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THE DEBATE OF MATTHEW ARNOLD'S
RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1956

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CHAPTER I

ARNOLD'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT UP TO 1868

On Sunday, December 7, 1841, while on his wedding journey, Arnold visited the Cathedral library, the Sainte-Chapelle of Reims, France. He expressed his feelings about the monastery in the poem "Reims, from the Arnolds" published four years later. In this poem he recalls that as he walked through the silent

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We do not know precisely on what day Arnold was under the influence of these "religious teachers." Mrs. Hughy Ford, the daughter of Arnold's brother Thomas, tells us in her autobiography that she visited Arnold and these "illuminated" the liberalizing writings of George Eliot, Emerson, Goethe, and Schlegel, and "transformed Christianity as they would to give the new religion that it had always been to

Dr. W. H. Miller and Dr. F. J. Lewis, *The History of William Arnold: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1901), p. 24.

CHAPTER I

ARNOLD'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT UP TO 1863

On Sunday, September 7, 1851, while on his wedding journey, Arnold visited the Carthusian monastery, the Grande Chartreuse at Dauphine, France.¹ He interpreted his feelings about the monastery in the poem "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," which he published four years later. In this poem he recalls that as he wandered through the silent courts, the chapel, the library, and the garden, he was filled with "pity and mournful awe," a mixture of emotions such as an ancient Greek, brought up in a sophisticated religion, might have felt chancing upon some "fallen Runic stone" on his travels in the less civilized North. In the rest of the poem Arnold explores the causes for the fascination which this "living tomb" of a dead religion had for him, remembering that "rigorous teachers" had seized his youth and "purged his faith."

We do not know precisely at what age Arnold came under the influence of these "rigorous teachers." Mrs. Humphry Ward, the daughter of Arnold's brother Thomas, tells us in her autobiography that at Oxford Arnold and Thomas "discovered" the liberalizing writings of George Sand, Emerson, Goethe, and Carlyle, and "orthodox Christianity no longer seemed to them the sure refuge that it had always been to

¹C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 246.

the strong teacher (Dr. Arnold) who trained them as boys."²

Certainly by 1846, when some real indication of the development of Arnold's thinking is evident, he had already lost his faith in Christianity.³ During the next few years what concerned him most was the effect this loss was having on his development as a poet. His letters and early poems reveal that skepticism had destroyed for him the intellectual unity which Christianity had provided for life--he was now left without guidance--and skepticism had had a benumbing effect on his emotions.

Arnold had formed very early the exalted ideas about the nature and function of poetry which he later developed into his "criticism of life" theory. In 1852, writing to his close friend Arthur Hugh Clough, he said that modern poetry must become "a complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did."⁴ Since the content of poetry is life itself, the great poet must, first of all, be a "sage," a man who sees life steadily and sees it whole and who can, therefore, mirror life truthfully and completely in his work. Thus the first necessity for the would-be poet is to achieve for himself what Arnold will later

²Mrs. Humphry Ward, A Writer's Recollections (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1918), I, 15-16.

³Alan Harris, "Matthew Arnold, the 'Unknown Years,'" Nineteenth Century, (XIII (April, 1933), 469. Alan Harris reports that in 1846 Arnold "was already so completely above the battle" that the publication of George Eliot's translation of Strauss's Leben Jesu "left him perfectly uninterested."

⁴The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, edited by H. F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 124.

call an "intellectual deliverance,"⁵ an insight into the unity which harmonizes the multitude of facts that make up the complex spectacle of life. Unless a poet can formulate such a unity, he will be overcome by life's "multitudinousness," with the result that his poems will be fragmentary or confused.⁶

Arnold also recognized early in his poetic career that the quality of a poet's work does not depend entirely on his own talents and efforts. If a poet is born into a unified age, into a society whose thinking and activity is ordered by a religion or a philosophy, he has his unity created for him, and he need only treat it poetically. If, on the other hand, a poet is born into a time of transition, when old faiths are being attacked and doubt is spreading among the members of his society, then the poet is himself overtaken by doubt, feels his life disorganized, and so is unable to do any good work at all.

It was into such an age of transition that Arnold felt himself to have been born. He was wandering between two worlds; his religion was gone, and the age could not provide him with a new faith. In his early poems he lamented the passing of the unity of the age of faith and expressed hope that a new unity may some day develop. But a few years

⁵See Matthew Arnold, "On the Modern Element in Literature," Essays in Criticism, Third Series, edited by E. J. O'Brien (Boston: Ball Publishing Co., 1910), pp. 56 ff. This essay, Arnold's inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, was first published in Macmillan's Magazine for February, 1869.

⁶Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold, edited by Arnold Whitridge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), p. 18. In 1853 Arnold spoke of his poems as being "fragments"; they "stagger weakly" and have no "consistent meaning."

later, he roused himself and tried, through critical activity, to create for his age a current of thought out of which the new unity might grow.

The second effect which Arnold felt his loss of faith was having on his poetic production was to give his poems an emotional coloring inappropriate to great poetry. Great poetry reflects "joy," "charm," and "animation," the emotions proper to a man who, like Sophocles,⁷ has oriented his life; but Arnold's poems, like his life, were filled with melancholy, coldness, "fever," and "langour," emotions reflecting an unsettled state of mind. In 1852 he told Clough that his poems have "weight" but "little or no charm."⁸ But he doubted whether he would "ever have heat and radiance enough to pierce the clouds that are massed round me."⁹ A few months later he complained again to Clough: "I am past thirty, and three parts iced over--my pen, it seems to me, is even stiffer and more cramped than my feeling."¹⁰

The following passage from Arnold's notes summarizes his recognition of the fundamental importance of religion in its intimate connection with the emotional life: ". . . feeling and the religious mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and

⁷In his essay "On the Modern Element in Literature," Arnold says that the poetry of Sophocles reflects "the charm of that noble serenity which always accompanies true insight." Essays in Criticism, Third Series, p. 60.

⁸Lowry, op. cit., p. 126.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 123.

greatness for him.¹¹ Men, in losing Christianity, will lose the emotions that have been associated with its language, symbols, and history. Arnold fears that this loss of content for the emotional life will have consequences as serious as the loss of the Christian world view. Man's affective life will still be with him and will still insist on being satisfied, but the great religious sources of this satisfaction will have been lost. In Charlotte Bronte's Villette Arnold already sees the effects of this loss:

Miss Bronte has written a hideous undelightful convulsed constricted novel. . . . It is one of the most utterly disagreeable books I ever read. . . . She is so entirely--what Margaret Fuller was partially--a fire without ailment--one of the most distressing barren sights one can witness. Religion or devotion or whatever it is to be called may be impossible for such people now: but they have at any rate not found a substitute for it and it was better for the world when they comforted themselves with it.¹²

In a letter to Clough, Arnold recommends that writers stick as long as they can to their religion, supposedly even at the expense of the new knowledge, if they wish to succeed at the present time in doing serious literary works:

If one loved what was beautiful and interesting in itself passionately enough, one would produce what was excellent without troubling oneself with religious dogmas at all. As it is, we are warm only when dealing with these last--and what is frigid is always bad. I would have others--most others stick at the old religious dogmas because I sincerely feel that this warmth is the great blessing, and this frigidity the great curse--and on the old religious road they have still the best chance of getting the one and avoiding the other.¹³

¹¹Ibid., pp. 8-10.

¹²Tinker and Lowry, op. cit., p. 132.

¹³Ibid., p. 143.

But Arnold also realized that reason is a powerful force and that in an age of reason religious feeling and the entire affective life of man suffer: "I cannot conceal from myself the objection which really wounds and perplexes me from the religious side that the service of reason is freezing to feeling, chilling to the religious moods."¹⁴ However, it was Arnold's hope that some day reason might be reconciled with feeling and imagination, and man might create a successful unity of these two forces which have been antagonistic for most of the world's history. He will later invent the phrase "imaginative reason" to describe this ideal reconciliation; and in his prose religious criticism he will try to prove that the religion of the Bible not only satisfies reason but also has "power and charm for the heart, mind, and imagination of man."¹⁵

As Arnold studied the intellectual and emotional effects of the loss of faith on himself, on his friends, and on the more advanced spirits of the age, and as he became convinced, through personal experience, of the necessity of preserving in himself as man and poet "fullness of life and power of feeling," he became an ultra-conservative with respect to religious change. His conservatism and his hope that "most others" in this age of transition would stick "to the old religious road" are reflected in his poem "Progress," published in Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems.

¹⁴Tinker and Lowry, op. cit., p. 270.

¹⁵Matthew Arnold, God and the Bible (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1875), p. xiii.

In this poem Arnold offers advice to modern revolutionaries, who want "to lay the old world low" so that they can build the new world on completely new foundations. Such advanced liberals advocate making a clean sweep of the old religious faiths:

"Religious fervours! ardour misapplied!
Hence, hence," they cry, "ye do but keep man blind!
But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,
And lame the active mind."

Arnold can not agree with these liberals. In reply he cites an historical parallel. Christ, the great reformer, two thousand years ago saw His disciples filled with revolutionary zeal for destroying the old law which had been kept so mechanically by the Scribes and Pharisees. To allay this mistaken zeal, Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, gave His disciples an insight into the proper relation between the new and the old, and reminded them that He had not come to annul the old law but to see that it is fulfilled more perfectly than it has been in the past.

Arnold, then, like a modern Christ, reminds the modern revolutionaries of the good that there is in the religion which they are trying to do away with. Superstitious elements might have grown into their old religion, but it had provided a depth of life for the soul. With the loss of this religion, "the fire within" might be destroyed, and the soul would then perish of the "cold." Arnold suggests that this deadening of the emotional life would be a more grievous thing than a continued belief in the superstitions of Christianity.

Arnold's recommendation to the liberals is, then, tolerance. God himself, Arnold says, has been tolerant of all religions; for their

teachings have been similar, and all have had a transforming and vivifying effect on their believers. Their common message and moral force Arnold explains in the stanza:

Which [religion] has not taught weak wills how much they can,
 Which has not fallen on the dry heart like rain,
 Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man;
Thou must be born again!

Arnold concludes: "All religions have been a source of comfort and education to men; all religions have, in no inconsiderable degree, helped men to think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well" --the ideal that God himself desires for men. With the phrase "bear fruit well" we pass to a function of religion which Arnold has not, as yet, emphasized. Up to now, Arnold, worried about his own development as a poet, had been thinking of religion primarily in the context of the psychology of creative activity. His later emphasis will be on the function of religion as a guide and stimulus to right conduct.

Before closing this survey of Arnold's earliest thinking about religion, let us glance at his first extended treatment of religion in a prose work.

Besides the periodic reports on the condition of the British schools in his district, which Arnold made as part of his duties as inspector of schools, he also made a number of special reports, each the result of a commissioned investigation of various school systems on the Continent. The first of these reports, The Popular Education of France, was published in 1861. In the course of this report he takes issue with the liberals, who, convinced of the desirability of the complete separation of church and state, have been advocating the

secularization of education in England and on the Continent, a secularization which had already taken place in America.

Arnold is not only against the secular American schools, which leave religion out altogether, but he is also against the "religious" but "neutral" Dutch schools, which profess to teach a Christianity free of the doctrines of any particular sect. For a few superior minds, Arnold argues, the teaching of moral precepts may be a civilizing influence; but for the masses religion in the full sense--morality combined with religious doctrine and sentiment--is necessary. Thus the state in neglecting the teaching of religion would be neglecting a "regular known machinery" which supplies a "regular known demand of common human nature."¹⁶

In France he found a handling of the religious problem in education which seemed to him most satisfactory:

The French system is religious; not in the sense in which all systems profess to be more or less religious, in inculcating the precepts of a certain universal and indisputable morality: it inculcates the doctrines of morality in the only way in which the masses of mankind ever admit them, in their connection with the doctrines of religion. I believe that the French system is right. . . . Morality--but dignified, but sublimed by being taught in connection with religious sentiment; but legalized, but empowered, by being taught in connection with religious dogma--this is what the French system makes the indispensable basis of its primary instruction.¹⁷

But few modern states are homogeneous in their religion. Arnold agrees that "it would be well, unquestionably, if there reigned

¹⁶Matthew Arnold, The Popular Education of France (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), p. 221.

¹⁷ibid., pp. 145-46.

everywhere one truly catholic faith, embracing all the faithful in a common bond," but the "spirit of sect" exists and must be taken account of.¹⁸ Arnold does not hesitate to place the state as a "higher reason" over religion:

It [the state] deals with all [the religions], indeed as an authority, not as a partisan; it deals with all lesser bodies contained in itself as possessing a higher reason than any one of them, (for if it has not this, what right has it to govern?); it allows no one religious body to persecute another; it allows none to be irrational at the public expense; it even reserves to itself the right of judging what religious differences are vital and important, and demand a separate establishment.¹⁹

Arnold would have the state support public schools for all the important religious organizations which are "incurably separate" from each other. France, for example, recognizes three such divisions. Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism, and in its public schools French inspectors impartially see that all children learn the doctrines of their own religion.

In The Popular Education of France, Arnold, anticipates many ideas about religion which he will develop more fully later on. He insists that religion is a means for satisfying a basic need of human nature; therefore, he has a deep reverence for all religious forms and is a firm believer in the state establishment of religion. But he is still "the apostle of religious toleration in all directions," arguing that the similarities among religions are of far greater importance than their differences. He also makes the distinction between the religious

¹⁸Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 220-21.

needs of the "few" and the "many," a distinction which will, a few years later, involve him in much controversy. Finally, he analyzes religion into its various elements and finds the essence of religion to be the inculcation of morality by the richness of its appeal to the emotional life of men.

In 1868, commenting on The Popular Education of France, Arnold said he doubted that more than two hundred people had looked into that volume.²⁰ There were very few reviews of the book, and none, so far as the present writer could discover, commented on Arnold's ideas on religious education. So The Popular Education of France probably did very little to publicize Arnold's ideas on religion. However, his next expression of opinion about religion, his anti-Colenso essay "The Bishop and the Philosopher," published in Macmillan's Magazine for January, 1868, received a considerable amount of attention, and with it the debate got under way.

²⁰Matthew Arnold, Schools and Universities on the Continent (London: Macmillan and Co., 1868), p. 280.

CHAPTER II

ARNOLD'S ATTACK ON THE RELIGIOUS LIBERALS

In 1855 Arnold made the following report on "church matters" to his brother Thomas, who had emigrated to New Zealand in 1847 to establish "some kind of pantisocracy":

As to Church matters. I think people in general concern themselves less with them than they did when you left England. Certainly religion is not, to all appearance at least, losing ground here; but since the great people of Newman's party went over, the disputes among the comparatively unimportant remains of them do not excite much interest.¹

In 1855 the religious world may have been quiet, but in the early 1860's the calm was broken by a new controversy, which was more bitter than that over Tractarianism and which suggested that a new religious orientation was becoming necessary for the English people. It was inevitable that Continental rationalism, especially German Biblical criticism, should sooner or later liberalize the thinking of some of the English clergy, and that, feeling themselves in a false position, they would be led to speak out. This is what happened in the 1860's. Country parsons and clergymen of an older generation, who, like Theobald Pontifex, had never doubted "the literal accuracy of any syllable in the Bible,"² listened scandalized as the Bishop of Natal,

¹Mrs. Humphry Ward, A Writers Recollections (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1918), p. 71.

²Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1911), p. 51. Colenso quotes the following statement from Burgon's Inspiration and Interpretation as representing "the creed of

the Dean of Westminster, and several eminent professors of Oxford expressed publicly the uneasiness and dissatisfaction which had long been felt by a number of the clergy because of the apparent inconsistency between the new--and to them true--theories of scriptural inspiration and the formularies of the Church of England to which they had to subscribe.

Contemporary accounts describe the effect of the publication of Essays and Reviews and of the works of Bishop Colenso and Dean Stanley in such words as "panic," "tumult," "outcry," and "storm." All clergymen felt themselves forced to take sides. Petitions were circulated, formal denunciations were made, and legal procedures were instituted against some of the liberals. Essays and Reviews had sold twenty thousand copies by May 1, 1861, a year after its publication, and had gone into eleven editions in two years.⁵ The amount of pro and con literature inspired by Essays and Reviews and Colenso's The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined was tremendous; the student may roughly estimate the extent of the discussion by referring to the quarter surveys of the literature in the Westminster Review and to the weekly lists in the Athenaeum.

the School in which I was educated": "The Bible is none other than the Voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne! Every book of it--every chapter of it--every verse of it--every word of it--every syllable of it--every letter of it--is the direct utterance of the Most High! John W. Colenso, The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1862-5), p. 6.

⁵Evelyn Abbott and Lewis Campbell, The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, M.A. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1897), p. 361.

All disputants recognized that the present was a time of crisis for the religious life of England. High and Low Churchmen, forgetting for the time their differences over the doctrines of the Tracts and forming now the "orthodox party," argued that the liberals with their "heresies" were undermining the faith of thousands of pious believers. The liberals justified their public appeal for changes in the Church of England by calling their efforts a fight for "truth" and the preservation of England's religious institutions. Benjamin Jowett, one of the Essayists, from the beginning of his tutorship at Oxford in 1846, had despised his fellow clergymen for their "intolerance, ignorance, narrowness and love of pious frauds";⁴ he felt that their obstinacy in refusing to recognize the results of the German Criticism of the Bible was making educated people lose respect for them and for Christianity; and his justification for his part in Essays and Reviews was that unless the Church gave up its doctrine of verbal inspiration and its belief in the Biblical myths in a few years "there will be no religion in Oxford among intellectual young men."⁵ And Colenso argued the same way:

I believe that there are not a few among the more highly educated classes of society in England, and multitudes among the more intelligent operatives, who are in danger of drifting into irreligion and practical atheism, under this dim sense of the unsoundness of the popular view (on verbal inspiration), combined with a feeling of distrust of their spiritual teachers, as if these must be either ignorant of facts, which to themselves are patent, or, at least, insensible to the difficulties which those

⁴Ibid., p. 150.

⁵Ibid., p. 345.

facts involve, or else, being aware of their existence, and feeling their importance, are consciously ignoring them.⁶

Legally, the controversy resulted in a victory for the liberals.

In 1862 two of the Essayists, Rowland Williams and Henry Bristow Wilson, were tried for heresy before the Dean of Arches, found guilty, and suspended from their offices. But the verdict was reversed in February, 1864 by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council consisting of two bishops and three laymen. This highest ecclesiastical court ruled, though the two bishops refused to support the verdict, that the Church of England does not teach as official dogma the doctrines of verbal inspiration of the Bible, imputed righteousness, and the eternity of punishment for the wicked, the denial of which Williams and Wilson had been accused. Colenso, too, was tried by an ecclesiastical South African Court and was suspended from his bishopric; on appeal to England he was reinstated by a higher court on the grounds that the South African Court had no jurisdiction over the disposition of Church property. And finally, in 1865 a new and more liberal act of subscription was passed by Parliament.

But the orthodox parties in the Church were not placated by these decisions, and their leaders did what they could to bring the liberals into disrepute. An Oxford Declaration of Faith, affirming belief in verbal inspiration and eternity of punishment, was drawn up immediately after the final judgment on the two Essayists and was signed by eleven

⁶Colenso, op. cit., p. xxvi.

thousand of the twenty thousand clergy of the Church of England.⁷ In June, 1876, Convocation condemned synodically the Essays and Reviews as heretical. Bishop Colenso, though he had been allowed to resume his duties, suffered isolation, attack, and humiliation. He was rejected by the clergy of his own diocese, condemned by the bishops of the Church of England and other churches in her communion, censured by Convocation, and excommunicated by his Metropolitan, who also ordained another bishop for Natal to rule in opposition to Colenso for the rest of his life.

Thus within the Church the work of the liberals had been strongly condemned. But they succeeded in making familiar to the great body of the English reading public questions which had hitherto been discussed almost wholly by theologians, and which the Westminster Review in its quarterly summaries of liberal theological literature and such early contributions to English "dissolvent" literature as Charles Kennell's Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity, J. A. Froude's Nemesis of Faith, and W. R. Greg's The Creed of Christendom had failed to make popular.⁸ The public was now ready to study the work of lay authors to

⁷F. Warre Cornish, The English Church in the Nineteenth Century (London: Macmillan and Co., 1910), p. 232.

⁸Charles Kennell's book, published in 1838, turned George Eliot from an evangelical Christian into a student of German Biblical criticism. The immediate fruits of her study were translations of Strauss's Life of Jesus (1846) and Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity (1854). Froude's book, a novel depicting a young man's loss of faith in Christianity, achieved some notoriety by being publicly burnt by one of the tutors at Oxford shortly after its publication in 1849. W. R. Greg's book, published in 1850, was a direct attack on the doctrine of verbal inspiration. In 1863 Greg will defend Colenso against Arnold's attack.

whom the leadership of the liberal movement had passed, such writers as Huxley, Spencer, Locky, Stephen, and Arnold himself.

When in January, 1863, Arnold entered the great Victorian debate between religious orthodoxy and liberalism with an article attacking Bishop Colenso and the Essayists, the initial and dramatic stage of the controversy was already more than two years old; but several references to the controversy in Arnold's letters show that he was interested in it long before he wrote his article.⁹ In these letters he states his conviction that religion in England must "renew" itself, but wonders whether a clergyman has a right to express opinions contrary to those of the Church in which he has been ordained. He feels that the doctrines of the Essays and Reviews are very radical, if not actually heretical, but he half excuses the dishonesty of the clergymen by musing that the typical English manner is to "admit novelties only through the channel of some old form."¹⁰ But his chief reaction is regret that the controversy has once more filled Oxford with "envies, hatreds, and jealousies," exemplified particularly by Goldwin Smith's vicious attack on an article which Stanley had published in the Edinburgh Review defending, to some extent, the publication of Essays and Reviews. Arnold finds he is not disposed to avoid Oxford, convinced

⁹Since several of his friends were concerned in the controversy, it would have been very surprising if Arnold had not been deeply interested in it. Temple, one of the Essayists, was headmaster of Rugby at this time; Jowett had been Arnold's tutor at Balliol; Stanley was one of his father's favorite pupils, his father's biographer, and one of Arnold's best friends.

¹⁰The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, edited by H. F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 152.

"that irritations and envyings are not only negatively injurious to one's spirit, like dullness, but positively and actively."¹¹ This was written in May, 1861. In the next two months Arnold got a further insight into the moral effects of controversy as he studied a little book by Francis W. Newman and an article in the Saturday Review¹² --"amenities" inspired by some rather vivacious remarks which, in lecturing on Homer at Oxford, he had made on the Homeric translations of Newman and certain other scholars. In spite of this growing sense of the futility of controversy, which he expressed privately in these letters and publicly in November in the first few paragraphs of his last lecture on Homer, Arnold kept up-to-date on the religious controversy and, after the publication of Colenso's book, was finally led to write a contribution himself.

Arnold must have read Colenso's book immediately after its publication at the end of October, 1862, for he is already commenting on it in a letter of November 19, and indicating that the idea for an article on the works of Colenso and the Essayists is in his mind. He is going to condemn the publication of these works, feeling that their effect

¹¹Ibid., p. 157.

¹²Francis W. Newman, Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice (London: Williams and Morgate, 1861). "Homeric Translators and Critics," Saturday Review, XII (July 27, 1861), 95. Newman accused Arnold of insulting him personally and deliberately misrepresenting his theories on Homeric translation. The Saturday Review article was among the first to criticize Arnold's "vivacities," for which he felt he had to apologize in his last Homer lecture and later, more elaborately, in the preface to Essays in Criticism. The article was also among the first to admonish Arnold for his "self-conceit," for his "authoritative, oracular" tone.

will be injurious to the religious life of England. He states that he intends to use as his chief rhetorical device a contrast between "Colenso and Co.'s jejune and technical manner of dealing with Biblical controversy" and the method of Spinoza in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus "with a view of showing how, the heresy on both sides being equal, Spinoza broaches his in that edifying and pious spirit by which Colenso and the English Essayists, from their narrowness and want of power, more than from any other cause, do not." He adds, "I know Spinoza's works very well, and I shall be glad of an opportunity of thus dealing with them."¹³ Arnold had been interested in Spinoza for a long time.¹⁴ However, in the essay "The Bishop and the Philosopher," which Arnold published in Macmillan's Magazine for January, 1863, the condemnation of Colenso and the Essayists receives the chief emphasis, and it is not until 1869, when in the second edition of the Essays in Criticism this essay is reprinted stripped of the Colenso material and combined with "A Week More about Spinoza," that Arnold invites the reader to study the views of Spinoza without the distraction of the Colenso controversy.

Arnold opens "The Bishop and the Philosopher" with a very formal statement of the principles and distinctions which he will use to condemn Colenso and the Essayists. The function of literary criticism, Arnold states dogmatically, is to guide the development of human

¹³Lowry, op. cit., p. 204.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 117. Arnold's first mention of Spinoza is a letter to Clough of October 23, 1850. He speaks of the "positive and vivifying atmosphere of Spinoza."

civilization. Since all literary works influence civilization for good or ill, one of the functions of the literary critic is to select for praise and comment those works which will advance civilization and condemn those which will not. About the direction of this advance Arnold is also dogmatic. The "civilising" of an individual consists first in "humanizing" him by forming his moral character--by "edifying" him through an appeal to his heart and imagination--and then in raising him to higher stages of culture by developing his intellect. Contemporary human society consists of a great number of individuals on all levels of culture; but the average cultural level, certainly of English society, is still very low. Those individuals who are ready for further intellectual cultivation are the "few" and those who still need further edification are the "many." A religious work, then, may be written for edification or enlightenment, for the many or for the few, or for a combination of these purposes. Arnold emphasizes the difficulties of a writer on religious subjects who seeks to reconstruct the intellectual element in the religion of any age. This writer will necessarily have to be partly negative in his criticism, will have to destroy some of the cherished religious beliefs of the age. Yet to be merely negative and thus run the risk of upsetting the moral life is indefensible; the moral development of a society, being the sine qua non of progress, must be preserved even at the cost of "truth" in the intellectual life. "Old moral ideas leaven and humanise the multitude; now intellectual ideas filter slowly down to them from the thinking few; and only when they reach them in this manner do they adjust themselves

to their practice without convulsing it."¹⁵ The religious writer must be a person of infinite tact and must know intimately the cultural level of his readers so that he will be able to adjust the content and method of his work to that level and lead his readers easily and naturally to higher stages of culture. The critic of a religious writer must ask: Does his work edify or instruct? If it performs either or both of these functions, it is to be praised. If it performs neither, it has no reason for existence, and literary criticism is bound "if the book has notoriety enough to give it importance, to pass censure on it."¹⁶

Arnold condemns Colenso because he does little or nothing to advance the culture of England or Europe. His criticism is chiefly negative; his positive suggestions are ludicrously inadequate. He does little or nothing for those of his readers who belong to the higher culture of Europe. These readers are bored by his book; their culture is not advanced because the Bishop's message--his negative criticism of the Bible--is now several generations old. Those who now seek to enlighten the learned few in the field of religious speculation must answer questions such as these:

What then? What follows from all this? What change is it, if true, to produce in the relations of mankind to the Christian religion? If the old theory of Scripture Inspiration is to be abandoned, what place is the Bible henceforth to hold among books? What is the new Christianity to be like? How are governments to

¹⁵Matthew Arnold, "The Bishop and the Philosopher," Macmillan's Magazine, VII (January, 1863), p. 245.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 242.

deal with national Churches founded to maintain a very different conception of Christianity?¹⁷

These questions Colenso, according to Arnold, "never touches with one of his fingers," and so his work fails as a contribution to the intellectual life of Europe.

The Bishop's other readers will be the many whose present cultural needs are ethical. His book, self-confessedly, fails to edify the uneducated; furthermore, his negative criticism of the Scriptures and his attempt to overthrow the theory of verbal inspiration by pointing out numerous arithmetical contradictions and impossibilities in the Pentateuch may turn the masses away from the Bible, and so actually harm their cultural advance. Colenso realizes this possibility, and Arnold becomes severely ironical over the adequacy of his efforts to provide spiritual consolation for the "simple everyday Englishman," whose faith in the Bible he has destroyed by his "rule-of-three sums," and to whom he can offer nothing better in return than "his own Commentary on the Romans, two chapters of Exodus, a fragment of Cicero, a revelation to the Sidi Sooreos, and an invocation of Ham."¹⁸

Thus Colenso's book fails to be positive, either for the few or the many, and Arnold can say that he does not criticize so much what the Bishop has done, but that he has not been able to do more.

Arnold condemns most of the work of the Essayists on the same grounds. Also, he finds some of the essays objectionable because of

¹⁷Ibid., p. 246.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 245.

their unmodifying impudent tone. Only the essay by Mark Pattison, "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750," and the essay by Jowett, "On the Interpretation of Scripture," deserve praise, the first because it is the only one of the essays that offers to educated Europe new information, and the second because it is written with "unction," a quality "which communicates to all works where it is present an indefinable charm, and which is always, for the higher sort of minds, edifying."¹⁹

Arnold then contrasts the work of the English religious liberals with Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus to point out "how free religious speculation may be conducted so as to be informing to the much-instructed, even though it be not edifying to the little-instructed."²⁰ By an extended summary of the teachings of this work, Arnold shows how Spinoza, with power and insight, tries to answer the question "What then?" and so interests the highest culture of Europe. Arnold further urges that Spinoza is not only instructive, he is also edifying. His work, though not possessing unctiousness, reflects "a sacred solemnity," which derives from the purity of his life, a life in the grand style, and makes all his writings deeply edifying. The Tractatus, then, combining enlightenment and edification, far surpasses the "weak trifling" of the English critics of orthodox Christianity.

Such were the arguments Arnold used to condemn Colenso and the Essayists. None of them were new. All of them had been used many times

¹⁹Ibid., p. 254.

²⁰Ibid., p. 246.

in the now-two-year-old controversy. The Saturday Review, commenting on Essays and Reviews, pointed out that "every deeply read man," even in England, must have been familiar with this material for many years past; Spinoza had discussed the question of Biblical inspiration two hundred years ago, and in England Coleridge had gone over the same ground.²¹ Stanley, in his review of the controversy over Essays and Reviews, used the argument of "nothing new" not to blame the Essayists but to exculpate them; he quotes eminent churchmen of the past fifty years to show that all the principles and even the very words of the Essayist have been used by students in theology for a long time.²² Even minor points in Arnold's article, such as his criticism of the tone of some of the Essayists and his imputation of dishonesty to clergymen who publish views contrary to those of the church in which they have been ordained, had been anticipated.

Though Arnold's arguments were not new, his essay instantly attracted notice and caused considerable critical comment, becoming thus the center of a controversy within the larger controversy. The essay may not have been noticed at all in the free-for-all fight that was

²¹"Essays and Reviews," Saturday Review, XI (March 2, 1861), 211.

²²"Essays and Reviews," Edinburgh Review, CXIII (April, 1861), 479-85. Stanley's article has many parallels to that of Arnold. Like Arnold, he points out that only Pattison's essay contains any new information; he praises Jowett for his impressive, lofty tone; he condemns Williams for his flippant and contemptuous tone; and then laments the loss of Latin as a learned language in which unorthodox religious speculation might first be presented to the scholarly world. But unlike Arnold, Stanley devotes ten pages of his article to a defense of a clergyman's right to free inquiry and to a publication of his views.

going on except for the genuine originality of Arnold's position--his agreement with the conclusions of the liberals and his insistence, at the same time, that these conclusions should not have been published. Most of the critics who agreed with the conclusions of the liberals praised them for their courage, honesty, and love of truth; those critics who disagreed with their conclusions attacked the liberals for causing scandal to the religious life of England. But here was Arnold insisting that the conclusions of the liberals, even though scientifically true, should actually be kept from the multitude, unless these conclusions should be presented edifyingly, that is, without disturbing the moral, religious life of the people. Arnold's insufficient elaboration of this saving qualification and the tone of the language that he used about the "few" and the "many" made him seem to say that he, as he himself put it, had "proposed to throw a false religion as a sop to the multitude."²³ The irritating tone of superiority and condescension was created by the dogmatism of the first few pages, in which Arnold sets up the principles by which literary criticism is to "try" the liberals; by his attack on the Times, which now praises the "public" as "the organ of all truth;" by his quoting (and, as some of his critics pointed out, misinterpreting) the words of a group of authorities--Pindar, Spinoza, Newman, Plato, and Christ--to prove his contention that knowledge can be attained only by the few and is never the possession of the many; by his very lofty attitude towards the results of the work of that "excellent arithmetician" Colenso; and by his referring contempt-

²³Lowry, op. cit., p. 208.

tuously to the many as "the undisciplined, ignorant, passionate, captious multitude."²⁴

The Saturday Review supported, with reservations, Arnold's views on the few and the many.²⁵ But these views were very offensive to the Examiner and the Spectator, both of which published criticisms of "The Bishop and the Philosopher" in January, and to the Westminster Review, which was not able to comment on the essay until its April issue.

The Examiner, in three consecutive weekly issues immediately after the appearance of "The Bishop and the Philosopher," rebuked Arnold both editorially and through its correspondent "Anti-Esotericus." For attempting to "missile" the clergy, Arnold is called a traitor to the laity; and his "jesuitical doctrine" is summarized as a belief that truth is for a "select circle of cosmoscendi, and that the vulgar are not to be disturbed in possession of convenient fictions tending to the support of an irrational faith."²⁶

²⁴"The Bishop and the Philosopher," Macmillan's Magazine, VII (January, 1863), 256.

²⁵"The Educated Few," Saturday Review, XV (January 17, 1863), 71-72. Though the reviewer defends Arnold's few-many distinction, he points out that at first sight it might seem arrogant and insulting; nor, he adds, "is Arnold a writer who is at such pains to avert or mitigate this indignation."

²⁶"The Bishop and the Professor," Examiner, January 17, 1863, p. 36. The Examiner had published article after article on the Colenso controversy, attacking any suggestion that the freedom of clergymen to speak the truth as they see it should be restricted. The articles on Arnold appeared in the January 10, January 17, and January 24 issues. These articles seem scarcely more important than most letters to the editor; yet Arnold took them seriously, and they account for a good part of the argument in his "Dr. Stanley's Lectures on the Jewish Church."

A more reasoned attack, "Mr. Matthew Arnold on the Aristocratic Creed," appeared in the Spectator. But even in this essay a good part of the effect depends on the caricature of Arnold as a "god-like critic," who with his "grand style," "lofty smile," "serene eyes," "stately step," "compassionate air," and "thoughtful condescension to the weakness of humanity" is becoming a worthy member of "this aristocratic, esoteric, common-hord-compassionating school" to which his "hero" Goethe belongs. The critic interprets Arnold as condemning Colenso and the Essayists "for the unpardonable crime of forcing on a collision between the esoteric philosophy of the learned and the esoteric doctrine which it is wholesome for the multitude to believe," of "trying to break down the barrier between the two."²⁷ The critic, ignoring Arnold's historical and psychological dialectic, attributes to him a belief in the eternal existence in society of two classes, the few and the many, the learned and the uneducated, those who know the truth and those who must receive knowledge only in such a form as the few think best for them.

The critic then attacks this "aristocratic philosophy." First he cites Arnold's own authorities against him, particularly Newman, Plato, and Christ; all of whom, he said, showed in their lives or works a deep hatred of esotericism. In the next place the critic points out that this philosophy is a psychological impossibility for most normal men. Men with the "frigid artistic perceptions of such teachers as Goethe,"

²⁷"Mr. Matthew Arnold on the Aristocratic Creed," Spectator, December 27, 1862, p. 1433.

men who merely play with ideas, may be able to "reserve a mature conviction;" but for most men ideas are a means to action, and are such deep elements of the personality that they cannot be detained in "aristocratic seclusion in our own hearts without killing the very soul within us."²⁸ Finally, the Spectator critic asserts that unless one is God himself there is the practical difficulty of deciding what truth is best for the few and what for the many; the increasing sense of this difficulty would result in greater and greater hesitancy in proclaiming the truth and might finally turn the few into reclining gods, careless of mankind. Thus though the critic agrees with Arnold that Colenso's book is "very imperfect and even distorted,"²⁹ he criticizes the criteria by which Arnold would condemn it and defends the right of anyone to publish his matured ideas on any subject.³⁰

²⁸Ibid., p. 1439.

²⁹Ibid. In an earlier article the Spectator had already reviewed Colenso very unfavorably. It found in Colenso's book a "whole undercurrent of thought which seems to imply that when once we have detected bad arithmetic in the Pentateuch, we may entirely change our attitude of mind towards the narrative--cease to feel under any divine obligations to its history, and thenceforward, though we may pick and choose from its text little bits of spiritual sentiment that we like or fancy better than the rest, as oases in the desert, dismiss all idea of studying (it) as a superstition which only those can afford who are satisfied with every detail in the numeration." "Dr. Colenso on the Arithmetic of the Pentateuch," Spectator, XXXV (November 3, 1862), 1251.

³⁰This article is interesting as containing a full portrait of the literary personality which Arnold, thanks to his reviewers, was developing. The charges of Goethe worship and of inventing excuses for not lending a hand in the world's work had already been made in reviews of Arnold's poems. They will be made again and again when the critics come to comment on Arnold's theories of "disinterested" criticism and "culture."

Arnold was pleased with his essay on Colenso and Spinoza³¹ and, after its publication, was gratified to find that it was attracting "much notice" particularly among the clergy, the class which he especially wanted to influence.³² Immediately upon reading the earliest of the attacks which the essay had inspired in the weekly newspapers, his mind turned to writing answers. He planned two articles, one for Macmillan's Magazine "to remove the misrepresentation of my doctrine about edifying the many" and the other for the Times, the subject unstated.³³ He completed the first article in time for the February issue of Macmillan, but did not finish the "Times Article" until spring and was not able to get it published until December.

Stanley's book, Lectures on the Jewish Church, which was published early in January, provided Arnold with excellent material for clarifying his doctrine about "edifying the many." The subject matter of Stanley's book, Biblical history, was the same as that of Colenso's, but the aim and treatment were altogether different. Thus Arnold had an opportunity for making another contrast which would help him establish the method proper to a writer on religion at the present time. Also, in being able to praise Stanley, Arnold felt he could be positive and so establish a balance which had been lost in his previous article: "My conscience a little smote me with having been, in my first article, too purely

³¹Lowry, op. cit., p. 205.

³²Ibid., p. 209.

³³Ibid.

negative and intellectual on such a subject."⁵⁴

Stanley had quite self-consciously written in the spirit for which Arnold was to praise his book. He had also made in his own mind the contrast that Arnold was to make between his book and Colenso's Fentateuch. When in August, 1862, Stanley paged through the proofs of Colenso's book, he was very much disturbed and urged Colenso "to write it more like a defence, and less like an attack."⁵⁵ In a number of letters which he wrote to Colenso immediately after the publication of the book in October, Stanley further expressed his dissatisfaction:

. . . I regard the whole plan of your book as a mistake. My object for twenty years, and my object in my forthcoming book, is to draw forth the inestimable treasures of the Old Testament, both historically, geographically, morally, and spiritually. To fix the public attention on the mere defects of structure and detail is, to my mind, to lead off the public mind on a false scent and to a false issue.⁵⁶

Stanley tells Colenso that his researches into the arithmetic of the Bible seem "of an importance so secondary to that of a just appreciation of the Old Testament itself, that I cannot think the good of their publication at all commensurate with the amount of alarm and misapprehension which they produce."⁵⁷

In his article "Dr. Stanley's Lectures on the Jewish Church," published in the February issue of Macmillan's Magazine, Arnold praises

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 211.

⁵⁵Rowland E. Prothero, Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), II, 100.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 103-4.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 104.

Stanley and blames Colenso in much the same terms. However, Arnold's praise of Stanley is incidental to his main purpose--that of defending, against the attacks of his critics, the criteria which he had used in "The Bishop and the Philosopher" to judge the work of Colenso and the Essayists. Arnold begins the essay with the statement that he had been "reproached" for two things: for "denying to an honest clergyman freedom to speak the truth," and for wishing to make religious truth "the property of an aristocratic few, while to the multitude is thrown the sop of any convenient fiction."⁵⁸ He defends himself in the essay by clarifying his distinction between the intellectual and religious lives, and elaborating on the proper relationship between the two.

The intellectual life consists of "an eternal series of intellectual acts," in which all subjects, including religion, are treated with the utmost freedom. The value to civilization of the intellectual life is tremendous, for those who lead it are working in the "laboratory wherein are fashioned the new intellectual ideas which, from time to time, take their place in the world."⁵⁹ Those who can follow the intellectual life are the "few," the born thinkers, a Parmenides, a Spinoza, a Hegel, a half a dozen gifted people in each generation. Thus, by restricting the membership of this class so severely, Arnold takes a great deal of the odium out of making anyone feel that he is one of the "many." Except for the "sublime solitaires," everyone has both

⁵⁸Matthew Arnold, "Dr. Stanley's Lectures on the Jewish Church," Macmillan's Magazine, VII (February, 1865), 327.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 328.

religious and intellectual needs.

The religious life consists "in a feeling which attaches itself to certain fixed objects," in Christianity to the life of Christ and the Bible. It also consists partly in a set of ideas that have been adopted about these objects, propositions about God and His attributes, immortality, and so on. A religion is "true" not when it teaches scientifically true ideas but when it can inspire so deep an emotion that it successfully leads its believers to higher stages of moral culture. As civilization advances, ideas change and grow. If these changes interfere with the ethical function of religion, regardless of how "true" the new ideas may be absolutely, they are "false" within the religious life and are to be resisted, at least until they can be made to "harmonize" with the religious life. The ideal, then, is to have new ideas "filter down gradually . . . into the common thought of mankind."⁴⁰ Colenso, speaking as a religious teacher, introduces unorthodox ideas suddenly and unedifyingly into the religious life, and, unable to make these ideas harmonize with it, he has confused the religious life of many pious people. His "truth," then, is a falsity for the religious life, and he is not to be praised as an honest and courageous man who speaks the "truth" regardless of the consequences, but to be blamed as a "blunderer."

The task of making new ideas harmonize with the religious life is one of the most difficult in the world. Only great religious reformers, like Luther, are able to do it successfully. Unfortunately, says

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 328-29.

Arnold, "no such religious reformer for the present age has as yet shown himself."⁴¹ Colenso, Arnold again admits, does attempt this task by insisting that in spite of his conclusions the Bible still remains a work full of divine instruction; but his power as a religious reformer is of a very low order. Lacking this power, he should have kept his negative ideas to himself.

What, then, is a religious teacher of a rank below genius, yet sensitive to the changed intellectual atmosphere of an age, to do in such a time of transition? Arnold recommends Stanley's methods. Arnold praises Stanley's book because Stanley, while not ignoring or falsifying the new knowledge, keeps the mind of his reader on the moral lessons to be derived from a study of the Bible and not, as does Colenso, on the unsolved problems concerning its text.

In a peroration directed at the modern clergyman, Arnold urges his doctrine with vigor and unexceptionable clearness:

Cannot he [the modern clergyman] see that, speaking to the religious life, he may honestly be silent about matters which he cannot yet use to edification, and of which, therefore, the religious life does not want to hear? Does he not see that he is even bound to take account of the circumstances of his hearers, and that information which is only fruitless to the religious life of some of his hearers, may be worse than fruitless, confounding, to the religious life of others of them? Certainly, Christianity has not two doctrines, one for the few, another for the many; but as certainly, Christ adapted His teaching to the different stages of growth in His hearers, and for all of them adapted it to the needs of the religious life.⁴²

The publication of "Dr. Stanley and the Jewish Church" did not

⁴¹Ibid., p. 380.

⁴²Ibid., p. 386.

bring to an end the controversy over Arnold's judgment of Colenso and the Essayists. However, most of the head had been dissipated, and it was not until a couple of months later, in the April Westminster Review, that the next contribution to the discussion appeared--"Truth versus Edification" by W. R. Greg, the author of The Creed of Christendom.⁴³ Greg, after agreeing with Arnold that a religious work ought to instruct the few or edify the many, points out that Colenso's book performs both of these functions in several ways that Arnold has not considered.

Greg opens his defense of Colenso by arguing, with a touch of irony, that Colenso instructs the few, for he informs the clergy (who surely must be placed with the learned few) of the fact that advanced thinkers have a long time ago rejected the doctrine of verbal inspiration. But Greg is not particularly interested in this part of his argument, for he admits that Arnold "from the height of his academic culture" might possibly include the clergy with the uninstructed many. Greg's chief contention is that Colenso's book will have an edifying influence on the many. Arnold has overlooked the fact that "thousands upon thousands" are today prevented from accepting Christianity "as the greatest boon ever offered to struggling and aspiring man" because they are told by the clergy that along with the deep moral insights of the Bible they must accept as an essential part of Christianity legends and dogmas against which their intellect and moral sense revolt. Colenso, by demonstrating the untenability of verbal inspiration in a way that is

⁴³W. R. Greg, "Truth versus Edification," Westminster Review, LXXX (April, 1863), 503-16. This essay was reprinted in Greg's Literary and Social Judgments (1868).

convincing even to the least educated, now enables the many to enjoy the fruits of that eclecticism with respect to the contents of the Bible which had been possible formerly only to men of Arnold's culture. In this sense the work of Colenso will be deeply edifying.

Arnold read this article, but it had no influence on his last direct contribution to this controversy.⁴⁴ In January he had planned two articles in answer to the critics of "The Bishop and the Philosopher," one for Macmillan and the other for the Times. We do not know what he then had in mind for the contents of the Times article, but his list of projects for the spring of 1863 included an article "on Spinoza in the Times."⁴⁵ He finished this article by April 17, though he doubted that the Times would print it since Parliament was in session.⁴⁶ Apparently the Times did refuse it, and finally he found a spot for it in the December Macmillan.

In this essay, "A Word More about Spinoza," Arnold does not mention Colenso, though he does refer to the current religious discussion on the inspiration of the Scriptures. The essay deals entirely with Spinoza and serves several different purposes: Arnold

⁴⁴Lowry, op. cit., p. 219. Arnold's comment on the article: "Greg's mistake lies in representing to his imagination the existence of a great body of people excluded from the consolations of the Bible by the popular Protestant doctrine of verbal inspiration. That is stuff. The mass of people take from the Bible what suits them, and quietly leave on one side all that does not. He, like so many other people, does not apprehend the vital distinction between religion and criticism."

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 212.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 221.

condemns a recent translation of the Tractatus for its inaccuracy; he makes certain negative criticisms of Spinoza's thought; he takes issue with the Reverend F. D. Maurice concerning the kind of influence Spinoza has exerted over modern minds; and he insists on the religious tone of Spinoza's work, explicitly contradicting certain liberal admirers of Spinoza, such as M. Van Volton of Amsterdam, who wish to derive from him support for their scientific materialism.

Maurice, who apparently had been the only critic to comment on Arnold's interpretation of Spinoza, attempted in his article⁴⁷ to deflate somewhat the enthusiasm for Spinoza which he felt Arnold's high praise might create. He suggests that Spinoza is not very systematic, that his work shows serious contradictions, and that much of his speculation in politics, metaphysics, and theology is a failure. He sees no good in the publication in English of the Tractatus, which to be completely understood must be read in the light of Spinoza's other works. And finally he accuses Arnold of having oversimplified the thought of Spinoza and described a unity which is not there.

Arnold apparently felt himself compelled to reply to this charge of "Spinoza worship," and "A Word More about Spinoza" is, in effect, a retraction of part of the praise he had given to the Tractatus in "The Bishop and the Philosopher."⁴⁸ He now indicates some of the limitations

⁴⁷The article appeared in the Spectator for January 3, 1863.

⁴⁸Lowry, op. cit., p. 208. Speaking of "The Bishop and the Philosopher" to his mother, Arnold gave this opinion on Spinoza: "You say, very justly, that one's aim in speaking about such a man must be rather to modify opinion about him than to give it a decisive turn in his favour; indeed, the latter I have no wish to do, so far as his

of the Tractatus for readers with modern problems about the Bible, particularly about its supernatural character. In the Tractatus, Spinoza, interested in the reconstruction of contemporary Christianity in terms of what he considered to be the real teaching of the Biblical writers, fails to give his own opinion about the truth or falsity of the claims of these writers to divine inspiration. Thus the modern reader, worried about prophecy and miracle, gets little help from the Tractatus, and Arnold, agreeing with Maurice, suggests that such a reader look in Spinoza's other works for his "genuine speculative opinions" on these subjects.

In the second half of the essay Arnold comes into explicit controversy with Maurice on the reasons for Goethe's great admiration of Spinoza. Maurice had said that Goethe was attracted to Spinoza because of Spinoza's sense of the immediacy of God's presence; Spinoza spoke of God as a living reality and not merely as a person in a book. This, Arnold says, is "fanciful." In his opinion Goethe was impressed chiefly by Spinoza's denial of final causes and by his "active stoicism" -- a moral lesson "of joyful activity within the limits of man's true sphere."⁴⁹

A year later, in his essay "The Function of Criticism at the

doctrines are concerned, for, so far as I can understand them, they are not mine. But what the English public cannot understand is that a man is a just and fruitful object of contemplation much more by virtue of what spirit he is of than by virtue of what system of doctrine he elaborates."

⁴⁹In Empedocles on Etna Arnold gives poetic expression to both of these ideas--the denial of final causes and active stoicism--in the advice Empedocles offers to Callicles in the first act.

Present Time," Arnold returned briefly to the controversy. In a footnote to the essay in the 1865 edition of Essays in Criticism, he declares his "sincere impenitence" for having attacked Colenso, though because of his dislike of "personal attack and controversy" he does not intend to reprint the essays. But he repeats his charges against Colenso both in the footnote and in the body of the essay.⁵⁰ Colenso in his first volume of The Pentateuch Critically Examined showed a "total misconception of the essential elements of the religious problem, as that problem is now presented for solution."⁵¹ Arnold then provides the reader with another touchstone--Renan's Life of Jesus, published in June, 1863--by which to judge the quality of religious speculation. Though Renan does not have the power of a Luther to harmonize successfully the new knowledge with the religious life, his book is of great significance:

. . . M. Renan's attempt is, for criticism, of the most real interest and importance, since, with all its difficulty a fresh synthesis of the New Testament data,--not a making war on them, in Voltaire's fashion, not a leaving them out of mind, in the world's fashion, but the putting a new construction upon them, the taking them from under the old, adoptive, traditional, unspiritual point of view and placing them under a new one,--is the very essence of the religious problem, as now presented; and only by efforts in this direction can it receive a solution.⁵²

⁵⁰This footnote and two other extended footnotes to the essay are answers to an attack which Fitzjames Stephen made on "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" in the Saturday Review for December 3, 1864. In a paragraph on the Colenso controversy, Stephen repeats the old charge that Arnold has made it "a crime against literary criticism and the higher culture to attempt to inform the ignorant."

⁵¹Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism (London: Macmillan and Co., 1865), p. 30.

⁵²Ibid., p. 31.

Arnold even has a few kind words for Colenso:

The Bishop of Natal's subsequent volumes are in great measure free from the crying faults of his first; he has at length succeeded in more clearly separating, in his own thoughts, the idea of science from the idea of religion; his mind appears to be opening as he goes along, and he may perhaps end by becoming a useful biblical critic, though never, I think, of the first order.⁵³

But Arnold derides the well-intentioned efforts of other liberals, who, emancipated from traditional Christianity, are attempting a reconstruction of religion. These "religions of the future," exemplified by the theories of Miss Frances Cobbe, the author of Religious Duty, fail entirely in being adequate substitutes for the great historical religions with their beauty and grandeur.⁵⁴

Such was Arnold's summary, early in 1865, of what he had tried to do in the current religious controversy. His contribution at this time to the Victorian debate between liberalism and orthodoxy was chiefly to judge the religious criticism of certain liberals. He agreed with the liberals that the present was a time which was calling for change, that the Zeitgeist was bringing the new ideas concerning the Bible more and more into the consciousness of all. The religious problem of the age was "What then? What new form must religion now take?" Arnold praised Spinoza and Renan for their attempts to answer the question, "What

⁵³Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁴The Examiner published a final note, "Comic Theology," on Arnold and Colenso in its March 25, 1865 issue. The note comments on Arnold's preface to Essays in Criticism. In this preface Arnold tries to excuse his "vivacities" and regrets the loss of liveliness in English life. The writer, pretending to a flash of insight, states that Arnold criticized Colenso because Colenso was too serious. Colenso should have "burlesqued" the Pentateuch to please our "learned Merry Andrew."

then?" He found both writers stimulating in the highest degree, but neither had the complete answer. He criticized the positive constructions of other liberals, such as those of Miss Cobbe, which did not have the power or philosophic scope of the thought of Renan and Spinoza. And he criticised most severely the primarily negative approach of liberals such as Colenso and most of the Essayists. Until the great religious reformer, the new Luther, does appear, well-intentioned writers on religious subjects should take their cue from Dean Stanley, and while not denying any of the new ideas, still keep first things first when speaking to the religious world.

A few years later, in Literature and Dogma, Arnold will return to the question "What then?" and himself attempt to provide the answer which the modern spirit is seeking.

It appears that Arnold no longer shares very highly of a criticism which simply involves "judgment," an estimate of the value of a work in terms of a "general standard." This negative criticism, he says, is like education, "based upon, and content with, the old Greek learning, the sense of creative activity." The more satisfactory criticism, or at least the criticism named "of the present time," is a "positive" or "creative" criticism, which concentrates on the reader's "fresh knowledge" and thus increases his stock of ideas on a subject. Arnold describes the ideal which he had set for his own critical work

"The Bishop and the Millwright," *Essays in Criticism*, 1911 (January, 1911), 211.

See also Arnold, *Essays in Criticism* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1911), p. 30.

CHAPTER III

ARNOLD'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT FROM 1863 TO 1871

In his essay "The Bishop and the Philosopher," Arnold had announced:

Literary criticism's most important function is to try books as to the influence which they are calculated to have upon the general culture of single nations or of the world at large. Of this culture literary criticism is the appointed guardian, and on this culture all literary works may be conceived as in some way or other operating.¹

In "The Bishop and the Philosopher" literary criticism had judged the Essays and Reviews and Colenso's Pontateuch as valueless for the advancement of the culture of the few or the many.

In his essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," it is apparent that Arnold no longer thinks very highly of a criticism which simply involves "judgment," an estimate of the value of a work in terms of a "central standard." This negative criticism, he says, is, like mathematics, "tautological, and cannot well give us, like fresh learning, the sense of creative activity."² The more satisfactory criticism, or at least the criticism needed "at the present time," is a "positive" or "creative" criticism, which communicates to the reader "fresh knowledge" and thus increases his stock of ideas on a subject. Arnold describes the ideal which he had set for his own critical work

¹The Bishop and the Philosopher," Macmillan's Magazine, VII (January, 1863), 241.

²Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism (London: Macmillan and Co., 1865), p. 30.

in a paragraph which serves to introduce the rest of the essays in

Essays in Criticism:

There is so much inviting us! What are we to take? what will nourish us in growth towards perfection? That is the question which, with the immense field of life and of literature lying before him, the critic has to answer; for himself first, and afterwards for others. In this idea of the critic's business the essays brought together in the following pages have had their origin; in this idea, widely different as are their subjects, they have, perhaps, their unity.³

To provide his English readers with fresh learning, to acquaint them with the best that has been thought and said in the world on the subjects which most concerned them at that time, and in this way "to pull out a few more stops in that powerful, but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman"⁴ was the aim which Arnold, the critic, now set for himself.

Since Arnold believed that religion is a very important civilizing influence and since religious problems were being heatedly debated at the time, it was to be expected that Arnold's criticism would ultimately take up the religious question in detail and try to spread the best thought on the subject. Before religious questions could be discussed profitably, Arnold felt that a subject of far greater importance must be treated. This was no less than the definition of perfection itself.⁵

³Ibid., p. 40.

⁴Ibid., p. xiv.

⁵In very general terms Arnold had already in his poetry indicated the nature of the ideal. In such poems as "Quiet Work" and "A Summer Night," he compares the activity of man and nature. He describes man's present activity as ill-regulated, petty, joyless; as full of "dust and soil"; as consisting of "a thousand discords," "senseless uproar," and "vain turmoil." The activity of nature is various and immense; yet she

The self-complacent, nineteenth-century Englishman must be shown that his present ideals are narrow, that human nature is more complicated than he realizes, and that real civilization requires the full development of all sides of human nature. Without such a picture of the complete ideal for human society, a particular discussion of any aspect of the ideal would lack perspective, subject the critic to various misunderstandings,⁶ and make his work a failure.

Furthermore, Arnold found modern Englishmen without ideas and without a love or even sense for truth. Their intellectual activity was devoted chiefly to the total attack on, or total defense of, some particular practice; they had no conception that there is a rational order of things which might be discovered by scientific methods and to which their practice, if it is to be fruitful, must conform. And so until the English could be made to appreciate what is meant by a "disinterested" play of mind, until they could be made to accept and

does all this work in a "calm," "untroubled," "unpassionate" way; she seems to know what she is about and performs her "glorious tasks" with "joy" and determined will. This harmonious blending of thought, emotion, and will, which nature exhibits, must be man's ideal too. The poem "Progress" (see *supra*, pp. 9-11) shows how religion has helped men in their striving for this ideal.

In the preface to The Popular Education of France, Arnold had given a short formal definition of the ideal: "A fine culture is the complement of a high reason, and it is in the conjunction of both with character, with energy, that the ideal for men and nations is placed." The Popular Education of France, p. xliii. But Arnold's readers had to wait until Culture and Anarchy (1869) for a detailed exposition of each of these elements of perfection.

⁶Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 ff. In his essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Arnold was already complaining about the misunderstandings which his criticism was suffering.

respect scientific method, they would profit little from a disinterested criticism in any field.

We can, then, study Arnold's critical work culminating in Culture and Anarchy, chiefly as an attempt to reorient the English, make them conscious of the full meaning of "civilization" and "culture," and persuade them to accept a method by which the details of the humane life for all might be worked out.

Since Arnold believed that religion was an important means to the ideal, religious topics formed a good part of his discussion of perfection. Since the ideal life involved important elements other than religion (as defined by Arnold) and since so many of the English regarded their religion as "the one thing needful," much of Arnold's treatment of religion was a criticism of the English conception of it and an attempt to define its proper function in the pursuit of perfection.

Arnold began this re-education of the English mind with his Essays in Criticism. In this volume Arnold used indirect, though concrete and vivid, methods of presenting his ideas. Most of the essays are pictures of gifted human personalities (no Englishmen among them) whose lives or works would suggest to his English readers their own inadequacy which concerned Arnold the most was the Englishman's lack of intellectual discipline.⁷ Since religion was an important influence in the lives of some of these personalities, Arnold had an opportunity of

⁷He points up this inadequacy in the essays "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," "The Literary Influence of Academies," "Heinrich Heine," and "Joubert."

dramatizing his own religious ideas by showing the good and bad operation of religion in their lives. He also discussed religion more directly in the essay "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment," and tried to spread "fresh knowledge" about religion by quoting liberally from the writings of the religious philosopher Joubert and the religious moralist Marcus Aurelius.

In his essay on Marcus Aurelius, Arnold comes very close to the wording of his later definition of religion as "morality touched by emotion." In this essay Arnold defines religion as "lighted up morality." To explain this definition, Arnold points out that the purpose of moral rules is "to take possession of human life, to save it from being abandoned to passion or allowed to drift at hazard, to give it happiness by establishing it in the practice of virtue."⁸ But to govern passion is a matter of tremendous difficulty, and so "moral rules, apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as laws, are, and must be, for the sage only."⁹ The mass of mankind "can be borne over the thousand impediments of the narrow way, only by the tide of a joyful and bounding emotion."¹⁰ Religion, supplying this emotion, makes moral development easier for mankind.

Arnold describes Marcus Aurelius as a man who had achieved a high degree of self-conquest and moral perfection. He may, then, be used as an example of what moral perfection means: "He is one of those

⁸Arnold, Essays in Criticism, p. 270.

⁹Ibid., p. 271.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 271-72.

consoling and hope-inspiring marks, which stand forever to remind our weak and easily discouraged race how high human goodness and perseverance have once been carried, and may be carried again."¹¹ And his works--his moral writings--suffused as they are with emotion, have the same inspiring effect as does the language of the Bible.

Aurelius is not a perfect example of the achievement of moral perfection. His life was melancholy and lacked the joy which should come with self-conquest. Living in the degenerate pagan age, without faith, his effort after moral perfection had to be a personal one, and he had to struggle too hard. Nor can his writings equal the effect of the Bible. Though his moral rules are excellent--he is one of the "great masters of morals" and Arnold takes exception to very few points in his moral system--the emotion which suffuses his statement of them is not entirely adequate: ". . . the emotion of Marcus Aurelius does not quite light up his morality, but it suffuses it; it has not power to melt the clouds of effort and austerity quite away, but it shines through them and glorifies them."¹² Aurelius, then, though great as a man and a religious writer, is not entirely adequate, and Arnold contrasts the Meditations with the Bible which teaches similar truths "with unexampled splendour."¹³ Because Aurelius' writings do not form part of an historical religious system, Arnold recommends them particularly to "pure and upward-striving souls in those ages especially that

¹¹Ibid., p. 260.

¹²Ibid., p. 292.

¹³Ibid., p. 272.

walk by sight not by faith, that have no open vision."¹⁴ Aurelius "cannot give such souls, perhaps, all they yearn for, but he gives them much; and what he gives them, they can receive."¹⁵

Having defined religion and shown how necessary it is as an aid in the attainment of moral perfection, the necessary first stage in the full development of human nature, Arnold, in another essay "Eugenie de Guerin," tries to suggest the limits within which religion should confine itself. Eugenie de Guerin, whom he calls "one of the rarest and most beautiful of souls,"¹⁶ is another example of moral perfection. Her Catholicism was the supreme force in her life, and she tried to bend all of her nature to its requirements. In her character, even more than in that of Aurelius, there was a deep melancholy. It is in the explanation of her melancholy that Arnold makes a criticism of the idea that religion is the "one thing needful" for a person's life. Her religion gave her much, but it also stunted her growth.

Christianity, in its emphasis on the inner life, on self-conquest, which in simple, emotionally gifted natures (Arnold gives Fenelon, St. Francis of Sales, and St. Theresa as examples) leads to happiness in mysticism, has deliberately tried to destroy man's concern for his outer life:

The insufficiency of her (Eugenie de Guerin's) Catholicism comes from a doctrine which Protestantism, too, had adopted, although Protestantism, from its inherent element of freedom, may find it

¹⁴Ibid., p. 301.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 118.

easier to escape from it; a doctrine with a certain attraction for all noble natures, but, in the modern world at any rate, incurably sterile,—the doctrine of the emptiness and nothingness of human life, of the superiority of renouncement to activity, of quietism to energy; the doctrine which makes effort for things on this side of the grave a folly, and joy in things on this side of the grave a sin.¹⁷

Arnold illustrates the insufficiency of this doctrine in the life of Eugenie de Guerin. Her nature was so rich on so many sides that she found her religion a narrowing influence. Had her personality been less complicated, she might have achieved the perfect sweetness of Penelon or St. Theresa. In addition to powerful religious needs, she had a fine intellect, excellent powers of expression, and strong practical talents, all of which she might have developed, benefiting the world and attaining happiness for herself. Her religious nature made her feel guilty for time "misspent" even in reading or writing in her journal. As a result, her inhibited, undeveloped nature filled her life with dissatisfaction. In this essay, then, Arnold suggests (which he will later in Culture and Anarchy discuss in detail) that religion, as he defines it, must not be allowed to usurp the whole of life, and that other sides of man's personality must be taken account of and developed.

In another essay, "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment," Arnold describes more fully this ideal of the development of all sides of man's nature and recommends it as the goal for human civilization.

In this essay Arnold analyzes a number of religious poems in order to find in them a reflection of the ideals and psychology of the people

¹⁷Ibid., p. 139.

who produced them. Just as an individual may become pre-eminent on one or another "line"--as Joubert in intellect, Marcus Aurelius in morals, Maurice de Guerin in the poetic interpretation of nature, Heine in the application of modern ideas in literature (a combination of intellect and literary talent)--so a race or nation may become pre-eminent on some line, and its achievements on that line may then be studied as examples of excellence.

One of the poems Arnold analyzes is by Theocritus. This poem reflects the psychology of the society of late pagan days. Arnold characterizes the activities of this society as attempts to satisfy the needs of man's outward nature, to develop the faculties of the "senses and understanding." This society was "sensual," "gay," "light-hearted," unmindful of the needs of man's inner and, particularly, moral nature. The poem contains a hymn to Adonis, but Arnold refuses to grant that the hymn reflects religious emotion: "But what a hymn that is! Of religious emotion, in our acceptation of the words, and of the comfort springing from religious emotion, not a particle."¹⁸

The second poem, a genuinely religious poem, is by St. Francis and reflects the psychology of the Christian society of the Middle Ages, which had tried to organize life by developing man's inward needs, those of the "heart and imagination." Christianity, Arnold explains, was a reaction to paganism, which, because it had neglected these important elements of man's nature, had inevitably decayed. The Christian society of the Middle Ages, in its antagonism to man's outer

¹⁸Ibid., p. 200.

life, was also an extreme and could not last; it developed in reaction to itself the Renaissance, a return to the life of the senses and intellect. The Renaissance was followed by the Reformation, a moral and spiritual reaction similar to the development of Christianity after paganism; and the extreme of the Reformation was followed by the rationalism of the eighteenth century. Thus Arnold interprets the history of civilisation as a swing from one extreme to another. The swing proves that man can not be permanently happy developing exclusively only one side of his nature. The ideal for modern man is a harmonious cultivation of all sides of his nature, a life of the "imaginative reason," a life which satisfies man's senses, his intellectual and religious needs, and his desire for beauty. The last poem which Arnold translates is by Sophocles, whose work reflects an age which made an attempt, though premature, to live by such an ideal.

In two or three places in Essays in Criticism, Arnold comments directly on English religious life. These comments are chiefly on Dissent, the dominant religion of the middle class.¹⁹ In "Eugenie de Guerin" and "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment," Arnold contrasts the richness and beauty of Catholicism with the narrowness, barrenness, and incompleteness of Puritanism. The religious life, Arnold says, "is at bottom everywhere alike."²⁰ Religions differ greatly in "setting and outward circumstance," in the "aids" to virtue which they provide.

¹⁹Arnold had already made a brief criticism of Puritanism in the preface to The Popular Education of France.

²⁰Arnold, op. cit., p. 137.

From her Catholicism, a religion which is "European, historical, august, and aesthetically attractive," Eugenio de Guerin received not only powerful aids to moral development but also a partial satisfaction for the total needs of her nature. Her English counterpart, Miss Mary Tatham, does not receive these aids from her religion. She is an English Dissenter, whose Chapel at Margate is the "brick-and-mortar image of English Protestantism, representing it in all its prose, all its uncomeliness--let me add, all its salubrity."²¹ Protestantism may have more of a future for itself than Catholicism, for unlike Catholicism it is not tending to widen the breach between itself and the modern intellectual spirit. Arnold concludes: "The signal want of grace and charm in English Protestantism's setting of its religious life is not an indifferent matter; it is a real weakness."²² In another essay, "Heinrich Heine," Arnold makes his most strongly worded judgment of Dissent: the middle class after the Elizabethan Age "entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned on its spirit there for two hundred years."²³

In Essays in Criticism all of these remarks on Dissent were parenthetical, and Arnold did not come to a full criticism of the religious institutions of Puritanism until Culture and Anarchy.

In writing Culture and Anarchy Arnold completed the project he had begun in Essays in Criticism to spread among the English a worthy idea

²¹Ibid., p. 158.

²²Ibid., pp. 158-59.

²³Ibid., p. 170.

of perfection and to advise them to "get geist."²⁴ In Essays in Criticism he had presented his ideas by describing the lives and works of a group of gifted people whose example would serve "to stimulate the better humanity"²⁵ in his readers; now in Culture and Anarchy he turns to exposition and systematic explanation. He analyzes perfection into its parts and describes its characteristics; he goes deeply into the psychology of the English people and tries to find historical reasons for their present dislike of "geist" and ideas; and he gives an illustration of what he means by the proper use of intelligence by applying the method of culture to a number of "practical operations" in which politicians of the time are engaged.

Religious topics enter into the very core of Arnold's discussion in Culture and Anarchy. He still defines religion as the means man uses for perfecting his moral life. As such, religion is only one of the contributors, though perhaps the most important one, to man's total perfection. Throughout Culture and Anarchy Arnold is much more explicit in limiting the function of religion than he had been in any other work:

Finally, perfection . . . is an harmonious expansion of all the powers which made the beauty and worthy of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the

²⁴"Get geist!" is the imperative form of Arnold's recommendation that the English develop themselves intellectually. It is used by the dogmatic young Prussian in Friendship's Garland.

²⁵The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, edited by H. F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 287.

expense of the rest. Here it goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived by us.²⁶

Arnold then goes on to make religion the villain in Culture and Anarchy. He asks: "Why, in fact, should good, well-meaning, energetic, sensible people, like the bulk of our countrymen, come to have such light belief in right reason, and such an exaggerated value for their own independent doing, however crude?"²⁷ Arnold's answer is that the English have developed a national psychology which stresses "doing," "practice," "duty," "obedience," the moral virtues; they have concentrated so much on the active life and the search for happiness through "strictness of conscience" that they have neglected everything else.

How did such national characteristics come into being? In the chapters "Hebraism and Hellenism" and "One Thing Needful" Arnold gives his answer. During the Elizabethan age the national psychology of the English had been very different. At that time there was wide-spread culture and love of ideas, the fruit of which was the splendid Elizabethan literature. Then in the seventeenth century the Puritans came into power. The Puritans, with their emphasis on religion and moral development, felt that everything else in life was unimportant. As a result the aesthetic and intellectual life of the nation went into decline; and, as Arnold pointed out in his essay on Heine, the middle class, the strongest part of the nation, in the seventeenth century entered the prison of Puritanism and had the key turned on its spirit

²⁶Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1869), p. 14.

²⁷Ibid., p. 137.

for two hundred years. Arnold calls Puritanism a "side-stream," crossing and checking the main current of man's advance. The main current is now with Hellenism, with the scientific appraisal of existing institutions for the purpose of determining wherein they must be reformed to suit modern needs. Thus England, with no aptitude for Hellenism, is not finding herself falling back in the general advance of humanity and is outstripped by Continental nations such as France and Germany, both of which have a greater love and respect for the intellectual life. So Arnold advises the English: forget about practice, religion, Hebraizing for a while, and turn to Hellenizing, to a play of ideas on stock notions and existing institutions.

In Culture and Anarchy Arnold gives a number of examples of the proper procedure in Hellenizing about stock notions, "practical operations," and institutions. The example of Hellenizing which got him into the most trouble was his play of ideas over some of the stock notions of the Dissenters, especially their ideas on disestablishment. In the course of his criticism of the Puritan propaganda for disestablishment, which at that time was being concentrated on the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland, he makes culture suggest some of the virtues that inhere in churches which are established and supported by the state. He also is led to make as specific a suggestion for "practice" as he had allowed himself in Culture and Anarchy: that the government establish all the chief religious groups in England, which he enumerates as the Anglicans, the Nonconformists, and the Catholics.²⁸

²⁸Ibid., pp. liii-lv. Arnold admits, in a burst of disinter-

In his next book, St. Paul and Protestantism (1870), Arnold returns to this controversy with the Puritans. In this volume his criticism becomes even more "practical" and his recommendations more detailed, at least to the extent of his quoting approvingly Tillotson's seven proposals for "comprehension," which, Arnold says, "cannot be too much studied at the present juncture," for the spirit of these proposals "any sound plan of Church-reform must take as its rule," though "their details our present circumstances would modify."²⁹

The main line of argument which Arnold uses in St. Paul and Protestantism is to show to the Puritans that the doctrines for which they separated from the Church of England are based on a misinterpretation of St. Paul. In Culture and Anarchy, commenting on the theology of Puritanism, he had called Puritanism's interpretations of St. Paul's key terms--grace, faith, election, righteousness--a "most monstrous and grotesque caricature of the sense of St. Paul."³⁰ Then he had given culture's version of the meaning of the Pauline term "resurrection" to show to Puritanism, as he says in St. Paul and Protestantism, how its Hebraizing and its want of wide culture "do so narrow its range and impair its vision that even the documents which it thinks all-sufficient, and to the study of which it exclusively rivets itself, it does not

estedness and flexibility, that perhaps this kind of establishment is not likely to happen and that the Nonconformists may eventually be able to achieve perfection even without establishment.

²⁹Matthew Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism and Last Essays on Church and Religion (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888), p. 151.

³⁰Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1869), p. 179.

rightly understand, but is apt to make of them something quite different from what they really are."⁵¹ In St. Paul and Protestantism Arnold goes "further in the same road," and in two lengthy essays gives his more complete version of the teachings of St. Paul on religion.

In the last essay included in St. Paul and Protestantism--"Puritanism and the Church of England"--and in the long preface to the volume, Arnold makes the practical application of this play of thought over the doctrines of St. Paul and Puritanism's misinterpretations of them. Among other arguments for the comprehension of all Protestant groups into a national church, Arnold points out that if the doctrines for which Puritanism separated from the Church of England are now being proved false by the Zeitgeist, the Puritans surely should rethink their present position, consider the advantages for fuller humane development that would come from their being a part of a national church, and reject their principle of separatism.

With St. Paul and Protestantism Arnold completed his thought on the problem of Dissent.⁵² His transition from his concern with Puritanism to his dealings with religion itself may be illuminated by the following passage from the preface to Literature and Dogma, in which Arnold, speaking of the Dissenters, is also perhaps thinking of himself:

But what is to be said for men, aspiring to deal with the cause of religion, who either cannot see that what the people now require is a religion of the Bible quite different from that which any of

⁵¹Matthew Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1883), p. 4.

⁵²He will return to the subject in a few later essays.

the churches or sects supply; or who, seeing this, spend their energies in fiercely battling as to whether the Church shall be connected with the nation in its collective and corporate character or no? The question, at the present juncture, is in itself so absolutely unimportant! The thing is, to recast religion.³³

Fearing that the English people, as a result of the spread of nineteenth-century free thought among them, may soon be led to reject the Bible and religion altogether and so lose the means by which they had developed the single strong characteristic which they now have-- their honesty, their respect for the ideal of duty and right conduct-- Arnold, in his next few works, set himself the task of recasting the Christian religion.

In his writings up to Literature and Dogma Arnold had maintained a consistent attitude towards religion. He had defined religion as "lighted up morality"; he had, as a deduction from this definition, distinguished the essential from the nonessential in religion. All religions have in common the aim of perfecting man in his moral life. They differ a great deal in nonessentials, in theology, in liturgy, in church discipline. These nonessentials are only "aids" by which religion seeks to fulfill its primary function. But because these elements are nonessential they are not to be made controversial issues, they are not to be used to set one faith against another, and they are not justifications for intolerance. This lesson of tolerance Arnold had taught in his poem "Progress." He had applied this lesson in his recommendations on religious education in the English schools, in his

³³Matthew Arnold, Literature and Dogma (1st edition; London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1873), p. xi.

admiration, before a Protestant audience, of Roman Catholicism, and in his plea for the establishment by the English state of all major religious divisions. He criticized the nonessentials only when, because of their falsity or inadequacy, they were hindering the primary aim of religion.

However, in the '70's he apparently became convinced that some of these nonessentials, particularly the intellectual difficulties about miracles and the inspiration of the Bible, were now actually making many Englishmen indifferent or even hostile to religion and the Bible. And so, reversing the position he had taken in his Colenso essays of 1863, in which he had pleaded that the intellectual difficulties about religion be not discussed before the "many" for fear that the progress of the civilizing influences of religion on their lives might be checked, Arnold in 1871 was himself ready openly to discuss these difficulties.³⁴ In 1863 he had advocated the principle of slow change

³⁴The first edition of Literature and Dogma was published in 1873; but the first four chapters had appeared in two articles entitled "Literature and Dogma" in the Cornhill Magazine for July and October, 1871. In the first of these articles Arnold had announced that he was going to publish a series of articles dealing with the relationship between literature and dogma, literature and physics, and literature and "science gone rally." He did not complete even the first part of this project. Of the series of articles which he had planned, only the two mentioned above were published. (Eleven years later he returned to his project with his essay "Literature and Science.") The second of these articles ended with the promise of a third, which would complete his treatment of the relationship of literature and dogma. The third article was not published. Arnold has not given us the reasons for the suspension of the series. Mr. E. K. Brown, in his Studies in the Text of Matthew Arnold's Prose Works (Paris: Pierre Andre, 1935), pp. 130-31, offers evidence to show that the editor of the Cornhill Magazine may have refused Arnold's third article because he felt that Arnold's religious views were too radical for his readers.

as the method by which the intellectual element in religion was to be transformed; in Literature and Dogma he brutally insisted that Christian theology "must go." He felt that the many, the "lapsed masses" as he now called them, were already, or were soon to be, in possession of the new knowledge. What these people now needed was guidance in the reconstruction of their traditional beliefs. Unless they received this guidance, Arnold felt that the "embarrassed times" he had described in Culture and Anarchy may well degenerate further into a real anarchy.

CHAPTER IV

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE AND DOGMA

In Culture and Anarchy, in order to illustrate how a lack of culture caused Puritans to misinterpret the greatest of the literary monuments of Hebraism, the Bible, Arnold had ventured briefly into Biblical criticism and then pointed the moral:

. . . whenever we hear that commonplace which Hebraism, if we venture to inquire what a man knows, is so apt to bring out against us in disparagement of what we call culture, and in praise of a man's sticking to the one thing needful,--he knows, says Hebraism, his Bible!--whenever we hear this said, we may, without any elaborate defence of culture, content ourselves with answering simply: 'No man, who knows nothing else, knows even his Bible.'

In St. Paul and Protestantism Arnold presented culture's exegesis and evaluation of the Epistles of St. Paul. He formally stated that his object was "the true criticism of a great and misunderstood author."² Now, in Literature and Dogma, Arnold offers a "true criticism" of the entire body of the Scriptures; his aim is "to put the right construction on the Bible," "to find from it what those who wrote it really intended to think and say."³

St. Paul and Protestantism and Literature and Dogma might be compared in several other ways. In St. Paul and Protestantism Arnold

¹Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1869), pp. 181-182.

²Matthew Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1865), p. 63.

³Matthew Arnold, Literature and Dogma (New York: Macmillan Co., 1893), pp. 79-80.

dramatizes his presentation of the doctrines of St. Paul by attacking "the perversions of them by mistaken men,"⁴ especially the perversions of the Puritan theologians. In the same way in Literature and Dogma Arnold constantly brings his own version of the teachings of the Old and New Testaments into comparison with the interpretations of the uncultured "dogmatists." Also, in both St. Paul and Protestantism and Literature and Dogma Arnold makes a practical application of the results of a disinterested play of mind over a literary test; in St. Paul and Protestantism he recommends that the Puritans accept establishment in a national church, and in Literature and Dogma he wishes to convince his readers that the Bible, rightly interpreted, deals with "facts momentous and real," and so should be retained as a guide for the further development of civilization even though its supernatural sanctions must be given up.

Although Arnold does not mention Bishop Colenso in Literature and Dogma,⁵ the preface shows that he has been rethinking his earlier criticism of the Fentateuch Critically Examined and Essays and Reviews. In "The Bishop and the Philosopher" Arnold condemned the liberals in the Anglican Church for running the risk of creating confusion in the religious world by publicly discussing novel religious ideas. Now, in Literature and Dogma, Arnold is about to do the same thing. To justify himself, he first summarizes and agrees with the position he had taken

⁴Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism, p. 4.

⁵Colenso is mentioned again in God and the Bible, and there Arnold compares his own work with that of the Bishop.

in 1863:

There is no surer proof of a narrow and ill-instructed mind, than to think and uphold that what a man takes to be truth on religious matters is always to be proclaimed. Our truth on these matters, and likewise the error of others, is something so relative, that the good or harm likely to be done by speaking ought always to be taken into account. . . . The man who believes that his truth on religious matters is so absolutely the truth, that say it when, and where, and to whom he will, he cannot but do good with it, is in our day almost always a man whose truth is half blunder, and wholly useless.

To be convinced, therefore, that our current theology is false, is not necessarily a reason for publishing that conviction. The theology may be false, and yet one may do more harm in attacking it than by keeping silence and waiting. To judge rightly the time and its conditions is the great thing. . . . If the present is a time to speak, there must be a reason why it is so.⁶

The reason for speaking out at the present time is the changed attitude of the masses towards Christianity. In his essays on Colenso Arnold had implied that the masses were still, as a whole, devout followers of traditional Christianity, and had argued that they had to be protected from unorthodox religious speculation. Now, ten years later, he says that the masses are "lapsed." Arnold does not give any statistics to show the extent of the "lapse"; he offers only clerical gossip--

Clergymen and ministers of religion are full of lamentations over what they call the spread of scepticism, and because of the little hold which religion now has on the masses of the people,--the lapsed masses, as some writers call them,

and a quotation from a letter of a workingman--

"Despite the efforts of the churches . . . the speculations of the day are working their way down among the people, many of whom are asking for the reason and authority for the things they have been taught to believe. . . . A discovery of imperfection and

⁶Arnold, Literature and Dogma, pp. v-vi.

fallibility in the Bible leads to its contemptuous rejection as a great priestly imposture."⁷

Arnold is so convinced that great numbers of the masses have already lapsed--"as far as the people are concerned, the old traditional scheme of the Bible is gone"--that he boldly announces: ". . . there is now an end to all fear of doing harm by gainsaying the received theology of the churches and the sects."⁸

Arnold states that the cause of the lapse is the spread of the rationalistic spirit among the masses. In Culture and Anarchy and in many of his other earlier prose works, Arnold warned the English that if they wish to survive as a great nation, they must "get geist"; they must learn what the "firm, intelligible law of things" is; they must stop their practical activities for a while and try to see things as they really are; they must open themselves to the "modern spirit," which is re-evaluating all "institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules." Now Arnold realizes that while he was preaching, the modern spirit had already achieved a considerable success in re-evaluating the institution which was most vulnerable to rationalistic attack--traditional Christianity. The secular liberals, citing the new discoveries in geology and biology and the results of the nineteenth-century German Biblical criticism, were convincing the masses that Christianity is either an "imposture" or a "degrading superstition."

At the end of his preface to St. Paul and Protestantism, Arnold had

⁷Ibid., pp. vi-vii.

⁸Ibid., pp. xii, xv-xvi.

already predicted the probable success of the anti-Christianity propaganda of modern liberalism:

Unhappy and unquiet alternations of ascendancy between Hebraism and Hellenism are all that we shall see;—at one time, the indestructible religious experience of mankind asserting itself blindly; at another, a revulsion of the intellect of mankind from this experience, because of the audacious assumptions and gross inaccuracies with which men's account of it is intermingled.

At present it is such a revulsion which seems chiefly imminent.⁹

The Dissenters boast that they will kill the new spirit. No, says Arnold, the future is with Hellenism:

Rather are we likely to witness an edifying solemnity, where Mr. Mill, assisted by his youthful henchmen and apparitors, will burn all the Prayer Books. Rather will the time come, as it has been foretold, when we shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and shall not see it; when the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Jesus Christ, as a power to work the annulment of our ordinary self, will be clean disregarded and out of mind. Then, perhaps, will come another reaction, and another, and another; and all sterile.¹⁰

The consequences of the lapse of the masses Arnold can hardly face.

Losing the Bible, they would, perhaps, lose the little civilization which they now possess:

Yet assuredly, of conduct, which is more than three-fourths of human life, the Bible, whatever people may thus think and say, 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, certainly, if it does not already constitute, a very unsettled condition of things.¹¹

⁹Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism, p. xxxv.

¹⁰Ibid., p. xxxvi.

¹¹Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. 312. Arnold had an almost life-long fear of what the "uncivilized" lower classes would do to British culture once they began to feel their power. See Letters of Matthew Arnold, I, 6: "What agitates me is this, if the new state of things succeeds in France, social changes are inevitable here . . . and such is

What is needed, then, is an antidote to the liberal propaganda, which would show that the Bible, correctly interpreted, is of the greatest value for human development and deserves all the veneration which men had formerly bestowed on it. The liberals are mistaken in their "re-evaluation" of Christianity, and their thesis that traditional Christianity and the Bible are both completely discredited must be contradicted. Otherwise, liberal propaganda will inevitably spread and soon be accepted by everybody as a result of a mechanism which Arnold describes in "Literature and Science": "On mankind in the mass, a movement, once started, is apt to impose itself by routine; it is through the insight, the independence, the self-confidence of powerful single minds that its yoke is shaken off."¹² In "Literature and Science" Arnold raises objections to the movement developed by the scientists to substitute science for literature as the chief part of the education of modern youth; similarly, in Literature and Dogma he raises objections to the liberal movement which is attempting to get rid not only of traditional Christianity but also of the Bible.

Arnold undertook this task because he felt that there was no one else who would do it. The teachers of religion, the clergy, were now, in Arnold's opinion, the worst enemies of religion. They themselves had

the state of our masses that their movements now can only be brutal plundering and destroying." (Written March 10, 1843.)

¹²Matthew Arnold, Four Essays on Life and Letters, edited by E. K. Brown ("Crifts Classics", New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1947), p. 97. Mr. Brown gives the original version of this essay as it appeared in the Nineteenth Century for August, 1832. The above quotation is found in the introductory section of the essay, which Arnold later excised.

to be taught the only method by which Christianity might be saved. Although the rationalistic spirit was making many people suspicious of dogma and the traditional sanctions of Christianity, the Church was making no effort to assimilate the new knowledge and start Christianity off on a new life. On the contrary, the clergy, especially the older High Churchmen who had felt the influence of the Oxford Movement, were becoming more and more reactionary. In June, 1870, at Oxford, Arnold had been "made anxious" in finding the new chancellor, Lord Salisbury, "full, almost defiantly full, of counsels and resolves for retaining and upholding the old ecclesiastical and dogmatic form of religion,"¹³ asserting, as Arnold quotes him in Literature and Dogma, that "religion is no more to be severed from dogma than light from the sun."¹⁴ Arnold was made even more anxious as he read, in High Church periodicals such as the Guardian and the Rock, the angry reactions of various clergymen to the "Westminster Scandal" and to the attempts of the Ritual Commission, in 1870 and later, to change or mollify parts of the Athanasian Creed.¹⁵

In the Anglican Church there were a few liberal clergymen of whom Dean Stanley was the leader; Arnold indicates their difficulties in a

¹³Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. 4.

¹⁵The "Westminster Scandal" was created by Dean Stanley's permitting a Unitarian to participate in a communion service at Westminster Abbey in June, 1870. For a detailed study of the influence on Literature and Dogma of the "Westminster Scandal" and the controversy over the Athanasian Creed, see William Blackburn, "The Background of Arnold's Literature and Dogma," Modern Philology, XLIII (November, 1946), 180-39.

letter to Fontanes, a French Protestant minister, written probably during the time he was working on Literature and Dogma:

. . . a present, devant le gros public et la majorite religieuse, la minorite liberale du clerge est tenue a parler avec une grande reserve, a menager beaucoup ses adversaires, a ne faire qu'effleurer les questions vitales, a n'attaquer de front que des parties minimes du dogme suranne que toutes nos eglises, meme celles des dissidents, subissent encore.¹⁶

In another letter to Fontanes, written just after the publication of Literature and Dogma, Arnold repeats his description of the uncompromising attitude of the majority of the clergy: ". . . ce que j'affirme, c'est qu'aucun corps religieux, aucune reunion religieuse n'aurait pas, chez nous, traiter les questions de dogme avec la franchise qu'a montree votre synode."¹⁷

Such was Arnold's justification for running the risk of creating confusion in the religious work by publishing novel religious speculations in a form accessible to the general reader. He was running no risk at all, for the speculations were no longer novel except to the clergy. Bishop Colenso's justification for publishing his Pentateuch Critically Examined is also an excellent summary of Arnold's own justification:

I believe that there are not a few among the more highly educated classes of society in England, and multitudes among the more intelligent operatives, who are in danger of drifting into irreligion and practical atheism, under this dim sense of the unsoundness of the popular view (on verbal inspiration), combined

¹⁶Letters of Matthew Arnold, II, 100. Cf. Arnold's quotation in Literature and Dogma of the Rock's description of Dean Stanley as "The degenerate plant of a strange vine bringing forth the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah." Literature and Dogma, p. 182.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 105.

with a feeling of distrust of their spiritual teachers, as if these must be either ignorant of facts, which to themselves are patent, or, at least, insensible to the difficulties which those facts involve, or else, being aware of their existence, and feeling their importance, are consciously ignoring them.¹⁸

The kinds of arguments and other persuasive devices which Arnold uses in Literature and Dogma may be better understood if we can discover the class of readers for whose benefit he wrote the book.

In the preface to God and the Bible, Arnold, upset by the numerous attacks on Literature and Dogma, as a book subversive of the Christian religion, very carefully limits the audience for which both Literature and Dogma and God and the Bible were written; he has addressed himself "to one country and nation, and to one sort of persons in it, and to one moment in its religious history."¹⁹ He describes these persons as

those who, won by the modern spirit to habits of intellectual seriousness, cannot receive what sets these habits at naught, 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 acquaintance with the Bible and some practice in using it.²⁰

¹⁸John Colenso, The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined (London: Longman, Green, and Roberts, 1862), I, xxvi.

¹⁹Matthew Arnold, God and the Bible (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1875), pp. xlix-l.

²⁰Ibid., p. xxviii. In the portion of Literature and Dogma which had appeared in the Cornhill Magazine in 1871, the audience which Arnold describes in God and the Bible is not mentioned. The two papers are explicitly directed at another group of readers. It is only in the new portion of the book that we get a few statements such as these: "Our attempt, therefore, has in view those who now throw the Bible aside, not those who receive it on the ground supplied either by popular theology or by metaphysical theology. For persons of this kind, what we say neither will have, nor seeks to have, any constraining force at all; only it is rendered necessary by the want of constraining force, for others than themselves, in their own theology."

For the lack of one or more of these characteristics, Arnold specifically excludes from his audience the following: firm believers in the traditional Christianity; the upper and lower classes; the Liberal secularists; and Roman Catholics.

In the preface to the popular edition of Literature and Dogma, Arnold further characterizes the audience of intellectually serious lovers of Christianity for whom he had written Literature and Dogma. He compares his own efforts towards changing Christianity to the transformation of religion which occurred at the Reformation: "The Germanic nations broke the tie with Rome, because they loved Christianity well enough to deal sincerely with themselves as to clericalism and tradition."²¹ The Reformation, thus, preserved for Christianity "the serious hold upon men's minds which is a great and beneficent force today, and the force to which Literature and Dogma makes appeal."²²

Arnold, then, pictures an audience of serious-minded people, people who for centuries have felt the power of Christianity and loved their religion. He pictures a vague unrest now coming over these people, similar to the unrest which preceded the Reformation. This unrest is due to the spread of the rationalistic spirit which is discrediting miracles and the super-natural. Some of these people are giving the Bible up, but most are hesitating. These people need to be reassured that even though belief in miracles has to be given up, the Christian religion still has as much profound significance for their lives as had

²¹Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. viii.

²²Ibid., p. ix.

traditional Christianity.

It is for this audience that Arnold poses as the new Luther. In 1863 Arnold had emphasized how difficult it is to make new ideas harmonize with the religious life and how only great religious reformers, like Luther, could do this successfully; and he had stated that no such reformer for the present age had as yet appeared. In 1873 the great reformer still had not appeared, and so Arnold took the task upon himself. As the new Luther, he tackled what in 1865 he had called "the very essence" of the religious problem: ". . . the putting a new construction upon them (the New Testament data), the taking them from under the old, adoptive, traditional, unspiritual point of view and placing them under a new one. . . ."23

For this reader the more purely expository portions of Literature and Dogma, in which Arnold is presenting his version of what the Biblical writers really thought and said, would be particularly appropriate.²⁴ The plain, careful analysis would appeal to the intellectual seriousness of such a reader, and the reverent tone toward the Bible would satisfy his own pious attitude. From him would also be appropriate the portions of Literature and Dogma in which Arnold passes from "criticism" to "recommendaion," from simply presenting

²³Arnold, Essays in Criticism, p. 31.

²⁴The more purely expository portions of Literature and Dogma would include the first three chapters, in which Arnold surveys very quickly the teachings of the Old and New Testaments; the sixth chapter, "The New Testament Record," in which Arnold discusses some of the principles of his exegesis; the seventh and eighth chapters, "The Testimony of Jesus to Himself" and "The Early Witnesses," in which he presents his detailed exegesis of the New Testament.

what the Biblical writers really thought and said to proving that the Bible teaches truths "momentous and real."²⁵

But for this reader the chapters of negative criticism would not be necessary, since Arnold assumes him to be a person who is already dissatisfied with current theology and metaphysics and no longer able to accept the theory of verbal inspiration or the proofs of prophecy and miracle.²⁶ Nor would this reader need the chapter "Our Masses and the Bible," in which Arnold reiterates the concern which he had shown in the preface over the lapse of the masses.²⁷ These chapters must have been written for some other group of readers.

Now, the audience of the Cornhill "Literature and Dogma" is explicitly the "friends of dogma," the religious teachers of the nation. In the introductory paragraphs of the first paper, Arnold accuses them of having attacked literature, and so "to the friends of dogma" he feels "emboldened . . . to say a few words on behalf of letters, and in depreciation of the slight which . . . they . . . put upon them."²⁸ Literature and Dogma is, then, to be a "defense" of literature against the aspersions of the theologians.

²⁵The "recommendation" is made throughout Literature and Dogma, but in the last two chapters, "The True Greatness of the Old Testament" and "The True Greatness of Christianity," Arnold makes a special effort to convince the reader of the importance of the Bible for his life.

²⁶The negative criticism is concentrated in the fourth, fifth, and ninth chapters, "The Proof from Prophecy," "The Proof from Miracles," and "Aberglaube Re-invading."

²⁷This is the tenth chapter, coming immediately before the two "recommendation" chapters.

²⁸Arnold, Literature and Dogma, pp. 5-6.

Arnold almost immediately forgets about his stated purpose.²⁹

Literature and Dogma turns out to be an original exegesis of the Bible, and the "defense" of literature is only an insistence that one of the chief qualifications of a competent Biblical critic is the possession of literary culture. That Arnold was keeping a clerical audience in mind throughout the two Cornhill papers is clear from this passage from the close of the second paper.

The same must be said of miracles. The substitution of some other proof of Christianity for this accustomed proof is now to be desired most by those who most think Christianity of importance. That old friend of ours on whom we have formerly commented, who insists upon it that Christianity is and shall be nothing else but this, "that Christ promised Paradise to the saint and threatened the worldly man with hell-fire, and proved his power to promise and threaten by rising from the dead and ascending into heaven," is certainly not the guide whom lovers of Christianity, if they could discern what it is that he really expects and aims at, and what it is which they themselves really desire, would think it wise to follow.³⁰

Arnold does not forget his original audience in the rest of Literature and Dogma. Throughout the book he is recommending his own version of the Scriptures for the serious consideration of the clergy,

²⁹"Mr. Arnold on God," Spectator, XLIV (July 8, 1871), 825-26. The Spectator praised Arnold's "Socratic" introduction: "Anyone who wishes to know how to slide in after the fashion of Plato's Socrates, by an apparently familiar criticism on modern tendencies, the exposition of a new, momentous, and subversive doctrine, without giving his readers previous notice of his drift, cannot do better than study some of Mr. Arnold's recent essays, but above all, this last on 'Literature and Dogma.'"

³⁰Arnold, Literature and Dogma, pp. 114-15. Arnold had "formerly commented" on this "guide" in St. Paul and Protestantism. The quotation is culled from an article in Fraser's Magazine. In St. Paul and Protestantism Arnold had unmasked the pretended guide as a Benthamite, whose insidious purpose in making his recommendation was to keep the clergy doing just the thing which will discredit Christianity altogether in the end.

and in many places he seems to be addressing them directly.³¹ For them Arnold also composes the chapters of negative criticism of the Bible. This negative criticism is not strongly insisted upon, and Arnold states explicitly that the aim of Literature and Dogma is not to undermine the faith of those who still accept traditional Christianity. Arnold's purpose in including the negative criticism at all is to show the clergy how unsound prophecy and miracles are as sanctions of Christianity and how easily the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible may be upset. For the clergy Arnold also writes the chapter "Our Masses and the Bible" to show them the seriousness of the religious crisis and the necessity of meeting it with new ideas. In this chapter he is teaching the teachers the proper method of winning the masses back to the Bible.

Though Arnold is convinced that Christianity must be transformed if it is to survive and that the clergy are now the chief force in hindering the transformation, he realizes that without their help his own efforts would be futile: "I do not pretend to operate a general change of religious opinion, such as can only come to pass through the operation of many labourers working, all of them, towards a like end, and by the instrumentality, in a very considerable degree, of the clergy."³² Thus, if he could bring the clergy over to his views, he would exercise a considerable influence for the good of religion. So

³¹Ibid., p. 325. "Now here . . . is the point . . . where to apply correction to our current theology, if we are to bring the religion of the Bible home to the masses. . . . Those whom it most concerns us to teach will never interest themselves at all in our amended religion, so long as the whole thing appears to them unsupported and in the air."

³²Arnold, God and the Bible, p. xlix.

in Literature and Dogma he points out the new and vital texts in the Bible on which the Christianity of the future must be founded; and in the preface to the popular edition of Literature and Dogma, he expresses the hope that "the teachers of religion will more and more bring these texts forward and develop them."³³

It is not necessary here to describe in detail the "construction" which Arnold put on the Bible, his interpretation of what he felt the Biblical writers "really intended to think and say." Good summaries of Arnold's exegesis are easily available.³⁴ In this section I shall only discuss Arnold's methods of proof.

³³Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. xi.

³⁴See, for example, Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 263-83. For a critical survey see Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1959), pp. 317-368.

The chief points of Arnold's exegesis are as follows: The Jews were the first race in history to recognize vividly the connection between morality and happiness. They discovered the moral rules through trial-and-error experience, and realizing that the rules were not an original part of man's nature, they attributed them to a force outside themselves. The happiness which resulted from following the rules aroused a feeling of gratitude towards this force or power, which the Jews personified and called God. And so God to them meant no more than the power in the universe that reveals and rewards righteousness. But the original intuition and the emotion connected with it faded with the years; their religious observances became external and mechanical, and events, such as the fall of the Jewish kingdom, seemed to belie the law. The Jews then turned to the hope that a Messiah might come to restore to them their former prominence and happiness. Since their civilization had become external and mechanical, their imaginations created a Messiah who would be a king powerful enough to subdue the heathen kingdoms around them and establish the material glory of Israel. Christ came, realized that the Jewish state had fallen because it had been untrue to its original intuition, and set himself to revivify the intuition. Israel's original intuition was but an incomplete description of righteousness, and in supplying what was lacking, Christ created a moral system which will legislate for man's moral life forever.

Arnold presents his "true criticism" of the Bible with unshaken dogmatism. For proof that his exegesis is correct, he can only offer his character as a competent literary critic. He nowhere in Literature and Dogma explicitly refers to himself as a competent critic, but he sets up the necessary qualifications for the critic, shows how other critics, especially the theologians, lack these qualifications, and leaves the implication that he dares his attempt because he feels himself well qualified.

Besides having a disinterested love for truth and a thorough knowledge of his text and the "facts" about his text, Arnold insists fifteen or twenty times in Literature and Dogma, that a Biblical critic must have culture. The theologians, Arnold says, are not depreciating literature; but since the study of literature is the means to culture, without a background of wide reading, the Biblical critic, even if he "knows" his Bible, will never be able to interpret it correctly or draw out its significance.

The first way in which the possession of the discipline of literature benefits the critic is to make him realize that there are great differences in the psychology of nations and eras. The present is a rationalistic age in which man is seeking to develop his intellectual, critical faculties; rationalism was also characteristic of the Greeks at the height of Hellenic culture and of most European nations of the Renaissance. On the other hand, the Medieval period was a time of development of the faculties of the emotions and imagination. The Jews at the time of the coming of Christ were similar in psychology to the Europeans of the Middle Ages. As a matter of fact their race

throughout history seems consistently to have emphasized the emotions and imagination and to have neglected the intellect, the faculty which is the peculiar gift of the Aryan races. Being an uncritical people with vivid imaginations, the Jews accepted as reality such things as prophecies and miracles which a more critical age, such as the present, can no longer believe in. Thus the reader must allow for the fact that the Bible, written in uncritical times, would be filled with the prejudices and attitudes which the human spirit had accepted naturally in such times and which the modern age is just as naturally rejecting.

The cultured critic also realizes that the psychology of a people not only influences their attitudes and beliefs but is even reflected in the language which they use. The language of an imaginative people, like the Jews, tends to be poetic, figurative, concrete, and is to be carefully distinguished from the literal, abstract, scientific language of philosophical disquisition. Arnold felt that the theologians, because of their lack of literary experience, did not see this distinction in language at all; they had taken the poetic language of the Bible as scientific terminology and had therefore attributed to the Jews a metaphysics which they could not possibly have had.

Perhaps the greatest benefit which wide reading will give to the critic of the Bible is what Arnold calls "power." In so far as reading develops culture in a man, gives him a knowledge of all sides of human nature, gives him standards for judging excellence in all activities of the human spirit, it gives him "Power." Disinterestedness, knowledge of facts, and high intelligence might make a man a good negative critic of the Bible, but only the cultured man has the perception to see that

even after negative criticism has done its worst there remains in the Bible an inspiration for the moral life which can be found nowhere else. Most German critics of the Bible, even Strauss himself, lack "power": ". . . to what is unsolid in the New Testament he (Strauss) applies the historic method ably enough, but . . . to deal with the reality which is still left in the New Testament, requires a larger, richer, deeper, more imaginative mind than his."⁵⁵

Speaking, then, as a representative of the Zeitgeist and culture, Arnold presents his exegesis. His version is only one of many competing interpretations of the Bible, and Arnold feels that the best way of discrediting these versions is to attack the competency of those who have constructed them.

In Arnold's opinion most of the interpreters of the Bible, past or present, have not been properly qualified critics:

It is as if some simple and saving doctrines, essential for men to know, were enshrined in Shakespeare's Hamlet or Newton's Principia (though the Gospels are really a far more complex and difficult object of criticism than either); and a host of second-rate critics, and official critics, and what is called "the popular mind" as well, throw themselves upon Hamlet and the Principia with the notion that they could and should extract from these documents, and impose on us for our belief, not only the saving doctrines enshrined there, but also the right literary and scientific criticism of the entire documents.⁵⁶

With the critics who represent the "popular mind," Arnold has very little to do. He brushes them aside with the remark: "Now, we all know

⁵⁵Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. xxv.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 179.

what the literary criticism of the mass of mankind is."⁵⁷ He attacks the theologians in almost every chapter of Literature and Dogma.

Arnold does not spare his language in expressing his contempt towards "the friends of dogma" and their exegesis of the Bible. At best the uncultured theologians are made to appear well-intentioned but one-sided men, who, because they combine an excess of talent for abstruse reasoning with a lack of literary experience, produce a most inaccurate interpretation of the teaching of the Bible. When Arnold becomes more contemptuous, as in his constant irony on the efforts of the Bishops of Winchester and Gloucester "to do something for the honour of Our Lord's Godhead," he implies that the theologians are learned fools. But Arnold's attack on the character of the theologians is even more abusive. They are "official critics," who have accepted a theology that was developed in the dark ages when scientific study of any kind was impossible and who, Arnold implies, are now more concerned with defending their official position than in seeking the truth. He identifies them with the Jewish theologians who opposed the religion of Christ and whom Christ attacked so severely:

And all that the Bible says of bringing to nought the wisdom of the wise, and of receiving the kingdom of God as a little child, has nothing whatever to do with the believer's acceptance of some dogma that perplexes the reason; it is aimed at those who sophisticate a very simple thing, religion, by importing into it a so-called science with which it has nothing to do. Jewish theological learning, the system of divinity of the Jewish hierarchy, who did not know how simple a thing righteousness really was, and who, when simple souls saw it in Christ and were drawn to it, cried out, "This people that knoweth not the law are cursed!" It was at

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 178.

these, and at whatever resembles these, that Christ aimed the words about receiving the kingdom of God as a little child.³⁸

In this passage and elsewhere Arnold compares dogma with the "genuine" teachings of Jesus and stresses how different Christ's religion is from that of the theologians. For example, Israel and Christ, according to Arnold, taught that God is really a great unknown;³⁹ but the irreverent and blasphemous theologians pretend to know all about him "as if he were a man in the next street." And in that interesting passage which concludes the Chapter "The New Testament Record," Arnold, at the height of his indignation, finds it necessary to use all the moral restraint he can summon to keep himself from hurling the word "infidel" at the theologians, who have earned the name ten times over by their false criticism of the Bible.⁴⁰

³⁸Ibid., p. 233. Cf. pp. 226, 370.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 39, 56, 191.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 150. "Happily, the faith which saves is attached to the saving doctrines in the Bible, which are very simple; not to its literary and scientific criticism, which is very hard. And no man is to be called 'infidel' for his bad literary and scientific criticism of the Bible; but if he were, how dreadful would the state of our orthodox theologians be! They themselves freely fling about this word infidel at all those who reject their literary and scientific criticism, which we see to be quite false. It would be but just to mete to them with their own measure, and to condemn them by their own rule; and, when they air their unsound criticism in public, to say indignantly: The Bishop of So-and-so, the Dean of So-and-so, and other infidel lecturers of the present day! or: That rampant infidel, the Archdeacon of So-and-so, in his recent letter on the Athanasian Creed! or: 'The Rock,' 'The Church Times,' and the rest of the infidel press! or: The torrent of infidelity which pours every Sunday from our pulpits! Just it would be, and by no means inurbane; but hardly, perhaps, Christian. Therefore we will now permit ourselves to say it; but it is only kind to point out, in passing, to these loud and rash people to what they expose themselves, at the hands of adversaries less scrupulous than we are."

Biblical critics with such qualifications could not possibly produce a correct interpretation of the Scriptures. Arnold thus saves himself the trouble of arguing that their versions are false.⁴¹ In speaking about dogmatic theology he relies chiefly on abusive language to form an attitude in the reader. Orthodox theology is "mechanical and materializing," "hollow," "worthless," and "grotesque." It is a "mess," and "illusion," an "extravagance," an "utter blunder." It is full of "deep confusions and misunderstandings." It is a system which prides itself on being "precise" ("precisely wrong," Arnold comments twice) and is characterized by "astounding particularity" and "insane license" in its affirmations about God and immortality. The Athanasian creed is a "grotesque mixture,--of learned pseudo-science with popular Aberglaupe"; it is a "notion work" with a "chimera" for its basis. All of dogmatic theology is "a separable accretion, which never had any business to be attached to Christianity, never did it any good, and now does it great harm, and thickens an hundred-fold the religious confusion in which we live."⁴² Defenses of dogma are "misspent labour" and are like "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."⁴³ [Italics theirs.]

⁴¹Ibid., p. 284. Here is Arnold's summary of the theology of the Middle Ages: "These are the men, this is the critical faculty from which our so-called orthodox dogma proceeded; the worth of all the productions of such a critical faculty is easy to estimate, for the worth is nearly uniform."

⁴²Ibid., p. 344. This is the same dogma, the strict teaching of which Arnold had vigorously defended in his earlier educational writings.

⁴³Ibid., p. 347.

Arnold is far more gentle with what he calls "popular theology." Instead of abusing it, he says that it ought to be treated with "infinite tenderness" and "indulgence inexhaustible." In his most mellow mood Arnold calls it an "Aberglaube" and even praises it as "the spontaneous work of nature." He also calls it "providential," since only by its means could the ethical teachings of Christ have spread throughout the world.⁴⁴ But he also occasionally speaks of it in derogatory terms. Its god is a "magnified and non-natural man," whose essence and government Arnold describes in the famous analogy of the three Lords Shaftesbury.⁴⁵ He also calls it an "anthropomorphism," a "fairy tale," and a "legend," words perhaps less brutal than the "degrading superstition" of the liberals but surely to sincere believers

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 303.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 305-307. "In imagining a sort of infinitely magnified and improved Lord Shaftesbury, with a race of vile offenders to deal with, whom his natural goodness would incline him to let off, only his sense of justice will not allow it; then a younger Lord Shaftesbury, on the scale of his father and very dear to him, who might live in grandeur and splendour if he liked, but who prefers to leave his home, to go and live among the race of offenders, and to be put to an ignominious death, on condition that his merits shall be counted against their demerits, and that his father's goodness shall be restrained no longer from taking effect, but any offender shall be admitted to the benefit of it on simply pleading the satisfaction made by the son;--and then, finally, a third Lord Shaftesbury, still on the same high scale, who keeps very much in the background, and works in a very occult manner, but very efficaciously nevertheless, and who is busy in applying everywhere the benefits of the son's satisfaction and the father's goodness;--in an imagination, I say, such as this, there is nothing degrading, and this is precisely the Protestant story of Justification. And how awe of the first Lord Shaftesbury, gratitude and love towards the second, and earnest co-operation with the third, may fill and rule men's hearts so as to transform their conduct, we need not go about to show, for we have all seen it with our eyes." Arnold was criticised so much for this "abominable illustration" that he expunged it in the popular edition of Literature and Dogma.

brutal enough. He even compares a man's belief in the "popular science" of Christianity to the solace an opium eater gets from his dreams.⁴⁶

Arnold predicts that popular theology will long survive as a poetic accompaniment to Christianity and an emotional stimulus to morality. A belief in learned theology can never again be made a vital part of Christianity! "The hour for softening down, and explaining away, is passed; the whole false notion-work has to go."⁴⁷

But when Arnold asks whether his exegesis is the "right construction" to put on the Bible, he admits that "demonstration in these matters is impossible":

It is a maintainable thesis that the allegorising of the Fathers is right, and that this is the true sense of the Bible. It is a maintainable thesis that the theological dogmas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement, underlie the whole Bible. It is a maintainable thesis, on the other hand, that Jesus was himself immersed in the Aberglaube of his nation and time, and that his disciples have reported him with absolute fidelity; in this case we should have, in our estimate of Jesus, to make deductions for his Aberglaube, and to admire him for the insight he displayed in spite of it.⁴⁸

Which exegesis is the right one? It is the Zeitgeist, the accumulated "reason and experience" of the race that will decide: "Does experience, as it widens and deepens, make for this or that thesis, or make against it?"⁴⁹ Arnold feels that reason and experience are making against the

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 338.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 347.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 336-37.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 337.

traditional theses and in favor of his own construction, which, then, though it can not "command" assent, will "win" assent as time goes on.⁵⁰ As the Zeitgeist widens the experience of larger numbers of people, these people will turn more and more to a construction of the Bible such as Arnold has put on it.⁵¹

In Literature and Dogma Arnold not only wanted to present the reader with a "true criticism" of the Bible, he also wanted to persuade the reader to accept this "true" teaching of the Bible as a guide for his life. Arnold would scarcely have considered it worth his while to have written Literature and Dogma, if his reader, after studying the

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 334-35. Here is how Arnold shows that "reason and experience" have been his guides in his exegesis: ". . . from Israel's master-feeling, the feeling for righteousness, the predominant sense that men, are, as St. Paul says, 'created unto good works which God hath prepared beforehand that we should walk in them,' we collect the origin of Israel's conception of God,--of that mighty not ourselves which more or less engages all men's attention,--as the Eternal Power that makes for righteousness. This we do, because 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. Again, the construction we put upon the doctrine and work of Jesus is collected in the same way. From the data we have, and from comparison of these data with what we have besides of the history of ideas and expressions, this construction seems to us the true and natural one. The Gospel narratives are just that sort of account of such a work and teaching as the work and teaching of Christ, according to our construction of it, was, which would naturally have been given by devoted followers who did not fully understand it. And understand it fully they then could not, it was so very new, great, and profound; only time gradually brings its lines out more clear."

⁵¹Ibid., p. xiii. The preface and brief conclusion to Literature and Dogma are, like Culture and Anarchy, direct propaganda for culture. They are appeals to people to help the Zeitgeist along by broadening their literary experience. Arnold realizes that "one cannot go far in the attempt to bring in, for the Bible, a right construction, without seeing how necessary is something of culture to its being admitted and used." In the preface to Last Essays on Church and Religion, he announces that he is ending his direct treatment of religion and will

book, accepted his exegesis as "true" but did not appreciate the significance of the Bible for his practical life.

In the preface Arnold agrees with all that the clergy say about "the importance of the Bible and its religion"⁵² and later emphasizes: "For us, religion is the solidest of realities, and Christianity the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection."⁵³ Christianity is of such importance because it is a guide to excellence in conduct, an area that covers three-fourths of a man's life,⁵⁴ and Arnold's language glows with strings of superlatives as he describes

now renew his efforts to spread culture: ". . . in returning to devote to literature, more strictly so-called, what remains to me of life and strength and leisure, I am returning, after all, to a field where work of the most important kind has not to be done, though indirectly, for religion. I am persuaded that the transformation of religion . . . 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. . . ."

⁵²Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. viii.

⁵³Ibid., p. 108.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 235-36. In proportioning the importance of the various elements that go to make perfection, Arnold makes the following comparisons: "Which is the solid and sensible man, which understands most, which lives most? Compare a Methodist day-labourer with him--but the first deals successfully with nearly the whole of life, while the second is all abroad in it. Compare some simple and pious monk, at Rome, with one of those frivolous men of taste whom we have all seen there!--each knows nothing of what interests the other; but which is the more vital concern for a man: conduct, or arts and antiquities?"

"May, and however false his science and Biblical criticism, the believer who applies the method and secret of Jesus has a width of range and sureness of foothold in life, which even the best scientific and literary critic of the Bible, who applies them not, is without; because the first is right in what affects three-fourths of life, and the second in what affects but one-fourth, or even but one-eighth. Each has a secret of which the other, who has no experience of it, does not know the value; but the value of the learned man's secret is ridiculously least."

the "immeasurable grandeur, the eternal necessity, the priceless blessing" of the revelation made to Israel, and the "far-reaching sanctions, the inexhaustible attractiveness, the grace and truth" of the "immense, important indispensable" doctrine of Christ. Furthermore, man, at present, has only an inkling of what Christianity can accomplish; the religion of Jesus has an "immense capacity for ceaseless progress and farther development";⁵⁵ and Arnold can not even conjecture what the new world will be like once humanity really understands and applies the method and secret of Jesus. And so Arnold is anxious to "convince," "win," and "persuade" the reader that the Bible deals with facts "momentous and real," and "recommend" that he accept the Bible as a guide to righteousness. And, if his reader is a clergyman, Arnold wants to induce him to preach this true and all-important doctrine in his church.

The chief line of argument by which Arnold tries to convince the reader to accept the Bible is that its teaching, scientifically interpreted, is the most adequate statement which humanity possesses of the principles which should govern a man's moral life. Christ has described once and for all the moral law of man's being, a part of what Arnold in Culture and Anarchy calls "the universal order which seems to be intended and aimed at in the world, and which it is a man's happiness to go along with or his misery to go counter to,"⁵⁶ and his teachings, therefore, have an "eternal necessity" for mankind. Furthermore, Christ

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 379.

⁵⁶Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p. 11.

conveyed his moral message in inspired language; never before were there "utterances concerning conduct and righteousness . . . which so carried with them an air of consummate truth and likelihood as Christ's did; and never, therefore, were any utterances so irresistibly prepossessing."⁵⁷

Arnold's chief argument for the validity of Christ's moral system is that it is "verifiable" by "experience." "Try it!" he wants the clergy to say to the masses, and if the masses made the experiment, Arnold is as certain that they will be able to prove that following Christ leads to happiness as they can prove that "fire burns."

Christ's moral system is so simple that the plainest man can understand it and from his own experience intuit its truth. Arnold describes this method of proof when he compares Aristotle's ethics with those of Christ and praises Aristotle for not deducing his morality from a "complete system of psycho-physiology," a science which even now is still far more complete, but rather appealing, as Christ did, to everyman's experience:

He . . . appeals throughout to a verifying sense, such as we have said that everyone in this great but plain matter of conduct really has; he does not appeal to a speculative theory of the system of things, and deduce conclusions from it. And he shows his greatness in this, because the law of our being is not something which is already definitively known and can be exhibited as part of a speculative theory of the system of things; it is something which discovers itself and becomes, as we follow--(among other things) the rule of renouncement. What we can say with most certainty about the law of our being is, that we find the rule of renouncement lead sensibly up to it. In matters of practice and

⁵⁷Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. 98. See Arnold's comments on Marcus Aurelius, supra, p. 49.

conduct therefore, an experience, like this, is really a far safer ground to insist on than any speculative theory of the system of things.⁵⁸

So Arnold proves the truth of Christ's moral system by a series of psychological propositions which he feels are generally accepted.⁵⁹

Christ taught the doctrine of the two selves, a "lower" self of uncontrolled impulse, leading a person to act at the instant bidding of his instincts; and a "higher" self, which leads a person to check the impulses of the moment and consciously direct his actions in terms of some rule. The activity of the higher self in controlling impulse is "conduct," and Arnold states dogmatically that conduct covers three-fourths of life.⁶⁰ By Christ's "method" a person is taught to explore his soul and recognize vividly the existence of these two selves.

Christ also provides a "secret" which, in its most general statement, is the doctrine that a person must "die" to his lower self and live at the direction of his higher self if he wants to have "life," "joy," and "happiness." The rules of morality are applications of the secret to the various impulses of the lower self.

To prove the truth of Christ's "secret"--that renouncement is the means to happiness--Arnold again appeals to the everyday experience of

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 208-9.

⁵⁹The statement of these propositions usually includes one or another of these formulas: "nobody will deny," "everyone knows," "no one will say," "it will be denied by no one," "it can hardly be gainsaid," "we all see," or "everyone can understand." See also the preface to Last Essays on Church and Religion, in which Arnold summarizes Christ's moral system and argues for its "natural truth" by a series of propositions that he feels are generally "admitted."

⁶⁰Arnold, op. cit., p. 15. If not four-fifths or five-sixths.

his readers. Only at two or three points in the text does Arnold bring in the authority of "all good observers" to confirm Christ's testimony. The list of authorities whom Arnold quotes includes Bishop Butler, Bishop Wilson, Goethe, the writer of the Imitation of Christ, Barrow, Aristotle, Plato, Wordsworth, and several minor witnesses.⁶¹

The existence and attributes of the God whom Israel and Christ worshipped can also be proved by empirical methods. God to Israel and Christ was the "Eternal Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." Experience revealed to them, as it does to any man who "attends" to his ethical experience, the "very great part in righteousness which belongs . . . to not ourselves."⁶² By "not ourselves" Arnold means all the objects and influences in the universe over which an individual has no control but which have a tremendous effect on his life. In St. Paul and Protestantism Arnold describes this "not ourselves" in its widest sense as the "element in which we live and move and have our being, which stretches around and beyond the strictly moral element in us, around and beyond the finite sphere of what is originated, measured, and controlled by our own understanding and will"; by this element "we are receptive and influenced, not originative and influencing."⁶³ Restricted to the moral life, the "not ourselves" operates in this way:

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 17-18, 45, 205. In the rest of the text Arnold very occasionally brings in authorities to buttress some statement or other which he is making; Bishop Butler and Goethe are the chief ones who function in this way.

⁶²Ibid., p. 27.

⁶³Arnold, St. Paul and Protestantism, p. 49.

In the first place, we did not make ourselves, or our nature, or conduct as the object of three-fourths of that nature; we did not provide that happiness should follow conduct, as it undeniably does. . . . All this we did not make; and, in the next place, our dealing with it at all, when it is made, is not wholly, or even nearly wholly, in our power. Our conduct is capable, irrespective of what we can ourselves certainly answer for, of almost infinitely different degrees of forces and energy in the performance of it, or lucidity and vividness in the perception of it, of fulness in the satisfaction from it; and these degrees may vary from day to day, and quite incalculably.⁶⁴

The Jews, having discovered in their ethical experience an influence which reveals, inspires, and rewards righteousness, and moved by emotions of awe and gratitude, personified this "Power" and called it God. By this personification Israel did not intend to attribute any other qualities to God. Except for their recognition that the "Power" makes for righteousness and that it seems to make for righteousness eternally, God to them was a great unknown. Their language about God was poetry, language "thrown out at an object of consciousness not fully grasped, which inspired emotion."⁶⁵

Arnold accepts this empirically proved God, though he reminds the reader that the term "God" may be used to describe a "Power" with other attributes. Since to fulfill the law of his being man must perfect himself intellectually and aesthetically as well as morally, some day, when men have come to follow completely the "eternal order," they will broaden the definition of God as "the Eternal not ourselves which makes for righteousness," into "the stream of tendency by which all things

⁶⁴Arnold, Literature and Dogma, pp. 27-28.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 41.

fulfill the law of their being."⁶⁶

When men are ready to broaden their definition of God, they will also broaden their definition of religion. In Literature and Dogma Arnold defines religion as "ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling," or "morality touched by emotion."⁶⁷ When men will have developed as sensitive a conscience in aesthetic and intellectual matters as they now have in moral matters, they will include in their religion their whole spiritual activity.

Besides appealing to individual experience and quoting the opinions of "all good observers," Arnold also cites the experience of the human race as confirming the teaching of the Bible that through righteousness comes happiness. Arnold's generalization--that moral causes govern the rise and fall of states--was one of the great themes on which he preached from Essays in Criticism to "Literature and Science." In Literature and Dogma this argument is developed in the chapter "The Greatness of the Old Testament."

In this chapter Arnold asks the reader to glance with him across history and watch "the spectacle of human affairs so edifying and so sublime."⁶⁸ Under the guidance of Arnold the reader sees the following:

The world goes on, nations and men arrive and depart, with varying fortune, as it appears, with time and chance happening unto all.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 41, 43-44.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 21. This definition of religion will cause much controversy, but in Literature and Dogma Arnold assumes that this definition is the generally accepted one, that when the ordinary person speaks of religion he means "morality touched by emotion."

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 549.

Look a little deeper, and you will see that one strain runs through it all; nations and men, whoever is shipwrecked, is shipwrecked on conduct. It is the God of Israel steadily and irresistibly asserting himself; the Eternal that Loveth righteousness.⁶⁹

In this chapter, rich in Biblical quotations, Arnold's own style becomes Biblical:

O long delaying arm of night, will the Eternal never put thee forth, to smite those who go on as if righteousness mattered nothing? There is no need; they are smitten. Down they come, one after another; Assyria falls, Babylon, Greece, Rome; they all fall for want of conduct, righteousness.⁷⁰

For particular study, Arnold singles out Greece, the period of the Renaissance, and stricken France, recently defeated in the Franco-Prussian war. Each of these peoples undervalued righteousness. Their worldly ideal has great attractiveness, and at certain periods in history it seems almost succeeding in establishing a complete rule over men's spirits. It is a false ideal and always breaks down, because "the constitution of things turns out to be somehow or other against it."⁷¹ Only through righteousness can individual men and nations achieve happiness and true greatness.

Experimental data for the proof of the Old Testament revelation are complete, and all nations now pay at least lip service to the ideal of righteousness. Since Arnold maintains that no nation has yet applied completely the method and secret of Jesus, the experience of the race can not provide the same evidence for Christianity as it provides for

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 350.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 351.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 359.

the lessons of the Old Testament.⁷² However, Christian history may be read as two thousand years of experimentation to discover what righteousness really is. Arnold shows how various eras and various Christian sects fastened on one or another of the basic doctrines of Christ; for example, Catholicism had emphasized Christ's secret and Protestantism his method.⁷³ But Christian history is a record of a long series of failures. Man, by studying the causes of these failures, is slowly getting a better idea of what righteousness really is, and Arnold sees this knowledge as developing towards the system of Jesus which he has described in Literature and Dogma.

In the chapters "Greatness of the Old Testament" and "The True Greatness of Christianity," Arnold uses his historical argument to show not only the "truth" of the religion of the Bible but also its "grandeur." Arnold wants to convince his reader that by giving up the Aberglaube of traditional Christianity and accepting Arnold's version, his imaginative life will not be impoverished. "The truth is really," Arnold says, "incomparably higher, grander, more wide and deep-reaching, than the Aberglaube and false science which it displaces."⁷⁴ The stage is the world; the actors, nations; the time, universal history; the drama, the discovery of the God of righteousness. Such a spectacle,

⁷²Ibid., p. 209. Arnold mentions a number of individuals whom he thinks have succeeded, to a considerable extent, in following the teachings of Christ: the author of the Imitation of Christ, Tauler, St. Francis of Sales, and Wilson of Sodor and Man.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 292-93.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 347-48.

Arnold says, will satisfy any man's desire for the edifying and sublime.

In the following quotation Arnold summarizes the intellectual and imaginative appeals which his exegesis should have:

Yes, the grandeur of Christianity and the imposing and impressive attestation of it, if we could but worthily bring the thing out, is here; in that immense experimental proof of the necessity of it, which the whole course of the world has steadily accumulated, and indicates to us as still continuing and extending. Men will not admit assumptions, the popular legend they call a fairy-tale, the metaphysical demonstrations do not demonstrate, nothing but experimental proof will go down; and here is an experimental proof which never fails, and which at the same time is infinitely grander, by the vastness of its scale, the scope of its duration, the gravity of its results, than the machinery of the popular fairy-tale. Walking on the water, multiplying loaves, raising corpses, a heavenly judge appearing with trumpets in the clouds while we are yet alive,—what is this compared to the real experience offered as witness to us by Christianity? It is like the difference between the grandeur of an extravaganza and the grandeur of the sea or the sky,—immense objects which dwarf us, but where we are in contact with reality, and a reality of which we can slowly trace the laws.⁷⁵

For his clerical readers Arnold uses a special set of appeals to induce them to consider seriously and accept his version of the Scriptures.

Earlier in this chapter the writer called attention to Arnold's use of the "lapsed masses" argument as a justification for his having written Literature and Dogma. Arnold's continual reference in strong, positive language to the growing indifference towards religion among larger and larger numbers of people would seem to indicate, however, that he is using the argument for a purpose other than merely self-justification. This purpose is to drive fear into the hearts of his clerical readers. Arnold does not even bother to prove the existence

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 371-73.

of the lapse; he wants the clergyman to feel that it is a fact accepted by all: "This is what everyone sees to constitute the special moral feature of our times, the masses are losing the Bible and its religion."⁷⁶

Not only does Arnold emphasize the growing indifference of the masses to religion, he also points out the active hostility of various modern thinkers to Christianity and the Bible. Among the opponents of Christianity whom he lists or quotes are the atheist Bradlaugh; the scientist Huxley, whose attack on the Old Testament in his 1860 article in defense of Darwin would be remembered by the clergy;⁷⁷ and an assortment of "philosophical liberals," whose derogatory opinions on the Bible are quoted at the beginning of the chapter on miracles. It is these liberals who are becoming the leaders of the masses; and when the

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 511. In his lecture "The Church of England," addressed to the London clergy at Sion College in 1876 (published in Last Essays on Church and Religion), Arnold uses a similar "scare" by pointing out to the clergy the "enemies and dangers" with which the Church of England is not encompassed. The "most formidable force in the array of dangers" is the "ostrangement of the working classes." Without the support of these classes, the Church of England "cannot, in the long run, stand."

⁷⁷Arnold, op. cit., pp. 6-8. In Literature and Dogma Arnold does not use the "modern bugbear of physical science" as an important "scare" element. Besides the reference to Huxley, there are only two or three other brief references to science in the text, e.g. on p. 61 where Arnold notes the "breach" that now exists between "what is called science" and "popular religion." In St. Paul and Protestantism he had used the science scare to a somewhat greater degree: "The scientific sense in man never asserted its claim so strongly; the propensity of religion to neglect those claims, and the peril and loss to it from neglecting them, never were so manifest." "Science" is demanding verification for all religious dogmas and, not getting it, is tending to treat such doctrines as the Atonement "as of no real consequence"; no one doubts "that such is the behaviour of science towards religion in our day, though many may deplore it."

liberals call Christianity "old-fashioned and superfluous," the masses "applaud them to the echo."⁷⁸

In these ways Arnold tries to convey to his clerical readers his own sense of the seriousness of the present religious crisis and of the immediate necessity of doing something to prevent a total collapse of Christianity within a short time.

The ordinary modern clergyman, Arnold feels, does not appreciate the transformation which the rationalistic spirit has wrought in the attitudes of his congregation towards some of the most cherished beliefs of Christianity. He is still preaching the traditional Aberglaube, not realizing that "as far as the people are concerned, the old traditional scheme of the Bible is gone."⁷⁹ He is still proving the existence of God by metaphysics or by miracles and the fulfillment of prophecy; he is still preaching the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. He does not realize how easily and decisively rationalism has attacked these elements of traditional Christianity, making it impossible for large portions of his congregation to believe them any longer.⁸⁰ If Arnold can make the clergyman conscious of this new

⁷⁸Arnold, op. cit., pp. 511-512.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 507-508. At one point in the text Arnold tries to make it appear that only a particular class of "devout women" can still take traditional Christianity seriously. But these women are low in intelligence and ridiculous in their actions. Arnold describes their behavior, so lacking in "tact, measure, and correct perception," at a Communion service in a Ritualistic Church: ". . . the floor of the church strewn with what seem to be the dying and the dead, progress to the altar almost barred by forms suddenly dropping as if they were shot in battle. . . ."

atmosphere, he will have made him see that some radical change in the interpretation of Christianity is necessary, and will have prepared him to take seriously his own recommendations.

The traditional metaphysical proofs for the existence of God Arnold brushes aside. Metaphysicists, Arnold says, prove the existence of God by using arguments based on reasoning from "ideas of substance, identity, causation, design and so on"; Arnold warns the clergy that there are now a "great many" people "who fail to perceive the force of such a deduction from the abstract ideas above mentioned, who indeed think it quite hollow, but who are told that this sense is in the Bible, and that they must receive it if they receive the Bible," and who therefore conclude "that in that case they had better receive neither the one nor the other."⁸¹ Metaphysical proofs are inconclusive with most people not only because most people do not have talents for "abstruse reasoning" but also because of an inherent difficulty in the science itself. The deductions of metaphysicians must fail because there is no agreement among them as to the precise meaning of the "ideas, or terms" with which they begin. With this simple insight Arnold attempts to sweep into the scrap heap as sophistry and illusion the metaphysical treatises of two thousand years. In the rest of Literature and Dogma he snipes at the "perilous business" of metaphysics from several other points of view. He points out the great differences among various metaphysical systems, the difficulties which doctors of metaphysics have in being consistent within their own systems, and the

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 13-14.

repugnance which common sense has to the conclusions of metaphysics.

The sanction which the Bible once received from prophecy and miracle is also losing its holding power. Citing the results of modern Biblical criticism, Arnold asks the clergy, "what, then, will they (the masses) say as they come to know" that many of the supposed prophecies are actually mistranslations of the original Jewish text; and "will not people be startled" when they come to realize (what the best intellects know already) that much of what has been taken to be prophecy is not prediction at all, that many of the supposed prophecies can be explained by Christ's acting out some of the statements in the Old Testament in order to dramatize his message and spiritualize the prophecies, and that the prophecies in the Bible which were intended to be literal predictions never were fulfilled. Arnold points the moral to the clergy-men: "And then, what will be their case, who have been so long and sedulously taught to rely on supernatural predictions as a mainstay?"⁸²

Miracles are "touched by Ithuriel's spear"; the objections to miracles "do, and more and more will, without insistence, without attack, without controversy, make their own force felt; and . . . the sanction of Christianity, if Christianity is not to be lost along with its miracles, must be found elsewhere."⁸³ He refuses to go into a long argument against miracles:

For it is what we call the Time-Spirit that is sapping the proof from miracles,--it is the "Zeit-Geist" itself. Whether we attack them, or whether we defend them, does not much matter; the human

⁸²Ibid., pp. 111-15.

⁸³Ibid., p. 148.

mind, as its experience widens, is turning away from them. And for this reason: it sees, as its experience widens, how they arise. It sees that, under certain circumstances, they always do arise; and that they have not more solidity in one case than another.⁸⁴

He describes the psychological atmosphere of the Biblical ages to show how naturally miracles would be attributed to a magnetic figure like Christ. He also compares Biblical times to the early history of other races to show that a belief in miracles is characteristic of all races in the early stages of their development.

Finally, he points out to the clergy, most of whom are still preaching the Bible as the literally inspired Word of God, how easy it is to prove that Biblical writers erred both in fact and in argument. Adopting Colenso's method, he indicates discrepancies among the New Testament writers by showing their misquotation and misuse of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and he gives a few examples of their fallacious reasoning. He warns the clergy that this "recognition of the liability of the New Testament writers to make mistakes, both of fact and of argument, will certainly . . . more and more gain strength, and spread wider and wider,"⁸⁵ with the result that the Bible will be thrown aside by increasing numbers of people. Arnold recommends that the clergy abandon the theory of verbal inspiration and work, as Arnold does, to extricate the true thought of Jesus from the incomplete and misleading reports of the Evangelists.

Such is the manner in which Arnold shows the clergyman how the

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 129.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 142.

influence of the modern Zeitgeist is emptying his church and creating a growing hostility to the Christian religion. The Bible, he says, "is attacked on all sides"; the defense which the theologians are making is palpably unsuccessful; hence "some new treatment or other the religion of the Bible certainly seems to require."⁸⁶

In the chapter "Our Masses and the Bible" Arnold recommends to the clergyman his own exegesis as the only one which will successfully get people back to church. He carefully describes the "masses" as "rude and hard reasoners," whose innate practical sense is now being reinforced by the spread of the scientific Zeitgeist. These rude and hard reasoners will accept only what can be verified, and traditional Christianity is filled with unverifiable doctrines. The excellence of Arnold's Christianity is that it is verifiable and so should be acceptable to the masses:

And now, then, let us go to the masses with what Israel really did say, instead of what our popular and our learned religion may choose to make him say. Let us announce, not: "There rules a great Personal First Cause, who thinks and loves, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe, and therefore study your Bible and learn to obey this!" No; but let us announce: "There rules an enduring Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness, and therefore study your Bible and learn to obey this." For if we announce the other instead, and they reply: "First let us verify that there rules a great Personal First Cause, who thinks and loves, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe."--what are we to answer? We cannot answer.

But if, on the other hand, they ask: "How are we to verify that there rules an enduring Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness?"--we may answer at once: It is so; try it; you can try it; every case of conduct, and of the life of all mankind, will prove it to you. Disbelieve it, and you will find out your mistake,

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 116.

as sure as, if you disbelieve that fire burns and put your hand into the fire, you will find out your mistake. Believe it, and you will find the benefit of it."⁸⁷

Two of the faults which most critics found in Literature and Dogma were unnecessary personal abuse of certain theologians and irreverent language directed at a faith which was still a matter of life and death to many people. Arnold comments on these attacks in a letter to his sister written about a year after the book was first published:

I write in the manner which is natural to me; the manner has, no doubt, its weak points. But ponderous works produce no effect; the religious world which complains of me would not read me if I treated my subject as they say it ought to be treated, and I want them, indeed, to read me as little as they please, but I do not mean them to prescribe a mode of treatment of my subject to me which would lead to my being wholly ineffective both with them and with every one else.⁸⁸

This letter suggests that Arnold had planned rather carefully a "mode of treatment" for Literature and Dogma, and presumably he felt that the element of ridicule would add to the book's effectiveness. So the question is how would Arnold have justified his use of ridicule as part of his persuasive strategy.

In an essay on Sainte-Beuve, Arnold, speaking of Sainte-Beuve's style, was also perhaps thinking of his own:

His curiosity was unbounded, and he was born a naturalist, carrying into letters, so often the mere domain of rhetoric and futile amusement, the ideas and methods of scientific natural inquiry. And this he did while keeping in perfection the ease of movement and charm of touch which belongs to letters properly so called, and which give them their unique power of universal penetration and of

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 332-34.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 138.

propagandism.⁸⁹

The secret of Christ's successful propagandism was also "charm"--his "mild, uncontentious, winning, inward mode of working (He shall not strive nor cry!) which was his true characteristic, and in which his charm and power lay."⁹⁰

Though the method of "charm" does not exclude banter, it can not be reconciled with anything so utterly negative as invective.⁹¹ Numerous passages might be quoted from Arnold's letters and published works in which he deprecates the use of heavy ridicule as a persuasive device. Perhaps the most revealing of these passages is his comment on his work A French Lion (1864), which he had written with a conscious effort to "persuade:"

I really want to persuade on this subject, and I have felt how necessary it was to keep down many sharp and telling things that rise to one's lips, and which one would gladly utter if one's object was to show one's own abilities. . . . I think such an effort a moral discipline of the very best sort for one.⁹²

⁸⁹Arnold, Essays in Criticism, p. 143.

⁹⁰Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. xvii.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 6. In a number of letters Arnold comments on the effectiveness of his banter and irony. For example, in a letter of 1867 he cites the evidence of his growing popularity and influence and states: "It shows what comes, in the end, of quietly holding your own way, and bantering the world on the irrationality of its ways without losing temper with it." And two years later, commenting on Culture and Anarchy: "However, much I may be attacked, my manner of writing is certainly one that takes hold of people and proves effective. I hear on all sides of the Preface being read, and making an impression."

⁹²Ibid., p. 255. Other passages: "Partly nature, partly time and study have also by this time taught me thoroughly the precious truth that everything turns upon one's exercising the power of persuasion, of charm; that without this all fury, energy, reasoning power, and

In spite of his conclusions about the most effective method of "propagandism" and in spite of his previous experience in having hurt other people's feelings,⁹³ Arnold in Literature and Dogma chose fiercely to attack the dogmatists and use language about popular Christianity which he knew would shock the religious sensibilities of some of the readers of his book. Clearly he had been goaded into the attack by his impatience with the conservatism of the clergy. Is his use of ridicule, then, to be explained as personal animosity, as a failure in "moral discipline," as an attempt to show his abilities, or could he have justified the ridicule on other grounds?

Arnold's attack on the dogmatists and popular theology might be illuminated by his comments in the preface to Literature and Dogma on the proper use of invective. Invective, Arnold says, cannot be

acquisition, are thrown away and only render their owner more miserable. Even in one's ridicule one must preserve a sweetness and good-humour." Ibid., p. 234; this letter is dated October 23, 1868. "Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must all be, all of us who have any power of working; what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents of it." Essays in Criticism, p. 155. Writing to his mother in 1868: "You will laugh, but fiery hatred and malice are what I detest, and would always allay or avoid, if I could." The phrase "you will laugh" may be significant in that perhaps his own family did not believe in the complete conformity of Arnold to this ideal. Letters of Matthew Arnold, I, 452. "So, too, Jacobinism, in its fierce hatred of the past and of those whom it makes liable for the sins of the past, cannot do away with culture,--culture with its inexhaustible indulgence, its consideration of circumstances, its severe judgment of actions joined to its merciful judgment of persons." Culture and Anarchy, p. 46.

⁹³In his Last Words on Translating Homer (1862) Arnold had to apologize to F. W. Newman for the "rivalries" with which he had satirized Newman's translation of Homer. In the preface to the 1865 edition of Essays in Criticism he had to apologize to I. C. Wright, another translator of Homer whose feelings had also been wounded by the 1861 Homer Lectures.

defended except when employed "against individuals who are past hope, or against institutions which are palpably monstrosities."⁹⁴ Christ, himself, occasionally abandoned his typical "mild, uncontentious, winning, inward mode of working" and used invective. So did St. Paul. Now, invective can not convert. Therefore, neither Christ nor St. Paul hoped to convert those against whom they used the invective; rather, their purpose was to make "a strong impression on the faithful."⁹⁵

Now the "faithful" for whom Arnold wrote Literature and Dogma were the clergy and the religious people in England whose faith had been disturbed by the rationalistic spirit. What, then, was the "strong impression" which Arnold, by his use of ridicule, hoped to make on each?

In the introduction to God and the Bible Arnold tells the reader that he does not regret a bit his personal abuse of various clergymen in Literature and Dogma. He justifies his attack on Bishop Wilberforce (the Bishop is now dead) by saying that the Bishop had used his talents and power of mind in an attempt to confirm his contemporaries in an "illusion":

A man of Bishop Wilberforce's power of mind must know, if he is sincere with himself, that when he talks of "doing something for the honour of Our Lord's Godhead," or of "that infinite separation for time and for eternity which is involved in rejecting the Godhead of the Eternal Son,"--he must know that by this singular sort of mixture of unction and metaphysics he is solemnly giving a semblance of conceivability, fixity, and certainty to notions which do not possibly admit of them. He must know this, and yet he gives it, because it suits his purpose, or because the public, or a

⁹⁴Arnold, Literature and Dogma, p. xviii.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. xviii.

large body of the public, desire it; and this is claptrap.⁹⁶ And so Arnold is not sorry if "by ridicule or by blame we have done anything to discredit a line such as that which he adopted."⁹⁷ Bishop Wilberforce posed as a "guide," and yet he lacked either insight or sincerity. Such a man should, then, be discredited as a guide "for the religious crisis upon which we are now entering."⁹⁸

By his own profession Arnold could not have hoped by the use of invective to have converted Bishop Wilberforce or any of the other clergy whom he had attacked.⁹⁹ But the clergy whom Arnold hoped to influence in Literature and Dogma were probably the humbler parish priests. His attacks are chiefly against "dogmatists," "theologians," and "bishops." It is these high-ranking and powerful clergymen who are holding up the transformation of religion. They, perhaps, are unconvertible; but if Arnold could discredit these influential leaders, the rank-and-file priests might turn to Literature and Dogma as the right guide for the present religious crisis.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Arnold, God and the Bible, p. 23.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 24.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Presumably Arnold does not use invective against the scientists in "Literature and Science" because he feels that they are open to conversion.

¹⁰⁰Arnold, op. cit., p. 147. After Arnold had given his address on February 22, 1876 to the London clergy at Sion College on "The Church of England," he reported gleefully to his sister: ". . . the comic thing was that clergyman after clergyman got up and turned upon (Bishop) Claughton (who is a weak man), who had thought he must caution people against something in my address, and, as I had insisted on the kingdom of God upon earth having been the original gospel, and pointed out how

The "faithful" for whom Arnold wrote Literature and Dogma also included the lover of Christianity who is at present disturbed by the rationalistic attack on his religion. What was the "strong impression" which Arnold by his ridicule of historical Christianity hoped to make on him? In a letter to his sister, who had complained of his "treating with lightness what is matter of life and death to so many people," Arnold suggests the persuasive strategy of this ridicule:

There is a levity which is altogether evil; but to treat miracles and the common anthropomorphic ideas of God as what one may lose and yet keep one's hope, courage, and joy, as what are not really matters of life and death in the keeping or losing of them, this is desirable and necessary, if one holds, as I do, that the common anthropomorphic ideas of God and the reliance on miracles must and will inevitably pass away. . . . When I see the conviction of the ablest and most serious men round me that a great change must come, a great plunge must be taken, I think it well, I must say, instead of simply dilating, as both the religious and the anti-religious world are fond of doing, on the plunge's utterness, tremendousness, and awfulness, to show mankind that it need not be in terror and despair, that everything essential to its progress stands firm and unchanged.¹⁰¹

Thus, Arnold saw around him many men who were feeling despondent and lost as they realized that their faith was slipping away. They were listening to the melancholy, long, withdrawing roar of the sea of faith, and felt like children crying in the night. To such men Arnold, in Literature and Dogma, presented himself as an example of a person who has lost his faith in traditional Christianity, who can lightly call it

no church could be in harmony with the popular classes and their ideal without reverting to this original gospel, thought he would caution them against this, and said it behoved them to remember that the real kingdom of God was not what I had said it was. Clergyman on clergyman, I say, turned upon Claughton and said they agreed with me far more than they did with him."

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 156-59.

a "legend" and a "fairy tale," but who still can keep his joy and buoyancy because he recognizes the "truth" and "grandeur" of the genuine teaching of the Bible.

The "legend" of his "legendary" life... which since the last...
...of his life... It was... and early... as a...
...to follow in a life which... of any other...
...a moral... to... because...
...by "lighting up" morality, helps... to be...
...the great provider of...
...to righteousness, and...
...of... for...
...of... and of...
...led him to express... for...
...of... teaching of...
...in 1885, the publication of...
...of... which...
...of... religion...

In the years that... convinced that... had...

Many articles have... and history...
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CHAPTER V

THE NECESSITY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"The necessity of righteousness"--these words, which close the last chapter of Literature and Dogma, echo the theme on which Arnold preached all his life.¹ In his poems and early essays he spoke of morality as a "clue" for man to follow in a life which lacks guidance of any other kind. But he also found that a moral stoicism is unsatisfactory because it lacks the emotion which, by "lighting up" morality, helps men to be virtuous. Historically, religion had been the great provider of emotional and imaginative "aids" to righteousness, and had thus enabled the mass of mankind to be "carried along a course full of hardships for the natural man."² Arnold's sense of the importance of conduct and of its intimate connection with religion led him to express tolerance for all forms of religion, to recommend the teaching of dogmatic religion in the schools, and even to condemn, in 1865, the publications of certain religious liberals in the Church of England whose negative criticism of traditional doctrines might loosen the hold which religion had on the masses.

As the years went on, Arnold became convinced that skepticism had

¹Many critics have commented on Arnold's intense and lifelong concern with morality. See, for example, the fifth chapter, "Conduct," of G. W. E. Russell's Matthew Arnold (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), pp. 172-209.

²Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism (London: Macmillan and Co., 1865), p. 271.

spread to such an extent that new proofs for Christianity had to be found if Christianity was not soon to be completely rejected as an "exploded superstition." His problem in Literature and Dogma was to bring the nineteenth-century doubter back to the Bible and Christianity. To do this, he performed what he felt was, as Trilling says, "a life-saving surgery upon religion."⁵ The doubter had rejected the Bible because he was no longer able to believe in miracles or in dogmas such as Original Sin, the Incarnation, and the Atonement, which, according to traditional exegesis, are part of the essential meaning of the Bible. Arnold tried to show the doubter that these dogmas are the result of a misreading of the Scriptures and that the essential message of the Bible is something very different--is something of incalculable importance. The Bible teaches a morality which, in its adequacy and in its inspirational statement is unique in literature. Literature and Dogma is, then, a new exegesis and evaluation of the teachings of the Bible by a "cultured" literary critic.

Arnold asked the doubter to accept the Bible as the record of the development, in a race uniquely gifted, of the idea of righteousness. This record is mixed with accounts of miracles and legends, which, however, the modern reader can easily account for and quietly ignore. But the Bible, from beginning to end, also speaks of God and his influence in human affairs. Arnold assured the doubter, who was perhaps an atheist or at least an agnostic, that to the Jews and to Christ the word

⁵ Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1939), p. 320.

"God" was a poetic term--a personification of their consciousness of a power external to themselves which helped them to lead the righteous life--and that when they spoke literally about God they said that they knew nothing about Him except that He is the Eternal Power that makes for righteousness.

Though Arnold frankly admitted that the Bible is discredited as a supernatural document, he argued that the moral truths "revealed" in it have an "eternal necessity" for mankind. The chief proof which he offered for this evaluation of the teachings of the Bible was the test of experience, individual and historical. Experience will teach a man that moral conduct is one of the chief sources of happiness and that the laws of morality are most adequately revealed in the ethics of Christ. It will also teach him that as he progresses in his moral development he will recognize a strengthening influence coming to him from outside himself. And if he studies history, he will see that others, particularly the Jews, had discovered this influence and that, therefore, the power which makes for righteousness is eternal.

Under the pressure of criticism provoked by his startling exegesis, Arnold in God and the Bible admitted that the Jews did not "consciously" personify a power the effects of which they felt on their moral lives, but in fact did worship an anthropomorphic deity.⁴ He admitted that the account which the Jews have given in the Bible of the development of their love of righteousness is "fanciful and legendary" and need not

⁴Arnold Whitridge, Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), p. 307. In his private notes, though never in public, Arnold also admitted that Christ himself believed in a personal God.

concern the philosophic student of their history. The important thing is the witness which their intense love of righteousness gives to the action upon them of the power which makes for righteousness. Their literature, then, contains a unique "revelation" of this God and the complete expression of the law of this God in the "method" and "secret" of Jesus.

With respect to his exegesis, Arnold's new position in God and the Bible seems to be this. Regardless of what the Jews themselves may have believed about God, the modern reader of the Bible can "transform" their powerful language about God and use it, not literally, but as a poetic expression of man's desire to reach a reality higher than himself. In St. Paul and Protestantism Arnold had shown that St. Paul had transformed his literal belief in Christ's physical resurrection into a symbol of a profound moral truth, the necessity of dying to the lower self and living in the higher self; and in two later essays, "A Psychological Parallel" and "A Comment on Christmas," Arnold explained and defended more fully this process of symbolic transformation of traditional religious beliefs.

In attacking Arnold's evaluation of the teachings of the Bible, none of Arnold's critics denied that righteous conduct is important, but a few objected to Arnold's making it three-fourths of life. Appleton, for example, suggested that Arnold in his earlier works had indicated the proper relationship which should exist between conduct and the other activities of life, and that in Literature and Dogma he had been led to exaggerate the importance of conduct because the "irreligious Philistine," whom he was addressing in that book, tended to undervalue

conduct.⁵

Though no critic denied the importance of righteousness, some denied that there is any necessary connection between righteous conduct and happiness. Critics like Bradley, Appleton, and Newman denied outright Arnold's eudaemonism: that the virtuous man will always be a happy man can not be proved either by personal experience or by history. The orthodox critics argued that the moral law, whether it leads to happiness or not, is to be followed because it is the commandment of God. In spite of this criticism, Arnold never gave up the proposition that righteous conduct leads to happiness.

Liberal critics disagreed violently with Arnold's evaluation of the Bible as a moral teacher. The Old Testament, they said, is a history, disfigured by gross superstition and immorality, of a backward race of nomad people; and though many of Christ's moral precepts are sound, his ethical doctrine is incomplete and sanctioned by threats of eternal punishment and rewards in a future life. But here, too, Arnold gave no ground to his critics. To the end, he argued that Christ, as a moral teacher, is an "absolute" and that his rule of self-renouncement is the foundation of all ethics.

Most critics found Arnold's description of God as the "Eternal Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness" very unsatisfactory.

⁵Matthew Arnold, Last Essays on Church and Religion (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1877), p. xvi. In the preface to Last Essays Arnold says that a French critic has objected to his making conduct three-fourths of life, and so he modifies his position: "We will not, then, there being all this opposition, offer to settle the exact proportion of life which conduct may be said to be. But that conduct is, at any rate, a very considerable part of life, will generally be admitted."

Orthodox critics argued that there are sufficient proofs to convince any reasonable man that this "Eternal Power" must be thought of as personal, and that without a belief in a personal God life would lose all its meaning and morality its most adequate sanction. In God and the Bible Arnold replied to these critics by examining the various proofs for the existence of a personal God and concluding that there is not even a low degree of probability that God is a person; and he repeated his conviction that man's vivid perception of an "eternal power which makes for righteousness" will create a religion more grand and awe-inspiring, and more imaginatively appealing, than the traditional Christian faith.

Other critics attacked the proofs which Arnold had used to establish the existence of the "Eternal Power." Arnold had offered man's ethical experience as the data from which he drew his inference. But, his critics argued, man, by introspection, is conscious only of certain psychological states; that these states have any cause outside of the personality itself is an unverifiable "hypothesis," a conclusion not of "science" but of "faith." Furthermore, Arnold was accused of having confused two realms of being. In his method of arriving at truth, he had explicitly committed himself to empiricism, and yet he spoke of an "eternal" power and of Christ's moral system as an "absolute." To some of his critics, like Knight, Bradley, and Appleton, his use of the term "eternal" was either philosophic confusion or "literary varnish."

To what extent Arnold was philosophically confused or to what extent he was merely using rhetorical emphasis is hard to determine. The world-view which he presented in his poetry was not consistent;

sometimes he spoke in the language of scientific naturalism and sometimes he spoke as if he believed the values inherent in the universe. Trilling makes the following comment on the philosophic positions which Arnold took in his poetry:

. . . Arnold never set great store by philosophic consistency in his poetry; conflicting views of Nature appear in each of the two early volumes and seem to have held simultaneously. The stringent materialistic naturalism of "Empedocles" does, indeed, diminish as Arnold gets older, but it never disappears: it is the inevitable result of his allegiance, tempered though it was, to contemporary science. On the other hand, the Platonic--or "realist"--position of "The Youth of Man" seems to have grown: Arnold's theory of the State, his theory of religion, demanded and expressed it. He did not struggle between the two views and in a sense they did not produce any fundamental contradiction, as they would have had he attempted a systematic philosophy. He allowed them to exist side by side; each was used to mitigate what Arnold thought were the excesses of the other in modern life. The scientific materialistic view he employed to combat theology; with his "realist" position he checked what he believed was the intellectual anarchy of the democratic dispensation; he wished to establish a Truth, a Goodness, a Beauty beyond the uncertain realm which is voted into existence by the counting of opinionated heads.⁶

Trilling here emphasizes the rhetorical uses to which Arnold put the two world-views and suggest that perhaps Arnold never achieved philosophic consistency in his thinking.

In St. Paul and Protestantism and Literature and Dogma, Arnold argued that the universe emanates moral influences which reveal to man an absolute moral law, provide him with energy to follow this law, and reward him with happiness for following it. After the criticisms of Knight, Bradley, and Appleton, Arnold, in both his religious and political writings, substituted for the "Eternal Power" the term "Nature" as the force which makes for righteousness and for social solidarity.

⁶Trilling, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

Was Arnold admitting that his "Eternal Power" had been only a rhetorical device, or was he abandoning the conception to save himself from the charge of philosophic confusion? Stray references to the "not ourselves" and the "Eternal" still occur in Arnold's works after God and the Bible.⁷ Furthermore, he still spoke of Christ as an "absolute," and, adapting a phrase of Coleridge, still spoke of the "necessary and eternal facts of nature or truths of reason." To his philosophic critics his continued insistence that "the eternal truths of nature and reason" are derived from man's necessarily tentative and limited experience would still have convicted him of philosophic confusion. Thus, he continued to use his "realist" position in his later works; though his "faith" in the "Eternal Power" must have been with him to the end, after God and the Bible he no longer made the establishment of its existence a part of his program for saving Christianity.

It is suggested that Arnold's shift in terminology from "Eternal Power" to "Nature" was perhaps the result of an attempt to reduce the issues between himself and his critics.⁸ His root-doctrine--that righteousness leads to happiness--had been severely attacked. In the face of this attack, to continue to argue about the existence of the "Eternal Power" would be to debate a side-issue. The essential thing now was to convince the doubter of the "natural truth" of Christian morals. To avoid further controversy on the existence of the "Eternal Power" and perhaps also to avoid the charge of being a mere rhetorician,

⁷Arnold, op. cit., p. 308.

⁸Ibid., p. 511.

Arnold substituted for the "Eternal Power" the term "Nature," which at this time even the most orthodox of scientists could use a conscious personification without being charged with philosophic confusion or the use of "literary varnish." He then concentrated on proving that charity and chastity, the two cardinal virtues of Christianity, make for happiness. To convince his reader, he quoted moralists of different ages and nations; he pointed out the lesson to be learned from the history of civilizations which disintegrated because they had undervalued righteousness; and he earnestly asked the reader to make the experiment for himself.

Since Arnold's death, his religious writings have been subject to occasional re-evaluation. Though they have not become mere literary curiosities, it can hardly be said that the response to them by the more prominent literary critics has been much warmer than it was during his life-time. In general, the weaknesses which later critics have found in Arnold's religious writings are much the same as those which were cited by his contemporary critics.

T. S. Eliot says that Arnold's religious writings are "tediously negative" and "can hardly be read through."⁹ He finds Arnold confused, giving only an "illusion of precision and clarity."¹⁰ In his religious works Arnold "had made an excursion into a field for which he was not

⁹T. S. Eliot, "Arnold and Pater," Selected Essays, 1917-1932 (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), pp. 392, 380.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 381.

armed."¹¹ In Eliot's opinion, Bradley's criticism of Arnold was "final"; Bradley "knocked the bottom out of Literature and Dogma."¹² In short, Arnold "in philosophy and theology . . . was an undergraduate; in religion a Philistine."¹³ And Eliot interprets Arnold's position as a recommendation to get the "emotional kick" out of Christianity without believing in it, a kind of thinking which led to the aestheticism of Pater.¹⁴

Garrod continues the attacks of Arnold's contemporary critics on his exegesis and evaluation of the teachings of the Bible.¹⁵ He feels that Arnold, lacking an historical sense, did not successfully interpret the teachings of Jesus Christ; rather, he made the vague figure of Christ into his own image. Nor is Arnold's evaluation of Christian ethics sound. He "proves" the natural truth of Christian morals by a careful selection of sagas to quote on his side. But Christian ethics are not "indispensable," as Arnold thought, and are probably in large measure inadequate, since civilization seems to have developed further and further away from them.

Trilling, like Eliot, accepts Bradley's criticism as indicating the weak spot in Arnold's system, his philosophic confusion. Arnold begins

¹¹Francis Herbert Bradley, "Ibid., p. 398.

¹²Ibid., pp. 399, 398.

¹³T. S. Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 97.

¹⁴Eliot, op. cit., p. 362.

¹⁵Heathcote W. Garrod, "The Theology of Matthew Arnold," Littell's Living Age, CCLXIV (February 5, 1910), 349-58.

with experience, postulates what in terms of experience can only be a pragmatic hypothesis, and then, "tempted perhaps by the exigencies of polemic," asserts "that the moral law is . . . gravon on the face of the universe, that meaning is pre-existent to man."¹⁶ If Arnold allows himself no more than experience, Trilling does not see that the "Power," with all the predicates which Arnold gives to it, can be verified either in private experience or in history.¹⁷ Hence, Arnold's postulating the "objective existence of the generator of the sense of influence is Arnold's own Aberglaube of morality."¹⁸ Even if Arnold could get his readers to accept his "faith" in the "Eternal Power," Trilling feels that Arnold's religion is too "thin" to serve as a substitute for the vital beliefs which it is to replace.¹⁹ Trilling is especially critical of Arnold's translation of traditional dogma into symbols of other beliefs. Religious dogmas were beliefs about a fundamental reality; as such, they had vitality and directing power; to turn them into mere "poetic experience" is to deprive them of most of their force.²⁰

Arnold's religious thought, taken as a whole, has, then, clearly not impressed very many of either his contemporary or modern critics. A study of Arnold which would place him in an historical pattern of ideas may show his real influence.

¹⁶Trilling, op. cit., p. 322.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 348, 358.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 348.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 320-21.

²⁰Ibid., p. 365.

T. S. Eliot has said that Arnold, through his influence on Charles Eliot Norton, probably fathered the American Humanist movement.²¹ Trilling has pointed out the similarity between Arnold's psychological dualism and that of Babbitt and More,²² and Eliot has noted the similarity between the "inner check" of Babbitt and the "best self" of Arnold.²³ Louis Bonnerot discusses other similarities between Arnold and the Humanists and says that a study of the coincidences between the doctrine of Arnold and that of the Humanists is badly needed.²⁴

Besides his influence on the Humanists, Arnold has probably influenced the religious movement known as Modernism. Basil Willey says that Arnold has been called the "founder of English Modernism,"²⁵ and himself pleads for a serious restudy of Arnold's religious writings by the liberal Christian. George Tyrrell, the well-known Catholic Modernist, seems to have been influenced by Arnold's Literature and Dogma; his thought shows many correspondences with that of Arnold, and he mentions Arnold many times in his works.²⁶ In 1942, in the liberal Christian Hibbert Journal, appeared a plea, addressed to liberal

²¹Eliot, op. cit., p. 382.

²²Trilling, op. cit., p. 543.

²³Eliot, op. cit., p. 400.

²⁴Louis Bonnerot, Matthew Arnold, Poete (Paris: Marcel Didier, 1947), pp. 515-16.

²⁵Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 266.

²⁶Alec R. Vidler, The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church (Cambridge: The University Press, 1934), p. 159.

clergymen, to return to Arnold's religious works as a source of suggestions for the reconstruction of religion which would appeal to the "modern" mind.²⁷

Much of Arnold's religious criticism was conditioned by current religious controversy. His Biblical exegesis, as a whole, can not be defended; nor is it likely that his recommendation for the retention of the Aberglaube of the traditional religion as a poetic symbolism for a new faith will be accepted. A study of Arnold which would consider him as anticipatory of certain twentieth century developments, such as Humanism and Modernism, might show his real significance.

²⁷H. S. Shelton, "Matthew Arnold and the Modern Church: a Possible Key to a Difficult Problem," Hibbert Journal, XLIV (January, 1946), 119-24.

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