of a literary-

[21] "I have elsewhere called the Apostles' Creed the popular science of Christianity, and the Nicene Creed its learned science; and in one view of them they are so. But in another and a better view of them, they are, the one its popular poetry, the other its learned or,—to borrow the word which Schopenhauer applied to Hegel's philosophy,—its *scholastic poetry.* The one Creed exalts Jesus by concrete images, the other by an imaginative play of abstract ideas. These two Creeds are the august amplifications, or the high elucidations, which came naturally to the human spirit working in love and awe upon that inexhaustible theme of profound truth: *Salvation through Jesus Christ*. As such, they are poetry for us; and poetry consecrated, moreover, by having been on the tongue of all our forefathers for two thousand years, and on our own tongue ever since we were born" (*Last Essays on Church and Religion*, 136).

[22] Primarily the last three chapters of *God and the Bible*: "The Bible Canon," "The Fourth Gospel from Without," and "The Fourth Gospel from Within," but also, secondarily, some chapters from *Literature and Dogma* including: "Religion Given," "The New Testament Record," and "The Testimony of Jesus to Himself."

[23] "[T]he valuable thing in letters,—that is, in the acquainting oneself with the best which has been thought and said in the world,—is, as we have often remarked, the judgment which forms itself insensibly in a fair mind along with fresh knowledge" (Literature and Dogma, 168).

[24]Throughout *Literature and Dogma* Arnold advocates culture because it promotes development of perception (158), because to "read…with discrimination culture is necessary" (156); culture helps "control what one reads by means of the discriminative tact coming, in a clear and fair mind, from a wide experience, [and such control] was never perhaps so necessary as in the England of our own day, and in theology, and in what concerns the *Bible* itself" (157); culture allows for "a wide and familiar acquaintance with the human spirit and its productions, showing how ideas and terms arose, and what is their character… and this is letters and history, not logic" (169). And the end of the introduction to the book reads: "[M]inds with small aptitude for abstruse reasoning may yet, through letters, gain some hold on sound judgment and useful knowledge, and may even clear up blunders committed, out of their very excess of talent, by the athletes of logic" (169). At one point in *Last Essays on Church and Religion* culture becomes the very vehicle by which religious understanding is achieved: "I am persuaded that the transformation of religion, which is essential for its perpetuance, can be accomplished only by carrying the qualities of flexibility, perceptiveness, and judgment which are the best fruits of letters, to whole classes of the community which

historical tradition renders it doubly valuable because therein are joined conduct and culture—three-fourths of life and its remaining fourth, respectively.

Bolstering Arnold's humanistic object and effort is his insistence on empirical evidence, since it naturally privileges human experience. Arnold is a thoroughgoing empiricist, in both method and matter. Hyperconscious of his readership, he insists on the pragmatic utility of his work and its claims, and on the cogency of their delivery. His acute awareness of the zeitgeist—of the historical flux and the Victorian rationalism of his particular moment—shapes much of the trajectory of his argumentation. He stresses the necessity, for the Victorian "masses,"[25] of a solid theology grounded in empirical (and, perhaps more importantly, intuitional)[26] evidence, whose claims are verifiable in the material world, and which rests on the authority of reason; he is quite convinced that the survival of both the Bible and Christianity depends on the success of such a theology.[27] In his effort to promote the utility of Christianity for the Victorian public,[28] he subjects to

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now know next to nothing of them, and by procuring the application of those qualities to matters where they are never applied now" (148).

[25] Despite the fact that Arnold's direct audience did not consist of the "masses," his socio-religious concern and its attendant solution were nonetheless directed their way. In *Literature and Dogma* he writes: "[S]uppose we tried [establishing righteousness]… with rude, hard, downright people, and with the masses, who for what is told them, want, above all, a plain experimental proof, such as that fire will burn you if you touch it" (367); and earlier on he establishes that "rude and hard reasoners" are the selfsame masses: "Now, the assumption with which all the churches and sects set out, that there is 'a Great Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe,' and that from him the *Bible* derives its authority, cannot at present, at any rate, be verified. Those who 'ask for the *reason* and *authority* for the things they have been taught to believe,' as the people, we are told, are now doing, will begin at the beginning. Rude and hard reasoners as they are, they will never consent to admit, as a self-evident axiom, the preliminary assumption with which the churches start" (149-50).

[26] Leon Gottfried, in *Matthew Arnold and the Romantics*, speaks to the importance of intuition in religion for Arnold. Gottfried argues: "Following the example of Coleridge, [Arnold] sought to ground the sanctions of religion not in a book, nor in a system of thought, nor in a human institution, nor in a body of dubious external fact, but in the emotional and moral needs of man" (58).

[27] He writes, in *God and the Bible*, that he is "for resting religion upon some fact of which it shall not be in vain to ask whether we can verify it" (161).

the criterion of verifiability the nature of God, the basis of the religion, and the claims of the Bible.[29]

Arnold's recognition of the historical flux is expressed in terms of the value he accords to epistemological evolution. In *God and the Bible* he repeatedly employs the phrase "men's experience widens,"[30] attributing to the process greater intimacy with "the mental history of mankind" (381), a progressively clearer understanding of "what fact is and what proof is" (388), a "conversance with real life and practical affairs" (279), an acquaintance with the history of miracles (165), and a corresponding tendency to repudiate their credibility. Arnold responds to the public's increasing need for concrete knowledge and reliance on rationalism and empirical evidence by launching an equally rationalistic attack against the supernatural, the miraculous,[31] and the metaphysical, and

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[28] Regarding *Literature and Dogma*, Arnold claims that he does not "…choose… for the experiment of a popular edition this book, merely because it admits of being shortened, or because it has been much in demand. I choose it far more for the reason that I think it, of all my books in prose, the most important (if I may say so) and most capable of being useful (*Literature and Dogma*, 141).

[29] In *God and the Bible* Arnold explicitly states his purpose: "[W]e want to recommend the *Bible* and its religion by showing that they rest on something which can be verified" (156); and with similar terms in *Literature and Dogma* he presents the problem facing his disquisition: "[T]o find for the *Bible*, for Christianity, for our religion, a basis in something which can be verified, instead of in something which has to be assumed" (150).

[30]Including *God and the Bible* (164, 166, 381, 388,); *Literature and Dogma* (246).

[31] In both *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* Arnold writes repeatedly about the damaging effect of miracles upon Christianity as a viable religion. In fact, with the exception of the belief in God as a supernatural being, the belief in *Bible* miracles meets with the greatest measure of acrimony from Arnold. Below are some examples provided with a view to the context of empirical evidence: "[Miracles in the *Bible* are] imposture or else illusion. Why? It is impossible to find any criterion by which one of these incidents may establish its claim to a solidity which we refused to the others" (*Literature and Dogma*, 247); "Our point is, that the objections to miracles do, and more and more will, without insistence, without attack, without controversy, make their own force felt; and that the sanction of Christianity, if Christianity is not to be lost along with its miracles, must be found elsewhere" (*Literature and Dogma*, 257); "That miracles *cannot* happen we do not attempt to prove; the demonstration is too ambitious. That they *do not* happen,—that what are called miracles are not what the believers in them fancy, but have a natural history of which we can follow the course,—the slow action of experience, we say, more and more shows; and show, too, that there is no exception to be made in favour of the Bible-miracles" (*God and the Bible*, 368).

advocating in their stead a "more plausible theology"[32]—one whose force can be felt experientially.

Although he objects to the distinction made between "natural" and "revealed,"[33] Arnold's brand of theology is, for all intents and purposes, and by virtue of its insistence on reason and experience, a natural theology. Informed by a "law of nature, collected from experience,"[34] Arnold's is a Christianity whose "truth" derives from mankind's experience of the religion as a "true source… of strength, joy, and peace,"[35] acquired through righteous conduct. His empiricism emerges quite clearly in a passage from *Literature and Dogma* in which he points up the experiential value of his theology while addressing the topic of conduct: "[W]e preach a doctrine, not thaumaturgical and not speculative, but practical and experimental; a doctrine which has no meaning except in positive application to conduct, but in this application is inexhaustible" (358). Righteousness, then (which is Arnold's central concern), recommends itself to mankind first on *empirical* grounds—by its ability to yield joy and peace ("the idea that *righteousness tendeth to life* has a firm, experimental ground, which the Messianic ideas

[32] *Literature and Dogma* 259.

[33] Arnold treats "natural" and "revealed" virtually synonymously by conjoining the two, and underscoring their intuitional and experiential qualities: "[L]et us anticipate the objection that the religion here spoken of is but natural religion, by pointing out the falseness of the common antithesis… between *natural* and *revealed*. For that in us which is really natural is, in truth *revealed.* We awake to the consciousness of it, we are aware of it coming forth in our mind; but we feel that we did not make it, that it is discovered to us, that it is what it is whether we will or no" (*Literature and Dogma*, 195).

[34] *God and the Bible* 192.

[35] *Literature and Dogma* 144.

have not")[36]—and next by its *intuitional* value ("[c]onduct, righteousness, is, above all, a matter of inward motion and rule").[37]

Perhaps in Arnold's case the distinction between empirical and intuitional is a false one. After all, the individual stands at the center of both, and "intuitional" represents a private and undeniable "knowing"—the script of the "inly written chart"[38] to which Arnold refers in his poetry—while "empirical" is simply the manifestation of this knowledge in the individual's outward, daily life. Nowhere is the connection between the two more apparent, and in fact of greater importance than in Arnold's treatment of Jesus' character (and teachings) in relationship to that of God. Quoting from the New Testament,[39] Arnold privileges intuitional evidence, arguing that faith in Jesus as the son of God[40] was established in the hearts of his hearers not by means of the miracles he was purported to have performed, but by virtue of "inward evidence" that stood in direct opposition to the "evidence" provided by miracles—"outward evidence, indirect evidence, not conclusive in this fashion."[41] Relying on their knowledge of God as "the Eternal that loveth righteousness" (a definition to which we will return in detail further

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[36] *Literature and Dogma* 212.

[37] *Literature and Dogma* 185.

[38] From line 5 of Arnold's poem, "Human Life."

[39] John 6:45 reads: "Every one that heareth and learneth from the Father, cometh unto me"; John 8:28 reads: "As the Father hath taught me, so I speak"; John 8:47 reads: "He that is of God heareth the words of God"; and John 8:42 reads: "If God was your Father, yet would have loved me!"

[40] In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold provides a succinct declaration of his belief about the relationship between God and Jesus: "But that there *is* an enduring Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness, is verifiable, as we have seen, by experience; and that Jesus *is* the offspring of this Power is verifiable from experience also. For God is the author of righteousness; now, Jesus is the Son of God because he gives the method and secret by which alone is righteousness possible. And that he *does* give this, we can verify, again, from experience" (375).

[41] *Literature and Dogma* 264.

ahead), Jesus' hearers, Arnold claims, "could and should have concluded irresistibly, when they heard his words, that he came from God."[42] Jesus' "evidence" according to Arnold, for the Christian religion, depends then on the "necessary connection"[43] between the intuitional evidence that makes belief possible for an individual, and the empirical evidence of the joy and peace enjoyed by that individual in his daily life of righteousness. For Arnold, whereas the influence of intuition rests with Jesus, the authority of outward experience—the experience of the joyousness of righteous living—belongs more to St. Paul's example. Arnold's interpretation of Paul's doctrine emphasizes Paul's asceticism, perseverance, self-discipline, and total devotion to the "law of righteousness"[44]—a "law," Arnold never fails to remind us, that has its basis in human nature and which appeals to man's rational side.[45] He holds up the claims of Puritanism to the teachings of Paul to determine whether or not they possess the "facts… [and] scientific validity" found in Paul's teachings, thus securing for the latter a certain solidity in the minds of a skeptical Victorian public.[46] At every turn, Arnold ensures Paul's doctrine a measure of authority

[42] *Literature and Dogma* 264.

[43] *Literature and Dogma* 264.

[44] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 29.

[45] Arnold writes in *St. Paul and Protestantism*: "Paul does not begin outside the sphere of science; he begins with an appeal to reality and experience. And the appeal here with which he commences has, for science, undoubted force and importance; for he appeals to a rational conception which is a part, and perhaps the chief part, of our experience; the conception of the law of *righteousness*, the very law and ground of human nature so far as this nature is moral" (29).

[46]"Therefore," Arnold argues, "it is perhaps expedient to refresh our memory as to these schemes of doctrine, Calvinistic or Arminian, to uphold which, as has been said, British Puritanism exists, before we proceed to compare them, for correspondence with facts and for scientific validity, with the teaching of St. Paul" (*St. Paul and Protestantism*, 10).

within the climate of the Victorian zeitgeist by aligning him with the real, the experiential, the rational, the verifiable, the scientific.[47]

A portion of Arnold's work concerning the character and teachings of Jesus involves "extracting" Jesus' "true" character from the scriptural account provided by his disciples.[48] This methodology extends also to the other two central matters of his discourse: God and the Bible. The etymological investigation of God's name (in the interest of making determinations about his *nature*) occupies a great share of Arnold's argumentation across the four books in discussion. An etymological approach yields a better understanding of the evolution of God's name and its occurrence in the Christian faith, which understanding, in turn, lays bare the problematic use of his name and subsequent problematic conception of his nature by Christianity throughout history. Dismissing both supernatural and metaphysical conceptions of God as "unverifiable," and stressing, with repeated emphasis, the detrimental influence of popular theology's tendency to anthropomorphize God, he pares down God's identity to what was "revealed" to the ancient Israelites "not from abstruse reasoning but from experience, and from experience in the plain region of conduct."[49] Having labored across hundreds of

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[47] Paul and his doctrine, Arnold asserts, "rely on facts of experience and assert nothing which science cannot verify" (*St. Paul and Protestantism*, 35); further on, he claims that "Paul did not go to Adam and Genesis to get the essential testimony about sin. He went to experience for it. 'I *see,*' he says, 'a law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity.' [Romans 7:23]" (*St. Paul and Protestantism*, 58); and in *Literature and Dogma* Arnold writes: "Righteousness is the end and aim. This to being with; then, in the words: 'I exercise myself to have a *conscience void of offence* towards God and men continually' [Acts 24:16], we find ourselves in the method of Jesus. 'Let every man *prove by experience* his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing *in himself alone* and not in another [Galatians 6:4], '*Prove* all things *by experience*, keep what is good' [I Thessalonians 5:21]; '*Prove by experience* what things are excellent' [Philippians 1:10]; 'Able to *prove by experience* what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God' [Romans 12:2]. All this points to inward appraisal, the method of inwardness, the individual conscience" (328-29).

[48] Arnold writes in *Literature and Dogma* that "[t]o extract from his reporters the true Jesus entire, is even impossible; to extract him in considerable part is one of the highest conceivable tasks of criticism" (275).

pages to base the identity of God strictly on that which can be "verified," Arnold concludes that "there is an Eternal not ourselves[50] which makes for righteousness and is called God…and indeed so much as this, human experience proves."[51]

Popular theology—Victorian Protestantism, more particularly—comes under attack once again when Arnold turns his attention to the Bible. Arnold's empiricism asserts itself in two distinct (albeit related) ways in his treatment of biblical matter. He shows first his acute sense of the fact of history, of historical incident, and of his contemporaries' place within the historical flux, and next his adeptness at textual criticism. The writers of the Bible, Arnold reminds us, were people—people subject to the dictates of the human imagination and human emotions, and to the beliefs and biases of their historical moment. They had at their disposal only flawed human language, doubly vexed on the one hand by its inability perfectly to apprehend the imagination and provide ideal expression for it, and on the other by its susceptibility to human emotion—itself often dynamic and mutable, its essence ultimately ineffable. In addition, temporal and cultural considerations (including the issue of numerous translations which function to make the Bible a palimpsest,) further remove us from the writers of the Bible, themselves removed from one another if by nothing else than the divisive fact of the Old Testament and the New. Arnold refers to the above phenomenon as the evidence from without, and in honor of the concept names one of the chapters of *God and the Bible* "The Fourth Gospel from Without," which focuses on the *context* of biblical matter. Its

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[49] *Literature and Dogma* 184.

[50] In support of the name he has assigned to the ancient Israelites' conception of God according to his analysis, Arnold writes in *Literature and Dogma*: "…the more we come to know how ideas and terms arise, and what is their character, the more this explanation of Israel's use of the word 'God' seems the true and natural one" (377).

[51] *God and the Bible* 159.

twin chapter, "The Fourth Gospel from Within," exemplifies in its methodology Arnold's treatment of the *text itself* of the Bible, and speaks to the second empiricist in Arnold—that of the literary critic, par excellence, who demonstrates his extraordinary skill[52] equally generously in *Literature and Dogma*, as well.[53]

Biblical language, the historical critic tells us, is "fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific."[54] It is, he continues, "the language of common speech or of poetry and eloquence, approximative language thrown out at certain great objects of consciousness which it does not pretend to define fully."[55] Furthermore, Arnold claims, the Old Testament in its conception, composition, intention, and finally interpretation, was, for the Israelites, talismanic. As such, it should be read as poetry. In Arnold's view, all literal interpretations of biblical material are not only erroneous, but more importantly, corrosive to the survival of the Bible as a moral guide, especially in an age of rationalism and scientific materialism. What might ensure the Bible's endurance, then, is a *literary* (over and against a *literal*) treatment of its language.[56] And as though these claims are not enough to incite a heated response from the theologians of his day, Arnold robs them of their right to act as interpreters of biblical language by placing the task safely (and

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[52] In his article, "Matthew Arnold and 'The Author of *Supernatural Religion'*: The Background to *God and the Bible,*" Jerold J. Savory calls Arnold's literary effort in *God and the Bible* "a remarkable display of… ability to master and apply the technical literature of scholarly biblical criticism" (677). The article appears in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 16, 1976: 677-91.

[53] Some of the chapters of *Literature and Dogma* evince with greater directness the systematic approach of the thoroughgoing textual critic. Their titles are indicative of their respective contents: "The Proof from Prophecy," "The Proof from Miracles," "The New Testament Record," "The Testimony of Jesus to Himself," and "The Early Witnesses."

[54] *Literature and Dogma* 152.

[55] *Literature and Dogma* 244.

[56] "[W]e will proceed with our endeavour to free the Bible,—by showing that it is not science but literature, by following it continuously and by interpreting it naturally,—to free the *Bible* from the serious dangers with which their advocacy threatens it" (*Literature and Dogma*, 280).

strictly) in the hands of the learned, well-rounded, cultured humanist, instead.[57] In *Literature and Dogma*, collectively attacking among others the adherents of the Athanasian Creed, the clergymen who write for the *Guardian*, and "our bishops," Arnold accuses them of being

> not conversant enough with the many different ways in which men think and speak, so as to be able to distinguish rightly between them, and to perceive that the Bible is *literature;* and that its words are used, like the words of common life and of poetry and eloquence, approximately, and not like the terms of science, adequately. (316)

Who then, by implication, is conversant with "the many different ways in which men think and speak"? He is the historian and literary critic, of course, who can boast a "very wide experience from comparative observation in many directions, and a very slowly acquired habit of mind."[58]

But the humanist-empiricist runs up against a wall of his own making in applying his method to his matter. The principle of verifiability, as comprehensively and as meticulously exercised over religious content as it is under Arnold's pen, inevitably fails.[59] While on the one hand Arnold's empiricism demonstrates his awareness of both

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[57] In *The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold,* R. H. Super speaks to this point, stating that "Arnold again and again insisted that the method of literary criticism provided the only valid approach to Scripture, since the man of letters knew how to read imaginative works like the Bible—books written in a language that is literary, no scientific" (88).

[58] *Literature and Dogma* 345.

[59] With regard to Arnold's attempt to apply scientific principles of verifiability in his argumentation, Leon Gottfried aptly notes in his book *Matthew Arnold and the Romantics:* "Arnolds pragmatic defense of Christianity encounters certain difficulties. After all, though such a test may prove religion useful, it cannot prove it true unless the terms are defined as synonymous. Measured by any absolute standard, the utility of religion may be just what makes one suspicious of the existential truth of its assertions. To be sure, in appealing to the modern notion of practical 'verifiability', Arnold thought that he was providing his arguments on behalf of faith with a firmly scientific basis. But such a notion of 'verifiability' is close to

his readership and the zeitgeist,[60] on the other it delimits the scope of his argument to purely rationalistic principles—a rather unfortunate fact for a discussion of religion. Too, if he insists on the verifiability of biblical claims as a test of their cogency, then he invites the reader to apply the same rigorous standard to his own argumentation. He rails against the rationalism, literalism, and scientific materialism of his day, but then makes liberal use of rational, literal, and scientific principles in establishing the boundaries of his examination of Christianity, and more specifically, in defining the terms under which his examination functions. As Ruth apRoberts asserts in *Arnold and God*, "[i]t must be emphasized that Arnold's own definitions of God come out of ratiocination. They are arrived at by close linguistic and psychological considerations" (199).

God (Who Is Not) -

The importance for Arnold of a definition of the term "God" is undeniable. In *God and the Bible* he accords to God primacy by claiming that "in the Bible God is everything" (156), and that the Bible cannot be recommended for public consumption without first ascertaining "what it is which we mean by God" (156). Earlier, yet, in *Literature and Dogma*, he states that "till we are agreed as to what we mean by God, we can never, in discussing religious questions, understand one another or discuss seriously"

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being a travesty of scientific operationalism. The scientist who develops a theory of adequate to the data in his possession never loses awareness of the hypothetical and, by any absolutist standards, tentative nature of his 'truth'. Furthermore, when a scientific hypothesis is made subservient to any set of psychological needs or to any value system, it is at once in the gravest danger of losing its scientific validity; when it is treated as an absolute it has already lost its validity" (211).

[60] Ruth apRoberts argues in *Arnold and God*, "The value of the Arnold definitions is that they are articles to which a man of science can subscribe, and Arnold says they are all in literal fact the religious man need subscribe to, and there is no discrepancy between the these minimal scientific statements on the nature of God and either the religious life or the devout reading of the *Bible*. This book is not addressed to mystics like Newman, it is addressed to rationalists" (199).

(372), and later makes reference to this statement in *God and the Bible* by reminding the reader: "For we have ourselves said, that without a clear understanding in what sense this important but ambiguous term God is used, all fruitful discussion in theology is impossible" (155). Thus, in order to render possible a fruitful discussion of Arnold's theological meanings, a clear understanding of his definition of God is here requisite. Requisite yes, but near to impossible. All that can be claimed definitively about Arnold's definition is that it is ultimately vexed, and that Arnold's struggle over its formation reflects his personal, psychological struggle with the notion of God. Promiscuous application to the fields of etymology, history, literary criticism, theology, biblical studies, and philosophy only muddies the waters of his struggle.

Perhaps the simpler task is to first ascertain what, for Arnold, God is *not*. The fulcrum on which his arguments here pivot is that of unorthodoxy. What best anchors the possibility of God's existence is the negation of that which most readily renders God "unverifiable." Thus, Arnold launches the most aggressive part of his attack against the tendency of orthodox Christianity to anthropomorphize God.[61] God is not, Arnold contends, a "magnified and non-natural man," the "man in the next street."[62] If he were,

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[61] Eugene L. Williamson, in his article entitled "Matthew Arnold's 'Eternal Not Ourselves'," locates the source of Arnold's notion of God as other than anthropomorphic in his father's philosophy borrowed from (or at least in sympathy with the ideology of) American intellectual, Jacob Abbott. Professor Abbott, according to Dr. Arnold, denounced the idea of "a monarch on a throne of marble and gold… sitting in a fancied region which we call heaven" (quoted in Williamson's article, sourced cited as: *The Corner Stone: or, A Familiar Illustration of the Principles of Christian Truth* [Boston, 1834].) Williamson writes that in well-known phrases of Arnold's in which he attempts to define the nature of God as "the Eternal not ourselves, that makes for righteousness," or "the stream of tendency by which all things fulfill the law of their being" (*Literature and Dogam,* 37), is implicit a "desire to avoid gross materializing and a view of divine immanence" (310). Williamson's contention is that the immanentist view of God was not suggested to Arnold by his 1847 reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* as some scholars argue, but rather by views his own father held, with which Arnold may have been acquainted as early as 1834 when he was only twelve-years-old: "In 1834… Dr. Arnold published a volume of Rugby sermons in which he takes up the problem of anthropomorphism" (310).

[62] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 9, 10.

he would have to be verifiable by way of empirical evidence. Concomitantly, he neither loves nor thinks.[63] In *God and the Bible* Arnold defends himself with respect to this latter claim by citing his own lack of experience with thinking and loving "except as attached to a certain bodily organization" (181), thereby reaffirming God's existence as other than something physical and physically verifiable in the world. Arnold categorically dismisses the traditionally Christian notions of God as the omnipotent, beneficent creator of the universe—of "the all-foreseeing, quasi-human designer, with a will and a character."[64] He also repudiates all conventional associations of God with supernatural, mythical, and thaumaturgic qualities. Nor is metaphysics spared Arnold's rebuff. Arguing that "of the constitution of God we know nothing,"[65] he conveniently elides questions of ontology, choosing, instead, to "assert nothing about God's constitution whatever…[to] neither affirm God to be a person nor to be a thing."[66] Since questions of "essence, existence, and substance,"[67] he writes, cannot be settled, we can speak only of God's "operation"[68] upon man—we resort, in other words, to empiricism, again. Without regard to all that he himself has affirmed about God in *St. Paul and*

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[63]Emphasizing the unverifiability of God's thinking and loving faculties seems central to much of Arnold's definition of God, and appears numerously throughout his argument, most frequently in *God and the Bible*: "People say that there is a personal God, and that a personal God is a God who thinks and loves" (159); "…people maintain…that he is a person, and thinks and loves" (159); "[people] make God a person who thinks and loves" (162); "He does well who…discover[s]…the hollowness of the main ground for making God a person who thinks and loves, a magnified and non-natural man" (171); "…[Descartes believes] that thinking and loving are perfections, therefore God thinks and loves" (178); "[w]e refused to affirm that God is a person who thinks and loves, because we had no experience at all of thinking and loving except as attached to a certain bodily organization" (181), etc.

[64] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 54.

[65] *God and the Bible* 395.

[66] *God and the Bible* 195.

[67] *God and the Bible* 178.

[68]Arnold writes of the "mighty *not ourselves*" that "in its operation we are aware of, but in its nature, no" (*God and the Bible*, 186).

Protestantism and *Literature and Dogma*, Arnold asserts unapologetically, "Till we know…[what constitutes being, essence, existence], we know neither what to affirm nor what to refuse to affirm."[69] He thus avoids ontological considerations altogether, limiting the discussion of metaphysics to God's function (rather than to his nature), advising his readers to "eschew as much as possible, in speaking about God, the use of the word *Being*."[70]

God (Who Is) -

Arnold's confirmations about God are neither as clearly nor as confidently expressed as his negations. As with the other religious subjects treated throughout *St. Paul and Protestantism*, *Literature and Dogma*, *God and the Bible*, and *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, the subject "God," too (and especially), Arnold insists, must meet the criterion of verifiability—be strictly delimited by man's experience of God's effect upon his life. This relentless appeal to empirical evidence ultimately works against Arnold, for it serves finally as the one check to the equivocations with which the definition of God is so troubled. His most consistently occurring[71] appellation of God is as "the Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness."[72] The three distinct attributes

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[69] *God and the Bible* 181.

[70] *God and the Bible* 201.

[71] The occurrence refers to the three texts in which Arnold variously and at length discusses the subject of God: *St. Paul and Protestantism*, *Literature and Dogma*, and *God and the Bible*.

[72] The terminology is used throughout with variations: In *St. Paul and Protestantism* God is referred to as "the eternal and divine power from which all life and wholesome energy proceed" (37); in *Literature and Dogma* he is "the not ourselves, which is in us and in the world around us" (182), "the Eternal" (182), "a real power which makes for righteousness" (190), "the power that makes for righteous conduct" (193), "The not ourselves which makes for righteousness" (196), "the Eternal that loveth righteousness" (305), "an enduring Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness" (374), "the author of righteousness" (375), "the Eternal Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness" (385), "the Eternal Power, not

that comprise this definition (the states of eternalness, being "not ourselves," and righteousness) function with varying degrees of both verifiability and general cogency. The greatest part of Arnold's attention is given to the last of these, and for more than one reason. By no coincidence does the concept of *righteousness* enjoy a tripartite instrumentality in Arnold's religious works—occupying a central position in his definition of God, motivating his programmatic preservation of the Bible, and actuating the machinery of right conduct in the interest of human progress.

In an effort to develop this third aspect of the definition of God, to righteousness are annexed the concepts of law and order: a "universal order," "the moral order in human nature," "the natural moral law," a "law of things which is found in conscience," a "rule of conduct."[73] Hence, although we cannot go so far as to say that human nature *generates* righteousness in accordance with man's conscience (even though Arnold does in fact seem [perhaps unwittingly] to argue as much on a number of occasions), righteousness does *reside* in human nature as an indispensable constituent. God then is the "power," as Arnold writes, that "makes for"—begets—this righteousness (or at least accounts for the existence of righteousness in man). The attributes of eternalness and of being "not ourselves" are linked one to the other at the very least, for us readers, by the fact of their "unverifiability," but also by the place they co-occupy in Arnold's vision for the future of mankind. In the chapter from *God and the Bible* called "The God of

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ourselves, by which all things fulfil the law of their being" (409); references in *God and the Bible* are somewhat grounded in biblical quotations and read: "the Eternal, that passeth not" (186), "[the] mighty not ourselves" (186), "the Eternal power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness" (201), "Jahveh was the Eternal Power that makes for righteousness" (221), "the mighty not ourselves which makes for moral order" (226), etc.

[73] From *St. Paul and Protestantism* 36, 37, and *Literature and Dogma* 190, respectively.

Metaphysics," in which against both miracles and metaphysics Arnold asserts his empiricism, a palimpsest of citations encapsulates Arnold's meaning of "Eternal":

> Israel conceived God with a solemnity and a seriousness unknown to other nations, as, 'the not ourselves that makes for righteousness.' 'When I speak of this unique God of Israel,' asked Moses, 'how shall I name him?' And the answer came (we will give it in the words of the literal Latin version, printed under the Hebrew in Walton's noble Polyglot *Bible*): 'Dixit Deus ad Mosen: *Ero qui ero.* Et dixit: Sic dices filiis Israel: *Ero* misit me ad vos.' '*I will breathe* hath sent me unto you;' or, as the Arabic version well renders this mystic name: *The Eternal, that passeth not.* For that this is the true meaning of the name there can be no doubt:—The *I will go on living, operating, enduring.* 'God here signifies of himself,' says Gesenius, 'not simply that he is *he who is*, for of this everyone must perceive the frigidity, but he signifies emphatically that he is *he who is always the same*, that is, the Immutable, the Eternal.' To the like effect Dr. Kalisch, in his valuable Commentary, after reciting the series of more fanciful and metaphysical interpretations, rests finally in this, the simple and the undoubtedly true one: 'He that changeth not, and that faileth not.' (186)

The "true meaning of the name" of God, then, is that which goes on to live, operate, endure (regardless, that is, of the finitude of individual human existence). Arnold's palimpsest reads such that mutability, temporality, death are the characteristics in human experience opposed to the aspect of God's eternalness. The "Eternal," Arnold writes

axiomatically, "did not begin when we began, nor does it end when we end."[74] The unfailing and immutable qualities of God are also interestingly implicated in the "not ourselves."

Early on in *St. Paul and Protestantism* Arnold establishes a dichotomy: that of the "two selves" that runs throughout all four of the works under consideration here, asserting itself now with more, now with less, prominence. The two selves—the two halves of any individual, that is—are "the law in our members" and "the law of the spirit" or, synonymously, "the law of our being."[75] Their relationship is clearly oppositional:

> The lusts of the flesh, the law in our members, *passion*…take naturally no account of anything but themselves; this arbitrary and unregulated action of theirs can produce only confusion and misery. The spirit, the law of our mind, takes account of the universal moral order, the will of God, and is indeed the voice of that order expressing itself in us.... [T]here is one central moral tendency which for us and for all men is the law of our being, and through reason and righteousness we move in this universal order and with it.[76]

The individual's body acts as both locus and motivation for action of the "member," while his (moral) intellect furthers the greater cause of the (universal) "spirit." To the "not ourselves" belongs the law of the spirit, not only because the spirit issues from God who is himself partly the "not ourselves," but also because the law of the spirit involves

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[74] *God and the Bible* 159.

[75] See, for example, in *St. Paul and Protestantism,* the philosophy in its nascent expressions: pp. 31, 43, 47, 58, and so forth.

[76] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 31.

promoting the right of the communal and the universal (that which is not *ourselves*—not *oneself*) up against that of the *self*. The dichotomy between *self* and *other* extends variously throughout Arnold's argument to include, for example, the temporary self (of the flesh) and the permanent self (of the spirit). Here, the immutability and the unfailing quality of the "not ourselves" stand up against the temporality of the self, for the individual meets with a natural end, while the spirit of the "not ourselves"—whether of God or of communal good will—endures, potentially, for the future of mankind. With the law of the spirit (that is, with selfless right conduct) rests "salvation" (yet another plagued term whose meaning in Arnold's work begs elucidation); living according to the law of the spirit is living in "conformity to *the will of God*," to which is consequent "our peace and happiness."[77] This peace and happiness, encompassing but also extending beyond individual existence, comprises "salvation" for humankind, generally. It would seem, then, that the "not ourselves" is incestuously both God and man's greater self—his selfless, universal spirit—for they are both presumably responsible for man's peace and happiness (which notion argues for God's immanence). Or is it the case that God is not really the "not ourselves," but simply its *source*? That is, the "not ourselves" conceived as man's best self—"that power, *not ourselves*, in which we live and move and have our being"[78]—recognizes as its source something that is "none of [its] own getting and making… the free gift of God." Or conversely, God is the "not ourselves" in his capacity to be something outside of man for whose existence man cannot give an accurate account: "the power representing to them that which transcended the limits of their

[77] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 32.

[78] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 50.

narrow selves."[79] The thing itself, or merely its source? Immanent, or transcendent? We cannot tell.

All three features of the "Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness" meet with objections on the grounds of their unverifiability (with the most damning portion accorded to "not ourselves," as it gestures toward the improbability of a purely humanistic teleology). Arnold's empiricism reminds us of an important etiological incongruity: how can we attribute to something outside us the origin/source of a tendency (righteousness) whose very existence is substantiated solely by our experience of it from within (human nature)? Arnold provides no answer. Once we subject the "*Eternal* not ourselves" to the same rudimentary test of empiricism, it comes up against an even more impervious wall of logic. An empiricist does himself a great disservice in insisting on the verifiability of a thing "not ourselves" whose existence cannot be verified in the physical world, if by "not ourselves" we take to mean the source of that which compels us toward righteousness. A similar discrepancy operates in an empiricist's admission of an "Eternal." Since "eternity" is outside the scope of human history and experience, we cannot speak of it in empirical terms. The Newtonian concept of time is irrelevant to an empiricist for whom time runs along a linear trajectory and is a purely intellectual construct—defined and delimited by our experience of it. So what has Arnold given us, thus far? An "Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness" based strictly on its verifiability in human experience is an almost entirely unverifiable thing. Besides which, Arnold does not labor until much later in his discourse (and even then only vaguely) to clarify what exactly he considers to be "righteousness"—the one *almost* verifiable aspect of his definition of God.

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[79] *Literature and Dogma* 182.

Embracing this last characteristic of the definition of God as its most significant—possibly even its most emblematic—might draw us nearer Arnold's meaning, albeit only tentatively. Arnold's teleological vision[80] for the future of mankind involves a state of progressive human perfection (and individual peace/happiness) by way of universal righteous conduct in perpetuity contributed to and experienced by all who inhabit the earth. The "stream of tendency," as Arnold calls it, toward righteousness exists in each individual, is brought to his attention through his conscience, and compels him toward right conduct—toward the universal order—in an effort to "fulfil the law of [his] being,"[81] which fulfillment accounts for his greatest happiness. God's essential association with righteousness derives, according to Arnold, from the ancient Hebrew conception of God: "In Israel's earliest history and earliest utterances, under the name of Eloah, Elohim, *The Mighty*, there may have lain and matured, there did lie and mature, ideas of God more as a moral power, more as a power connected, above everything, with conduct and righteousness, than were entertained by other races."[82] So Israel is set apart from other historical peoples by its ability to "entertain" a source for righteousness. One can't help but exercise a bit of skepticism over Arnold's motivation for reminding us that the ancient Israelites are the source from whom the Judeo-Christian conception of God is

[80]A rather succinct and comprehensive expression of this vision occurs in the chapter from *God and the Bible*, "The God of Experience," in which Arnold attempts, in narrative, to give a genealogical account of "God" in the collective mind of the ancient Israelites: "Who first, amid the loose solicitations of sense, obeyed (for create it he did not) the mighty *not ourselves* which makes for moral order, the stream of tendency which was here carrying him, and our embryo race along with him, towards the fulfillment of the true law of their being?—became aware of it and obeyed it? Whoever he was, he must soon have had imitators; for never was a more decisive step taken towards bringing into human life greater order, and with greater order greater well-doing and happiness" (225-6).

[81] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 36.

[82] *Literature and Dogma* 183.

inherited: Arnold's recollection seems wholly motivated by God's affiliation (according to Arnold) with the concept of righteousness.

The ancient Israelites were not rationalist-empiricists who reasoned[83] that apprehension of the world was possible only through sense perception.[84] Their record of God reflects a belief in an entity that they perceived to be real and living,[85] and really very *national* (a fact Arnold seems conveniently to forget). His version of the Israelites' "Eternal" is of a figure tenuously held before us, whose shape shifts, and by degrees disappears into the human imagination, receding as we approach. The first assertion of the Eternal's existence comes by way of an *essence*: "Righteousness, order, conduct, is for Israel at once the source of all man's happiness, and at the same time the very essence of *the Eternal*."[86] The Eternal next shifts into a "power," whose only claim to concreteness is his authorship of (righteous) human conduct: "Jahveh was the Eternal Power that makes for righteousness, was the center and source of those ideas of moral order and of conduct which are… in human nature, but which pressed on Israel's spirit with extraordinary power."[87] Then he is found to be analogous to a nebulous "law"—

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[83] Arnold insists on the purely experiential and intuitional (over and against the rational) nature of early Judaism: "Israel, at this stage when *The Eternal* was revealed to him, inferred nothing, reasoned out nothing; he felt and experienced…. Happily, when *the Eternal* was revealed to him, he had not begun to speculate" (*Literature and Dogma*, 184).

[84] In explaining Arnold's meaning of "Israel was a poet," apRoberts writes: "…the Hebrew poet tends to 'represent everything under his own figure' without stopping to think whether it is a figure. The figure of Abraham as the 'friend of God' represents a stage in this developing idea of the Eternal, and the Hebrews, by dwelling on the idea of righteousness and the not-ourselves, conceive of the Eternal as an unchangeable power that makes for righteousness. This did not come out of metaphysical speculation, or ratiocination, but out of feeling and experience." And, again, in further explication of Arnold's concept, she writes: 'The Jews' lack of talent for metaphysics constitutes their greatness in religion: they founded religion not on metaphysics but on experience" (*Arnold and God*, 196 and 203, respectively).

[85] For example, in *God and the Bible* Arnold admits that "…Israel…might with propriety call God 'the high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity'…" (156).

[86] *Literature and Dogma* 185.

impressing himself now only upon (and therefore perceptible only through) the inner workings of the human mind: "To please God, to serve God, to obey God's will, means to follow a law of things which is found in conscience, and which is an indication, irrespective of our arbitrary wish and fancy, of what we ought to do."[88] Once the figure of God has moved from conduct to conscience and into the realm of pure emotion—once, that is, "emotion has been applied to morality"[89]—God's dissolution, as Israel conceived him according to biblical record, is almost complete.

Right conduct, Arnold argues, generates happiness.[90] Attendant upon this happiness is a sense of gratitude toward the source (perceived to exist outside man) of this happiness.[91] Salvation in Arnold's discourse is tantamount to the lifelong perpetuation of this feeling of happiness (both for oneself and for one's posterity). Abundant and lasting joy combines with gratitude to raise conceptions of God to an emotional pitch where prayer and praise, even, are directed not at a perceived entity, God, but at righteousness itself. What does it mean, for example, given Arnold's rendition of God, to sing, "My soul, wait thou only upon *God*, for of him cometh my salvation," which Arnold quotes from the Book of Psalms?[92] Salvation, according to Arnold, comes by way of righteousness. So, essentially, the verse could arguably read: "My soul, wait

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[87] *God and the Bible* 221.

[88] *Literature and Dogma* 190.

[89] *Literature and Dogma* 193.

[90] "To feel that one is fulfilling in any way the law of one's being, that one is succeeding and hitting the mark, brings, as we know, happiness; to feel this in regard to so great a thing as conduct, brings, of course, happiness proportionate to the thing's greatness" (*Literature and Dogma,* 191).

[91] "And for such happiness, since certainly we ourselves did not make it, we instinctively feel *grateful*…. And this sense of gratitude, again, is itself an addition to our happiness!" (*Literature and Dogma,* 192).

[92]Psalm 62:5.

thou upon *Righteousness*, for of him cometh my salvation," and the construction would be acceptable in Arnold's disquisition. And again, Arnold quotes from Psalms: "Have I not remembered *Thee* on my bed, and thought upon *Thee* when I was waking,"[93] only to mean: "Have I not remembered *Righteousness* on my bed, and thought upon *Righteousness* when I was waking." If only that which can be verified is admissible in religious discussions, and if God's possible existence is verifiable only by virtue of our experience of him by way of the righteousness to which mankind tends, then how is God *other* than that righteousness itself? If the Eternal is itself righteousness, then absurdity is the unfortunate result of phrases like "the Eternal loveth righteousness,"[94] or "The Eternal loveth the thing that is right."[95] More importantly, the possible existence of God as an entity of the kind the ancient Israelites conceived and which Christianity inherited is so ancillary to God's affinity with righteousness, that it becomes entirely negligible.

Lest the above assessment suppress Arnold's *complete* definition of God, a secondary aspect of his definition should be treated here, even if cursorily. In writing about the ancient Israelites' concept of God, again quoting from the Book of Psalms, Arnold admits into his argument this notion: "God is also, to the Hebrew, the power by which we have been 'upholden ever since we were born,' and whose 'mercy is over all his works.' He is the power that 'saves both man and beast, gives them drink of his pleasures as out of the river,' and with whom is 'the well of life.' "[96] Although this particular strain of the definition receives little attention over the space of several

[93]In his footnote Arnold cites Psalm 63:7. The actual Psalm reads: "For you have been my help, and in the shadow of Your winds I sing for joy."

[94] *Literature and Dogma* 305.

[95] *God and the Bible* 212.

[96] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

hundred pages, and is often either subordinated to the first strain of "the Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness," or is deeply qualified by the context in which it occurs, it nonetheless makes its presence known clearly enough for us to raise an eyebrow. What is this morsel of contradiction? God, who according to Arnold, neither thinks nor loves, who is in fact not identifiable by any association with an emotion or action observable in mankind, now feels mercy, saves man, gives him "drink of his pleasures," and serves as the source of life itself! Little suffices to explain Arnold's choice of the biblical quote. One possible interpretation offers itself when we consider a passage in which, again calling God "the source of life and breath and all things, and of what… [the Hebrews] call 'fullness of life' in all things,"[97] Arnold writes of the Hebrew religious aesthetic in contradistinction to that of the medieval Christian, and in sympathy with Greek thought. This latter association lends the clue to a possible interpretation of an otherwise contradictory admission: Arnold was advocating a Greek sense of *wholeness* caught in the Hebrew tendency to deem divine "the gift of life, and health, and the world…."[98] The Hebrews considered God the source of the "*fullness* of life," and "this way of thinking," Arnold tells us, "was common to them with the Greeks."[99] Almost immediately, however, Arnold reclaims the definition for righteousness by rounding up the list of gifts with "the gift of morals."[100]

Once more, and within the context of a discussion about righteousness, Arnold hints at the possibility of a belief in God as an actual entity—an entity who is the creator

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[97] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

[98] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

[99] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

[100] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

of the universe (an orthodox Christian claim he elsewhere repeatedly derides). He writes of St. Paul that he "asserts the existence of the natural moral law…. [T]he source he assigns to this law is not merely God in conscience, the righteous judge, but God in the world and the workings of the world, the eternal and divine power from which all life and wholesome energy proceed."[101] Yes, the backdrop intimates again a Greek (or possibly Hindu) aesthetic, given, especially, a phrase like "all life and wholesome energy," but now there exists the contrast between the internal conscience and the external world. God "in the world" is no longer merely a construct of the psyche, but an actual "divine power" that has a hand in the "workings of the world." A slip of this sort—irreconcilable with the remainder of much of Arnold's argument, and ironic in light of his open disdain for such beliefs by others—is difficult to ignore. It undermines any affirmation one might make about what, exactly, Arnold believed about God. Ultimately, however, the major part of even this second strain of the definition of God is predominantly driven by the idea of righteousness.[102] For Arnold, the Israelites' perception of God as the source of life itself seems, more often than not, to be tied up with his own notion of God as the source of morality, which connection is captured in the recurring phrase, "the law of their being." God, deeply implicated in a teleology, is the "stream of tendency," the "universal order," and the "Eternal Power"[103] by which "all things [seek to] fulfil the law of their being."[104] Hence, even as other than he who "makes for righteousness," God manages to

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[101] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

[102] "This is the Hebrew's first and deepest conception of God,—as the source of the moral order" (*St. Paul and Protestantism*, 37).

[103] *St. Paul and Protestantism* (10 and 36), and *Literature and Dogma* (409), respectively.

[104] In *St. Paul and Protestantism* Arnold writes: "…the Hebrew race apprehended God,—the universal order by which all things fulfil the law of their being—chiefly as the moral order in human nature…" (36);

inspire a search to fulfill "the law of [one's] being," which is synonymous with the universal order (of right conduct)—the "law of the spirit" previously mentioned. He is the élan vital behind man's search for moral perfection.[105] Arnold's humanism is brought full circle.

Perhaps because Arnold's religious aim is a highly pragmatic one—with a view to delivering the Bible from the possibility of future obscurity—and because the open-endedness of ontological questions does not serve well the real-world utility of his endeavor, Arnold resorts to a wholesale dismissal of ontology. All questions about God's *nature* are continually circumscribed by a discussion of God's *function* (or effect upon humankind). The ancient Israelites' life force is reduced to a "perceived energy and operation, and nothing more."[106] Sequentially, *God and the Bible*, the general intent of which is to respond to some of the objections raised by Arnold's contemporaries to *Literature and Dogma*, occupies the third position in the series of Arnold's four books under discussion.[107] The first three chapters treat, in successive order, the God of miracles, the God of metaphysics, and the God of experience, and are titled accordingly. In "The God of Metaphysics," by way of a partial history of philosophy on the subject of God's nature rather informally rendered, Arnold attempts to tear down the anthropomorphic quality of God that follows from "metaphysical" thought. Citing

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in *Literature and Dogma* the terms shift slightly: "…the Eternal Power, not ourselves, by which all things fulfil the law of their being" (409); and in *God and the Bible* he quotes himself from *St. Paul and Protestantism*: "…God as the stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being" (202).

[105] apRoberts calls God "[t]he term… associated with *morality* and *perfection*" (*Arnold and God*, 189).

[106] *God and the Bible* 186.

[107] *St. Paul and Protestantism* was published in book form in 1870, followed by *Literature and Dogma* in 1873 (which had appeared in serial publication in *Cornhill Magazine* as early as 1871); next came *God and the Bible* in 1875, and finally *Last Essays on Church and Religion* in 1877.

Descartes' "I think, therefore I am," he directs his attention to the concept of "being," identifying it as fundamental to a successful discussion of God's nature, arguing that neither Descartes nor any of the philosophers who follow in his line[108] settle, with any degree of satisfaction for Arnold, the question of what "being" actually is. He contends it is not substance (corporal), nor spirit (of incorporeal breath), nor even existence (evident). The answer, he declares, is offered not by an ontological analysis of the concept of "being," but rather by an etymological investigation of the word—by relying, as he writes, on "our old resource… [of] trying to make out how men have used words and what they meant by them."[109]

Arnold finds the etymological trail a fruitful one. There he traces the English verb "is" to its Greek source: *eimi, eis, esti*; from there he proceeds to the Sanskrit *as-u-s, asu-ra-s,* and *as*, which stand for life-breath, living, and mouth, respectively, to yield "breathe" as the meaning of "is." He again traverses the Greek route to obtain "I beget, I grow" from the Indo-European *bhu*—our English "be." And finally, from the Indo-European *sta* he derives the English "existence" and "substance," and happily concludes: "Our composite verb substantive in English, like the verb substantive in Latin, employs both the root *as* and the root *bhu*; we have *is* and *be*, as the Latin has *est* and *fui.* The French verb substantive manages to employ… the roots *as*, *bhu*, and *sta*, all three."[110] All of which is to convey the idea that "being" is not an abstraction, but rather a concept originating from a very concrete action—that of breathing—just as "is" and "existence" denote growing and standing forth, respectively. Next, by virtue of an expedient theory

[108] Arnold cites, in particular, Clarke, Locke, and Anselm (*God and the Bible*, 179).

[109] *God and the Bible* 182.

[110] *God and the Bible* 184.

of language acquisition and evolution thrown out at the reader, Arnold renders this associated definition of God:

> Whatever affected us by appearing to us, or by acting on us, was first said by a figure to *breathe* and *grow*. The figure was forgotten; and now *as* and *bhu* no longer raised the idea of breathing and growing, but merely of that appearance or operation,—a kind of shadow of breathing and growing,—which these words *as* and *bhu* had at first been employed to convey.[111]

The "being"—the existence, that is—of God, then, springs from our sentience (or illusion?) of his effect upon us. Of course, this image of God, Arnold tells us, "did not of necessity express anything of a thing's nature, [rather] expressed only man's sense of a thing's operation."[112] Advancing a definition that emphasizes the function over and against the nature of God reifies him in this case, while it also strangely averts the likelihood of anthropomorphic conceptions. Too, it underscores the importance of empiricism in religious matters: we affirm about God (and, by extension, religion) only that which we experience. The operation/nature dichotomy Arnold erects, however, allows him too often in his argument to conflate nature with existence. *What* something is and *that* it is are independent considerations. In denying the possibility of real-world discoveries about God's nature, Arnold also denies the probability of his existence; on one pivotal occasion, the vehicle of his denial is the word "being." Eliding the distinction between the verb and noun substantives of "being" affords Arnold the means to maneuver "God" out of existence: because he is not a "being"—an entity—the noun

[111] *God and the Bible* 185.

[112] *God and the Bible* 187.

substantive—whose existence is verifiable in the observable world, he cannot possibly enjoy "being"—existing—the verb substantive.[113] Arnold's is a world of absolute materiality.

One forcible impression made on the reader of this chapter on metaphysics is the disparity between Arnold's assiduous attempt to pin down "God" to a concrete definition verifiable in the physical world via a process of demystification, and the subsequent mist that enfolds his ultimate definition. In mock humility, claiming he suffers from a "want of talent for abstract reasoning,"[114] he denies the "proposition… that we have the idea of an infinite substance, that there is an essential substantial good and great… that a self-existent cause there must have been from eternity…."[115] An infinite substance that is, in essence, "good and great," and that has enjoyed existence from eternity is cousin to "an eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness." The three components of each definition nearly mirror one another! How, if not in content exactly, then at least in their respective abstractness of conception and formulation, are the propositions different from one another? How much more concrete than the proposition Arnold rejects is his own "element in which we live and move and have our being"?[116] Several hundred pages of a disquisition involving the subject of God reveal him, in Arnold's view, to be a thing (if even that) only tentatively animate but unequivocally animating; which does not breathe,

[113] Twice in the midst of his discussion about Descartes' ideas regarding substance and reality and the perfection of God, Arnold invokes the two (admittedly interrelated) definitions of "being," and artfully fuses them into one. While writing about "being" as synonymous with "finite substance" (as noun), he introduces the word "existence" which gestures toward "being" as a verb, but continues, then, to treat it as a noun. An ostensible turn to "being" as tantamount to "existing" (as verb) in the following paragraph belies the content of the paragraph, which actually involves "being" as a "Divine Person who thinks and loves"—as noun. (*God and the Bible*, 178-79.)

[114] *God and the Bible* 179.

[115] *God and the Bible* 179.

[116] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

but loves (righteousness); which cannot make itself known to mankind, but which profoundly affects and inspires him, nonetheless, as the "Spirit… brooding over chaos, moving silently upon the human deep;"[117] which consciously functions as "source," but does not think; which is not an "entity," does not have being, essence, or existence; is not human or even superhuman, not physical, nor metaphysical, but certainly eternal, and just as certainly the life force behind man's greatest strength, peace, and joy.

The fact is that Arnold spends a great good portion of space in debate over a subject whose "existence" is unnecessary for the advancement of his programmatic preservation of Christianity. That God occupies so prominent a place in the Bible is arguably *unfortunate* for Arnold. His effort to eradicate anthropomorphic notions of God from the minds of his readers results in so rarefied a picture of God, that if God isn't very well an intellectual-intuitional construct, he's altogether irrelevant. But, alas, "in the Bible God is everything;"[118] and the Bible to Arnold is everything—everything, that is, requisite to informing and directing righteous conduct, which in its turn leads, in the short term, to individual peace and joy, and in the long term, to the perfection of humankind. Here again the humanist stands before us. Because Arnold does not find a way to sever the God-Bible-righteousness relationship, and because two of these three constituents are indispensable to his program, he is left to deal with the third. He does manage, at least, in the interest of his goal, even if somewhat covertly, to subordinate God to righteousness. A relationship between God and righteousness is nowhere *necessarily given* in the Bible, and certainly not in the manner nor to the measure of Arnold's insistence. Conceivably, given a theological/biblical discussion, there are important, verifiable, and cogent means

[117] *God and the Bible* 218.

[118] *God and the Bible* 156.

of addressing God's "function" in man's life that exclude the idea of righteousness. Except that Arnold's argument is driven by a desire to persuade his readers quite specifically to lead righteous lives, the particular relationship of God to righteousness Arnold delineates, as well as the significance he assigns to righteousness in religious matters, seem otherwise arbitrary. Furthermore, the affiliation of righteousness with God anchors righteousness with unquestionable significance in the minds of Victorian Christians, because after all, God is everything in the Bible.

Righteousness -

What, then, we might ask, does Arnold mean by righteousness (which he calls "the master-word of the Old Testament"[119]) since it occupies so paramount a position in his vision to "save" Christianity? Righteousness serves as the conceptual nucleus around which all the key players of Arnold's religious discourse gather and fall into place: religion, Judaism and Christianity, God, Jesus, salvation, eternal life, the Bible. A close examination of the concept of righteousness at work in Arnold's writing not only reveals the centrality of its position in his religious thought, but also underscores its primacy in Arnold's mind over both God and Christianity to the extent that, by and by, it becomes clear that rather than rescuing Christianity, negotiating for and securing righteousness in the interest of human progress is the actual object of Arnold's program. In brief, righteousness at its most basic is what we might commonly understand as goodness toward another[120]—as morality; but, then, Arnold makes little attempt to further define

[119]*Literature and Dogma* 175.

[120]Arnold quotes Paul in this regard, for example: " 'I exercise myself,' he told Felix, *'to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men continually.'* To the Hebrew, this moral order, or righteousness, was

the term, except to say that righteousness can be identified by its likeness to Jesus' "method" of "sweet reasonableness"—a sort of "right" living, persuasive because expressed by way of a gentle temper. Judaism (that is, the Judaism practiced by the ancient Israelites) harbingered righteousness, and Christianity (by virtue of Jesus' example) perpetuates it. God is the otherwise unknowable source of righteousness; religion is the structure that supports righteous living; the Bible is the vehicle of delivery, informing man of the particulars of righteousness; salvation is best understood as the joy and peace experienced by a righteous individual, and eternal life, then, is the state of salvation extended to humankind in general and in perpetuity. This, in sum, is the basic arrangement of the components of Arnold's religiosity, held together by his primary notion of righteousness. But it represents a finely extracted picture of both righteousness and his religious principles in relationship to one another. It is a picture drawn *despite* the apparent confusion behind his thinking, and the subsequent contradictions in his words.

Without regard for circumscription or qualification, Arnold first defines righteousness by way of a number of superlative statements that point up the significance of the term in Arnold's thought as a guiding principle of life.[121] The most common among these is righteousness defined as three-fourths of life.[122] Using conduct

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pre-eminently the universal order, the law of God" (*St. Paul and Protestantism,* 23). Again, a few pages further, he writes: "The miserable sense of sin from unrighteousness, the joyful witness of a good conscience from righteousness, these are points in which Puritanism and St. Paul meet" (33).

[121] Variously throughout the four texts, Arnold refers to righteousness and/or conduct as: "true life," "true heaven," "more necessary than anything else," "the object of religion," "the main part of human life," "men's universal concern," "the basis of religion," and, of course, "three-fourths of life."

[122] Among numerous other examples across the four texts in discussion is one, for example, that reads: "…that with which not less than three-fourths of human life is indeed concerned,—*righteousness*" (*Literature and Dogma*, 248).

synonymously with righteousness, Arnold writes repeatedly about its far-reaching influence in passages like the following:

> [Difficulty in religion] …extends to rightness in the whole range of what we call *conduct*; in three-fourths, therefore, at the very lowest computation, of human life…. Eating, drinking, ease, pleasure, money, the intercourse of the sexes, the giving free swing to one's temper and instincts,—these are the matters with which conduct is concerned, and with which all mankind know and feel it to be concerned.[123]

Hence, righteousness involves all aspects of an individual's life[124]—his outward actions as well as the inward modes of thought and emotion. The only sphere of life Arnold excepts from his formulation and considers independently of righteousness comprises the remaining one-fourth: culture.[125]

Over and over again, Arnold assures us that righteousness is natural. Not only is it part and parcel of human nature,[126] but it also mysteriously unites us to the cosmos—to what Arnold terms the "universal order." Early on in his discourse he writes that "there is one central moral tendency which for us and for all men is the law of our being, and

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[123] *Literature and Dogma* 173.

[124]"…conduct is the main part of human life" (*Literature and Dogma*, 373).

[125]Arnold writes at length about the distinction between culture and conduct, particularly in the Preface to *Literature and Dogma.* He returns to the distinction in the conclusion, calling attention there to the connection between the two—to the synergistic relationship between the two that renders possible the "wholeness" of life. Speaking to this last point, Ruth apRoberts writes that "[t]he stylish little poem-in-prose that is the 'Conclusion' of *Literature and Dogma* reconnects the three-quarters of life that is conduct back to the one-quarter that is not conduct but intellect; reconnects art and science to man's singleness of being" (*Arnold and God,* 215).

[126]As one of a myriad examples, in *God and the Bible*, Arnold writes that: "…the saving power of righteousness is a profound law of human nature" (232).

through reason and righteousness we move in this universal order and with it."[127] He claims that righteousness is a rational concept, and experientially knowable and known, and that it is "the very law and ground of human nature so far as this nature is moral."[128] As a rhetorical move, locating righteousness within human nature ensures its essentialness. As an essentialist construct, righteousness transcends cultural and temporal confines. It consequently enjoys a close relationship with the individual in which firstly, its "existence" is rendered undeniable for (because essential to) the individual;[129] secondly, its function is readily accessible by the individual; and finally, the "fruits" of its success are felt to be "natural" for the individual.[130] Arnold's characterization of righteousness as intimately connected with human nature is perhaps an attempt to place his polemic on a platform apart from and above that shared by the respective partisanships of Victorian rationalists, scientists, theologians, and dogmatists, as well as those of the various Christian churches and sects. References to human nature, however, are clearly problematic in a text whose intended readership (also serving as partial subject matter) has been identified from the start as consisting of Victorian Christians.[131] With

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[127] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 32.

[128] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 30.

[129] In *God and the Bible* Arnold writes: "…[T]he ideas of moral order and of right, which are in human nature, which appear in a recognizable shape, whatever may be their origin, as soon as man is sufficiently formed for him to have a history at all, to be intelligible to us at all, to stand related to us as showing a like nature with ourselves,—that these ideas so laid hold upon Israel as to be the master-element in his thoughts, the sheet-anchor of his life. And these ideas have such a range that they take in at least three-fourths of human life" (214).

[130] Again, from *God and the Bible*: "As far as a man's experience reaches, it comes out, and comes out ever more clearly, both by the operation of the law itself and by man's inward sense of affinity and response to it, that our welfare, which we cannot but pursue, is inextricably and unalterably, and by no procuring of ours but whether we ill or no, dependent on conduct" (191).

[131] Arnold hoped to inspire the middle and working classes of Victorian Englishmen who had been raised with the Christian faith. In *Literature and Dogma,* for example, he portrays his audience as "those whose

each mention of "human nature," Arnold's argument grows progressively less and less persuasive.

An intellectual with Arnold's knowledge of history might be hard pressed to deny that a most central human "tendency" as revealed by the historical record is the destructiveness of humankind, so very inimical to Arnold's concept of righteousness. Where in that record is "righteousness" predominant, ubiquitous, or even consistently occurring, let alone *natural* (so as to imply an ability to transcend historical circumstance)? Indeed Arnold misunderstood (or perhaps misrepresented) human nature. And for all his assurances that righteousness is natural,[132] Arnold goes a good, long way in demonstrating the actual difficulty and unnaturalness of righteousness. In the "Religion Given" chapter of *Literature and Dogma*, he writes that conduct "is the simplest thing in the world as far as *understanding* is concerned; as regards *doing*, it is the hardest thing in the world…. [S]urely the difficulty of religion is great enough by itself, if men would but consider it, to satisfy the most voracious appetite for difficulties" (173). Perhaps he slips when he writes that "men by themselves fail of righteousness"—that they require "identification with Jesus Christ" [133] in order to "reach it," as he says. But a direct observation like the following is no mere slip: "…to indulge our ordinary self is the most natural thing in the world. But Christianity is not natural."[134] Clearly, mention of an "ordinary self" returns us to a point made earlier about Arnold's

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attachment to Christianity is such, that they cannot part with it, and yet cannot but deal with it sincerely" (143).

[132] "[A]ll things seem to us to have what we call a law of their being, and to tend to fulfil it, is certain and admitted" (*Literature and Dogma*, 190); "…a tendency, which is *not ourselves*, but which appears in our consciousness, by which things fulfil the law of their being" (*Literature and Dogma*, 191).

[133] *Literature and Dogma* 59-60.

[134] *Literature and Dogma* 123.

conception of the self as divided between a lower and a higher self, and it would be easy to argue that Arnold is here referring simply to the difficulty one faces in triumphing over one's "lower" self in the effort to achieve one's "higher" self, but the emphasis, one might rightly argue, rests with the second half of the observation—with the *unnaturalness* he ascribes to Christianity.

A correct understanding of the relationship Arnold constructs between righteousness and God must take into account Arnold's interpretation of the ancient Israelites' conceptions of God. This conceptual relationship of ancient Israel-to-righteousness-to-God involves a dizzying reflexivity that results from the particular position the concept of righteousness holds in the relationship: as the binding force between God and ancient Israel, such that their actual, historical relationship is subverted. That is, one could claim that Arnold's God is borrowed from the ancient Israelites (that he emerges from the pages of the Old Testament); however, since Arnold's God is defined entirely by his relationship with righteousness (rather than his relationship with a historical people), unless Arnold also secures for the ancient Israelites a like relationship with righteousness, his borrowing will have been fruitless!

So central is Arnold's notion of righteousness to conceptions of God and Christianity that he rewrites biblical "history" so as to reflect a picture of the ancient Israelites' religion as wholly organized around the concept of righteousness. Israel, Arnold tells us in *God and the Bible*, "is the great, standing, unsilenceable, unshaken witness to the necessity of minding one's ways, of conduct" (215). And of the Hebrew God he writes: "This is the essential character of Israel's Eternal: to love the thing that is

right, to abhor that which is *evil."*[135] According to Arnold, the religion of the ancient Israelites came to life in the following way:

> [T]he first man who… controlled the blind momentary impulses of the instinct of self-preservation, and… the impulses of the sexual instinct, had *morality* revealed to him; so in like manner we may say, that the first man who was thrilled with gratitude, devotion, and awe, at the sense of joy and peace, not of his own making, which followed the exercise of this self-control, had *religion* revealed to him. And, for us at least, this man was Israel.[136]

Arnold interprets the covenantal promise of (national) salvation made by God to Abraham in *Genesis* as made not to "the seed of Abraham," but, rather, to righteousness, directly: "[T]he promises were to *righteousness,* and… what *tendeth to life* was not the seed of Abraham taken in itself, but *righteousness.*"[137] Hence is Israel's value for Arnold established—as exclusively germane to the development of Judeo-Christian notions of righteousness. Arnold argues that the Hebrew religion was founded on the very simple notion that "conduct brings happiness,"[138] but that by and by, despite the fact that the "Hebrew race found the revelation needed to breathe emotion into the law of morality and to make morality religion,"[139] as the religion evolved into "too much a national and

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[135] *God and the Bible* 213.

[136] *Literature and Dogma* 194.

[137] *Literature and Dogma* 208.

[138] *Literature and Dogma* 205.

[139] *Literature and Dogma* 205.

social affair,"[140] it became a religion of "mechanical exterior performance, in which the heart has no share."[141] Arnold names the historical period approximately a thousand years before the appearance of Jesus "the golden age of Israel,"[142] and argues that thereafter occurred a tremendous "change from the clear certitude of the golden age"[143] as the Hebrew race, he writes, fell away from righteousness:

> Poor Israel!... It was revealed to thee that righteousness is salvation; the question, what righteousness is, was thy stumbling-stone. Seer of the vision of peace, that yet couldst not see the things which belong unto thy peace! With that blindness thy solitary pre-eminence ended, and the new Israel, made up out of all nations and languages, took thy room.[144]

What remained, then, for Arnold, was "the true Israel…the bringer-in and defender of the idea of *conduct,* Israel the lifter-up to the nations of the banner of *righteousness.*"[145] The "new Israel" became Christianity, brought in by the messiah who secured "the future of righteousness itself."[146]

Although the figure of Jesus narrowly escapes subordination to the concept of righteousness (for obvious reasons to be explored further ahead), God and orthodox Christianity are openly subordinated to the concept, and so much so that a strange, slow effacement of both begins to surface as *Literature and Dogma* proceeds, page after page.

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[140] *Literature and Dogma*, 223.

[141] *Literature and Dogma* 216.

[142] *Literature and Dogma* 205.

[143] *Literature and Dogma* 208.

[144] *Literature and Dogma* 393.

[145] *Literature and Dogma* 387.

[146] *Literature and Dogma* 214.

Not surprisingly, no clear, definitive relationship between righteousness and God is discernible in Arnold's work. The connections are loose at best, at worst illogical. Without belaboring a point made earlier about the problematic nature of Arnold's ideas with respect to the "existence" of God, it is worth mentioning here that expressions about his relationship with righteousness again raise ontological and etiological questions. God is at one moment a nebulous force or source that makes righteousness possible—described as the divine law, the eternal order,[147] "the centre and source… of moral order and conduct"[148] to which humankind "conforms" in its attempt to achieve righteousness—and at the next, he is a more palpable (or at least more anthropomorphic) entity in possession of a will, capable of an operation, a king whose kingdom is of righteousness.[149]

Arnold's long, etymological investigation into the name of God leads him again to the doorstep of righteousness, as is evinced by the following few lines from *Literature and Dogma* wherein the kernel of his thought regarding God and righteousness is given in sum, and his gift for rhetoric is given full play:

> God or Eternal is…, at bottom, nothing but a deeply moved way of saying 'the power that makes for *conduct* or *righteousness*.' 'Trust in *God*' is, in a deeply moved way of expression, the trust in the law of conduct; 'delight in *the Eternal'* is, in a deeply moved way of expression, the happiness we all feel to spring from conduct. (193)

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[147] *Literature and Dogma* 43 and 24, respectively.

[148] *God and the Bible* 221.

[149] *Last Essays on Church and Religion* 156.

The biblically resonant mesodiplosis—"a deeply moved way"—with each iteration shifts its object, until the erasure of God (as apart from righteousness) is complete by the third. By degrees, "God" slips from the possibility of being the "power" behind conduct, to becoming "the law" of conduct, and finally conduct itself, such that he no longer stands as an entity unto himself, unrelated to conduct. With one brief passage, God is almost entirely effaced. And with regard to Christianity (a far less formidable entity than God), the unequivocal quality of Arnold's words in the following excerpt speak for the depth of his conviction concerning the primacy of righteousness:

> Now, Christianity is that which righteousness really is. Therefore, if something called Christianity prevails, and yet the promises are not satisfied, the inference is that this *something* is not that which righteousness really is, and therefore not really Christianity.[150]

If, as earlier stated, Christianity is a tool for human progress and perfection in Arnold's estimation, then the tool (as Arnold conceived it) reaches fulfillment in the figure of Jesus. As perfected man, Jesus brings to fruition Arnold's humanistic vision of righteousness. He is master of the right manner, and treats the right matter (righteousness). Arnold's representation of Jesus as emblematic of righteousness spares Jesus subordination to righteousness in Arnold's discourse in a way that is not possible for the more multifarious categories "God" and "Christianity." Surely, one must first accept Arnold's straightforward denial of the orthodox Christian doctrine of Jesus' divinity. But past that hurdle, even the expressions that bring together Jesus and righteousness are formulated differently from those that treat righteousness in connection with God and Christianity; in his last chapter of *Literature and Dogma* Arnold announces

[150] *Literature and Dogma* 397.

that "no other conception of righteousness will do, except Jesus Christ's conception of it" (400). Vis-à-vis Arnold's depiction of Jesus, righteousness experiences a reversal of its hitherto held principal position. The exercise of conscience and the practice of self-renouncement, which Arnold writes are "the method and secret of Jesus,"[151] "*are* righteousness"[152] (emphasis his). The figure of Jesus is not depicted for its utility to righteousness, but rather, righteousness is defined by what Jesus (happens to have) taught and exemplified (which material is, of course, subject to interpretation). To the matter of "conscience and self-renouncement" Arnold adds Jesus' manner of "sweet reasonableness,"[153] thereby completing the picture of his figure.

But herein—in this very figure of Jesus—lies the crux of Arnold's trouble. This "lover of righteousness,"[154] Arnold claims, came to renew the Old Testament "tendency" toward righteousness so long ago lost by the ancient Israelites: "For the true greatness of Israel was *righteousness*; and only by an inward personal religion could the sense revive of what righteousness really was—revive in Israel and bear fruit for the world."[155] Jesus' method entailed self-examination, self-renouncement, mildness, and inwardness.[156] And with these sibling ideas of inwardness and inward personal religion—ideas that occupy almost the whole of Arnold's *solution* to saving Christianity—rest the portion of Arnold's contradictions most damning to his argument. Arnold tells us that "all men by

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[151] *Literature and Dogma* 401.

[152] *Literature and Dogma* 401.

[153] *Literature and Dogma* 405.

[154] *Literature and Dogma* 319.

[155] *Literature and Dogma* 223.

[156] *Literature and Dogma* 220 and 228.

themselves fail of righteousness,"[157] and that success along the rough travail of righteousness can be attained only by virtue of "identification with Jesus Christ."[158] Identification with Christ? The kind of empathy Arnold here invokes and deems requisite to achieving righteousness also requires the kind of *belief* in the object of empathy that Arnold has worked so hard, across hundreds of pages, to hollow out.

Religion -

The term "religion" (which Arnold calls "the most loveable of things"),[159] appears no less troubled by confusion and irreconcilable qualities than the terms God, Christianity, or righteousness. His process of definition is equally plagued with vacillations here as it is elsewhere. A few principles with regard to the term, however, can be rescued from the fog, if for no other reason than the frequency of their occurrence in his work, or the urgency of his tone in insisting upon a number of qualities. A brief look at his definition of religion is particularly useful in aiding our understanding of the actual shape of the Christianity he tried to preserve. Primary among these qualities of religion is its practicality.[160] In a passage in *Literature and Dogma* that equates ethics with religion (defined as ethics with emotion superadded), Arnold again reveals his aversion against metaphysics, while he also emphasizes his pragmatism: "Ethical means *practical*, it relates to practice or conduct passing into habit or disposition. Religious also means *practical*¸ but practical in a still higher degree; and the right antithesis to both

[157] *Literature and Dogma* 59.

[158] *Literature and Dogma* 60.

[159] *Literature and Dogma* 109.

[160] On page 201 of *Literature and Dogma*, for example, he writes that religion is "a matter where practice, after all, is everything, and theory nothing."

ethical and religious, is the same as the right antithesis to practical: namely, *theoretical*" (176). The passage serves well the purpose of understanding Arnold's definition of religion not only because of the parallel he draws here between ethics and religion, and for the significance he assigns to the practicality of religion, but also because of the *distinction* made between ethics and religion and because of the mention of the *process* of religion as Arnold conceives it: "[P]ractice or conduct passing into habit or disposition."

No phrase is more frequently repeated in Arnold's definitions of religion than that religion consists of "ideas of moral order and right"[161]—ideas concerning ethics; religion is, quite simply, "that which binds and holds us to the practice of righteousness."[162] Clearly, the difference between ethics and religion is a difference in degree, not in kind: "Religion… is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling; the passage from morality to religion is made when to morality is applied emotion."[163] The emotion, of course, must be authentic and deep, deeply enough felt to compel an individual to live religiously. And although Arnold regards the object of religion—conduct—"the simplest thing in the world as far as *understanding* is concerned," its actual practice "is the hardest thing in the world."[164] In fact, the process of a life led religiously, with right conduct as its guiding principle, seems, for Arnold, of tremendous difficulty: "…the difficulty of religion is great enough by itself, if men would but consider it, to satisfy the most

[161] God and the *Bible* 209. He again repeats the phrase on page 214: "the idea of moral order and of right, which are in human nature;' on page 217 he posits that religion was "reached" when "the ideas of conduct, of moral order and of right, had gathered strength enough to declare and establish themselves." He recognizes "the religion of Israel as a religion in which ideas of moral order and of right were paramount" (219). And he repeats his claim on page 227: "Religion, we know, arises when moral ideas are touched with emotion," extending the quality of morality also to Christianity: "The seriousness of Christianity in morals has been its charm and its power" (385).

[162] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 33.

[163] *Literature and Dogma* 176.

[164] *Literature and Dogma* 172.

voracious appetite for difficulties. It extends to rightness in the whole range of what we call conduct; in three-fourths… of human life."[165] The process by which an individual "bind[s himself] to righteousness, or else a serious attending to righteousness and dwelling upon it"[166] is characterized by a strenuous life of devotion, asceticism, habit. It is the life exemplified, in Arnold's estimation, by Paul (but which, upon examination, more closely resembles the life of meditation, self-control, and austerity advocated by Hinduism). The point of departure from Paul and his life of asceticism is represented by Arnold's emphasis on the individual's own efforts to achieve a life of righteousness. The effect of a particular passage in *St. Paul and Protestantism*, for example, is that in Arnold's desire to liberate his own brand of Christianity from Puritanism—attacking at once Calvinism's tendency to anthropomorphize God and its penchant for superstition—he points up the significance of man's independent effort in a religious life:

> [T]he Calvinistic scheme, rests with all its weight on the assertion of certain minutely described proceedings on God's part, independent of us, our experience, and our will; and leads its recipients to look, in religion, not so much for arduous progress on their own part, and the exercise of their activity, as for strokes of magic…. (19)

Hence, Arnold seems to argue, a religious life—a life of conduct—entails an "arduous progress on [our] own part," rather than dependence on outside aid.

The qualification of conduct as comprising three-fourths of life introduces to the reader the portion of life that Arnold deems outside the scope of religion: culture. The juxtaposition of conduct to culture throws into relief the actual object of Arnold's

[165] *Literature and Dogma* 173.

[166] *Literature and Dogma* 176.

religious pursuit: human perfection: "speaking strictly… there go to this [human perfection] certain things—art, for instance, and science—which the Bible hardly meddles with."[167] Culture and conduct together complete Arnold's picture of life and subserve the aim of human progress; culture escapes the scope of religion, while conduct becomes its purpose: "[W]hen we are asked, what is the object of religion? —let us reply: *Conduct.* And when we are asked further, what is conduct? —let us answer: *Three-fourths of life.*"[168] And what, then, is the purpose of living according to right conduct? Why should righteousness occupy so much of the mental and practical matter of peoples' lives? The "road of religion," Arnold tells us in *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, is "the way of peace" (57). What he deems the "highest possible satisfaction" for humankind comes by way of "succeeding, going right, hitting the mark in this great concern [of righteousness]."[169]

But the religion to which Arnold here refers is that of the ancient Israelites, while the religion he sets out to rescue from possible peril is Christianity. In Arnold's view the difference between the two is akin to the one he delineates between ethics and religion. Whereas the religion of the Old Testament was, for Arnold, a "matter of national and social conduct mainly,"[170] that of the New Testament is "a *personal religion*; religion consisting in the inward feeling and disposition of the individual himself, rather than in the performance of outward acts towards religion or society."[171] The distinction between

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[167] *Literature and Dogma* 149.

[168] *Literature and Dogma* 175.

[169] *Literature and Dogma* 180.

[170] *Literature and Dogma* 215.

[171] *Literature and Dogma* 217.

a religion of "outward duties" and one of "inward dispositions"[172] marks Christianity as a religion in which the old Hebraic ideas of moral order and conduct take root *empirically* and therefore bear *personal*, even potentially *emotional*, fruit. In Arnold's work, even this difference between the two religions paradoxically points to a similarity, as it points up a shared quality: the centrality of the concept of righteousness. Internalizing "outward duties" renders them more personal, more compelling, more influential in the life of the individual; the difference, then, is much like the difference for Arnold between ethics and religion: one of degree. In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold argues that Christianity's capacity first to personalize the importance of righteousness and next to disseminate that message characterizes its main departure from Judaism:

> Let us take the effect of Christianity in the world. And if we look at the thing closely, we shall find that its effect has been this: Christianity has brought the world, or at any rate all the leading part of the world, *to regard righteousness as only the Jews regarded it before the coming of Christ.* (398)

The especial achievement of Christianity in the world, then, is its promulgation of the Hebraic message of righteousness.[173] In fact, righteousness is so fundamental to the Christian faith in Arnold's estimation, that the faith altogether dissolves and dissipates without righteousness as its nucleus.[174] By his treatment of Christianity as synonymous

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[172] *Literature and Dogma* 217.

[173] In *God and the Bible* Arnold writes of Christianity that "its seriousness… in morals has been its charm and its power" (385).

[174] As previously quoted, in *Literature and Dogma* Arnold proclaims that "Christianity is that which righteousness really is. Therefore, if something called Christianity prevails, and yet the promises are not satisfied, the inference is that this *something* is not that which righteousness really is, and therefore not really Christianity" (397).

with righteousness—as bound one to the other at the level of essence—Arnold accomplishes a great deal for his doctrine of humanism. The parallel Arnold draws between Christianity and righteousness in one fell swoop liberates Christianity from Christian dogma, and from any possible claim made over it by a Christian church or sect, past, present, or future. Freed from the fetters of time, culture, and organized religion, this universalized Christianity is delivered into the general service of humankind. Christianity, Arnold tells us, is "the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection."[175]

[175] *Literature and Dogma* 232.

CHAPTER 3

Arnold's Christianity: An Analysis

The Christianity Arnold ultimately attempts to rescue is of a character that will aid in the effort to achieve humanistic progress. The 1873 Preface to *Literature and Dogma* begins with Arnold's articulation of the perceived crisis to which his religious oeuvre is a response—the crisis of change (and imagined eventual annihilation) "befalling the religion in which we have been brought up."[1] His effort to save Christianity is an effort, at base, to save the Victorian moral fabric (and by extension a particular standard of *culture*). Christianity becomes the object of preservation for no other discernible reason than that it happens to be "the religion in which" Victorian Christians were "brought up." That is, the conventional tenets of Christian belief are so incidental a part of Arnold's picture that one can argue the Christian religion is not at all what is at stake for him. As religion proper, Arnold's Christianity qualifies as a strange admixture of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and unorthodox Christianity. In *Last Essays on Church and Religion* he gives us a summary of his religious theory[2] which, despite the absence of a comment on the nature of God, reads as comprehensive:

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[1] *Literature and Dogma* 147.

[2] Various scholars have offered summary statements of Arnold's theology, culled from the four major religious essays in question here. Among them, the explications contained in Ruth apRoberts' *Arnold and God,* Sidney Coulling's chapter 7 of *Matthew Arnold and His Critics,* William Robbins' *The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold,* and R. H. Super's *The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold* are particularly useful. apRoberts' analysis is shaped by her view of Arnold as humanist and literary critic; Coulling's style of reportage allows him to stand above his interpretation better than most others; and Robbins applies E. A. Burtt's *Types of Religious Philosophy* to his explanation of Arnold's religious philosophy to conclude that Arnold was an "ethical idealist."

> Eternal life? Yes, the life in the higher and undying self of man. Judgment? Yes, the trying, in conscience, of the claims and instigations of the two lives, and the decision between them. Resurrection? Yes, the rising from bondage and transience with the lower life to victory and permanence with the higher. The kingdom of God? Yes, the reign amongst mankind of the higher life. The Christ the son of God? Yes, the bringer-in and founder of this reign of the higher life, this true kingdom of God. (156)

He lists the components of doctrinal Christianity—eternal life, judgment, the kingdom of God, Christ as the son of God—so that they approximate Hindu philosophy. (Clearly, he would not have offered an open admission of such a tendency, especially not to a middle-class Christian readership.) Arnold's early reading—possibly as early as 1845, but certainly by 1848—of the *Bhagavad Gita* establishes his familiarity with Hinduism.[3]

Although a proper treatment of Hinduism (and of Hinduism in Arnold's work, more specifically) lies outside the purview of this study, given not only Arnold's familiarity with the philosophy but also his extensive use of many of its principles throughout both his prose and poetry (whether overt or veiled), its influence on Arnold's religious thought cannot go entirely untreated. From Arnold's very conception of the entity "God," down to his prescription for daily living, Hinduism is implicated. So, too, one might argue, are Judaism and Christianity. The difference, however, resides in the fact that Judaism and Christianity are united first and foremost as Abrahamic religions by a belief in a transcendent God. Basic to Christian theology—more basic even than an

[3]Kenneth Allott. "Matthew Arnold's Reading-Lists in Three Early Diaries." Victorian Studies, vol. 2, 254-266, 1959.

admission of Jesus as divine or a belief in the holy trinity—is the defining character of God as transcendent, and the subsequent relationship of man to God. Without this primary principle, the Abrahamic religions qua religions are undone. Hindu cosmology accounts instead for God's immanence as well as his transcendence. From this fundamental difference between the Abrahamic and dharmic religions spring all the subsequent differences of the two systems of thought, as do all the departures of Arnold's theology from that of conventional Christianity. A conception of God as *delimited* to a position of transcendence (as Christianity conceives of him) is a fact rather irreconcilable with the conception of him as also immanent. Here is the fact Arnold conveniently either overlooks and/or hopes will be overlooked by his readers. The success of his argument depends on a successful intellectual circumvention of this fundamental difference of conceptions of God between a monotheistic and a panentheistic religion. But as far as Arnold is able to evade this principal difference, he is able to move his humanistic agenda and its rhetoric freely from one system to the other, because seeming parallels abound between Hindu and Christian theologies. Arnold borrows from Hinduism (as he does from Christianity) what best serves his humanism, with great facility avoiding whatever portion of the philosophy (the concept of reincarnation, for example) does not suit his purpose. This is an avoidance easily achieved, of course: he is neither advocating Hinduism, nor even admitting to its use.

The Two Selves -

The whole of Arnold's religious discourse is predominated by a small number of topics, namely the nature of God, the concept of righteousness, the concept of the two

selves, the examples of Paul and Jesus, the importance of the *Bible*; these are the primary preoccupations of the several hundred pages of his religious writing. Their treatment is undertaken in the eudaemonic interest of human development—to aid in the prescription of a way of life that will lead to peace or happiness. The linguistic fog in which Arnold enshrouds the character of the Judeo-Christian God (purportedly an attempt to liberate him from all anthropomorphic attributes) allows God a safe seat at the center of Hindu cosmology as the amorphous *Brahman*—the "Spirit…brooding over chaos, moving silently upon the human deep."[4] The etymology he uses with which to define God as that which simply breathes and grows in *God and the Bible* is borrowed from Sanskrit—the *Bhagavad Gita's* original language. God is "the Eternal that passeth not," the "I will go on living, operating, enduring" [5] of *God and the Bible* who seems to have taken form from the *Gita's* "Supreme Imperishable."[6] He remains otherwise "unexplored and inexpressible."[7]

If we understand *dharma* (derived from the *Vedas*), with its literal meaning in Sanskrit as that which upholds or supports, to signify at base the underlying order in nature[8] (that upholds or supports humankind), then a first connection between dharma and Arnold's notion of righteousness is irrefutably established. Variously throughout his work Arnold characterizes righteousness as "the ideas of moral order and of right, which are in human nature," "the true law of [our] being," "a profound law of human nature,"

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[4] *God and the Bible* 218.

[5] *God and the Bible* 186.

[6] *Bhagavad Gita*, chapter 8, verse 3.

[7] *Literature and Dogma* 200.

[8] See the *Mahabharata,* Books 11 and 12.

"the universal order," "the eternal order," "[the] one central moral tendency which for us and for all men is the law of our being,"[9] and the like. A second connection between dharma and righteousness hinges on the close relationship between Arnold's synonym for righteousness—conduct—and a definition of dharma collateral to the first: the social order, religious duty, right conduct, or virtue to which an individual is obligated. Dharma, then, is both the universal moral order as well as the means to living in harmony with this order. Hence, the Hindu concept of dharma with its two definitions constitutes for Arnold's sense of righteousness a most fortunate marriage of purpose and method—one he could never hope to find in almost any system of thought that might call itself "Christianity." For if God's transcendence is the principle most fundamental to Christianity, the sinful nature of humankind is possibly its second most fundamental (a principle necessarily related to the first). The biblically given record of the "laws of human nature" is in fact a record of *dis*order and *un*righteousness, and *these* are the qualities of humankind that determine its relationship with the biblical God. The union of natural with social order, especially as expressed together in one term, is entirely alien to the Bible, and a concept which Arnold imports into Christian dogma. The issue of human nature resurfaces when we turn our attention to yet another of Arnold's concerns: the nature of the self, and his subsequent theory of the two selves. Although Arnold's theory probably derives at least in part from dualistic conceptions of mind/body (St. Augustine superadded to Plato and Aristotle), the main line of argument regarding the two selves follows a course closer to that of Hinduism than that of ancient Greek thought or early Christianity.

[9] Respectively, *God and the Bible* 214, 225, 232, and *St. Paul and Protestantism* 30, 54, and 32.

A brief return to the excerpt in the previous chapter that encapsulates Arnold's general theory of religion at once furthers our understanding of his ideology and facilitates our examination of his concept of the two selves. In his theory, presented in query-and-response format, Arnold assigns to the query portion a list of conventionally Christian tenets: "Eternal life…. Judgment.... Resurrection…. The Kingdom of God…. The Christ the son of God." In the response portion he answers each question with affirmation upon affirmation regarding the two selves, such that these basic tenets of Christian doctrine are turned on their heads to confirm a philosophy of the self—of the "two selves"—that few would characterize as Christian over and against Hindu:

> Yes, the life in the higher and undying self of man…. Yes, the trying, in conscience, of the claims and instigations of the two lives, and the decision between them…. Yes, the rising from bondage and transience with the lower life to victory and permanence with the higher…. Yes, the reign amongst mankind of the higher life…. Yes, the bringer-in and founder of this reign of the higher life, this true kingdom of God.[10]

So, essentially, Arnold's "religion" consists of a life of devotion to the actualization of a higher self—liberated from and victorious over the lower—extending universally to humankind, exemplified by the life and teachings of Jesus.

The *Gita* adopts its concept of the two selves from the *Upanishads*. The idea that the self consists of two—two components, entities, natures, etc.—is ubiquitous in the *Upanishads*.[11] Contingent upon translation and interpretation, the dichotomy is

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[10]*Literature and Dogma* 156.

[11]The idea of the two selves appears, for example, in the Brihadaranyaka, the Mundaka, and the Katha Upanishads, but in the last, most relevantly (for example, in Chapter 3, the two selves are represented as

expressed variously in terms of an empirical and a transcendent self, a lower and a Supreme or Higher Self, individual consciousness and Ultimate Consciousness, and so forth. The object of meditation is to achieve union between the two, such that beyond physical existence even, an individual soul (what is known in Hinduism as jiva) unites itself with the universal soul (Atman). Atman is synonymous with God, and communion with God means "liberation from the endless cycle of births and deaths"[12]—a state of pure non-existence—nirvana. A similar philosophy of the self appears in Arnold's work, expressed in terms of a division between the flesh and the spirit:

> [T]o follow that central clue in our moral being which unites us to the universal order, is no easy task…. [E]very man is conscious of an opposition in him between the flesh and the spirit…. [A]ll the forces and tendencies in us…require to be harmonized with [our proper moral tendency the desire of righteousness], because this aims directly at our total moral welfare,—our harmony as moral beings with the law of our nature and the law of God…. The lusts of the flesh, the law in our members… take naturally no account of anything but themselves… The spirit, the law of our mind, takes account of the universal moral order.[13]

Despite the conventionally Christian construction of an opposition between the flesh and the spirit, from its first appearance in *St. Paul and Protestantism* Arnold's concept of the two selves cited above reads as a conflation of Hindu and Christian beliefs, and

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light and shade: "Like light and shade there are two selves, one here on earth imbibes the law of his own deeds: the other, though hidden in the secret places of the heart, dwells in uttermost beyond.")

[12]Mathur, D.C. "The Concept of Action in the Bhagavad-Gita." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 35, no. 1 (Sept., 1974), pp. 34-45.

[13]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 31.

underscores what again stands at the base of his departure from conventional Christianity: the notion of immanence vs. transcendence. If we accept that a belief in God as transcendent is, in fact, fundamental to a system of thought called Christianity, then it follows that, according to Christianity, what God transcends is humankind and human experience; division exists between God and man because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness; this separation is remedied only by way of Jesus' propitiation. The Hindu philosophy of the self involves a division between the individual jiva and the universal Atman, whereas division in Christian doctrine exists between man and God. One might argue that the two doctrines of the self are essentially the same, as Atman is one with God, except that the Christian view of humankind does not account for anything in an individual's nature that "unites [him] to the universal order." In fact, according to Christian dogma, man's nature, by virtue of its sinfulness, is the reason for his separation from God. In Hinduism, however, since Atman resides in everyone, all individuals have the potential to become one with God. Arnold locates a natural, universal tendency in humankind—a "central clue in our moral being"—which, with great effort, can be accessed and put to use in the interest of individual perfection. The idea, if not definitively Hindu, is certainly not Christian.

In his philosophy of the two selves quoted above, Arnold is responsible for yet a second conflation which further complicates the issue of the self. To the conventionally Christian distinction between the flesh and the spirit (between what he elsewhere calls the temporary self and the permanent self, which also occurs in Hinduism)[14] Arnold conjoins another: the distinction between individuals and humankind. His treatment of the flesh as

[14]The distinction occurs variously and repeatedly throughout *Literature and Dogma*, particularly in the chapter called "The Testimony of Jesus to Himself."

synonymous with the individual and the spirit as synonymous with humankind oddly mixes Christianity with Hinduism in a way that adulterates both. The treatment is particularly problematical because Arnold superimposes the Hindu idea of the individual against the universal onto Bible verses taken out of context. He writes in furtherance of his philosophy that:

> Paul talks of a man sowing to *his* flesh, because each of us has of his own this individual body, this *congeries* of flesh and bones, blood and nerves, different from that of every one else, and with desires and impulses driving each of us his own separate way; and he says that a man who sows to this, sows to a thousand tyrants, and can reap no good harvest. But he talks of sowing to *the* spirit; because there is one central moral tendency which for us and for all men is the law of our being, through reason and righteousness we move in this universal order and with it.[15]

Arnold cites the source of his reference as Galatians 6:8, which reads: "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." Emphasizing with the enthusiasm of italics the contrast between "his flesh" and "the spirit" (which he fails to capitalize), he introduces into Paul's discourse the Hindu distinction between the individual and the universal spirit. Its context recovered, the verse reveals the actual distinction it means to communicate between man's flesh and the Spirit of *God* (hence the capitalization). The verse immediately before establishes the contrast between man and God: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."[16] And the context

[15] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 31.

of the entire chapter is the state of man's sinfulness and its consequent burden. If Arnold means to imply that the universal spirit *is* God, then the picture of immanence is complete and Arnold's philosophy is by no means Christian.

Nor is it Hindu. What Arnold calls "the opposition in [man] between the flesh and the spirit" Christianity conceives of as the condition of humanness in a *whole* self—composed of flesh and spirit. Without one or the other half, the individual ceases to be "human" in Christian terms. Hinduism's idea of an individual consciousness up against the Ultimate consciousness means to account for two distinct (even if mutually dependent) consciousnesses—two separate "selves"—the lower warring against the higher, their relationship defined in terms of surrender and conquest. Arnold's solution to the divided self entails harmonizing the two halves. He attributes no "inherent evil to the flesh and its workings."[17] Instead, his philosophy calls for moderation—a regulation of the "arbitrary…action" of the "lusts of the flesh" so as to achieve harmony between the flesh and the spirit. Hindu philosophy by contrast is quite clear about the necessity of *overcoming* the lower self by the effort of the higher, in pursuit of nirvana. Moderation, regulation, harmony and the like, with their definitively Greek resonance and their tendency to preserve both sides of the self, are decidedly Arnoldian additions to borrowings from both Hinduism and Christianity. This *effort* to actualize a single "self" from two constitutes the most significant difference between Hindu and Christian conceptions of the self. Quite simply, the spirit of God immanently present in all individuals enables *from within* the Atman's potential triumph over the jiva, while God's transcendence reminds the Christian of the utter wretchedness of the human condition,

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[16]Galatians 6:7.

[17] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 31.

whose salvation requires transcendent, *outside* aid. Here again Arnold walks his own course by admixing the two ideologies. The humanist clearly indicates the individual as the source of his own salvation, assuring us that one can "find the energy and power to bring all those self-seeking tendencies of the flesh… into obedience to the central tendency [of righteousness],"[18] which notion shares an affinity with the Hindu belief in the individual's own ability to achieve nirvana, but then he offers up Paul and Jesus as the examples to follow. The life of meditation and yoga leading to nirvana advocated by Hinduism stands a world apart from the life of asceticism led by Paul. But, once more under Arnold's pen, the two merge. An understanding of the subtle yet critical difference between the respective philosophies underlying the two walks of life requires a closer look at Paul.

St. Paul -

Arnold states that the object of *St. Paul and Protestantism* "is not religious edification, but the true criticism of a great and misunderstood author."[19] In the interest of recommending Paul as indispensably valuable to the spiritual life of Victorian Christians, Arnold sets out to liberate Paul from both received and contemporary Protestant interpretations of his work. While the Protestantism which "has so used and abused St. Paul is coming to an end," the teachings and figure of Paul as exemplary of spiritual living belong to the "real" Paul whose "reign," Arnold claims, "is only beginning" (5). Thus, he endeavors to disengage Paul's "fundamental ideas… from the elaborate misconceptions with which Protestantism has overlaid them" (5), focusing his

[18]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 32.

[19]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 46.

efforts on reinterpretations of the concepts of predestination, justification, sanctification, and faith.

Arnold tells his readers that for the *content* of his treatise he will "follow Puritanism's example" in applying to the book of Romans "as the chief place for finding what [Paul] really thought on the points in question" (20), with the emphasis, in his *method*, directed by the "scientific value of Paul's teachings" (42) rather than toward settling ontological questions involving the identification of Jesus as the Logos or the Messiah. Already, Arnold has so narrowed and qualified what can be considered "Pauline" that the possibility of even a full (let alone a complete) picture eludes us.[20] But Arnold can be taken to task strictly on his own terms. He at least brings the object of his treatise—the attempt to extricate Paul from Protestantism—to a fitting conclusion: "The three essential terms of Pauline theology are not, therefore, as popular theology makes them: *calling, justification, sanctification*. They are rather these: *dying with Christ, resurrection from the dead, growing into Christ*."[21] And, subordinating all other conventionally "Pauline" issues—predestination, justification, sanctification, faith, the nature of sin, the law, the Logos, the Messiah, etc.—to the "central matter," he defines this central matter of Paul's thought as: "*The righteousness of God, the non-fulfillment of it by man, the fulfillment of it by Christ*" (42). This much alone—what Arnold himself

[20]In the chapter on Arnold in his book called *The Poetics of Belief*, Nathan A. Scott notes that Arnold's "rendering of Pauline thought… [cannot] for all its occasional brilliance, be considered even minimally adequate, given its well-nigh total neglect of what is so much of the essence of Paul's theology—as it involves his analysis of sin, his very high Christology, his doctrine of grace, and his doctrine of the Church" (59).

[21]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 50. Just a few pages later he states in almost identical terms: "The three cardinal points in Paul's theology are not therefore, we repeat, those commonly assigned by Puritanism, *calling, justification, sanctification;* but they are these: *dying with Christ, resurrection from the dead, growing into Christ*" (56).

provides us—suffices to lay bare his deep misunderstanding (or perhaps misrepresentation) of the thoughts and teachings of Paul.

The Hellenic and the Hebraic enjoy a fortuitous union in the character of Paul as rendered on Arnold's pages. Both intellectual and religious, philosophical and practical, a mystic, an ascetic, a man of conviction and action, righteous in deed as well as in conscience, equally stirred by rational as by emotional promptings, Paul is Arnold's consummate spiritual hero, as close to Jesus' perfection as history's record allows. What Arnold calls the "twofold life" of Paul is an Arnoldian notion that undergirds with consistent force all the details of Paul's character that Arnold brings to the reader's attention. He admires Paul for the fact that his "piercing practical religious sense [is] joined to his strong intellectual power,"[22] and attributes to this twofold quality Paul's ability to "discern and follow the range of the commandment, both as to man's actions and as to his heart and thoughts, with extraordinary force and closeness" (24). In Arnold's view, this harmonious marriage between the intellectual and the religious halves of Paul's mind accounts for the psychological state that enables such comprehensive and fluid movement between the man's inner and outer worlds—between the realm of his thoughts and those of his actions. Paul's "religious perception"[23] is further divided again into two synergistic halves between a side Arnold calls "mystic," responsible for Paul's preoccupation with questions of "faith, light, love," and the other side—the "moral"—to which Arnold appropriates Paul's "hearty desire for righteousness," responsible for "the frequent, nay, incessant lists, in the most particular detail, of moral habits to be pursued

[22]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 24.

[23]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 65.

or avoided."[24] This is Paul's life of asceticism. Taken together, Paul's mystic and moral sides make for a state of righteousness—both mental and physical—aided by the intellect, which Arnold holds up for his readers as an example by which to live.

Even if we were to confine an honest investigation of Paul's character and teachings to Romans as Arnold's gesture mentioned above more or less calls upon us to do, we would be likely to find there a doctrine and a character (to the extent it is possible to discover the "character" of a man from his formal writings) different from the ones Arnold depicts. Given an a priori perspective of his work informed by a paradigm partly Greek, partly Hindu, Paul is an obvious choice as the Arnoldian exemplar of human progress and perfection; otherwise, the choice is ironic. Arnold singles out Paul not only because he is the author of three "Puritan" ideologies of which Arnold is intent upon disabusing his readers (predestination, justification, sanctification), but also because Arnold reads Paul as a deeply *righteous* man of *action*, devoted to a life of *asceticism*—all immensely valuable characteristics in Arnold's view. Paul is further useful because he writes about human nature and sin, and because he demonstrates the *internal* life of Christianity, directed by a deep love for Jesus. Furthermore, the character Arnold delineates exemplifies perfectly the Greek taste for a balanced man of thought and action—a man who leads a *twofold* existence—while his doctrine of human nature as outlined by Arnold neatly supports the Hindu conception of the *two selves*. But the principle of bifurcation and its accompanying practice of categorization, which together underlie the great portion of Arnold's treatise on Paul, ultimately damage Arnold's purposes in ways entirely different from one another.

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[24] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 24-5.

In the interest of keeping the discussion of biblical matter limited to what Arnold himself permits, we might remember that he outlines the "essential terms of Pauline theology" as "*dying with Christ, resurrection from the dead, growing into Christ,*" and gives us the "central matter of [Paul's] thoughts" as "*[t]he righteousness of God, the non-fulfillment of it by man, the fulfillment of it by Christ*." He subordinates the significance of the former list to the latter, remarking that as "important as these ideas are in Paul… the importance is only secondary, compared with that of the great central matter…."[25] Let us concede as willingly to Arnold's depiction of "the essential terms" and the "central matter" as to that of their relationship, without even expecting an explanation of the categories "essential terms" and "central matter" (which explanation, incidentally, is nowhere to be found). In its original context, the essential terms of Pauline theology as Arnold defines them are held up against the essential terms as defined by "popular theology"—calling, justification, sanctification. A clear understanding of the terms according to Arnold cannot be derived from his text, as he does not provide it; what remains to us is only an approximate understanding puzzled out from intimations. And despite Arnold's habit of openly naming intellectual adversaries, even explanations of the conventional terms he ascribes to popular theology find neither master nor home by way of legitimate citations, and hence neither the explanations nor their sources can be verified. What, then, is left to us with which to rest confidently in knowledge or to distinguish meaningfully between Arnold's terms and those of "popular theology"?

If we take Arnold's list at face value—as much as is possible—and piece together his meaning of Paul's essential terms as it is given in hints and fragments over hundreds of pages, we might conclude that by "dying with Christ" Arnold meant to indicate a

[25] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 42.

willingness to relinquish a self-serving life synonymous with the aforementioned concepts of the life of the flesh, the life in our members, the life of the lower self. By implication then, "resurrection from the dead" indicates a spiritual rebirth into a new life, while "growing into Christ" serves as a prescription denoting the *kind* of new life one is to lead: the life of the spirit, the life of the universal moral order, the life of the higher self, a life of Christ-like perfection.

The conventional terms—calling, justification, sanctification—are for Arnold laden with meanings whose authors are unknown and untraceable—ghosts of Puritans and Protestants appearing on one page with one name, and on the next with another. To attempt an explanation of the terms is to enter the landmine of biblical interpretation. Moreover, the terms in Arnold's list are not parallel to those of popular theology: "resurrection from the dead" and "growing into Christ" can be read as the beginning and end markers of *one* continuous process, whereas the second and third terms Arnold opposes to these—justification and sanctification—are taken, in conventional Christianity, to be independent albeit related ideologies. These two textual obstacles notwithstanding, if we were to argue that Arnold stacks the deck against popular theology by citing but *one* interpretation of these terms, we might simply cite another.

Such futile argumentation aside, if in fact "dying with Christ" is tantamount to a willingness to self-sacrifice, by what means does an individual arrive at such a willingness? Arnold himself points to a mysterious "power that worketh in us"[26] that inspires such willingness. Surely, here is one possible interpretation of "calling."[27]

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[26]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 38.

[27]1 Corinthians 1:9 reads: "God [is] faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"; Galatians 1:6: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the

Although, in the lists above, Arnold's "resurrection from the dead" stands in parallel opposition to "justification" in the list belonging to popular theology, Arnold also reads biblical justification as "dying with Christ." Without citing the source except to call it Protestant, Arnold quotes and contests the accepted interpretation of justification as "giv[ing] your hearty belief and consent to the covenant of grace; Receiv[ing] the offered benefit of justification through Christ's imputed righteousness," further contesting that it might mean "rest[ing] in the finished work of Christ the Saviour," and offering, instead: "[justification] mean[s]: *Die with him!*"[28] If the conventional Christian understanding of justification can be taken to mean an acceptance of an individual's sinfulness—an acceptance that the only way to *rise* above one's current condition is through Jesus, and thus be "justified" before God—then there is but a small step between that interpretation of justification and one that argues for a spiritual *rebirth* into a new life that exemplifies Jesus, a "dying with Christ." And as for sanctification, it comes nearest in the list of terms to Arnold's own "growing into Christ," regardless of which definition of sanctification is adopted. Arnold's derisive tone in the footnote regarding the Puritan translation of the term from Greek is perhaps misguided: "The endless words which

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grace of Christ unto another gospel"; Ephesians 1:18: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"; Ephesians 4:1: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"; 1 Thessalonians 2:12: "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory"; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"; 2 Timothy 1:9 reads: "Who hath saved us, and called [us] with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"; 2 Peter 1:10: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall"; and Hebrews 9:15 reads: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions [that were] under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

[28]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 46.

Puritanism has wasted upon *sanctification*, a magical filling with goodness and holiness, flow from a mere mistake in translating; …[sanctification] means *consecration*, a setting apart to holy service."[29] Indeed, one definition of sanctification—in both its colloquial use in the English language as well as in conventional Christian interpretations in general, such as Paul's use—does stand for a setting apart of a thing or person for a holy or religious use. The act of setting apart or of being set apart initiates the process of *growing into* a consecrated (or if you will a "holy" or spiritually perfected) state—a "growing into Christ." One definition of the term brings to light its purpose, while the other describes the process that brings the purpose to fruition; they neither negate nor exclude one another.

By rewriting Paul's essential terms into "dying with Christ, resurrection from the dead, growing into Christ," Arnold has given us essentially a humanistic doctrine of progress and perfection: relinquishment of self-serving desires in the interest of progress toward selfless, Christ-like perfection. Or, in Hindu terms: surrender of the self-seeking jiva to the universal Atman, in the attempt, ultimately, to become one with Brahman. Clearly, the difference between Arnold's terms and those of popular theology can be read, as it is above, to indicate the possibility—the probability even—of its being merely semantic. If the difference is authentically conceptual, then the concepts and their relationships must undergo an exegetical process of clarification; but as they appear on Arnold's pages, the concepts themselves remain unclear and their relationships incestuously entangled. And Arnold is hardly prepared, as he has repeatedly assured us, to enter the quagmire of theological debates over concepts because in truth the difference

[29]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 68.

between his terms and those of popular theology is actually, and quite characteristically, a *practical* one.

Arnold's objection to popular theology's list of essential terms is fueled by a tendency he reads in Puritan and/or conventionally Protestant interpretations of Paul to deprive humankind of its own potential for righteousness, attributing to God's grace alone any possibility for human righteousness. For Puritanism, Arnold argues, only what "God has done and does… is the great matter."[30] He complains, with a degree of anxiety painfully apparent on the page, that for Puritanism "[w]hat there is left for man to do, the human work of righteousness, is secondary, and comes in but to attest and confirm our assurance of what God has done for us."[31] And since Arnold's preoccupation, where Christianity is concerned, is with "the human work of righteousness" and little else, clearly he is anxious. He is troubled by the notion that in order to believe an individual must be "called" into belief; that being "justified" to God requires accepting that "all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags,"[32] such that one must depend on *another*—on Jesus—for reconciliation with God; and that such reconciliation entails a life of constant abidance—a life of "sanctification"—where one sets oneself aside *daily* for the work of righteousness, in remembrance of one's insurmountable imperfection. Such constructions unsettle the humanist and his project, for if "the desire to work righteousness is… [a] saving grace… applied by the Holy Spirit to the elect"[33] rather than a propensity intrinsic to humankind, then by what practical means will Arnold call his

[30] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 28.

[31] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 28.

[32] Isaiah 64:6.

[33] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 28.

readers to action? How will he persuade them to live active lives of righteousness, in accordance with biblical standards? How, ultimately, will he empower them to rise above their current historical moment and move forward in the name of progress, combating complacency and the degradation of culture?

Arnold's effort to elucidate the difference between his interpretation and that of popular theology's on the subject of Pauline theology is tremendous, even if unsuccessful, and its result copious. Hence, one puzzles at the notion that there is yet a "central matter"—a matter of even greater importance, as he admits—additional to the elaborate treatise on Paul's essential terms, which Arnold has not treated, and which in fact he never treats. We will recall that he articulates the central matter of Paul's thoughts as "the righteousness of God, the non-fulfillment of it by man, the fulfillment of it by Christ." But why, if ideas about calling, justification, and sanctification are all secondary to this central matter, does the matter receive a single mention and nothing more in an oeuvre exceeding 800 pages? Arnold names the matter, and then moves on. His particular articulation of Paul's primary concern in Romans, the juxtaposition of the three elements—God, man, Christ—with righteousness as the focal point, ironically underscores the kind of relationship among the three elements Arnold so passionately denies. The formulation cannot but serve to emphasize the transcendence of God, to remind the reader that the source of God's transcendence is his righteousness, against which Arnold next offers us man's total sinfulness—his "non-fulfillment of [righteousness]"—against which Arnold offers us Christ. The formulation invites a double opposition of Christ to man: first, Christ is successful in his fulfillment of righteousness, and, next, he stands apart from man—"non-fulfillment…by man…

fulfillment… by Christ." Did Arnold mean to indicate that Jesus was *other* than man? If his intent in opposing *man* to *Christ* in this context was to establish a difference between the *historical record* and an *ideal*, then he might have said as much. But he says nothing whatsoever in the way of clarification or exposition. Small wonder that Paul's "central matter" receives scant attention in *St. Paul and Protestantism* and never reappears in Arnold's other religious texts.

But Paul generally, and Romans more specifically, are not especially well-suited for Arnold's purposes in the first place. Let us concede to Arnold that the subject of righteousness occupies the heart of Paul's teaching, and that Romans serves as the nucleus of that body of edification, and furthermore, that the relationship of God, man, and Jesus is the central concern of Romans. By quantifiable measures alone (if we were to consider merely the frequency with which words occur or a subject appears), Romans is a book of sixteen chapters (rather long by New Testament standards) devoted to asserting over and over again the unrighteousness of humankind and the unmerited grace of God in the face of that unrighteousness. God's absolute transcendence, man's utter sinfulness, the relationship of these two states to one another, and their unbridgeable disparity (excepting Jesus' intercession) are subjects nigh to impossible to escape in Romans. That Arnold sidesteps them is a testament at best to his complete misreading, and at worst to his misrepresentation, of the text.

With eagerness Arnold establishes and ascribes to the character and teachings of Paul the dichotomies of the two selves, the flesh and the spirit, Paul's intellectual and religious sides, his practical Hebraism and his mystical Hellenism, and so forth. Without dignifying too much by way of counterargument the practice of reducing a man's

character into quantifiable halves, let us borrow from Arnold and call the practice as unverifiable as it is reductive, and move forward. What pertains to Paul's *teachings*, however, are of course not entirely unverifiable. Across the pages not only of Romans, but of Ephesians, Colossians, and Corinthians, too, Paul gives us what there is to be interpreted from him on the matter of dichotomies. He alludes to an "old self" and a "new self" (their relationship expressed always in terms of progress and chronology, but never hierarchically as in "lower" and "higher"). The change from one state to the other is a spiritual one—a spiritual renewal manifested in man's behavior, entirely dependent for its genesis on a supernatural source.[34] A closely related dichotomy is that of the "inner" or "inward" man whose conduct follows his conscience up against the Israelite bound by "outward" Mosaic law.[35] The vehicle of change from one state to the other arrives again from without, in the form of Jesus, with the individual's *faith* serving as proper proof for the existence of the change.[36] Finally, the dichotomy that compels from

[34]God's will and his image, Jesus' sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit's inspiration are all co-actors in a process over which man's will and power are secondary to those of supernatural origin. Romans 6:6 reads: "For we know that our old self was crucified with [Christ] so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Other examples include Ephesians 2:15: "[Christ] abolish[ed] in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace…; Colossians 3:10: "…the new [man]…is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him"…; Ephesians 4:24: "…put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness," and so forth.

[35] Romans 2:28 and 2:29 read: "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God."

[36] Romans 3:22-27: "Even the righteousness of God [which is] by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: the he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where [is] boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." Romans 7:4 reads: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, [even] to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." More directly, 2 Corinthians 5:17 and 18 read: "Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things

Arnold not only the greatest measure of effort expressed in quantity of words but also the gravest of his misunderstandings regarding Paul's teachings is the dichotomy between the flesh and the spirit—or, rightly, Spirit. Paul does in fact denote a difference between his *will* and his *flesh*—his desire for righteousness and the human inability to act upon that desire.[37] But he never once divides himself—the "self"—between an entity called flesh, and another called spirit; the human being is not divisible in this way in Pauline terms. In the same verse where he writes of the spiritual quality of God's law of righteousness, he writes that he himself *is* flesh: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). The allusion to a war between his mind and his "members" ("But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" [Romans 7:23]), is a depiction of an internal struggle belonging to the condition of humanness. Pauline references where flesh is opposed to Spirit are references to *man's* flesh and *God's* Spirit;[38] that is, man *as* flesh and God *as* Spirit; hence, the capitalization, in almost every instance in the New Testament of the *King James Bible*, of the word Spirit (which Arnold conveniently alters).

Arnold faults Calvinism and Methodism for "laying all stress on a wonderful and particular account of what God gives and works for us, not on what we bring or do for ourselves, "[39] as if there is evidence in any of Paul's writings—in Romans especially—to the contrary. Did not Arnold himself characterize the central matter of Romans as the

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are become new. All things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation."

[37]Romans 7:15-23.

[38]See, for example, Romans 8:4-5; Ephesians 3:16.

[39] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 17.

righteousness of God, man's non-fulfillment of that righteousness, and Jesus' fulfillment of it? What is the function of this last element—of Jesus' role—in that context, if not as a reminder of man's total inability to "bring or do for [himself]," and as the proper solution to that shortcoming? One after another of Paul's pronouncements on the nature of man asserts only man's infirmity, wretchedness, unworthiness, and total unrighteousness before God by virtue of man's very nature.[40] If he were able to "bring or do for [himself]," what value, then, could be claimed for God's grace?[41] Writing of Jew and Gentile alike, as Paul says, he proclaims that "[t]here is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10-12). By Paul's estimation, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). There is no possibility in Pauline theology for man to "bring or do for [himself]" anything profitable in the interest of his own salvation. Thus is the quality of divinity ascribed to Jesus requisite to the Christian mythos: in order to be reconciled to God, man requires an outside source—one outside the self certainly, but also, and perhaps more importantly, one outside the human race altogether. Only under this interpretation does the formulation of *God's-righteousness-against-man's-non-fulfillment-of righteousness-against-Christ's-fulfillment-of-righteousness* work successfully.

But Arnold's conception of human nature and sin is clearly not Pauline. Strenuous effort—*human* effort—is all that Arnold requires for the proper eradication of

[40] See Romans 2:1, 2:11, 3:9-12; 3:19-20; 3:23-24; 5:12; 7:14-25; 9:16; 11:32; *Ephesians* 2:1-3.

[41] Romans 11:6: "And if by grace, then [is it] no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if [it be] of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

sin: "Sin is not a monster to be mused on, but an impotence to be got rid of. All thinking about it, beyond what is indispensable for the firm effort to get rid of it, is waste of energy and waste of time."[42] But Arnold neither defines sin, nor points to the shape of the "effort to get rid of it," except to say that expiating one's sins requires "fire and knife, cautery and amputation," [43] which, in essence, is a call to repression. While on the one hand he stresses the importance of "the keeping of the commandments of God,"[44] on the other he rants against the "stringency" of "the Mosaic code," complaining that it "increased the feeling of dismay and helplessness; it set forth the law of righteousness more authoritatively and minutely, yet did not supply any sufficient power to keep it."[45] So we are in possession of a nature whose "central moral tendency" is toward righteousness, but which nonetheless requires God's commandments—set down in an authoritative code—for its fidelity to that naturally occurring central tendency. But the code must also be accompanied by a "power to keep it," lest we lose heart under the burden of its weighty authority. The difficulty of keeping to the code comes from the sinful "law of nature"[46] (apparently this is the same nature that possesses a moral tendency), which nonetheless is offset by our natural tendency toward righteousness. If Arnold had made the effort to reconcile his contradictions, a cogent philosophy of human nature and sin might have emerged. As they stand, however, the contradictions only

[42] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 35.

[43] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 66.

[44] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 28.

[45] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 32.

[46] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 32.

serve to point up the difficulty of marrying Pauline theology to Greco-Hindu moral humanism.

In referring to Paul's view of human nature, Arnold mentions that Paul sees man as inherently flawed, commenting that "when we are working against one fault, a dozen others crop up without our expecting it,"[47] but he does not think to question why, and to attempt an answer. He openly acknowledges Paul's notion that one instance of unrighteousness stands for the general unrighteousness of mankind—that we are all guilty of falling short of God's grace, all the time. He reminds us that "Paul did not need James to tell him that whoever offends on one point is… guilty of all;" and that this "guilt" is imputed and extended to each individual simply by virtue of his humanness: "[T]hough I may know nothing against myself, yet this is not enough, I may still not be just."[48] But he does not question the conception of human nature and sin that constitutes the necessary basis for such a philosophy. Why should right conduct prove so terribly painful to a nature that possesses a "central moral tendency" so that it "requires an effort out of all proportion to the actual present emergency"[49] to live righteously? Could it be that having rejected Protestantism's version of Paul's conception of human nature and sin, Arnold is yet unable to escape the influence and implications of that version? Perhaps there is little outside of Protestantism's version of Paul that Arnold can use as material for his own rendition without also contradicting himself.

When Arnold, in characterizing Paul's moral side in contradistinction to his mystical side, cites Paul's "frequent, nay, incessant lists, in the most particular detail, of

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[47]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 36.

[48]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 36.

[49]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 66.

moral habits to be pursued or avoided,"[50] he misconstrues Paul's lifestyle for asceticism (or moralism), whose intent is *habituation* in the interest of progress. Distinguishing Paul from other Israelites, Arnold lauds "his conviction that the commandment is holy, and just, and good; and also his desire to give effect to the commandment, to *establish* it."[51] Paul does claim in chapter 7 of Romans that he desires to keep God's law, but the emphasis in the passage is on his absolute *inability* to do so (as inherently sinful man), without any implication that there exists an attempt to *establish* the law. In fact, the subject of the entire chapter (and, most would argue, its message) is how the law was erected in order to remind man of his eternal inability to keep to it—as an unmistakable marker dividing the holiness of the law from the sinfulness of man: "[S]in, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:13-14). Paul despairs over the condition of being human, crying: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). In recognizing the inescapability of the human condition, he bemoans his own wretchedness—his utter impotence in the face of his desire for righteousness: "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do….. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."[52] Arnold refers to Paul's "repeated and minute lists of practices and feelings to be followed or suppressed"[53] as though they constituted for Paul a means to a better existence, a vehicle

[50] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 24.

[51] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 24.

[52] Romans 7:19 and 21.

[53] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 47.

of habituation with an end in mind. Paul's life of sanctification—of setting himself apart for God's purpose—was lived *daily*. If, as Arnold says, Paul's greatest message was in fact to die with Christ, Paul *daily* undertook this spiritual death ("I die daily" [1 Corinthians 15:31]) in observance of the fact that there is neither progress nor possibility of perfection for unrighteous man, no potential to transcend the human predicament, only an incessant, repeated *abidance.* Arnold attributes to Paul a "practical religious sense" responsible for his success in "seeking righteousness… and finding it,"[54] little remembering that Paul assures us *no one* seeks righteousness, let alone finds it.[55]

Quoting Paul in Galatians, Arnold lists "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control" as "man's right aim."[56] Are we to believe that a philologist of Arnold's caliber innocently overlooked the phrase preceding the list: "the fruit of the Spirit"? Paul composes a list of the *fruit,* the naturally occurring result of the workings of the *Holy Spirit*, not the *intent*—a consciously exerted effort—on the part of man. Arnold has misappropriated the agency of the Spirit to man, eliding man's position as *object*. Paul's Epistles show no evidence of a man with a "right aim" regarding his habits, or one who might have aspired to a particular state of existence, like a Hindu yogi in pursuit of nirvana. Although Arnold's depiction of Paul's actions may not be inaccurate, in his eagerness to provide his readers with a biblical model for righteous living he misreads Paul's motivations and draws misguided and misleading conclusions about his ideology: "[H]e goes back upon himself again and again, he marks a duty at

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[54]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 69.

[55]Romans 3:11 reads: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."

[56]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 30. Galatians 5:22-23 reads: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance…."

every point of our nature, and at points the most opposite, for fear he should by possibility be leaving behind him some weakness still indulged, some subtle promptings to evil not yet brought into captivity."[57] A man who openly admits that he is the "chiefest of sinners,"[58] irremediably guilty of doing the very things he does not wish to do, and who preaches that God's law is present to remind him that he can never do otherwise, wants to bring his "promptings to evil… into captivity"? Here indeed, in Arnold's interpretation, is the Hindu concept of the surrender of the lower self to the conquest of the higher, given us in the language of a man whose unfortunate answer to the human condition was suppression and captivity.

Jesus and Individual Inwardness -

When Arnold turns to discussing Paul's mystical side—a discussion that brings us to the heart of Arnold's solution for saving Christianity—he touches upon the subject of *belief*, developing out of that discussion a theory of *inwardness*, and what emerges is his attempt to establish a Christian *ethos* proper to informing the life of righteousness he advocates, for "Christianity," he argues, "is, first and above all, a temper, a disposition."[59] But Arnold's exposition reads as both confused and confusing, and whereas the presentation of Paul's moral side leads simply to contradictions born of misunderstanding or misrepresentation, the account of his mystical side results, quite characteristically, in a foggy mess befitting both the subject and Arnold's difficulty in treating it. The confusion

[57]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 25.

[58]1 Timothy 15:1 reads: "This [is] a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

[59]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 118.

that surrounds the subject of belief and Christian "inwardness" in Arnold's work makes an early appearance in a description of Paul's mystical side:

> The voluntary, rational, and human world, of righteousness, moral choice, effort, filled the first place in his spirit. But the necessary, mystical, and divine world, of influence, sympathy, emotion, filled the second; and he could pass naturally from the one world to the other. The presence in Paul of this twofold feeling acted irresistibly upon his doctrine. What he calls 'the power that worketh in us,' and that produces results transcending all our expectations and calculations, he instinctively sought to combine with our personal agencies of reason and conscience.[60]

Here Arnold's most pressing conceptual problem seems to be, once again, a misappropriation of agency, and next a misalignment of the elements in the two lists he juxtaposes. Arnold's distinction between a world he calls "human" and another he calls "divine" is both false and confusing. Voluntary, rational, and human are readily paired against necessary, mystical, and divine; however, righteousness, moral choice, effort, influence, sympathy, and emotion together compose, at best, an amorphous mélange. Perhaps Paul was indeed both powerfully rational and deeply spiritual, and was able to engage both aspects of his character in equal measure. But to say that Paul passed "naturally from the one world to the other" is to cast the two worlds in a parallel relationship with one another which, in truth, they do not have. Furthermore, while moral choice, effort, sympathy, and even emotion can lay claim to correlative human actions observable in the physical world, we can hardly extend to "influence" the same quality of verifiability. Unlike the other elements, influence is conceived of as purely causal.

[60] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 38.

Finally, having precluded all things supernatural from a discussion of religion, Arnold now allows them reentry by referring to a "divine world of influence," and conjuring images of "results transcending all our expectations and calculations." The allusion to Ephesians 3:20 ("Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us") represents one of Arnold's most flagrant misreadings of scripture. Paul's prayer—a doxology—continues into the next verse that brings the chapter to an end: "Unto him [be] glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21). Paul offers a prayer of praise and thankfulness for God's grace "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," and also for his power that works to inspire man—the power of the Holy Spirit. If "the power that worketh in us" is accessible to man and manipulable such that he can "combine [it] with our personal agencies of reason and conscience," then it has degenerated from Paul's conception of God's power into a mere human attribute—a personality trait that "produces results." Once again, Arnold has usurped the power of agency Paul ascribes to God, and has delivered it into man's hands.

Neither are the two sides of Paul (as Arnold depicts them here) parallel, nor are their elements divisible. But it serves Arnold to divide them in this manner because, as the perfectly balanced man who possesses both rationality and mysticism, Paul simultaneously negotiates morality and belief, stands on the threshold between the old Hebraic order and the new Christian ethos, bridging the gap between the outer and the inner man. And the mystical-mysterious power that functions in him to bring to fruition the Christian ethos is the power of love: "Of such a mysterious power and its operation some clear notion may be got by anybody who has ever had any overpowering

attachment."[61] Hence, Arnold launches into an extended analogy involving human love and the love of God, Jesus, and righteousness as demonstrated by Paul. The love of God inspirits, according to Arnold, much in the same way as the love of man: "a powerful attachment will give a man spirits and confidence; and… in this mood he can do wonders which would not be possible to him without it."[62] But, in contradiction to himself, Arnold locates the source of the power of love outside the self. Quoting Psalms 22:29 (this time not from the Bible, but from the Anglican prayer book), he writes that " 'No man,' as the Hebrew psalm says, 'hath quickened his own soul.' "[63] He cites God again as "the element in which we live and move and have our being," and contends that "this infinite element" is responsible for our capacity to be "receptive and influenced, not originative and influencing."[64] Biblical scripture on the matter of the source of love between man and God is not equivocal: God is its author.[65] But Arnold's confusion does not let the matter rest there. Only a handful of pages onward, the "element in which we live and move and have our being" and by which we are moved to love is no longer a power outside of man but rather is constitutive of human nature:

> The elemental power of sympathy and emotion in us, a power which extends beyond the limits of our own will and conscious activity, which we cannot measure and control, and which in each of us differs immensely

[61] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 38.

[62] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 39.

[63] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

[64] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 37.

[65] Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose." 1 John 4:10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:19: "We love Him, because He first loved us." John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him…."

> in force, volume, and mode of manifestation, [Paul] calls into full play, and sets it to work with all its strength and in all its variety.[66]

In the midst of his contradictions about the actual source of "sympathy and emotion" Arnold has also just told us that Paul "calls into full play and sets… to work" a power that is "beyond the limits" of man's will and conscious activity.

But Arnold presses on with even heavier contradictions, perhaps in the interest of emphasizing the need for inwardness—for an internal, emotional movement that inspires man: "As self-moved agents, for whom alone exist all the predicaments of merit and demerit, praise and blame, vice and virtue, we are impotent and lost; we are saved through that in us which is passive and involuntary; we are saved through our affections, it is by an *influence* and emotion that we are saved."[67] The conflation here of influence with emotion baffles meaning. They are speciously joined by the fact that passiveness and involuntariness can be attributed to both. But influence implies the existence of an outside agency, while emotion can be spoken of only in terms of effect. The passage invites a question regarding Arnold's intent: does he mean to indicate that, ultimately, the Christian ethos issues from a (possibly supernatural) source over which man exerts no degree of control, or, more likely, that *emotion* (and in particular the emotion of affection) over and against one's conscious rational *will* accounts for the Christian ethos of inwardness? Textual evidence comes down on the side of the latter possibility. So, then, Arnold means to advocate an emotional attachment that will fuel and maintain the desire for right conduct—an emotional attachment whose object is human. This is the shape of Arnold's Christian ethos. The above jumble points to the general difficulty

[66] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 47.

[67] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 59.

intrinsic to discussions about ethos and essence, as well as to the specific difficulty Arnold experienced in extricating Christian mystery from Christian supernaturalism.

Inwardness, for Arnold, marks the especial distinction between Israelite and Christian.[68] It consists of "a change of the inner man in regard to the moral order, duty, righteousness."[69] In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold tells us that the concept of inwardness added "*mercy* and *humbleness* to judgment and justice,"[70] and that it made for "personal religion; religion consisting in the inward feeling and disposition of the individual himself, rather than in the performance of outward acts towards religion or society. It is the essence of Christianity, it is what the Jews needed, it is the line in which their religion was ripe for development" (217). Jesus teaches, Arnold claims, that "instead of attending so much to your outward acts, attend… first of all to your inward thoughts, to the state of your heart and feelings."[71] Thus Jesus purportedly restores the *intuition* that governs Hebraic law and righteous conduct.[72] Translating "metanoia" from the Greek not as conventional Christianity would have it (as "repentance, a groaning and lamenting over one's sins"), but rather as "a change of the inner man," Arnold credits Jesus for "the

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[68] In the chapter entitled "Religion New-Given" in *Literature and Dogma*, Arnold offers his interpretive history of the spiritual movement from Judaism to Christianity: "Those courses of conduct, which Israel's intuition of the Eternal had originally touched with emotion and made religion, lay chiefly, we have seen, in the line of national and social duties…. And national and social duties are peculiarly capable of a mechanical exterior performance, in which the heart has no share. One may observe rites and ceremonies, hate idolatry, abstain from murder and theft and false witness, and yet have one's inward thoughts bad, callous, and disordered. Then even the admitted duties themselves come to be ill-discharged or set at nought, because the emotion which was the only certain security for their good discharge is wanting. The very power of religion, s we have seen, lies in its bringing *emotion* to bear on our rules of conduct, and thus making us care for them so much, consider them so deeply and reverentially, that we surmount the great practical difficulty of acting in obedience to them, and follow them heartily and easily" (216).

[69] *Literature and Dogma* 67.

[70] *Literature and Dogma* 216.

[71] *Literature and Dogma* 218.

[72] In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold writes: "what *did* attest Jesus Christ, was his *restoration of the intuition"* (285).

setting up [of] an immense *new inward movement* for obtaining one's rule of life"[73]—for bringing into existence a change in the inner man. This, in sum, represents Arnold's theory of inwardness.

In *St. Paul and Protestantism* Arnold writes that "[r]eal life, for Paul, begins with the mystical death which frees us from the dominion of the external *shalls* and *shall nots* of the law" (45). Jesus is the object of Paul's love; that is, empathetic identification with Jesus serves as the impetus for Paul's righteousness. As the human model for the movement from external to internal righteousness—from Judaism to Christianity, in Arnold's view—Paul overcomes the "struggling stream of duty, which had not volume enough to bear him to his goal," by virtue of his love for Jesus: "[the stream of duty] was suddenly reinforced by the immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion."[74] Defining faith as "a power, preeminently, of *holding fast to an unseen power of goodness,*"[75] Arnold further argues that Paul's "faith, working through love… enabled him to reinforce duty by affection."[76] To have faith in Jesus in Arnoldian terms means, then, "to be attached to Christ, to embrace Christ, to appropriate Christ, to be identified with Christ." This, however, Arnold asserts, "is not enough; the question is, to be attached to him *how*, to embrace him *how*?"[77] The answer arrives but a page later: "*Die with him!*"[78] Hence, not only by outward conduct but also in his *conscience* is man brought to righteousness:

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[73]*Literature and Dogma* 288-89.

[74]*Literature and Dogma* 43.

[75]*Literature and Dogma* 44.

[76]*Literature and Dogma* 47.

[77]*Literature and Dogma* 45.

[78]*Literature and Dogma* 46.

"The motions of sin in ourselves we succeed in mortifying, not by saying to ourselves that they are forbidden, but by sympathy with Christ in his mortification of them."[79] Arnold delineates Paul's relationship with Jesus in terms that render possible for his discourse a simultaneous denial of supernaturalism and an affirmation of humanism. What Arnold calls "the wonder-working power of attachment"[80] operated in Paul for the *man* Jesus whom, Arnold explains, Paul embraced as an exemplary model of righteousness (for Paul, after all, was "a man for whom the moral sympathies and the desire of righteousness were all-powerful").[81] Paul's method of holding fast to Jesus' example involved "perfectly identifying himself through [the power of love] with Jesus, by appropriating Jesus." Paul required "the confidence and the force to do as Jesus did."[82] Clearly, Arnold argues for Jesus as a *human example* to Paul of perfect conduct. But a small hitch frustrates Arnold's argument. What would inspire a man to love Jesus so deeply, with such ardor and fidelity, that he would relinquish all his self-serving impulses? How, if the love for God was not enough to keep the Israelites on the path of righteousness, would the love for a *man* succeed?

The Christian mythos responds to this question by a means not available to Arnold who has denied all supernatural possibilities.[83] Since mere conduct without the proper emotional force had proven fatal to the religion of the Israelites (as regards their

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[79] *Literature and Dogma* 49.

[80] *Literature and Dogma* 43.

[81] *Literature and Dogma* 43.

[82] *Literature and Dogma* 43.

[83] William Robbins, in *The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold,* argues that: "[The] humanizing of Christ into a reasonable being and ethical teacher, the attempt to make sweetness and light prevail in regions full of the conflict of passions and superstitions, suggests a 'philosophy' of middle principles akin to what Arnold was trying to work out for himself" (162).

pursuit of righteousness), and since Puritanism with its "spirit of watchful jealousy" and its stringent adherence to and literal interpretation of the Bible unwittingly imitated the mechanicality of the Hebraic code, Arnold seeks to establish a Christian *ethos* that will ensure the continuity of righteous conduct for humankind. The ethos requires inwardness—an awakening of the conscience to righteousness inspired by Jesus. In order for the inspiration to operate properly, one would have to experience love toward Jesus. Arnold's theory of inwardness paradoxically becomes clearer and more cogent if we place it within the conventional Christian mythos to which the *divinity* of Jesus is central.

If "salvation," as Arnold conceives it, is the return of humankind to the universal moral order, or in more basically "Christian" terms, the reconciliation of man to God, and if mankind has always failed (according to the historical record) to bring to fruition this reconciliation, then the means for salvation cannot come from within the human race. Here, then, is a first principle of the need for Jesus' divinity, according to Christianity. Next, Jesus as the Incarnation—as the incarnation of God in human form—acts as an associative agent, affording man immediacy and intimacy of experience with an otherwise unknowable, unfathomable entity, while he also assures man of his total ability to identify—in every painful detail—with the human condition. And finally, Jesus' sacrifice as a divine being—as the Son of God—not only communicates Jesus' own love for man, but also, and perhaps more significantly, clarifies and concretizes *God's* love for man. Jesus' sacrifice must be that of a divine being so that it is not an incidental, human one—susceptible to historical circumstances—but rather the intended gift of God, which confirms his grace. Jesus as a divine being makes tangible the untouchable God of the Israelites. This palpability is requisite for the empathetic identification with Jesus that

Arnold claims is at the heart of inwardness; the human animal, by Christian standards, needs a palpable object to love; the love of God is made manifest in the person and sacrifice of Jesus, and hence the reciprocal love of man for God is made possible.

The cause-and-effect relationship Arnold sets up with respect to righteousness and God is deeply problematic. Arnold asserts that Paul loved righteousness above all else;[84] he came to God out of his love for righteousness, as he likewise arrived at his love for Jesus.[85] Having just compared, in his elaborate extended analogy, empathetic identification with Jesus to a "deep attachment" akin to being in love,[86] Arnold is hardly in a position to argue that abidance to an abstract notion precedes—and even compels—the love felt for the love object in association with whom one abides to the abstract notion. That is, to argue that sexual fidelity, say, as an abstract concept (and even as a way of life), precedes and can lead to the love felt for one's monogamous sexual partner, is to make an especially dubious argument. A far more cogent assertion is offered up by the cause-and-effect relationship whereby the love felt for one's partner leads to the desire for fidelity; in like manner, God's love leads to gratitude, and gratitude then

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[84]*In St. Paul and Protestantism*, for example, Arnold argues that "It has not been enough remarked how this incomparable honesty and depth in Paul's love of righteousness is probably what chiefly explains his conversion" (25). He tell us that "[a]t no time, perhaps, did Paul arrive at practicing quite perfectly what he thus preached; but this only sets in a stronger light the thorough love of righteousness which made him seek out… parts of righteousness which do not force themselves on the common conscience…" (26). Arnold claims that "Paul… starts with the thought of a conscience void of offence towards God and man, and builds upon that thought his whole system" (28), which is quite problematic in consideration of Arnold's theory of inwardness which argues that empathetic identification with Jesus is what awakens one's conscience.

[85]Jesus' message, according to Arnold, "sank down and worked there [in Paul's heart]" because Paul had such a "thorough love of righteousness." Again crediting Paul's [naturally occurring?] tendency for righteousness, Arnold further argues that Jesus' doctrines of meekness and solidarity "offered new fields of righteousness to the eye of this indefatigable explorer of it" (*St. Paul and Protestantism*, 26-27). Arnold asserts that Jesus' teachings were, for Paul, "sympathetic utterances, which made the inmost chords of his being vibrate, and which irresistibly drew him sooner or later towards their utterer" (27).

[86]See extended analogy in *St. Paul and Protestantism,* pp. 44-49.

inspires man's desire to please God through righteous living. Furthermore, if God is the author of righteousness (as Arnold assures us he is), how does a love of righteousness arise independent of a consideration of God, in the first place?

The illogic that entangles the cause-and-effect relationship of the love of God and man aside, the more pressing obstacle in the path of Arnold's project of prescribing a way of life that evinces this love is the absence of both a motivating factor and a method. By nature, it would appear, the love of righteousness (indistinguishable from the love of God) occurred in Paul. Arnold never attempts to explain what motivates Paul's love for righteousness—neither as abstract concept nor as concrete lifestyle. Out of this first love, he next loved Jesus whom he regarded as the most righteous among men.[87] Given this model, why would Paul need Jesus? Arnold writes that "all men by themselves fail of righteousness, that only through identification with Jesus Christ can they reach it,"[88] but Paul was apparently already righteous before his conversion. And if righteousness is what reconciles man to God, Paul was already reconciled—already "saved." What motivation would Paul have had for identifying with Jesus and for following his example? The preexistence of righteousness in Paul (as Arnold depicts it) obviates the need for Jesus and his sacrifice.

But perhaps Paul is not a fitting example as representative of mankind, as he seems to have been in miraculous possession of an abundance of righteousness from the start. Arnold preaches to his readers that "Jesus Christ's solemn and dolorous condemnation of sin does actually loosen sin's hold and attraction upon us who regard

[87]Arnold's rendition of the love, respect, admiration, and awe Paul felt for Jesus occurs throughout *St. Paul and Protestantism.* A poignant summary is given on p. 43.

[88]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 59.

him,—makes it easier for us to understand and love goodness, to rise above self, to appropriate Christ, to die to sin."[89] A preexisting love of righteousness would axiomatically "loosen sin's hold and attraction upon us." What need of Jesus? The point, it would seem, is that man does *not* love righteousness. A love of Jesus on the other hand might bring one to want to follow his example of righteousness. And how does one arrive at a love—at what Arnold calls a "penetrating enthusiasm of love, sympathy, pity, adoration"—for Jesus?[90] What is the method? Whence comes the motivation, in the first place? Why does "the person and character of Jesus" inspire an "immense emotion of love and sympathy"?[91] Why in some but not in others? By what means does one "have the spirit of Christ… live as he did… serve the spirit of God… and follow the eternal order"?[92] Why would one do so? Despite the fact that his text repeatedly invites these questions and his prescription demands their satisfaction, Arnold does not even begin to essay a response, which fact only confirms the difficulty of elucidating the mystery of *love* and the mystery of *belief*, and the impossibility of explicating these in a religious context. The source of religious inspiration is mysterious; the method of inwardness impalpable, amorphous, ineffable even. The conventionally Christian account of these mysteries—the mysteries of love and belief that subsequently inspire inwardness—is contained in its *supernaturalism*, which Arnold vehemently denies.[93]

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[89] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 67.

[90] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 49.

[91] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 49.

[92] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 53.

When Arnold undertook the task of "saving Christianity" from certain demise, and devoted to the enterprise seven years (between publication dates) of contemplation and writing, and produced in consequence four weighty books, he was in truth engaged in an altogether different pursuit from the ostensible one. Paramount among his religious-cultural concerns was the reestablishment and stability of "righteous conduct" for Victorian Christians as individuals, and, by extension, beyond cultural and temporal limits for humanity in general. With regard to right conduct, a question like the following brings to the surface the nature and the measure of his anxiety for the individual: "But how to find the energy and power to bring all those self-seeking tendencies of the flesh, those multitudinous, swarming, eager, and incessant impulses, into obedience to the central tendency? Mere commanding and forbidding is of no avail, and only irritates opposition in the desires it tries to control."[94] Implicit in his dismissal of "commanding and forbidding" (as a proper response to his question) is Arnold's recognition of the danger of repression. Much of his religious discourse is committed to exposing the mechanicality of the Hebraic code and the austerity of the Protestant spirit in their respective efforts to "bring all those self-seeking tendencies" under what he deemed repressive control. Only the Christian ethos as exemplified by Jesus, as taught by Paul—the ethos of inwardness—introduced by a method sweet and reasonable,[95]

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[93]Joseph Carroll writes that Arnold "cannot deny that emotion is in some way associated with the supernatural beliefs of conventional religion, but he tries to avoid the conclusion that the emotion actually derives from the beliefs" (*The Cultural Theory of Matthew Arnold,* 100).

[94]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 32.

[95]"[In Jesus] are both inward appraisal and self-renouncement; but what is most admirable is the sweet reasonableness, the exquisite, mild, winning felicity, with which the renouncement and the inward appraisal are applied and conveyed. And the conjunction of the three in Jesus,--the method of inwardness, and the secret of self-renouncement, working in and through this element of mildness,--produced the total impression of his 'epieikeia,' or sweet reasonableness; a total impression ineffable and indescribably for the

balanced, tolerant, and progressive because dynamic, could stir the *heart* and compel right action. This internal effect in the individual would, then, little by little grow into a "gradual inward transformation of the world by a conformity like Christ's to the will of God."[96] This is the shape of the "eternal life" Arnold tries to promulgate—the eternal life not of the individual but of *righteousness* as a way of life for humanity.[97]

Arnold's model, in which the individual imitates Jesus' "superhuman example,"[98] requires of the individual to "look in religion" at "an arduous progress on [his] own part, and the exercise of [his] activity."[99] Hence, the model underscores Arnold's humanism in its reliance on the human capacity for exertion of effort toward progress and perfection, while it also (unfortunately) reintroduces the potential for the kind of control he tries to subvert.[100] This "arduous progress" is pursued ultimately in the interest of

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disciples, as also it was irresistible for them, but at which their descriptive words, words like this *'sweet reasonableness,'* and like *'full of grace and truth,'* are thrown out and aimed" (*Literature and Dogma,* 300).

[96]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 43.

[97] Arguing for the character (and life) of Jesus as a human example that informs man's, Arnold broaches the subject of resurrection in *St. Paul and Protestantism:* "…the essential sense in which Paul… uses the term *resurrection* is that of a rising, in this visible earthly existence, from the death of obedience to blind selfish impulse, to the life of obedience to the eternal moral order;—in Christ's case first, as the pattern for us to follow; in the believer's case afterwards, as following Christ's pattern through identifying himself with him" (56).

[98]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 66.

[99]*St. Paul and Protestantism* 19.

[100] The method Arnold recommends for the "application of emotion to morality" is not only full of the language of control, retention, and one might argue repression, but is also suggestive (in part because it evokes the notion of the "two selves") of the life of meditation advocated by Hinduism: "…how does one get the application made?... By dwelling upon it, by staying our thoughts upon it, by having it perpetually in our mind…. [S]o entirely does the idea of humanity, of intelligence, of looking before and after, of raising oneself out of the flux of things, rest upon the idea of steadying oneself, concentrating oneself, making order in the chaos of one's impressions, by attending to one impression rather than the other. The rules of conduct, of morality, were themselves, philosophers suppose, reached in this way;—the notion of a whole self as opposed to a partial self, a best self to an inferior self, to a momentary self a permanent self requiring the restraint of impulses a man would naturally have indulged;—because, by *attending* to his life, man found it had a scope beyond the wants of the present moment" (*Literature and Dogma*, 179).

perpetuating a cultural standard—of "sav[ing] the ideal of human life and conduct from the deterioration with which men's ordinary practice threatens it."[101] Religion, then, becomes engaged for the deliberate perfection of civilization. The alternative offered by the popular theology of his day was anathema to the humanist in him. Arnold implies that the calling-justification-sanctification hobbyhorse of Puritanism, because it entrusts God and Jesus with the responsibility for man's salvation, divests man of his ability to act on his own behalf. Not only is human potential limited in this way, but so, too, the potential universality of Christianity. That particular theology confines Christianity to a static dogma, rendering it both culturally and temporally unprogressive.

Christianity, Arnold argues, is "a method of *inwardness,* a secret of *self-renouncement.*"[102] Formal religion and dogma aside, simply as a body of knowledge containing a "method" and a "secret," Christianity also contains principles. Clearly, the task of *defining* a religion—of determining its parameters and designating its constituents—is troublesome at best; to claim with cogency any element *essential* to the religion, then, is nearly impossible, and entirely outside the scope of this study. But, in the end, Christianity must rest on *something* in order to be recognizable as Christianity, as distinguishable from other religions. At bottom, the nature of the relationship Christianity sets up between man and the numinous is its fundamental principle (based on its particular conception of human nature). The Christian mythos regards that relationship as broken because of the unchanging and unchangeable fact of man's natural iniquity; the possibility of reconciliation must arrive from a supernatural source, for hence is man's iniquity reemphasized and God's grace glorified. Arnold's humanistic

[101] *St. Paul and Protestantism* 66.

[102] *Literature and Dogma* 299.

model of salvation empowers man in a way that strikes the Christian paradigm at this most basic level. Therefore, to continue to call Arnold's religion "Christianity" is to be caught up in an inaccuracy.

The love (for Jesus) Arnold deems essential to the establishment of the Christian inwardness he so passionately advocates cannot be experienced as he imagines; the historical record reveals as much. No love of a mere man two-thousand years removed from our experience will serve to inspire us, as Arnold requires, to live a life of self-renunciation. Love is mysterious, as is belief. This mystery alone can compel man to inexplicable acts of self-renunciation. Rationalism, the spirit of utilitarianism, even humanism, gut out the mystery of religion by a process of demystification; while they may bring man's *conduct* under control (and even then for only a season), they can lay little claim to stirring man's *heart*. In his desire to harmonize man's mind and heart in religious conduct, contradictorily embracing Christianity's mystery while denying its supernaturalism, caught up in the intellectual imbroglio of discarding the dogma while preserving the literary value of the religion, unable in the end to resolve the conflict between Christian principles and his humanism, Matthew Arnold bequeaths to the twentieth century a bewilderingly tattered Christianity.

CHAPTER 4

Eliot's Christianity: A Reassessment

Conceding to John Donne a "genuine taste both for theology and for religious emotion," Eliot's pronouncement nevertheless follows fast upon the heels of the concession: "He belonged to that class of persons, of which there are always one or two examples in the modern world, who seek refuge in religion from the tumults of a strong emotional temperament which can find no complete satisfaction elsewhere."[1] The curiously haunting possibility exists that the self-referential quality of Eliot's statement about Donne did not escape its author. The more disturbing possibility is that the irony was entirely lost on him. The effusive admiration Eliot expresses for Lancelot Andrewes in this brief essay comparing Andrewes to Donne underscores Eliot's penchant (widely cited by scholars) for order. Seizing upon particular aspects of Andrewes' character, portraying him as "pure" because medieval in contrast to Donne whose personality he finds more "modern," Eliot idolizes and attempts to emulate Andrewes: "his passion for order in religion is reflected in his passion for order in prose" (183).

In his comprehensive biography of Eliot, Peter Ackroyd alludes to Eliot's "instinct for order" (160) and to its more consciously acquired twin: the "allegiance to an external order" (138). Ackroyd posits that "the circumstances of Eliot's life and the nature of his personality would impel him in his search for order and authority" (156). That order-and-authority presented itself in the form of Anglo-Catholicism which afforded Eliot the "kind of historical and ritualistic continuity which were for [him] the

[1] *Lancelot Andrewes* 187.

essential elements of faith."[2] The need for order not only drove Eliot to Anglo-Catholicism, but also shaped in specific detail the Christianity he adopted and espoused; it determined the tone and tenor of his religious discourse; it gave voice to his scheme for a Christian Society, his vision for Christian culture, and his dark misgivings about individual consciousness in religious matters. Despite Eliot's affection for history, tradition, and ritual, despite his reverence for church authority and even his craving for what Lyndall Gordon calls a "dogmatic theological structure,"[3] in the end the shape of Eliot's Christianity, as it is evinced in his renditions of Christian society, Christian culture, and the Christian individual, is so thoroughly tortured by his need for order and authority that it can hardly boast an affinity with dogmatic Christianity.

Society, Not Christianity -

The first endnote to *The Idea of a Christian Society* addresses the meaning of the word "idea," borrowed, Eliot tells us, from Coleridge's similar use of the term in *Church and State.* In explaining that by "idea" he means "that conception of a thing… which is given by the knowledge of its ultimate aim" (52), Eliot invites a reformulation of the title: *The Aim of a Christian Society*—that is, the pursuit of a Christian Society as an ultimate aim. The imagined title points up the centrality of *society* in the essay—a centrality often denied it by the conventional reception of the essay as a text containing *religious* matter. In fact, despite its placement with *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* in a volume entitled *Christianity and Culture* (in which the essay presumably represents the first half of the volume's title), and its frequent listing in one collection after another under Eliot's

[2]Peter Ackroyd, *T.E. Eliot,* 160.

[3] Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 126.

"religious criticism," *The Idea of a Christian Society* is only secondarily about Christianity. It serves, more accurately, as a blueprint for the construction of a society, in this case a Christian one. But if we hope to glean from the essay the landscape of Eliot's religion or theology, we will have a hard time of it. Only bits and pieces surface here and there to gesture toward the existence or suggest the importance for Eliot of a Christian ethos whose shape remains amorphous in this particular text.

Since the essay is essentially a response to the question: "What can be done for this country in the future?" (9), a good deal of its matter consists of a depiction of the socio-cultural situation—an articulation of the sociological crisis—in England (and by extension America) as it stood in the late 1930s. The more specifically articulated response, arriving at the end of the first chapter ("the only hopeful course for a society which would thrive and continue its creative activity in the arts of civilization, is to become Christian" [19]), is then elaborated on in the following chapter in which Eliot outlines the structure of the stratified society he imagines. Next, he treats the subject of the relation of Church and State, and in the final chapter returns, now with broader and fuller strokes, to the original question and its response: the subject of the condition of contemporary society and the need for Christianity as a solution.

Eliot announces that "the modern system of society has a great deal in it that is inherently bad" (26), and hence conceptualizes a system constructed on Christian principles that is ethically preferable to the existing one. Economic, political, and cultural maladies alike are treated by the panacea of Christian principles. The degree of attention paid and the expanse of space devoted to Eliot's socio-political preoccupations in an ostensibly religious essay speak to the fact of his actual, underlying concern. The

contemporary crisis of transition, rampant materialism, the commercialization of every aspect of life and the unlimited industrialism that supports such commercialization; the insidious force of a liberalism that guts out the spirit of constructiveness and creativity because it possesses an essentially "negative" energy; the oppression, violence, and cruelty practiced by totalitarian and seemingly democratic governments alike; mob mentality, spiritual sterility, and intellectual lethargy; the almost total absence of a guiding philosophy of life on the part of the political and ecclesiastical leadership; life fractured and fragmented, lacking in wholeness and harmony on both the social and individual levels are all conditions Eliot has imagined, witnessed, or experienced in his contemporary milieu and to which he accords more than a fair share of his anxiety as both citizen and cultural critic, and which receives the amplest share of expression in *The Idea of a Christian Society.*

Eliot wastes no time in communicating the essay's primary concern: "Not spiritual institutions in their separated aspect, but the organization of values, and a direction of religious thought which must inevitably proceed to a criticism of political and economic systems" (4). The terse dismissal of "spiritual institutions in their separated aspect" opens the way for the affirmation that follows. (One imagines that the "separated aspect" of spiritual institutions could encompass either ecclesiastical or theological issues or both.) In its negation, the statement actually *affirms* Eliot's interest in (religious) institutions—in their capacity, that is, to inform a people's political and economic way of life. The statement seems strangely to tear itself apart into two opposite directions. On the one hand, the preoccupation with institutionalized religion (especially in the interest of politics or economics) emphasizes religion's utility and makes a

handmaid of spiritual matters; on the other, the statement reveals Eliot's interest in establishing an *ethos*—a spirit—that is at base religious, and whose influence is so far-reaching that it will inevitably touch other aspects of life. The pursuit of a Christian ethos throws into relief the absurdity of the society Eliot tries to erect. Ironically, however, the picture of the ethos, oddly nestled in the rigidity of the external concept of a Christian society, emerges only by way of its juxtaposition to his description of the society. This is the underlying paradox at work in the text—the very paradox that renders Eliot's solution to secularization untenable.

The stratification of society into three categories of citizenship—the Christian State, the Christian Community, and the Community of Christians[4]—is rigid in

[4] An explanation of these three categories in summary occurs in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. A more detailed description of each in Eliot's words follows: Eliot imagines a State that is "in some sense Christian" (21), by which he does not mean to indicate a union of Church and State. The Christian State is responsible for "legislation, public administration, legal tradition, and form" (21). He continues: "The Christian and the unbeliever do not, and cannot, behave very differently in the exercise of office; for it is the general ethos of the people they have to govern, not their own piety, that determines the behavior of politicians" (21). The State does not have to consist of believers; statesmen simply have to be "confined, by the temper and traditions of the people which they rule, to a Christian framework within which to realize their ambitions and advance the prosperity and prestige of their country" (22). Although they do not have to be held up to Christian standards in their private lives, they should be in possession of an understanding of Christian principles and should uphold these for the sake of the people whom they govern. They "would have received a Christian education…. A Christian education would primarily train people to be able to think in Christian categories" (22). They would be held, at minimum, to a "conscious conformity of behavior" (23). "The rulers… will, qua rulers, accept Christianity… as… the system under which they are to govern" (28). The Christian Community "…is the idea, or ideal, of a community small enough to consist of a nexus of direct personal relationships, in which all iniquities and turpitudes will take the simple an easily appreciable form of wrong relations between one person and another" (25). "A Christian Community is one in which there is a unified religious-social code of behavior" (27), and where "the Christian faith would be ingrained, but it requires, as a minimum, only a largely unconscious behavior" (23). For the members of the Christian Community, their "religious and social life should form for them a natural whole, so that the difficulty of behaving as Christians should not impose an intolerable strain" (23), and "the specifically religious emotions must be a kind of extension and sanctification of the domestic and social emotions" (24). The much smaller Community of Christians will consist of the "consciously and thoughtfully practicing Christians, especially those of intellectual and/or spiritual gifts" (30). "It will be their identity of belief and aspiration, their background of a common system of education and a common culture, which will enable them to influence and be influenced by each other, and collectively to form the conscious mind and the conscience of the nation" (34). Andrew John Miller tells us that Eliot "considers the ineffable quality of exceptional self-consciousness to be the criterion that most decisively qualifies one for social and spiritual leadership" (" 'Compassing Material Ends': T. S. Eliot, Christian Pluralism, and the Nation-State," 233).

proportion to Eliot's fear of both social and personal crisis. Institutionalizing Christianity in this way and to this degree liberates Christianity from what Eliot believes is only a precarious existence in the private realm and casts it into the public, where he imagines it has greater stability. His fear runs in both directions: outward toward the social condition, and inward toward the human. He reads the deplorable spiritual state of the public as a reflection of the spiritual darkness of the individual's internal space. Hence, a rigidly structured Christian society remedies social needs, while it also saves the individual from himself and from the possibility of sinking into unbelief.[5]

One of the more immediately apparent problems with Eliot's oligarchical conception of society (in addition to its rather alarmingly totalitarian implications) is, of course, its impracticality. Ironically enough, the unreality of the proposal stems from the fact that Eliot hopes to inspirit society with a Christian ethos. An autocratic form of government would ensure a certain measure of order in a particular direction; society under a theocracy, for example, is often stratified according to religious criteria, and everyone must fall in line irrespective of belief. But Eliot's vision precludes a government run by ecclesiastical authority; he envisions instead a State in which, by virtue of a Christian education that teaches "people to be able to think in Christian categories" (22), the heads of government will believe in the value of Christian principles and govern according to these principles for the benefit of the people. But here is a government whose members are not required to believe privately in the religion whose principles they uphold publicly. How, then, do they come to believe in the value of these principles? Although one might argue that personal religious belief may not, in fact, be

[5] Eliot writes that the "notion that religion was a matter of private belief and of conduct in private life, and that there is no reason why Christians should not be able to accommodate themselves to any world which treats them good-naturedly, is becoming less and less tenable" (17).

requisite for the success of this leadership, certainly belief in the principles as in themselves valuable for society to one extent or another is a given. How is this consent secured? No system of education can ensure an acceptance of the principles taught by that system. Is there an authority *external* to the government—to this Christian State—that presides over such issues? Where is there room for possible dissent? And if dissent is not possible, if statesmen don't actually value the principles by which they govern, what remains to them is either repression or hypocrisy.

To be held to a "conscious conformity of behavior" (23) while in office (behavior which one otherwise might not choose for oneself) is to play a public role—to function under a particular persona. What Eliot advocates here flies in the face of his own criticism of modernity's tendency to fragment life—a tendency manifested more specifically, in Eliot's view, by the complicity of Christians in a materialistic, commercializing socio-economic system that demands that they live under two sets of principles.[6] The wholeness of individual existence, then, is important for Eliot only in so far as it extends to Christians; the psycho-spiritual well-being of non-Christians, it would seem, is of no concern. In the interest of promoting social structure, Eliot's proposition

[6] In the first chapter of *The Idea of a Christian Society* Eliot explains that "[t]he problem of leading a Christian life in a non-Christian society is now very present to us…. It is the problem constituted by our implication in a network of institutions from which we cannot dissociate ourselves…" (17). The same line of thought recurs repeatedly throughout the essay. He is disturbed by the idea that modernity facilitates the view that "the religious and the secular life of the individual and the community can form two separate and autonomous domains" (40). The fragmentation of life's aspects into disparate "compartments" gives easy passage to the possibility of immorality in the modern world (even in his own personal case): "I am by no means sure that it is right for me to improve my income by investing in the shares of a company, making I know not what, operating perhaps thousands of miles away, and in the control of which I have no effective voice—but which is recommended as a sound investment. I am still less sure of the morality of my being a money-lender: that is, of investing in bonds and debentures. I know that it is wrong for me to speculate: but where the line is to be drawn between speculation and what is called legitimate investment is by no means clear. I seem to be a petty usurer in a world manipulated largely by big usurers. And I know that the Church once condemned these things" (76). He brings the essay to an end with the following pronouncement: "We cannot be satisfied to be Christians at our devotions and merely secular reformers all the rest of the week…" (77).

simultaneously sacrifices the individual and dogmatic Christianity. His vision calls for indoctrination and conformity, both of which bring personal, independent belief—in whatever direction—under control. Advocacy of religious principles by a group of people who have no belief in the religion qua religion not only mocks its dogma but is essentially a rape of the dogma from within. To perpetrate this conceptual act against a religion that has its life in individual consciousness and that distinguishes itself from its source religion in part by its anti-elitism—its universality—is to be especially misguided.

Perhaps, one might argue, the portion of the imagined Christian State that consists of non-believers is indeed a negligible portion of the population, and hence to neglect it is not too grave a sin on the part of a cultural critic. After all, in a democratic government, the majority is what really matters. But Eliot's vision is hardly kinder to this second category of society: the Christian Community. If the success of a Christian Society in part rests (as Eliot assures us it does) with treating "Christianity with a great deal more *intellectual* respect… as being for the individual a matter primarily of thought and not of feeling" (6), then the great majority of society—Eliot's Christian Community—is all but excluded from contributing to such success because "the great mass of humanity" has a limited "capacity for *thinking* about the objects of faith" (23). With Eliot's sanction, their Christianity "may be almost wholly realized in behavior: both in their customary and periodic religious observances, and in a traditional code of behavior towards their neighbors" (23). His description of the Community evokes a picture of the traditional English parish—a "simple agricultural or piscatorial society" (25)—a socio-religious complex in which religion comprises an organic, unconscious part of daily existence.

A curious irony emerges on the page as Eliot's description of the Christian Community proceeds. The verbal expression of the attempt to organize the Christian Community around an accommodating and innocuous Christianity ironically reveals the affliction and knotted anxiety of Eliot's own Christianity and delivers to the reader an uncomfortable and fear-ridden communication:

> Even for the most highly developed and conscious individual… a consciously Christian direction of thought and feeling can only occur at particular moments during the day and…week, and these moments themselves recur in consequence of formed habits; to be conscious, without remission, of a Christian and non-Christian alternative at moments of choice, imposes a very great strain. The mass of the population, in a Christian society, should not be exposed to a way of life in which there is too sharp and frequent a conflict between what is easy for them or what their circumstances dictate and what is Christian. The compulsion to live in such a way that Christian behavior is only possible in a restricted number of situations, is a very powerful force against Christianity; for behavior is as potent to affect belief, as belief to affect behavior. (24)

Within a terrifically compact space, Eliot manages to relay a picture of stifling constriction formed by the fusion of fear and control, expressed in language that betrays chronic anxiety: imposition of a strain—a *very great one,* at that—sharp and frequent conflict, compulsion, restriction, force, and the potency of habit. These are the terms in which Eliot sees the life of an average Christian in the modern world. But to wish for an "unconscious" Christianity for the majority of Christians in the face of modernity is to

cast that majority "as rubbish to the void."[7] The act constitutes an unraveling of the Christian doctrine that the individual and his consciousness are of paramount importance.[8] Furthermore, it shows no degree of confidence in the presumably supernatural force at work behind the belief system, or in the system's own ability to function as a source "of spiritual vitality… [for] resolving the psychological conflicts from which the society suffers."[9]

Eliot's motive for organizing the majority of society into the Christian Community becomes suspect. If Christianity is so frail a system of belief that it can survive neither the inherent condition of sinfulness, nor the external conditions imposed by modernity, nor even the intellectual prodding and investigation of the average man, then why recommend it as a way of life for the masses? Relegating the Christianity of the Christian Community to ritualistic observance controls the "unthinking masses." The Community constitutes the social stratum through which Eliot hopes to achieve "social tenacity and coherence" (28); its institutionalized, regulated way of life stultifies the

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[7] From Tennyson's "In Memoriam," line 7, section 54.

[8] See, for example, the following biblical verses: Matthew 10:30: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered…"; Matthew 10:31: "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than the sparrows"; Matthew 11:28: "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; John 15:16: "You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name"; John 14:15-17: "If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you do, because he lives with you now and later will be in you"; John 17:23: "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me"; Romans 2:15: "Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves [their] thoughts accusing or else excusing [them]"; Romans 8:32-33: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies"; 1 John 4:9-11: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"; 1 John 4:16, 19: "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us…We love, because He first loved us."

[9]From Christopher Dawson's *Beyond Politics,* 21, quoted in *The Idea of a Christian Society,* 66.

masses into social peace and conformity, and lends greater facility to the existence and sustenance of the elite Community of Christians—the jewel in the crown of Eliot's Anglo-Christian Society. This coterie of "consciously and thoughtfully practicing Christians, especially those of intellectual and spiritual superiority" (28) will provide a check against the State's potential "tendency… toward expediency" and the people's parallel tendency "toward intellectual lethargy and superstition" (28). A brief return to Eliot's primary object in writing *The Idea of a Christian Society*—to affect "an organization of values and a direction of religious thought" (4)—underscores the value of this third stratum of society. In its responsibility for the education and edification of the entire Christian Society, this group of citizens formulates and disseminates the "organization of values" and the "direction of religious thought" that Eliot wishes to realize: "It will be their identity of belief and aspiration, their background of a common system of education and a common culture, which will enable them to influence and be influenced by each other, and collectively to form the conscious mind and the conscience of the nation" (34). The Community of Christians is the only category of citizens possessing both the capacity and the responsibility to engage in and enjoy a "direction of religious thought." (The mechanism by which these citizens are chosen and grouped together into this illustrious category, and the criteria that determine the parameters of the category itself are never made clear.) If they also "form the conscious mind and the conscience of the nation," then what remains to the rest of society? What do they represent for Eliot? What Eliot proposes here is a cultural oligarchy, and it seems clear that if Eliot had had his way he would not have wished for the existence of a society outside the Community of Christians with which to contend—a society to divide into a

State and a Community "Christian" in name only, in which members would busily occupy one another by governing and being governed without reference to actual Christian belief.

But Eliot seems to understand full well the impossibility of realizing his vision, and attributes that failure to the fact of human fallibility. His conception, in accordance with doctrinal Christianity, of human nature as specifically sinful informs his belief that his proposition as an actual social system is abstracted, at best: "A wholly Christian society… would engage the cooperation of many whose Christianity was spectral or superstitious or feigned, and many whose motives were primarily worldly and selfish" (47). Each of the divisions of his Christian Society is bound to fail because of flaws intrinsic to its structure:

> We have no safeguard against [the State's] proceeding, from un-Christian acts, to action on implicitly un-Christian principles, and thence to action on avowedly un-Christian principles…. [A]s the State may pass from expediency to lack of principle, and as the Christian Community may sink into torpor, so the Community of Christians may be debilitated by group or individual eccentricity and error. (35)

Eliot's recognition that his Christian Society will not materialize and cannot succeed invites readers to question what, in the end, he hopes to communicate. The essay is rife with both direct and indirect gestures toward a notion of Christianity left deliberately imprecise and open-ended. Even his descriptions of the rigidly structured strata of society are punctuated by moments of imprecision that possibly communicate the desire to provide but a nebulous sketch in place of a focused image. The Christian

State, for example, comprised vaguely of "whatever State is suitable to a Christian Society" (9) should be concerned merely with "the general ethos of the people [it]… govern[s]" (21), while the Christian Community is guided by an "ingrained, unconscious behavior [that issues from]… a natural whole" (23); and the Community of Christians consists not of an "organization, but a body of indefinite outline" (34).

The desire to shape values (probably the most frequently expressed desire throughout the essay) is a desire to broadly influence society at its base—to affect an *essential* change—to effect an *ethos.* Eliot writes that his "primary interest is a change in our social *attitude*" (8)—in society's "state of mind" (13) which implies a desire to infuse the social fabric with a particular spirit. By way of an appropriately self-reflexive analogy at the end of the piece, he acknowledges the "machinery" at work in his highly-structured society and simultaneously reiterates his larger purpose:

> Any machinery, however beautiful to look at and however wonderful a product of brains and skill, can be used for bad purposes as well as good: and this is as true of social machinery as of construction of steel. I think that, more important than the invention of a new machine, is the creation of a temper of mind in people such that they can learn to use a new machine rightly. (77)

To engender a Christian temper of mind, then—one that would, in general, inform the public's decisions, behavior, lifestyle—seems to be the broader aim of the Christian Society Eliot conceptualizes. His vision returns us to Arnold's notion of the "sweet reasonableness" of Jesus—to his "epieikeia"—that inspires a change of the inner man. If the individuals in Eliot's idealized society conducted themselves according to the

Christian ethos Eliot attempts to adumbrate, presumably society would undergo spiritual invigoration and human interrelationships would fall organically into proper order; the right ethos would obviate the need for rigid divisions among social strata and structured, unnatural instructions about operation and conduct within the strata.

Since Eliot makes scant reference to theology or dogma throughout *The Idea of a Christian Society* such that little can be deduced about the actual shape of his Christian beliefs, the Christian ethos that whispers to the reader through the severe structure of the Christian Society represents one porthole to understanding Eliot's Christianity. The remainder (what little there is of it in the essay) can be gleaned from moments in the text when he touches on relevant topics. The assertive opening of Chapter IV establishes Eliot's unequivocal belief in the existence of the metaphysical: "To identify any particular government with Christianity is a dangerous error: for it confounds the permanent with the transitory, the absolute with the contingent" (45). He insists that the morality of this "permanent and absolute" Christianity issues from "the *truth* of Christianity" (46), and that a Christian society has its distinction from a non-Christian society by virtue of its dogma. The Church possesses "supernatural reality" (64); "essential Christianity" consists of holding "the Christian Faith according to the Creeds" (65); and whatever is "inconsistent with Christian doctrine" is religiously "wrong" (76). Even the condition of modernity serves at one moment to highlight Eliot's conventionally Christian belief in hell: "this is a world in which I, and the majority of my fellow-beings, live in that perpetual distraction from God which exposes us to the one great peril, that of final and complete alienation from God after death" (75). Clearly, religion is not merely a sociological category for Eliot as it may be for Arnold—a means of gathering the public

under moral order; Eliot argues for social order from the premise of a supernatural "reality" that determines the shape of that order: "As a political philosophy derives its sanction from ethics, and ethics from the truth of religion, it is only by returning to the eternal source of truth that we can hope for any social organization which will not, to its ultimate destruction, ignore some essential aspect of reality" (50). Even though their respective Christian positions are diametrically opposed in ideology, the social aspect of religion is engaged by both Arnold and Eliot in a similar way with an almost identical outcome. In the final analysis, Eliot, too, condones using Christian dogma to serve a socio-cultural end.

Despite Eliot's application to Christian "truth" and creeds and doctrine, his interest in Christianity extends well beyond its purely theological potential. In addition to religion's indispensable role as constituting half of the socio-cultural complex Eliot imagines as a social ideal, religion also serves in a personal capacity for Eliot. In her brief biographical study, *Eliot's Early Years*, Lyndall Gordon captures some of the aspects of Christianity that caught Eliot's attention and later became rather instrumental in his 1927 conversion to the Church of England:

> At first, he enjoyed the high Anglo-Catholic St. Magnus the Martyr aesthetically, for its 'splendour'; later he appreciated its 'utility' when he came there as a sinner. He was struck, once, by the sight of a number of people on their knees, a posture he had never seen before…. Eliot admired this gesture of abasement and worship…. [He] craved a stronger, more dogmatic theological structure than was to be found in his purely ethical background. (126)

Gordon's observations emphasize the fact that Christianity appealed to Eliot's sense of aesthetics and to his penchant for tradition and historical forms. As religion, Christianity responds to spiritual needs; that is, it aids in the formation of a "whole" character whose course of edification depends for its success on the twin influences of religion and culture.[10] In Eliot's cultural theory, religion serves as a vehicle for harmonizing the temporal and spiritual life,[11] just as it provides a structure for moral conduct. Most significantly, however (and the excerpt from Gordon speaks to this issue as well), by virtue of external orthodox control Christianity offers a haven from the sinfulness of human nature—allows an escape from *personality*.

If, as was argued in chapter 1 of this study, Eliot's concept of orthodoxy is akin to Arnold's notion of "the best that has been thought and said," then the latter's disparaging phrase, "doing as one likes" (also from *Culture and Anarchy*), shares an affinity with the former's distaste for individualism and personality. The Judeo-Christian conception of good and evil (which informs the idea behind man's sinfulness against God's sanctity) is the particular form orthodoxy[12] assumes in this context, whereby human nature is

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[10] In his essay on Babbitt called "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," for example, Eliot writes: "[for] a spiritual and intellectual coordination on a high level… it is doubtful whether civilization can endure without religion, and religion without a church" (283).

[11] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 44.

[12] Eliot's concept of orthodoxy receives its fullest and clearest articulation in *After Strange Gods,* which can be considered a sort of companion piece to "Tradition and the Individual Talent." It was written with a kind of corrective impetus—to render clear his concept of tradition as it appeared in the latter essay (a clarification many contemporary critics argued was much needed). In *After Strange Gods* Eliot goes at the task by making a distinction between "tradition" and "orthodoxy." He uses contemporary literary examples to illustrate the moral-literary need for orthodoxy, hence using literary criticism to make a moralist's argument. As he says early on in the essay, he "ascend[s] the platform of these lectures only in the role of moralist" (12). The essay is tremendously useful for the purpose of this study in its capacity to suggest what Eliot might have thought about the concepts of good and evil, original sin, human nature, the medieval tradition juxtaposed to the Romantic, individual consciousness not only as it pertains to artistic creation but also to religion, and so forth. The most salient aspect of orthodoxy (over and against both tradition and the individual) that emerges from the essay is its Arnoldian pursuit of perfection. When

defined. In other words, to think of human nature as evil—as sinful—is to be in line with (Christian) orthodoxy.[13] Furthermore, commitment to orthodoxy is the means by which an individual safeguards himself against the perils of his own nature—of the inner voice that can promise nothing in the form of spiritual salvation because it is ultimately sinful (and lacking the benefit of the composite knowledge handed down from the ages).[14] According to Eliot, the religious aesthetic is present in an individual in proportion to his recognition of the wretchedness of the Self. Humility is the response to this recognition: "For only in humility, charity and purity—and most of all perhaps humility—can we be prepared to receive the grace of God without which human operations are vain."[15] This

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Eliot's concept of orthodoxy is held up to Arnold's notion of culture, the parallels are truly striking. Orthodoxy seems to involve the same kind of strenuous, conscious, intellectual effort toward determining what is "the best that has been thought and said in the world" that Arnold accords to culture. The difference in the two philosophies resides in Eliot's dependence on generations and generations of minds working communally toward the effort, and Arnold's belief that independent, individual effort suffices. The most succinct description of orthodoxy that brings together many of the elements discussed in *After Strange Gods* is given below. Implied in the description is orthodoxy's unspoken claim to transcendence—the attribute that casts it into the spiritual/religious realm: "…[T]radition is rather a way of feeling and acting which characterizes a group throughout generations; and that it must largely be, or that many of the elements in it must be, unconscious; whereas the maintenance of *orthodoxy* is a matter which calls for the exercise of all our conscious intelligence…. Tradition has not the means to criticize itself; it may perpetuate much that is trivial or of transient significance as well as what is vital and permanent. And while tradition, being a matter of good habits, is necessarily real only in a social group, orthodoxy exists whether realized in anyone's thought or not. Orthodoxy also, of course represents a consensus between the living and the dead: but a whole generation might conceivably pass without any orthodox thought…. Tradition may be conceived as a by-product of right living, not to be aimed at directly. It is of the blood, so to speak, rather than of the brain: it is the means by which the vitality of the past enriches the life of the present. In the co-operation of both is the reconciliation of thought and feeling" (29-30).

[13] Eliot argues that the recognition of the existence of evil in the Self is what makes us "religious." In making a distinction between the religious and the secular reformer, he interestingly (without direct reference) touches on the fundamental difference between Arnold's Christianity and his own: "[O]ne reason why the lot of the secular reformer or revolutionist seems to me to be the easier is this: that for the most part he conceives of the evils of the world as something external to himself. They are thought of either as completely impersonal, so that there is nothing to alter but machinery; or if there is evil *incarnate,* it is always incarnate in the *other people*—a class, a race, the politicians, the bankers, the armament makers, and so forth—never in oneself" (*The Idea of a Christian Society,* 75).

[14] Eliot insists that "we need to know how to see the world as the Christian Fathers saw it; and the purpose of reascending to origins is that we should be able to return, with greater spiritual knowledge, to our own situation" (*The Idea of a Christian Society,* 48).

[15] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 75.

passage, arriving near the very end of the Appendix to the essay, is arguably the only passage in the entire piece that gestures toward actual Christian dogma. In his 1933 essay on Arnold entitled *Matthew Arnold,* Eliot writes that "though [Arnold] speaks to us of discipline, it is the discipline of culture, not the discipline of suffering" (103). If Arnold makes a hobbyhorse of culture, then Eliot's hobbyhorse is this concept of suffering—his idea of the undeniablity of the "reality" of good and evil, and the attendant belief in the utter sinfulness (and therefore suffering) of mankind. Eliot fears the chaos of internal, psychic space. The external structure and communal voice promised by orthodoxy provide him freedom from the chaos within. Orthodoxy binds people who share a common vision and helps bring to fruition communal goals.[16] It rescues society from psycho-social fragmentation by quelling eccentricity, individualism, dissent.[17] The Church, then, is the earthly manifestation of orthodoxy—the more highly institutionalized and given over to tradition and ceremony, the more authentically orthodox in Eliot's view.[18]

[16]In *The Idea of a Christian Society* Eliot writes that he is convinced "that you cannot have a national Christian society, a religious-social community, a society with a political philosophy founded upon the Christian faith, if it is constituted as a mere congeries of private and independent sects" (40).

[17] Eliot writes disparagingly of "the preserves of 'private life' in which each man may obey his own convictions or follow his own whim," and aligns himself with what he believes is conventional Christian doctrine when he writes that "if eternity and universality is to be found, not in dogma, but in worship—that means, in a common form of worship which will mean to the worshippers anything that they like to fancy, then the result seems to me to be likely to be the most corrupt form of ritualism" (*The Idea of a Christian Society,* 14 and 63, respectively).

[18] Writing of the value of the Church of England, Eliot says: "I am only affirming that it is this Church which, by reason of its tradition, its organization, and its relation in the past to the religious-social life of the people, is the one for our purpose—and that no Christianization of England can take place without it" (*The Idea of a Christian Society,* 37).

Culture, Not Christianity -

The concept of orthodoxy as it occurs in *The Idea of a Christian Society,* which remains essentially unnamed as such and is given in snippets only, appears more concretely and clearly in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* in which Eliot shifts his focus from the subject of society to that of culture. Here, too, theology is treated as an ancillary topic:

> This is not a religious talk, and I am not setting out to convert anybody…. I am not so much concerned with the communion of Christian believers today; I am talking about the common tradition of Christianity which has made Europe what it is, and about the common cultural elements which this common Christianity has brought with it. (200)

Nonetheless, what surfaces in the text about the religion-culture complex in its contribution to orthodoxy elucidates our understanding of Eliot's view of the natural in relation to the supernatural. Hence, despite his caveat, the text does indeed reveal a piece of the puzzle that is Eliot's theology.

The task of reading Eliot's theology separated from his theory of culture is challenging.[19] Particularly in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture,* in which religion

[19]Although pinning down Eliot to a precise definition of the term culture is difficult, it is a task worth undertaking to try and glean an understanding of culture's general character, especially as it appears in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. Firstly, his definition incorporates the conventionally accepted meaning: "By 'culture,' then, I mean first of all what the anthropologists mean: the way of life of a particular people living together in one place. That culture is made visible in their arts, in their social system, in their habits and customs, in their religion" (198). But then he adds a caveat that propels culture into a higher category—of an entity or phenomenon capable of providing wholeness of life: "We must remind ourselves of the danger… of identifying culture with the *sum* of distinct cultural activities…. [C]ulture is not merely the sum of several activities, but *a way of life*" (113-114). Next, culture is pared down to its most valuable claims: "Culture may… be described simply as that which makes life worth

takes its place as a topic under the larger umbrella of and in strict relationship to the topic of culture, the task is near to impossible. More importantly, in Eliot's mind, culture as an entity is not clearly divisible from religion. That complexity and possible complications are by-products of a disquisition involving culture and religion seems quite natural. Eliot, who admits that "[t]he way of looking at culture and religion which I have been trying to adumbrate is so difficult that I am not sure I grasp it myself except in flashes" (103), may be speaking to more than just the possibility of a confused vision. Furthermore, Eliot's personal process of conversion to Christianity is so incestuously bound to his cultural aesthetic that to divide his cultural from his religious ideas is to force, in essence, a rift between an impetus and its outgrowth.[20]

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living. And it is what justifies other peoples and other generations in saying, when they contemplate the remains and the influence of an extinct civilization, that it was *worth while* for that civilization to have existed" (100). Then a curiously interesting note occurs near the essay's end: "Error creeps in again and again through our tendency to think of culture as group culture exclusively, the culture of the 'cultured' classes and elites. We then proceed to think of the humbler part of society as having culture only in so far as it participates in this superior and more conscious culture" (183). And finally, a salient attribute is highlighted that brings culture close to Eliot's concept of tradition, and seeks to gesture toward an *ethos* of culture. This is culture's "unconscious" quality: "Culture can never be wholly conscious—there is always more to it than we are conscious of; and it cannot be planned because it is also the unconscious background of all our planning" (170). Again, in almost identical terms he reiterates: "Culture cannot altogether be brought to consciousness; and the culture of which we are wholly conscious is never the whole of culture; the effective culture is that which is directing the activities of those who are manipulating that which they *call* culture" (184); "we cannot directly set about to create or improve culture—we can only will the means which are favorable to culture" (186); "culture is something that must grow; you cannot build a tree, you can only plant it, and care for it, and wait for it to mature in its due time" (196).

[20]In a passage that can be read as autobiographical, Eliot writes in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture:* "It is always the main religious body which is the guardian of more of the remains of the higher developments of culture preserved from a past time before the division took place… it is the main religious body which is the least alienated from the best intellectual and artistic activity of its time. Hence it is that the convert… o the intellectual or sensitive type is drawn towards the more Catholic type of worship and doctrine…. [O]n the view of the intimacy of religion and culture which is the starting point of my examination, such phenomena as the progress to religious faith through cultural attraction are both natural and acceptable" (155). In his biography of Eliot, Peter Ackroyd notes that Eliot was "attracted to the spectacle of the organized Church" (138), and writes of Eliot's interest in St. Thomas Aquinas: "Eliot's concern was not simply a theological or philosophical one: Aquinas's work embodied the unity of European culture in the thirteenth century, and he believed an examination of that culture to be the best possible training for the contemporary mind. A new form of Thomism offered at least the possibility of re-establishing the principles of order and lucidity, just as in his Cambridge lectures he wanted to demonstrate how that original unity had disintegrated" (155). Ackroyd argues that Eliot idealized the "notion of a medieval Europe in which literary, religious and philosophical activities were all broadly in accord" (155).

He announces that he feels obliged "to maintain two contradictory propositions: that religion and culture are aspects of one unity, and that they are two different and contrasted things" (142-43). (The latter half of the claim points up Eliot's conviction that a certain degree and nature of tension between any two elements in interaction with one another is necessary for their progress.) He draws an apt analogy in the passage between the relationship of culture to religion and that of the individual to society: "It is only by unremitting effort that we can persist in being individuals in a society, instead of merely members of a disciplined crowd. Yet we remain members of the crowd, even when we succeed in being individuals" (142). Despite the "strain" between culture and religion that Eliot identifies, he considers them always somehow interdependent, often synonymous, and certainly synergistic.[21] The unity rather than the diversity of culture and religion occupies the greater share of Eliot's attention and of space in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture.* Orthodoxy comes into being under the influence of this unity. Orthodoxy as an explicitly articulated concept does not occur in the text. In fact, the word itself is mentioned but once. But if we can accept the meaning ascribed to it by the study at hand (that orthodoxy is tantamount to Arnold's notion of the best that has been

[21]Eliot writes broadly about the synonymous quality of culture and religion: "[T]here is an aspect in which we can see a religion as the *whole way of life* of a people, from birth to the grave, from morning to night and even in sleep, and that way of life is also its culture" (103). He further argues: "The development of culture and the development of religion, in a society uninfluenced from without, cannot be clearly isolated from each other: and it will depend upon the bias of the particular observer, whether a refinement of culture is held to be the cause of progress in religion, or whether a progress in religion is held to be the cause of a refinement of the culture" (101). He then reminds the reader that even Greco-Roman culture was itself a religious culture, even though "in decline." He continues: "We may… ask whether what we call the culture, and what we call the religion, of a people are not different aspects of the same thing: the culture being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people" (101). He writes that the belief "that culture can be preserved, extended and developed in the absence of religion" is an error (102). With regard to the synergistic relationship between culture and religion, he declares, for example: "Aesthetic sensibility must be extended into spiritual perception, and spiritual perception must be extended into aesthetic sensibility and disciplined taste before we are qualified to pass judgment upon decadence or diabolism or nihilism in art" (103).

thought and said), then it can be argued that the concept does, in fact, assert a presence (albeit only implicitly) in various and important capacities throughout the essay.

The express aim of the essay is "to help to define a word, the word *culture"* (85), which aim then crescendoes from a hope that "*culture* would cease to be abused, cease to appear in contexts where it does not belong" to accumulate an additional goal: "[t]o rescue this word [from contextual "abuse"] is the extreme of my ambition" (89). As the text proceeds, Eliot's goal assumes a more intense hue and grows more expansive as its expressions begin to incorporate *definitions* of culture. He seeks to persuade his readers to conceive of the religion-culture complex as "something toward which they strive, not merely something which they possess" (103). The attempt at a detailed delineation of "the situation most favorable to the preservation and improvement of culture" (144) marries an effort toward definition to the expression of an ultimate goal—that of preserving and improving culture. Cultural disintegration all along is Eliot's most salient concern not only in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* but also in *The Idea of a Christian Society.* In the latter text the formation of a Christian society represents an act of recuperation just as in the former the formulation of a definition aims at preservation. Eliot's fear that the psycho-spiritual health of (European) civilization is in jeopardy gives rise to his project of return to and recovery of a center—of what he considers a "source."[22] For Western culture, that nexus, by Eliot's estimation, is Christianity: "[T]his unity in the common elements of culture [by way of Christianity], throughout many

[22] In summing up the nature of the "spiritual organism of Europe" (197) in the Appendix to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture,* Eliot writes: "The Western World has its unity in this heritage, in Christianity and in the ancient civilization of Greece, Rome and Israel, from which, owing to two thousand years of Christianity, we trace our descent" (201).

centuries, is the true bond between us. No political and economic organization, however much goodwill it commands, can supply what this culture unity gives" (201).

Notes Towards the Definition of Culture is replete with articulations of the fear of cultural disintegration, expressed here most specifically and most frequently in terms of the threat of fragmentation, both social and psychic. At the heart of that threat rests the fear, ultimately, of annihilation—a very human fear, grounded in the material, and involving a concern about human progress. In Eliot's view the solution to avoiding such annihilation is to erect standards that transcend the material—a sort of meta-structure that will ensure the survival and continued progress of a civilization regardless of the moment's crisis.[23] He announces that: "The most important question that we can ask, is whether there is any permanent standard, by which we can compare one civilization with another, and by which we can make some guess at the improvement or decline of our own" (91). Religion by virtue of its (even purely sociological) nature—because of its interest in the permanent and the nonphysical—serves as an ideal vehicle for this endeavor—for breeding the "cohesion necessary for culture" (96). (Orthodoxy shares a common ground with religion in its devotion to a higher standard than the moment's, in its pursuit of transcendence and cohesion.)

[23] The search for standards established according to what is transcendent and eternal touches every aspect of Eliot's intellectual thought. In the introduction to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* for example, the same aspiration expresses itself now with regard to literary criticism: "[T]he study of criticism… may also help us to draw some conclusions as to what is permanent and eternal in poetry, and what is merely the expression of the spirit of an age; and by discovering what does change, and how, and why, we may become able to apprehend what does not change," the ultimate goal of which is to "extend our… limitations and liberate ourselves from some of our prejudices" (27-8). The passage brings to mind Arnold's theory of disinterestedness, particularly as disinterestedness is held up against the spirit of the zeitgeist.

Superadded to the interest in preservation is the desire for wholeness and a harmonious cultural existence. Although Eliot denies (in *The Idea of a Christian Society*) the accusation that he wishes to return Western culture to a pre-modern existence, he does indeed argue for a cultural condition that predates the "cultural specialization" (98) resulting from industrialization, a condition in which "religion, science, politics and art [were not] abstractly conceived apart from each other" (97). Cultural specialization (one manifestation of fragmentation) represents, for Eliot, a particularly insidious force against spiritual wholeness, intellectual progress, and social harmony; he deems it "the most radical disintegration that a society can suffer" because it produces a society in which "[r]eligious thought and practice, philosophy and art, all tend to become isolated areas cultivated by groups in no communication with each other. The artistic sensibility is impoverished by its divorce from the religious sensibility, the religious by its separation from the artistic" (99). The result in the individual's life (which of course, in turn, has reflexive implications for society) is a loss of meaning: "[people] will have no context in their lives to give value to their behavior" (99).[24] He seeks to establish (or perhaps

[24] He writes at length about his fear of this phenomenon of fragmentation and differentiation with particular reference to religion in the section called "The Issue of Religion" in his essay entitled *The Aims of Education*: "[T]he assertion that a man's religion is his private affair, that from the point of view of society it is irrelevant, may turn out in the end to lead to a situation very favorable to the establishment of a religion, or a substitute for religion, by the State. The religious sense, and the sense of community, cannot be finally divorced from each other. They are first formed, certainly, in the family; and when they are defective in the family, the defect cannot be supplied by the school and the university. But on the other hand, the contrast between a community life in which religion has no place, and a family life for which it is reserved, cannot be long endured; and the weakening of the social side of religion in the outside world will tend to weaken it in the family also; and the weakening of the religious bond between members of the same household… will leave the family reduced to the insecure bond of affection and sentiment. Thus, when religion comes to be more and more an individual matter, and is no longer a family tie; when it becomes a matter of voluntary association on one day a week when the weather is neither too good nor too bad, and of a traditional and more and more meaningless verbiage in the pulpit and at times upon the political platform; when it ceases to inform the whole of life; then a vacuum is discovered, and the beliefs in religion will be gradually supplanted by a belief in the State" (113-114). Of added (and telling) interest here is that Eliot's fear of secularization carries with it a fear of the precariousness of human emotion—of the possibility that the "bond of affection and sentiment" may be the only existing bond between family members.

recover) a society in which thought and feeling and behavior are together governed by an unconscious sense of commonality, unification, wholeness, even communion—a society in which, in its quotidian conception, "persons of every superior activity can meet without merely talking shop or being at pains to talk each other's shop" (161).[25]

Preservation of culture, however, depends as much on diversity as it does on unity. Fragmentation should be resisted and reversed not only in order to establish a common cultural base or to create a balanced, harmonious society but also in the interest of maintaining exchange and interplay among elements—of achieving synergy. Once a common cultural context[26] is in place, the constituents of the whole must retain their individuality—contribute to their collective diversity—so that tension (or what Eliot calls "irritation")[27] can push the culture along the course of progress. Such tension functions to keep cultural insularity and petrifaction at bay. The cultural-historical phenomenon Eliot imagines by which unity and diversity enjoy this coexistence is the particular articulation given in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* of his theory of orthodoxy. A concise description of the phenomenon is given in summary near the essay's end:

> For the health of the culture of Europe two conditions are required: that the culture of each country should be unique, and that the different cultures should recognize their relationship to each other, so that each

[25] He reiterates that "a society is in danger of disintegration when there is a lack of contact between people of different areas of activity—between the political, the scientific, the artistic, the philosophical and the religious minds" (160).

[26] At one point in the text Eliot concretely describes the process behind the establishment of this context as "the overlapping and sharing of interests, by participation and mutual appreciation" (96).

[27] "The universality of irritation is the best assurance of peace. A country within which the divisions have gone too far is a danger to itself: a country which is too well united—whether by nature or by device, by honest purpose or by fraud and oppression—is a menace to others" (133).

> should be susceptible of influence from the others. And this is possible because there is a common element in European culture, an interrelated history of thought and feeling and behavior, an interchange of arts and of ideas. (197)

The entity responsible for the "common element in…culture" is religion: "we must aspire to a common world culture, which will yet not diminish the particularity of the constituent parts. And here, of course, we are finally up against religion" (136).[28]

The call to commonality—to the pursuit of finding and establishing common ground—already shares an aspect with Eliot's theory of orthodoxy whereby a meaningful acquaintance with history leads, ultimately, to a survey of what has been handed down to the current generation.[29] This latter half of the process—the assessment of one's cultural inheritance—depends on the successful operation of the kind of tension that here assumes the term "diversity." That is, the method of teasing out the best that has been thought and said requires juxtaposition of and even conflict among elements being compared, so that the "best" can surface and take its proper place.[30] In *Notes Towards the Definition of*

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[28] Even more simply and directly, Eliot writes in the Appendix: "The dominant force in creating a common culture between peoples each of which has its distinct culture, is religion" (200).

[29] By virtue of the proper exposure to the history of art, the pursuit of orthodoxy prevents artists from producing in egoistic vacuums; much in the same way, societies (and religions) are safeguarded against insularity: "A universal religion is at least potentially higher than one which any race or nation claims exclusively for itself; and a culture realizing a religion also realized in other cultures is at least potentially a higher culture than one which has a religion exclusively to itself" (104).

[30] The following passage serves well to illustrate two of Eliot's interests given at once. He argues for the necessity of the exposure of "great minds" to another in the formation of a cultural influence so deep-rooted and ubiquitous that it is mostly unconscious. But the reference to "elites" also gestures toward the process of orthodoxy in which standards are established by teasing out "the best" within the culture: "I have suggested elsewhere that a growing weakness of our culture has been the increasing isolation of elites from each other, so that the political, the philosophical, the artistic, the scientific, are separated to the great loss of each of them, not merely through the arrest of any general circulation of ideas, but through the lack of those contacts and mutual influences at a less conscious level, which are perhaps even more important than

Culture Eliot recommends the application of a similar process to the constitution of the governing class in his idealized society,[31] and, more relevantly, to the formation of universal Christianity: "Christendom should be one…. [W]ithin that unity there should be an endless conflict between ideas—for it is only by the struggle against constantly appearing false ideas that the truth is enlarged and clarified, and in the conflict with heresy that orthodoxy is developed to meet the needs of the times" (157). Presumably, a commitment to the tension of unity-and-diversity in religion will ensure the maintenance of orthodoxy,[32] will serve to compel Christianity to assume its best form:

> It is only when we imagine our culture as it ought to be… that we can dare to speak of Christian culture as the highest culture; it is only by referring to all the phases of this culture, which has been the culture of Europe, that we can affirm that it is the highest culture that the world has ever known. (106)

But the concern of the passage is neither with Christianity nor Christendom. The ethnocentric and elitist sentiment behind Eliot's comment shows him immune to the possibility of self-reflection—oblivious to what he arrogates. What is at the heart of the conception of Christian culture as "the highest culture the world has ever known"? Whose benefit does the conception serve? Clearly, Christianity is not being

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ideas" (110). In a similar spirit, he praises the English language as the best language for writing poetry because it is "a composite from so many different European sources" (189).

[31]He argues that "society… must see that the ablest artists and architects rise to the top, influence taste, and execute the important public commissions; it must do the same by the other arts and by science; and above all, perhaps, it must be such that the ablest minds will find expression in speculative thought" (118).

[32] With more specific regard to Christianity itself, orthodoxy, in Eliot's estimation, enjoys its fullest expression through Catholicism: "When we consider the Western World, we must recognize that the main cultural tradition has been that corresponding to the Church of Rome" (148).

recommended here on the strength of its doctrinal possibilities—not as a system of thought regarding the numinous nor one that engages ontological questions, nor even one that serves to provide moral guidance. In fact, "Christian culture" as Eliot uses it here seems entirely free of reference to Christian dogma. Christianity appears simply as the historical agency by which European cultural production came to fruition. Since religious proselytization is not his aim, we can hardly eliminate the possibility of the dark desire for cultural dominance.

Within the framework of the complex diversity dictated by geopolitical and national differences, a common system of belief acts as a cohesive agent: "Without a common faith, all efforts towards drawing nations closer together in a culture can produce only an illusion of unity" (157). Hence, Christianity shows its utility in its capacity to unify European culture. Through the effort to maintain orthodoxy, the communal shapes the lives of individuals. Eliot notes that, regardless of individual belief, every aspect of a modern European's life is so completely infused with Christian ethos that to have one's existence apart from the influence of Christianity is an impossibility in (Western) modernity. A Christian heritage means that "our arts have developed" (200) under Christianity, that "the laws of Europe have…been rooted" (200) in Christianity, that Christianity informs "our conceptions of private and public morality" (201), and establishes "our common standards of literature" (201). The disappearance of God as a spiritual force or a supernatural entity is hardly at the center of a concern that "[i]f Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes" (200). Eliot renders illogical the application of his theory of orthodoxy to religion by the imposition of his belief in a supernatural "reality." While the theory of orthodoxy serves validly enough in the case

of culture and art which require for their sustenance interaction among elements in the natural world only, orthodoxy does not satisfy the need for supernatural involvement. The belief in the validity of orthodoxy is a belief in the communal power of *humanity.* If access to the supernatural is achieved solely by way of a tradition handed down, then the connection between the natural and the supernatural (between man and God) is purely social. Orthodoxy in religion obviates the need for the existence of the supernatural, just as it eliminates the significance of individual consciousness.

In fact, this attribute of orthodoxy has especial attraction for Eliot in religious matters. Orthodoxy's tendency to subsume the individual in the communal functions in the religious realm as a mechanism of control from without—a social force that silences the "inner voice" that Eliot finds both untrustworthy and terrifying.[33] Composite Christian knowledge provides a structure whereby the individual is delivered from reliance on the sinful self in matters of religion. The conventional Christian conception of the sinfulness of man against the sanctity of God in fact may be the very draw of Christianity where Eliot is concerned. The fact that the idea is fundamental to Christian dogma is not what recommends it to Eliot's imagination. The causal relationship works in the opposite direction: Eliot is drawn to Christianity because of its particular ideological construction of good and evil. What Ackroyd calls "an allegiance to an external order," citing, in support, Eliot's own words that he "wished to surrender to 'something outside himself'," [34] does not necessarily indicate a Christian understanding of

[33]Juxtaposing Eliot's concept of cultural orthodoxy to Arnold's concept of culture, Vincent Buckley calls Arnold's "personalist" and Eliot's "institutionalist." While Arnold's view of culture, according to Buckley, "is of an interior condition or possession of the person seeking full human perfection," Eliot escapes the internal/personal view of culture through orthodoxy by asserting "an external state of society" (*Poetry and Morality,* 138).

the need for selfless living as much as it evinces an anti-Romantic need to escape the self.[35] For as far as Christian dogma itself is concerned—that is, Christianity as a spiritual pursuit embraced by the individual, conceived apart from its cultural-aesthetic appeal—Eliot writes that "religion imposes a conflict, a division, torment and struggle within the individual" (142).

The Individual without Christianity -

Much like the "irritation" among elements in a given system Eliot believed requisite to the system's progress (like culture, society, or religion),[36] perhaps the sense of psychological tension—of conflict, torment, and struggle imposed upon the individual by the discipline, difficulty, and asceticism of religion—assured him of personal spiritual progress. In *Thoughts After Lambeth* he depicts the Christian life in the modern world as a life of "thought, study, mortification, sacrifice," and preaches that the "way of discipline and asceticism must be emphasized for even the humblest Christian layman" (16). Gordon argues that Eliot was "drawn by Christianity's martyrdoms and feats of asceticism rather than by its more compassionate humane goals" because he was "self-absorbed and obsessed with a darker life."[37] Clearly, Eliot at least found comfort in the palpability of structures outside the self—in organized religion, in ceremony and ritual, in

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[34]Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot,* 138.

[35]Lyndall Gordon writes in *Eliot's Early Years* about some of the circumstances behind his conversion: "Eliot did not turn from atheism to belief but from spiritual self-reliance to the support of a Church. Eliot in his youth had trusted the inner light, but came to perceive the danger of untempered individualism" (120).

[36]See footnote 138 of chapter 1.

[37]Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (136).

an ascetic lifestyle—that guard against "the disorderly mind and… the unruly passions."[38]

The conspicuous absence of the individual—as a citizen in a society or a member of a community who contributes to its cultural formation—from both *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* can be read as a form of ideological or perhaps rhetorical fidelity to the philosophy of the communal espoused in these texts.[39] The fact is telling, nonetheless, of Eliot's tendency to efface the individual from projects that paradoxically would all but dissolve without the consent and involvement of individuals. The unwavering push for conformity at every turn in both the construction of the oligarchical Christian society and the formation of orthodox Western culture in any case sacrifices the individual. The deep distrust of individual consciousness, of the inner voice, of personal experience and private religion intimated in Eliot's socio-cultural vision receives earlier and direct expression in texts like "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and *The Function of Criticism* by way of his theory of impersonality.[40]

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[38]*Thoughts After Lambeth* 16.

[39]Vincent Buckley makes the point that Eliot's "notion of impersonality leads to one of communion" (*Poetry and Morality* 128).

[40]The application to Eliot's religious discourse of theories belonging, in their original context, to literary criticism is sanctioned by his own conflation of the two fields. Of course, he stood vehemently against Arnold's idea of "substituting" poetry (or anything, for that matter) for religion, but as fields of study that occupied his interest and a good deal of his time and critical effort, religion and literature were gathered under his thought and his pen in close relationship to one another. Eliot "ascend[s] the platform" of literary criticism "as a moralist," he tells us in *After Strange Gods.* In fact, the theory of orthodoxy given in *After Strange Gods* is deeply steeped in Judeo-Christian conceptions of good and evil and the premise of original sin. In the late essay called *To Criticize a Critic,* Eliot assures us that he has "suggested… that it is impossible to fence off *literary* criticism from criticism on other grounds and that moral, religious and social judgments cannot be wholly excluded. That they can, and that literary merit can be estimated in complete isolation, is the illusion of those who believe that literary merit alone can justify the publication of a book which could otherwise be condemned on moral grounds" (25-26). In explaining the purpose of *Religion and Literature,* Eliot writes: "Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite

Under the pen of a literary critic arguing for the importance of tradition not on the basis of any inherent value but because tradition represents an external authority, anti-Romanticism reaches an exaggerated pitch.[41] Eliot's theory of impersonality—succinctly captured in his description of the theory-in-process as the artist's "continual surrender of himself… to something which is more valuable… a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of the personality"[42]—demands more of the artist than even an intimate familiarity with the tradition within which he creates. The process involves a commitment to something outside oneself to which one contributes at the cost of the self as an individual self. Eliot writes: "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates."[43] In essence, the personality of the artist is subsumed in the tradition within which he produces; what remains outside the tradition—that which is purely personal or belongs to the personality of the man who suffers—is residual and therefore dispensable as far as art and the

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ethical and theological standpoint. In so far as in any age there is common agreement on ethical and theological matters, so far can literary criticism be substantive" (97). He puts the theory into practice in his own literary criticism: "I am not concerned here with religious literature but with the application of our religion to the criticism of any literature" (98). So it stands to reason that theories developed in one field are applicable to another. He argues for standards that are transcendent: "What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: of something which I assume to be our primary concern…. What I believe to be incumbent upon all Christians is the duty of maintaining consciously certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world…. The greater part of our current reading matter is written for us by people who have no real belief in the supernatural order" (104-105). In his essay called "T. S. Eliot and Ideology," Kenneth Asher writes that "Eliot's literary judgments had always been influenced by ideological considerations," and that "extraliterary pressure, though never directly acknowledged, seems to have shaped the small canon of examples of a prelapsarian sensibility, still unified, that Eliot holds up for approval" (900).

[41]In "T. S. Eliot and Ideology" Kenneth Asher counts Eliot among those who, "chagrined by almost every aspect of modern lilfe," elected conservatism. He writes that Eliot fell in line with the belief that: "The objects of antagonism—Romanticism, democracy, Protestantism—are all regarded as similarly motivated by an anarchic individualism that threatens the order and beauty made possible only by the discriminations of traditional hierarchy" (895-96).

[42]"Tradition and the Individual Talent" 40.

[43]"Tradition and the Individual Talent" 41.

tradition are concerned. When Eliot introduces the element of simultaneity into the discussion, he brings the theory of impersonality closer to its companion theory of orthodoxy. Eliot's exhortation that the poet must labor to obtain a perception "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence"[44] is his invitation to the poet/artist to participate in the process of orthodoxy (which he here calls "tradition"; later he makes a distinction between the two in *After Strange Gods*). If the poet treats the literary past within which he writes as a *living* past, he can enter into a collaborative relationship with it—one in which he both affects and is simultaneously affected by the tradition. Eliot claims that "the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."[45] The achievement and perpetuation of this "simultaneous order," of an intellectual-cultural construct that theoretically transcends temporal confines, is selfsame with the preservation of orthodoxy; in other words, the conflation here of past with present conceives of the resulting poetic tradition as permanent and absolute—as essentially spiritual.

In making a distinction between a first- and a second-rate artist, Eliot proclaims in *The Function of Criticism* that "only the man who has so much to give that he can forget himself in his work can afford to collaborate, to exchange, to contribute" (69) to the tradition. Artistic work thus described approaches religious self-sacrifice. But the movement toward "extinction," as Eliot calls it, does not end with self-sacrifice; reliance on outside authority—reliance of the nature and to the degree advocated by Eliot—can be

[44]"Tradition and the Individual Talent" 38.

[45]"Tradition and the Individual Talent" 38.

interpreted as its own form of self-negation. When Eliot writes that "men cannot get on without giving allegiance to something outside themselves,"[46] he gestures toward his theory of orthodoxy as it applies to matters both socio-cultural and religious. Denouncing Romanticism as fragmentary, immature, and chaotic, he affiliates with it what he considers to be the Protestant notion of the "inner voice"—equally immature, misguided, and chaotic. Eliot dismisses as "a form of pantheism" Middleton Murry's idea that if a man "truly interrogates himself [he] will ultimately hear the voice of God."[47] Against the "Inner Voice" he erects "Outside Authority," by virtue of whose power he derides and attempts to debunk individual consciousness, calling on no other than Matthew Arnold for reinforcement: "My belief is that those who possess this inner voice are ready enough to hearken to it, and will hear no other. The inner voice, in fact, sounds remarkably like an old principle which has been formulated by an elder critic in the now familiar phrase of 'doing as one likes'."[48] The transcendent quality of "Outside Authority" reenters the discourse of *The Function of Criticism* with Eliot's claim that the communion between dead and living artists is "mostly unconscious" (68), and that the "cooperative activity" among art critics can culminate in "something outside of ourselves, which may provisionally be called truth" (76).

What, we might ask—what manner of dark vision or paralyzing fear—does Eliot associate with the inner voice or the "Inner Light," which he calls "the most untrustworthy and deceitful guide that ever offered itself to wandering humanity,"[49] that

[46] *The Function of Criticism* 71.

[47] *The Function of Criticism* 71.

[48] *The Function of Criticism* 71.

he assembles against it so impenetrable a version of "restriction[s] of tradition and institution"?[50] A dogmatic belief in original sin does not suffice to explain Eliot's terror of one's "own desert places."[51] The Christian doctrine of Jesus' propitiation for "the evil which is present in human nature at all times"[52] provides solace to any adherent of conventional Christianity. In fact, orthodox Christian dogma can be called up to argue that an obsession with the condition of sinfulness (especially to the degree suffered by Eliot) works psychologically (and theologically) to nullify Jesus' atonement, so that the preoccupation—in both fact and content—is itself sinful. The threat of widespread secularism that undoubtedly occasioned skepticism (and presumably cosmic dread) in the hearts of believers, and the fragmenting forces of modernity that promised and delivered the isolation of individual from individual that Arnold so plangently poeticized,[53] could not have been lost on Eliot as reasons to commune with the outside world. Outside structures—especially those that boast the authority of community, tradition, and history—potentially can act to prevent anarchy and to keep self-righteousness, self-deceit, and solipsism at bay. What measure of Eliot's desperate need for and insistence upon tradition and institutions owes its existence to the desire to recapture the certitude that historians tell us slipped tragically away from his Victorian forebears, and what portion belongs strictly to his own biographical circumstances, we cannot tell. What we can assert, in any case, is that the dread of individual consciousness and the concomitant

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[49]*After Strange Gods* 59.

[50]*After Strange Gods* 59.

[51]From Robert Frost's poem, "Desert Places," line 16.

[52] *The Idea of a Christian Society* 26.

[53]For example, poems like "Dover Beach," "Isolation: To Marguerite," and "To Marguerite—Continued" come immediately to mind.

flight to seek refuge in outside authority of the kind Eliot sought cannot make a cogent claim to being doctrinally Christian.

Ultimately and ironically the impulse to escape the self seems to issue from a need to save oneself from annihilation. If a tradition is established with a claim to standards that are not merely lofty but actually permanent and absolute by virtue of being morally and supernaturally sanctioned, and if an artist can place himself firmly within the stream of this tradition—this orthodoxy—then he has (at least in his own illusion) ensured himself some measure of immortality. Self-motivation aside, the project is at base deeply humanistic because it aims to reassess and regenerate the best that has been thought and said in history. Especially since Eliot did not believe in human evolution á la Tennyson and Arnold, orthodoxy becomes a means of preserving the *material* productions of humankind for their own sake.

That the process of orthodoxy formulates and comes to represent an authority external to the individual can be shown to be true enough. However, that its authority is transcendent hangs on nothing more than Eliot's own assurance; and any pretension to supernaturalness is just that—a pretension. If the religious manifestation of orthodoxy is the Church with its doctrine, its tradition, its history, then an appeal to external authority in the form of the Church—social and institutional—is an appeal to the natural over and against the supernatural. (Eliot cannot logically argue that the efficacy of the supernatural extends to the social, the institutional, the traditional and historical, and

particularly the orthodox, but not to the individual.)[54] Eliot's orthodoxy reifies the external authority of dogmatic Judeo-Christianity that is reserved, conventionally, for the religion's supernatural deity. Christianity's doctrinal break with Judaism (non-ecclesiastical, historical circumstances aside) has its inspiration in Christianity's additional, independent appeal to the purely spiritual nature of God—liberated from Jewish code, ritual, and ceremony. Jesus' appearance upon the religious scene as the incarnation of God marks, for Christians, the establishment of a new law—the law of conscience—of the "inner man," as Arnold calls it.

When the religious relationship involves the individual Christian in communion with the authority of the Church at the exclusion of the terrifying "inner voice"—the unreliable, disingenuous[55] human conscience—where can the supernatural possibly insert itself? What need of a supernatural god after the concretization of the relationship between man and the socio-cultural institution he has erected? Eliot's concern is that the self-deceiving, fallible inner voice will err. Mocking[56] Irving Babbitt's notion that an individual can supply "inner restraint… over himself" in the absence of the "restraints of an orthodox religion,"[57] Eliot complains: "The sum of a population of individuals, all ideally and efficiently checking and controlling themselves, will never make a whole…. There is nothing left for the individual to check himself by but his own private notions

[54] Arguing the same point from the perspective of original sin, Northrop Frye writes: "An authoritarian inference from original sin is not very logical, for those entrusted with imposing social discipline on others cannot by hypothesis be any better themselves" (*T. S. Eliot,* 13).

[55]In *Thoughts After Lambeth* Eliot alludes to "the extreme disingenuity of humanity" (17).

[56]In *The Humanism of Irving Babbitt* Eliot writes that Babbitt's belief in the power of "inner restraint" is tantamount to "build[ing] a Catholic platform out of Protestant planks" (218).

[57]*The Humanism of Irving Babbitt* 281.

and his judgment, which is pretty precarious."[58] Nothing? Not even the supernatural existence of God? Eliot's comment (perhaps unwittingly) seems based on the premise that the supernatural is a purely intellectual construct. If so, then arguably one's private notions and own judgment emerge from the psyche, presumably uninformed by external religious authority—whether of the natural or supernatural kind, as the case may be. The position is at least agnostic, if not atheistic. Babbitt's humanism leaves little room for God, but ironically so too does Eliot's fetishization of the Church. However, whereas Babbitt easily escapes the charge of self-contradiction (and atheism) because his "religion" is so eclectic that it successfully resists classification, Eliot's comment altogether baffles because he deems himself a devout Christian of the most orthodox sort.

Regretting, in *Thoughts After Lambeth,* that the bishops of the Lambeth Conference "have placed so much reliance upon the Individual Conscience" (17), Eliot nonetheless confirms his belief in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He does so, however, only to deny what, according to that doctrine, is the function appropriated to the Holy Spirit:[59] "Certainly, anyone who is wholly sincere and pure in heart may seek for guidance from the Holy Spirit; but who of us is always wholly sincere, especially where

[58]*The Humanism of Irving Babbitt* 281.

[59]See, for example, John 16:8: "When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment"; John 14:26: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you"; Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"; Acts 9:31: "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord"; Romans 8:27: "And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will"; 1 Corinthians 12:1-3: "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

the most imperative of instincts may be strong enough to simulate to perfection the voice of the Holy Spirit?" (17). Again, Eliot's acute need to assert the authority of the Church leads him to argue a point he otherwise might have recognized as rather heretical according to Christian dogma. Given Christianity's conception of the human condition under original sin, conventional Christianity takes no one to be "wholly sincere and pure in heart." (Eliot himself more than once has emphasized this very point.) Furthermore, the idea that human effort brings to fruition the relationship with and the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual's life negates the function of the Holy Spirit, while to claim that human "instinct may be strong enough to simulate… the voice of the Holy Spirit" makes a mockery of the doctrine altogether. Once more, Eliot effectually has obviated the need for the supernatural.

The life of "discipline, inconvenience, and discomfort"[60] to which Eliot relegates himself, imagining it to be the life of a Christian, depends for its success on the individual's strenuous effort to hold fast to the rigors of the ascetic lifestyle (which may or may not be dictated by an external authority such as the Church). This is a life led by the strength of the individual's independent desire to exert restraint over his thoughts and conduct. Because its reliance is on the individual, its prospective success celebrates the individual. If we hold this life under a conventional Christian lens, we will find there the confirmation of original sin in the form of hubris. The ethos of conventional Christianity, like that of Hinduism, expresses itself not in retention, but in relinquishment. As the doctrine reads, the individual's acceptance that original sin dooms him to moral inefficacy invites into his life the force of the supernatural in the figure of the Trinity.

[60]*The Idea of a Christian Society* 19.

The ethos of Eliot's model is doubly inimical to that of Christianity not only because it effaces the supernatural, but also because it ironically positions the individual at the center of a religious model that demands from him the pursuit of a moral perfection Christianity assures him is not his to have. In the final analysis, Eliot's Christianity conceives of a society in which authentic religious belief is superfluous to the society's survival as "Christian"; it advocates a Christian culture so entirely severed from Christianity's dogmatic roots that spiritual sterility is its only conceivable fate; and it works so thoroughly to extinguish the individual's conscience and consciousness that it resolves into either a religion of mechanized worship as dehumanized as it is dehumanizing, or a religion of the nonconformist, standing solipsistic and destitute in the shadow of an Anglican Church that eclipses God.

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