



# I

## THOMAS ARNOLD *HISTORY AS PRACTICAL EVANGEL*

Thomas Arnold served many nineteenth-century historians as he did former students: he was an abiding presence, a stern guide, a demanding example. In various ways he furnished a prototype for the historiographic traditions that followed. Keenly aware of the increased importance of both scholarship and artistry to historical writing, he set out to emulate Niebuhr in his critical evaluation of source materials as well as in his imaginative resuscitation of the past. He suffused both processes with a moral earnestness characteristically Victorian and thereby turned historical writing into a didactic tool vitally important for his time. Of even greater significance for the characteristic intellectual dilemmas of the period was his concern to reconcile the truths of reason with the truths of belief. His developmental model of historical change accommodated the relative and the absolute, the constantly evolving with the permanently fixed, and thus provided his contemporaries with a means of diffusing the destructive potential of scientific thought for the bases of belief. Suitably defined, scientific understanding became an aid, not an obstacle, to Christian duty, and the "natural" sanctioned the political and moral change Arnold desired for his own society. Arnold's historian could challenge Utilitarians with an analysis of progress that was "philosophical" without being materialist or mechanical. If the

firmness of Arnold's faith in these reconciliations throws him into poignant relief against the sceptical generation that followed, his conviction that Christian ethics could be a practical force in shaping society retained its inspiration even when cut loose from dogmatic orthodoxy. This conviction informs his conception of history as well as makes his work especially important to interpreting the forms and purposes of Victorian historical writing.

Arnold's intellectual development was shaped by his willingness to wrestle with the "multitudinousness" that threatened to overwhelm his son. Thomas Arnold's greater confidence in the ultimate harmony of the created world gave him the energy for his struggle, but it made the task of integrating the moral, the intellectual, and the emotional no less demanding of active effort. His characteristic combination of Christian earnestness and scholarly rigor first emerged when his studies for ordination led him to "distressing doubts" about the "proof and interpretation of the textual authority" supporting several of the Thirty-Nine Articles.<sup>1</sup> He undoubtedly took John Keble's advice to "pray earnestly for help and light from above and turn himself more strongly than ever to the practical duties of a holy life" (LC, 16), but his reservations remained, and he took Priest's Orders in 1828 only upon being allowed to explain his objections to the presiding Bishop. In Arnold's discomfort over Subscription, we first hear the undertone of a continuing anxiety that historical criticism might threaten belief. He faced the challenge of the Higher Criticism most directly in his sermons on scriptural interpretation, but we should also consider his histories as further attempts to confront and to reconcile conflicts between doctrinal truth and historical understanding.

The work of Arnold's middle years was diverse but motivated by consistent intellectual concerns. He produced his first work on Roman history, a series of articles collected as the *History of the Later Roman Commonwealth*, in the mid-twenties. During the same period, he also taught himself German in order to read Niebuhr and other Germans and began ten years work on his edition of Thucydides. We can find early evidence of his theory of historical development at Rugby, where he adjusted his treatment of different forms to their relative levels of intellectual and moral maturity. The famous educator actually gained more notoriety as a controversialist in the late twenties and early thirties. Arnold's reaction to the widespread social distress of these years characteristically fused moral and intel-

lectual impulses. He considered it part of a Christian's duty to promote the welfare of the poor, but advocated systematic research into all pertinent aspects of lower class existence as the most effective means of alleviating their suffering.<sup>2</sup> Believing that physical well-being had to build on a moral foundation, he freely mixed religious homilies with economic and political critiques in his short-lived *Englishman's Register*, aimed at effecting "*Christian Reform*." A similar mixture of motives informed his skirmishes with the Tractarians. He found their increased emphasis on sacraments and clergy decidedly at odds with his desire for comprehension of dissenters and the merger of church and state, and he attacked their rejection of progress as "unhistorical." By choosing to live in the past, Oxford effectively abdicated moral and intellectual leadership, leaving the people it should guide to their own presentist and utilitarian biases. Typically, Arnold found it hard to distinguish between "*intellectual error*" and "*moral wickedness*" in the Tractarian position, and the intemperate tone of articles like his "The Oxford Malignants" played a significant role in depriving him of two prospective bishoprics in the thirties.<sup>3</sup>

Arnold's complex conception of intellectual responsibility quite naturally informed his historical writings. He began his *History of Rome* at Rugby and published the first volume in 1838. The second followed in 1841, and the third, nearly complete at his death, was hardly needed to cement his reputation as a historian. That had been recognized in 1841, when he was appointed to the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Oxford. His *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* proclaimed a new breadth and relevance for historical study and, by implication, a new stature for the historian—a stature confirmed by crowds unprecedented in the history of the Chair. A. P. Stanley's agenda for future lectures suggests that Arnold would have continued to use his position to integrate his historical, religious, and social concerns: to act on his

long cherished intention of bringing the "Politics" of his favorite Aristotle to bear on the problems of modern times and countries,—his anxiety to call public attention to the social evils of the lower classes in England, which he would have tried to analyze and expose in the process of their formation and growth,—his interest in tracing the general laws of social and political science, and . . . his longing desire . . . of unfolding all the various elements, physical and intellectual, social and national, by which the moral character of the Christian world has been affected. (LC, 590-91)

In his eminently practical way, Arnold would have made the lectures into his own "Tracts for the Times," had he not died suddenly in June of 1842.

We can appreciate the centrality and peculiar intensity of historical study for Arnold only after grasping the extent to which a scientific and a moral understanding of the world were to him equivalent. "The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and for the mere indulgence of our intellectual appetite," he considered no more worthy than "an excessive desire for food for its own sake, for the gratification of our bodily appetite" (MW, 148). But ultimately he viewed "all science, whether natural or moral, as a matter of duty rather than of simple knowledge" (MW, 411). Like other members of what Susan F. Cannon has called the "Cambridge Network" of scientists and Broad Churchmen,<sup>4</sup> Arnold refused to confine the pursuit of knowledge within narrow theological bounds, for he was convinced that the search for truth in whatever field could not threaten the fundamental bases of faith and, when rightly valued, could indeed be a positive support to them. Neither the substance nor the methods of scientific investigation were subversive of Arnold's goals. Using the term *science* in the sense of *Wissenschaft*, Arnold could conceive of only one possible sphere of "Truth" and thus could see no reason why the truths of natural and moral knowledge should ever contradict one another. Of course man's highest happiness was moral, so that knowledge of the physical world could not in itself be adequate to its fulfillment. But a man who was one of Buckland's "most earnest and intelligent" students, and who maintained a life-long interest in geology, could hardly be considered hostile to scientific study. "The discovery of truth" in all fields he considered "more or less our duty . . . for the benefits of others . . . or for the improvement of our own powers of mind, that so we may act our part in life more efficiently" (MW, 412).

More importantly, he adopted as being best suited to this "discovery of truth," and thus best suited to the fulfillment of our "duty," procedures similar to those of the natural sciences: the critical evaluation of evidence, and the inductive method of observation, generalization, and verification. He was convinced that only "by the study of facts, whether relating to nature or to man, and not by any pretended cultivation of the mind by poetry, oratory, and moral or critical dissertations," would "the understandings of mankind . . . be most

improved, and their views of things rendered most accurate."<sup>5</sup> Facts alone led to a "philosophical" understanding of the principles that structured the moral and the physical worlds. The mind could "exert the very fulness of its power" (MW, 404) only when it was engaged in understanding "the laws or causes by which . . . phenomena are regulated" (MW, 410), and these must be determined by the scientific method. The duty to achieve such "philosophical" understanding was ultimately moral: mastering those laws would allow mankind to "form [Nature] or reform her for our own purposes," and teach us "after our most imperfect measure to learn to work like" the God who authored them (MW, 408). In this way a scientific understanding of the world became an asset rather than a liability in the Christianizing of daily life, and the scientific verification of truth an inherently moral undertaking.<sup>6</sup> One's duty as a Christian was better to understand, so as more fully to conform to, the laws by which God regulated the moral and physical world. Arnold's relentless search for the laws that could reveal the truth—whether it be in scriptural, historical, or scientific study—was thus inseparable from his mission as a Christian and infused with a similar earnestness.

Once shown to be the preeminent moral science, history could play a key role in this educational process. Arnold believed that only the study of biblical prophecy had a better claim to direct man's attention to general principles of good and evil in the world: "Whatever there is of greatness in the final cause of all human thought and action, God's glory and man's perfection, that is the measure of the greatness of history."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Arnold ended his short-lived appointment as Examiner in the Arts at the University of London because it did not require that the professors of such "moral subjects" as history be Christian (LC, 428). Since he considered it the historian's highest duty to "encourage the love of all things noble and just, and wise and holy" (LC, 406), he felt called upon to disparage current, more limited conceptions of this calling. He deplored the classical tradition that considered historical writing no more than a source of literary fame to the author or a "means of giving pleasure" to an audience.<sup>8</sup> He sternly condemned the poetic license of modern work for leading at best to frivolity, at worst to falsification: "We may hope that the folly is now gone by of studiously painting the manners, institutions and events of ancient times in colours most strongly contrasting with everything which we know from our own experience. The pictures thus pro-

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duced were striking and beautiful indeed, but nothing practical could be learnt from them, since they displayed a world as unreal as the fantastic creations of romance."<sup>9</sup>

Like Carlyle and many another early Victorian critic of "romantic" literature, Arnold felt the artist shirked his duty if he entertained at the expense of truth. But Arnold had reason to fear that even legitimate historical writing could be subverted to escapist ends, becoming another form of that "intellectual indulgence" he equally condemned. Stanley's conjecture that writing the *History of Rome* afforded Arnold "a refuge from the excitement and confusion of the present," a retreat from "the painful and conflicting thoughts roused by his writings on political and theological subjects" (LC, 268), hints at potential struggles with the temptations of escape. Elsewhere Arnold openly expressed worries that the life of the scholar might deflect his energies from the duties of the Christian reformer. "How earnestly one desires to present to one's mind a *peopled landscape* of Gaul, or Germany, or Britain, before Rome encountered them" he wrote to Chevalier Bunsen; "And yet, these indulgences of our intellectual faculties match strangely with the fever of our times, and the pressure for life and death which is going on all around us" (LC, 311).

Arnold thus had both a personal and a public stake in proving history's practicality. By demonstrating that historical study was scientific and not merely antiquarian, he could make it proof against escapism or self-indulgence. And so as he advised his Oxford audience, "We must remember also not so to transport ourselves into the fourteenth century as to forget that we belong really to the nineteenth; that here, and not there, lie our duties; that the harvest, gathered in the fields of the past, is to be brought home for the use of the present" (L, 313-14). Not the details themselves, "which are generally worthless," but the "great changes, both physical and moral" (LC, 310-11) which they could be shown to document, had practical importance for guiding the present. "Antiquarianism is no teacher of wisdom" because the antiquarian lacked "that comprehensive view which becomes the true historian." Although many of Arnold's assumptions about historical reality were quite romantic, this "comprehensive view" entailed the same things for him as it had for the men of the Enlightenment: the ability to discern beneath the apparent randomness of history general patterns that "may really assist in shaping and preparing the course of the future" (L, 84). Far from advocating an historicist immersion in the spirit of past ages, Arnold felt the historian

had a duty to judge the past by the priorities of the present. He especially criticized historians like de Barante who, after "having shown himself most capable of analyzing history philosophically" in earlier works, had chosen in his study of the dukes of Burgundy "to forfeit the benefits of his own wisdom" and describe "the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries no otherwise than might have been done by their own simple chroniclers" (L, 314).

Arnold consciously modeled the historical researcher on the scientist: both tried to separate "what is accidental and particular from what is essential and universal."<sup>10</sup> He had no doubt that proper inductive methods would yield "truths of historical science" (L, 63) when applied to the facts of the past. Because historical periods were not viewed "in combination with one another," he argued, "perception of the general law" was obscured by "circumstances which interfere with its regular operation" and the "scientific character" of historical study was not acknowledged (L, 306). Reveal these laws by induction and comparative analysis, however, and human history became not just "a mere aggregation of particular actions or characters, like the anecdotes of natural history but . . . besides this the witness to general moral and political truths, and capable when rightly used, of bringing to our notice fresh truths which we might not have gained by *a priori* reasoning only" (L, 307).

In practice Arnold's investigation rested upon *a priori* moral universals that subverted induction to the same extent as had the *philosophe's* rationalistic ones. He proclaimed himself

firmly persuaded . . . that setting out with those views of man which we find in the Scriptures, and with those plain moral notions which the Scriptures do not so much teach as suppose to exist in us, and sanction; the laws of history, in other words, the laws of political science, using "political" in the most exalted sense of the term . . . may be deduced, or . . . confirmed from it with perfect certainty, with a certainty equal to that of the most undoubted truths of morals. (L, 305)

Arnold projected onto history the moral order he assumed in all human affairs. For a mind so heavily regimented by general principles, an objective measure of the individual datum was virtually impossible. Stanley describes his "unwillingness . . . to act in any individual case, without some general law to which he might refer," suggesting that "at times it would almost seem as if he invented universal rules with the express object of meeting particular cases" (LC, 80). Contemporary political and ecclesiastical controversies merged in his

mind with "the prototypes of the various forms of error and wickedness" denounced in the Bible, and "living individuals . . . and existing principles, became lost to his view in the long line of images, past and future, in which they formed only one link" (LC, 150). In such a mind, historical induction inevitably confirmed patterns established by "undoubted truths."

Too much depended upon the existence of these truths to allow the historian to accept the scientist's objectivity along with his authority. Arnold was keenly aware of the damage that could be done to the bases of belief if historical events were allowed to be random in their occurrence or relative in their significance, or worse yet, if historical and scientific criticism could be shown to compromise revealed truth. If historical study could not demonstrate the functioning of moral law, "we should be driven to the extremity of scepticism; truth would appear indeed to be a thing utterly unreal or utterly unattainable" (L, 306). This placed great responsibility on the historian. Nothing was more culpable than a relativism that deprived laws of their sanction, nothing so insidious for a Christian society. Even impartiality—if it meant to write "as if there were no truth attainable in the matter, but all was mere opinion" (LC, 577)—became morally remiss. Once convinced that political and moral truths existed, the historian could not "but wish them to be seen and embraced by others."<sup>11</sup> Thus it was far from "partiality to say that the support of a bad cause is itself evil, the support of a good cause is itself good" (L, 301-2). As Duncan Forbes explains it, the impartiality of the Liberal Anglican historians did not mean having no standpoint, but rather having the best one—the Christian one.<sup>12</sup>

Imposing such a viewpoint allowed Arnold to side-step the challenge that history's sheer variety posed to universal and permanent truths. He objected to Strauss's scriptural interpretation not because it was too sceptical but because it was not scientific enough.<sup>13</sup> According to Arnold's disciple Bonamee Price, Arnold showed in his sermons that the most advanced insights of historical and scientific criticism could be used to place "the supernatural inspiration of the sacred writers on an imperishable historical basis . . . proof against any attack which the most refined modern learning could direct against it" (LC, 168). Arnold was able to turn the Higher Criticism against itself because the "scientific" principle revealed by his "*a priori* inquiry" into scripture was that its "lower," "historical" sense was of a different order from the higher, universal, spiritual meaning of



each text.<sup>14</sup> He could apply the “general rules of interpretation” to the historical side of the Bible without fear because he knew the validity of its “higher” meaning could not be undermined by its imperfect realization in history. Arnold was able, in Price’s words, to reconcile “the progress of knowledge with Christianity” by limiting the sphere in which critical methods had validity, rather than by attempting to prove biblical accounts literally correct.

Arnold overcame scepticism in the secular realm by similarly ruling invalid all challenges to the bases of his belief. The “laws” of political science possessed in his mind the same certainty as did the tenets of Christian conduct because they were in essence the same thing: “The truths of political science belong as much, I think, to an historian, as those of theology to a Professor of Divinity” (LC, 577). As Stanley reminds us, “The Greek science, *πολιτικὴ*, of which the English word ‘politics,’ or even political science, is so inadequate a translation” meant for Arnold “society in its connexion with the highest welfare of man” (LC, 170). Moral perfection was the end of both civic and individual development and was guided by the same laws. Once assume these laws—and he confessed perplexity that any could doubt them—and the lessons of history neatly followed. Since Arnold was sure that only the presence of some “disturbing causes which may be clearly pointed out” could prevent such laws from promoting the good of nations, he could conclude that to oppose them was simply “to uphold what is bad” (L, 306-7).

For Arnold the “unity of history” derived in part from the continuing validity of these laws. Believing that the “general rules” of “political wisdom” had remained the same for all western society made the classics contemporary and the study of ancient history not “an idle inquiry about remote ages and forgotten institutions, but a living picture of things present, fitted not so much for the curiosity of the scholar, as for the instruction of the statesman and citizen” (LC, 148-49). But Arnold’s unity meant more than uniformity. He based history’s practicality on an interpretive tool more powerful than the manifestation of universal laws, always and everywhere the same. In an appendix to his translation of Thucydides, Arnold enunciated a theory of development that gave the additional “scientific” sanction of organic similarity to historical comparisons. Inspired by Vico, this master law of history held that “states, like individuals, go through certain changes in a certain order. . . . But they differ from individuals in this, that though the order of the periods is regular, their dura-

tion is not so; and their features are more liable to be mistaken, as they can only be distinguished by their characteristic phenomena."<sup>15</sup> This law provided the demonstrable regularity in human history necessary to a philosophical understanding of it, while still respecting the uniqueness of the developmental process in individual states. Only nations at the same stage of development could be validly compared. To impose upon history the "artificial divisions" established by political events was to be arbitrary and unscientific: "History is to be studied as a whole, and according to its philosophical divisions, not such as are merely geographical and chronological."<sup>16</sup> Every society had an ancient and a modern history, so that "ancient history" was misnamed, because it really constituted the "modern history of the civilization of Greece and Rome." Empirical comparison of similarities between past and present would make clear that "in our moral and political views, in those matters which most determine human character," there existed a "perfect resemblance" between moderns and ancients (MW, 349). As a result the ancient world provided data directly relevant to the historian's theorizing about modern society—data possessing "all the value of a mass of new and pertinent facts, illustrative of the great science of the nature of civilized man" (MW, 350).

This "science" was governed not by the static categories of man in general, but by the stages through which a biological organism matured. It could account for change without sacrificing identity and recognize relative degrees of development without foregoing valid generalizations about the developmental process as a whole, or about the organism as an entity. The significance of this qualified relativism is demonstrated by the ways it conditioned Arnold's theorizing in other areas. At Rugby the lower standard of morality he tolerated among younger boys paralleled that historically tolerated during "the boyhood of the human race" (LC, 68). Their limited development justified flogging, though reason and responsibility were the appropriate means of enhancing the sixth form's greater moral maturity. The "principle of accommodation" Arnold used to interpret scripture similarly adjusted rules to circumstances. By claiming that "God's revelations to man . . . were adapted to his state at the several periods when they were successively made,"<sup>17</sup> he could argue that injunctions given to one age were only binding upon another to the extent that their circumstances were similar. This provided an escape from the intellectual discrepancies created by literal interpretation of scripture, and more importantly, established grounds for the per-

manent relevance of Christian doctrine. For Arnold as for Carlyle, appreciating relative stages of development ended by shoring up rather than undermining what each defined as permanent principles.

Like Carlyle too, Arnold justified his diagnosis of present problems with an appeal to the past—an appeal that merged the authorities of the historical, the natural, and the divine. The organic metaphor lent urgency to the reform movements of the early nineteenth century because it stressed the inevitability of change and the dangers inherent in attempting to subvert the natural maturation of the state. In Arnold's case, however, the state "naturally" progressed toward greater freedom and complexity. The tendency of society was to "become more and more liberal" as the source of authority shifted from birth, to wealth, to numbers.<sup>18</sup> Progress toward wider participation represented the growth of moral as well as political maturity. The transition from aristocracy to plutocracy was analogous to the transition from childhood to manhood:<sup>19</sup> accepting the responsibility of self-government encouraged "that practical vigour of mind" which, when properly cultivated, was "the greatest earthly blessing of which mankind are susceptible" (LRC, 2:257-58). Since "all the world is by the very law of its creation in eternal progress" (LC, 224), attempting to resist the expansion of self-government would be like trying to defy the order of nature and, by implication, the moral order of God's plan for human development.

Arnold's conviction that this kind of political progress was organically necessary helps explain those attitudes toward revolution and aristocracy that so alarmed the Tories in the twenties and thirties. As he explained to **Chevalier Bunsen**, he took the revolutionary turmoil of the thirties as a "sign infallible" of the irreversible breakup of the old order. Trying to hinder it could only "derange the process of the new birth which must succeed it" (LC, 281). Government by aristocracy was to Arnold "the greatest source of evil throughout the world" (LC, 447), because, by attempting to preserve the status quo, they had themselves provoked violent disruptions of the social order: "Considering the people as children, they have restrained the child, but they have not educated him; considering them even as lunatics, they have confined the lunatic, but have often so irritated him with their discipline as to make his paroxysms more violent and more incurable" (L, 276). In distinction to Carlyle and other early Victorian conservatives, Arnold stressed that the aristocracy's responsibility was to "train up" the lower orders "to the independence of manhood," to

elevate and enlighten their inferiors, preparing them for popular rule.<sup>20</sup>

But those who branded Arnold a dangerous radical missed the inherently conservative assumptions behind such views. As his reading of Roman history repeatedly makes clear, he condoned expanded popular power only when "the natural progress of things" (i.e., the spread of wealth and education) made the people "ripe for it" (R, 1:340-41). Giving them too much power too soon would be as "unnatural"—as subversive of God's providence—as refusing to change at all (R, 1:491). Like Macaulay and other Whigs, Arnold championed reform as the best means of preserving the underlying continuity of national institutions. "Every new institution should be but a fuller development of, or addition to, what already exists," he wrote. "If things have come to such a pass in a country, that all its past history and associations are cast away as merely bad, Reform in such a country is impossible" (LC, 503). To reject tradition and ignore history as did the Chartists was to be a "slave," not a citizen (MW, 494). Believing that a nation could no more deny its past than could a person the formative events and associations of his own life, Arnold cultivated an attitude toward progress that encouraged further growth while respecting national heritage; in this way the English could achieve "Democracy without Jacobinism" (LC, 679 n.).

Human or natural models of change increased Arnold's leverage on an undesirable status quo but also posed the problem of decay. To allow the history of western culture to be cyclical without being circular, he needed to argue that improvement had been incremental even though development repeated the same pattern in every society. To image all history as a static repetition of identical cycles would have negated the moral progress implicit in Christianity. Like other Liberal Anglican historians, Arnold believed that modern history exhibited "a fuller development of the human race, a richer combination of its most remarkable elements" (L, 26), because it incorporated and improved upon the moral excellence attained by previous cultures. Unlike Carlyle and Froude, he felt that overvaluing the past was more dangerous than undervaluing it; glorifying former times tended to hinder progress by "depriv[ing] us of the advantages of our own superior experience" (LC, 195). To idolize either classical antiquity or the middle ages was to permit the possibility that humanity had degenerated over time—a conclusion thoroughly incompatible with Arnold's belief that history was the arena for the gradual perfecting of the hu-

man race.<sup>21</sup> He allowed that material progress might be equivocal in its nature, but not moral progress:

. . . while the advance of civilization destroys much that is noble, and throws over the mass of human society an atmosphere somewhat dull and hard; yet it is *only* by its peculiar trials, no less than by its positive advantages, that the utmost virtue of human nature can be matured. And those who vainly lament that progress of earthly things, which, whether good or evil, is certainly inevitable, may be consoled by the thought that its sure tendency is to confirm and purify the virtue of the good.<sup>22</sup>

Holding center stage in this historical arena was the nation rather than the individual. History was foremost "the biography of a political society or commonwealth" (L, 5). The institutions of the advanced state were necessary to cultivate the moral maturity Arnold desired in its subjects. The nation expressed the common life and common purpose of its members; it focused their efforts to accomplish its divinely appointed work. The struggles of even the greatest heroes were of interest not for their private triumphs but for their advance of the state; the Hector who subordinated himself to his country's good was more noble than the selfish and self-sufficient Achilles (R, 3:386-87). Even nations diminished in importance when viewed through the wider lens of western culture. The individual struggles of the Romans and Teutons were significant not in themselves but for their advance of civilization. These peoples had been chosen by Providence to play leading roles in the spiritual biography of western man.

As inheritors of this legacy, the Victorians bore a grave responsibility. The possibility of regression always qualified the inevitability of progress for Arnold. "Nations, like individuals," he wrote, "have their time of trial; and if this be wasted or misused, their future course is inevitably evil" (R, 1:252). Indeed, in the history of Rome itself loomed the specter of possible defeat: "The great improvements of our own days may at some future period be again cut short" (LRC, 2:386). His confidence in the continuity of progress was qualified by the eschatological anxiety that "modern history appears to be not only a step in advance of ancient history, but *the* last step; it appears to bear marks of the fulness of time, as if there would be no future history beyond it" (L, 28). Because he saw "no new continents peopled by youthful races, the destined restorers of our worn-out generations" (L, 30), he ruled out the possibility of a "third period of human his-

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tory" beyond classical and modern. It was the apocalyptic culmination to his pattern of progress that gave historical writing its urgent practicality. If "our existing nations are the last reserve of the world," he wrote, "its fate may be said to be in their hands—God's work on earth will be left undone if they do not do it. But our future course must be hesitating or mistaken, if we do not know what course has brought us to the point where we are at present" (L, 31). On man's success in discerning, understanding, and applying the laws of history rested the fate not just of England, but of God's favored people on earth. And the historical scientist, by virtue of his command of these laws, guided the spiritual as well as the political destiny of the world. He was not just a scholar, but a sage.

### II

We can clearly trace the ramifications of Arnold's theories about history in his analysis of sources, his artistic reconstruction of the past, and his judgments on men, events, and nations. For Arnold as for Carlyle, the danger of scepticism intensified the responsibility of research. As he warned in his eighth lecture, "If historical testimony be really worth nothing, it touches us in one of the very divinest parts of our nature, the power of connecting ourselves with the past. For this we do and can do only through knowledge which we must call historical." If no veracity could be expected from historical statements, if no facts could be established from the physical evidence of past civilizations, "our life would be at once restricted to the span of our own memory; nay, I might almost say to the span of our own actual consciousness. For if no other man's report of the past is to be credited, I know not how we can defend the very reports of our own memories" (L, 282-83). Identity itself rested on the truths of memory. Like Wordsworth's child and man, England too could claim a unified self: her political life was "made up wholesomely of past and present, so that the centuries of English History are truly 'bound each to each by natural piety'" (LC, 680). Critical analysis of source materials must not be allowed to produce radical scepticism about historical truths, lest the basis for life-giving continuity—the integrity of the individual organism over time—be destroyed. That is one reason why Arnold so admired Niebuhr's analytical skills. The master possessed an "instinctive power of discerning truth" where others saw only myth: he "has rescued from the dominion of scepticism much which less profound inquirers had before too hastily given up to it" (R,

1:218) and thus affirmed the historical validity of Rome's "childhood."

Evaluating the credibility of historical data took on a characteristic high seriousness for Arnold. It was not enough for the historian to be impartial or free from dishonesty: he must have "an earnest craving after truth, and utter impatience not of falsehood merely but of error" (L, 293). Significantly, as in scriptural interpretation, Arnold considered the "scientific" treatment of source materials not only a means to truth, but the best guarantee of reaching it. In his "Introductory Dissertation on the Credibility of Early Roman History," he compared the evaluation of historical data to that of "natural philosophy": what would be unthinkable in the sciences—the confounding of all evidence, regardless of its reliability, with fact—must also be avoided in the study of history "if we wish to establish the great doctrines of history on the same sure base with those of natural philosophy."<sup>23</sup> Arnold's "cross-examination" of historical witnesses is clearly inspired by Niebuhr's methods for evaluating textual reliability. He tried constantly to be aware of the prejudices, affiliations, and temperaments that color the testimony of his sources. He pointed out, for instance, that Livy and Dionysius had relied upon the annals of great Roman families, and that "each successive version of these, as men's notions of their early history became more and more romantic, would omit whatever seemed inconsistent with the supposed purity and nobleness of the times of their forefathers" (R, 1:239-40). Elsewhere in the *History of Rome* he was careful to separate disinterested observation from prejudice in accounts rendered by participants, and he remained alert to the ways that friendship between historians and their subjects could restrain criticism and exaggerate praise (e.g., R, 3:382-83).

Although Arnold was keenly aware that the modern historian could no longer gain a "reputation for learning" (R, 1:476) merely by repeating the accounts of the ancients, his own work was far from original. His primary materials were those available to any educated man of the time: the standard accounts and the more modern attempts to reconcile them, chief among them Niebuhr's. Arnold followed Niebuhr very closely in volumes 1 and 2 of the *History of Rome*, although he insisted that his work was more than "a mere compilation," insofar as his "own reading and comparison of the ancient authorities" was the foundation of every paragraph (R, 2:v). Of particular significance for Arnold's romantic sense of national identity,

he followed Niebuhr in restoring the myths of early Rome to its history. Like the German and British romantics before him, Arnold believed that the best means of discovering the essence of "racial" identity lay in the literature it had produced. He was aware that given "that wider view of the connection of races and languages, which we have learnt of late to entertain," historians could no longer "cast . . . aside as mere fables" the "mythic reports" of a nation's origins (R, 1:481). Besides valuing myths for the "germ of truth" that might be recovered from them, Arnold was also committed to a theory of history that stressed the organic integrity of all manifestations of national life at any given stage of its development. The epigraph from Mackintosh that opens the *History of Rome* acknowledges the value Arnold placed on the emotional "facts" of national identity: "The old songs of every people, which bear the impress of their character, and of which the beauties whether few or many must be genuine, because they arise only from feeling, have always been valued by men of masculine and comprehensive taste."

Even in researching later periods Arnold considered popular literature of unique historical importance. His lectures particularly recommended a period's second- and third-rate literature to the student. In a peculiarly Carlylean image, Arnold compared this literary "rubbish" to "mere moss" which "becomes in the lapse of ages, after being buried in its peat bed, of some value as fuel; it is capable of yielding both light and heat" (L, 75). He found the "colloquial peculiarities" of contemporary histories and the "particularity" of an age's legal style also worthy of attention because they helped resuscitate the past; in reading them the audience could feel "we are in some sort hearing" the voices of contemporary speakers (L, 67). The end of research was ultimately to galvanize these remains into some semblance of the once living whole. Literature was merely the most accessible form of the wealth of sociocultural data needed to reveal "not what existing accounts may have recorded of a people or a race, but what the people or race really was, and did; we wish to conceive a full and lively image of them, of their language, their institutions, their arts, their morals; to understand what they were in themselves, and how they have affected the fate of the world" (R, 1:476-77).

Arnold's attention to the geographical evidence also deserves note, as it would be shared by Carlyle, Freeman, and especially Green. Buckland had first kindled Arnold's scientific curiosities; their continued vigor manifested itself in plans for a major work "on the con-



nection between the revolutions of nature and those of mankind" that would demonstrate that "nature, no less than human society, contains tokens that it had a beginning, and will as surely have its end" (R, 1:498). Geography also had a romantic appeal for one who shared Wordsworth's quasi-religious attachment to the Lake District around his own Fox How. In his Oxford lectures, Arnold recommended the study of geography not just as a pedagogically useful starting point for political history, but also because it contained "so much . . . of the most picturesque and poetical character; so much of beauty, of magnificence, and of interest, physical and moral" (L, 123-24). Just as the life of a nation could to him become as distinct "as that of an individual," so too the terrain of a country could take on an anthropomorphical individuality. "Let me once understand the real geography of a country," he claimed, "its organic structure . . . the form of its skeleton, that is, of its hills; the magnitude and course of its veins and arteries, that is, of its streams and rivers; let me conceive of it as a whole made up of connected parts; and then the position of man's dwellings . . . becomes at once easily remembered, and lively and intelligible besides" (L, 125-26). In geographical evidence an understanding of organic relationships was quite literally the key to meaning; reverence for the poetic feelings nature awakened was the best guarantee of "scientific" accuracy in reconstructing its past. Arnold criticized Polybius because the "tameless" of his accounts of alpine passes crossed by Hannibal revealed that "not one spark of feeling" had been awakened in him by the sublime; the "unpoetical character" of his mind made his descriptions so "unscientific" as to be unrecognizable.<sup>24</sup> Landscape provided history's most palpable terrain. It took the eye of imagination to glimpse its true contours, a collaboration of poetry and science to fix its extent. It was not just a backdrop, but a vital part of historical understanding.

Arnold's conception of his artistic tasks was informed by a similar complexity of moral and creative vision. The writing of history posed more than a literary problem: an inadequate narrative failed to make sense of the past. So long as it lacked coherent shape, the historical account could not demonstrate the unfolding of God's will in the universe. Like a paleontologist trying to make the argument from design, the historian was left with only scattered bones; what gave them identity and unity, "the face, figure, and mind of the living man are lost to us beyond recall" (R, 2:82). He had to impose order lest vision become nightmare. His task was to "supply, and arrange into

an intelligible whole, the disjointed and seemingly unmeaning images, which our fragments of information offer, as perplexing and incongruous as the chaos of a dream" (R, 3:460-61). Arnold admired Niebuhr's artistic abilities as much as his scholarship, for his integrative genius allowed him to retrieve "from much, that to former writers seemed a hopeless chaos, . . . a living picture of events and institutions, as rich in its colouring, as perfect in its composition, as it is faithful to the truth of nature" (R, 1:219).

Arnold's early conversion to Wordsworthian romanticism had helped convince him that only art could render this coherent truth adequately. His college friend J. T. Coleridge had first introduced Arnold to the *Lyrical Ballads*. In Coleridge's eyes becoming a "zealous disciple" of Wordsworth was of peculiar advantage to Arnold, whose practical bent too often inhibited his "feeling for the lofty and imaginative" (LC, 12). Doubtless Wordsworth's ideas also played a role in convincing Arnold that "*Poetical feelings* are merely . . . all the highest and purest feelings of our nature. . . . The very essence of poetry is, that it exhorts and ennobles us, and puts us into a higher state of mind than that which we are commonly living in" (MW, 252-53). It was natural that as an historian he should draw upon these feelings in himself and appeal to them in his audience. When Arnold confessed to his brother-in-law in 1841 that he had begun to regard his own *History of Rome* "more and more with something of an artist's feeling as to the composition and arrangement of it" (LC, 549), he implied a spiritual and imaginative intensity different in kind from the ancients' concern with mere style. Haunted even in sleep by images of famous events, he tried to maintain this identification and sympathy in the creative process as well. J. C. Hare conjectures that Arnold's manuscript lacked footnotes because "after having impregnated his mind with the liveliest conception he could gain of the events he was about to record . . . he was unwilling to interrupt the flow of the narrative by pausing to examine the details of the documents" (R, 3:iv). Where he lacked personal experience of the kind of events portrayed, he trusted in "his general knowledge of human nature, his love of great and good actions, his sympathy with virtue, his abhorrence of vice" to "assist him in making himself as it were a witness of what he attempts to describe" (R, 2:vii-viii). Upon the authenticity of this witnessing rested the credibility of the historian's message; his highest credentials were moral, not scholarly.

Arnold also had quite pragmatic reasons for his artistic choices. It

was impossible "to communicate any interest to history," he feared, "if it must only record events and not paint actions" (R, 2:562). History had great potential as a didactic weapon; a lively narrative filled with "painted" scenes and portraits was the best means of reaching a wide audience. Consistently, the needs of the general reader took precedence over those of the fellow scholar in shaping Arnold's histories. He wished to make his translations "as good as any which they are publishing in Germany" but was also anxious that their scholarly apparatus not seem superfluous to a "man of plain sense" (LC, 63-64). He undertook his own history of Rome because he feared that Niebuhr's "discoveries and remarkable wisdom" would not become "generally popular in England" unless rendered in a form "more adapted to our common taste" (R, 1:vii). "Common taste" favored a higher proportion of story-telling narrative to scholarly "dissertations." Arnold excused the excessive length of volume 2 by claiming that further abridgment would deprive it of the interest and particularity that most effectively impressed the memory. Although generally scrupulous about the reliability of historical data, so that at one point he relegated conjectures to an appendix because they were not definite enough "to claim the name of history" (R, 2:307), elsewhere he allowed audience expectations to override his reservations. He relied on the traditional chronology for the consuls and tribunes of Rome because it was fixed in readers' memories in a way Niebuhr's more accurate version was not. In Rome's earliest history he was content to flesh out "an outline of undoubted truth" with specifics that were at least "clear from manifest error" and that still preserved "some of its most remarkable details, which may be true, and are at any rate far too famous to be omitted" (R, 1:531-32). Although vigilant against the distortions of fantasy, Arnold remained sensitive to its emotional power. He consciously chose to include events that "are so striking in their incidents, as to acquire the interest of a romance, and thus retain their hold on the imaginations and moral feelings of all ages and countries" (R, 3:259-60). Memory and imagination were the keys to living history; the "romance" that nurtured both must not therefore be sacrificed completely to the "spirit of inquiry and of fact" (R, 1:99).

Arnold's treatment of the legends of early Rome offers the most interesting examples of his attempts to preserve this "romantic" quality. Like Macaulay in the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, Arnold sought to capture the voice as well as the message of the ancient world. Too

## *History as Practical Evangel*

sophisticated a style would be anachronistic; one too prosaic would destroy the poetry. No man could tell "such stories in a civilized age in his own proper person, with that sincerity of belief, nay even with that gravity which is requisite to give them their proper charm" (LC, 432). Just as Wordsworth attempted to approximate the "language really used by men" in his poems of rural life, so too Arnold presented the early legends of Rome in what he called "an antiquated and simple language"; in fact, he told J. T. Coleridge that Wordsworth had seen and approved of this treatment (LC, 432). Arnold considered it irreverent to follow too closely the most obvious model, the Bible, but its stylistic impress still lingers. In the legend of Aeneas that opens the *History of Rome*, Arnold combines touches of archaic diction and syntax with balanced cadences to reinforce the mythic details of the story:

When the fatal horse was going to be brought within the walls of Troy, and when Laocoon had been devoured by the two serpents sent by the gods to punish him because he had tried to save his country against the will of fate, then Aeneas and his father Anchises, with their wives, and many who followed their fortune, fled from the coming of the evil day. But they remembered to carry their gods with them, who were to receive their worship in a happier land. They were guided in their flight from the city, by the god Hermes, and he built for them a ship to carry them over the sea. When they put to sea, the star of Venus, the mother of Aeneas, stood over their heads, and it shone by day as well as by night, till they came to the shores of the land of the west. But when they landed, the star vanished and was seen no more; and by this sign Aeneas knew that he was come to that country wherein fate had appointed him to dwell. (R, 1:1-2)

Even in the later history of Rome, Arnold found himself falling "insensibly" into the same measured pace and antiquated inversions when confronted by stories historically true in substance but filled with "romantic" details, like that of the Gauls' attack on the Capitol (R, 1:545). Arnold hoped this treatment would charm, but he also intended it to serve more practical ends: it made clear to "the most careless reader" that the legends were distinct from "real history" (R, 1:x, 20). Arnold follows these early legends with analyses, often based on a comparison of variants, designed to determine how much of the ancient tales could be accepted as true. Still, he distinguished between fictions calculated to minister to national or individual vanity, and those which were "imaginative but honest . . . not professing to impart exact knowledge, but to delight, to quicken, and to

raise the perception of what is beautiful and noble" (R, 1:393). If the former deserved oblivion, it would be "irreverence" to neglect the latter, serving as they did some of the highest aims of historical writing.

Reverence and identification were the keynotes of Arnold's reconstruction of people and events as well. Nowhere were they more important than in his handling of characterization. Although Arnold never indulged in hero-worship for its own sake, he too believed that respect for true superiority lay at the base of the modern social order and could hardly retain its credibility in the present if it could not be made understandable and admirable in the past. The myths of ancient Rome served this end by providing some of the commemoration that was traditionally "due to the memory of illustrious names" (LRC, 1:26). But "real history" demanded recognizable individuals; these transformed the "landscape" into "an historical picture." A more powerful means of inspiring understanding and admiration was the historian's ability to "multiply in some sort the number of those with whom we are personally and individually in sympathy." Enabling the reader "to recognise amidst the dimness of remote and uncongenial ages, the features of friends and of brethren" laid on him a claim to belief and assent forged from a common humanity (L, 74). Arnold lamented that the utter lack of "materials for painting portraits" made his account not only inferior to Niebuhr's, but contrast sadly with "those inimitable living pictures with which Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution* abounds" (LC, 448). He strove to compensate for this lack in a number of ways.

Dialogue provided one means of increasing the reality of characterization. Arnold felt it "quite essential" to present the legends dramatically, "making the actors express their thoughts in the first person, instead of saying what they thought or felt as narrative" (LC, 432). Such was the style of the Bible and Herodotus, works from commensurate stages of cultural development. For later periods, too, he occasionally fashions direct quotations from the classical sources (e.g., R, 3:69), notwithstanding his conviction that such speech-making had too easily degenerated into mere rhetorical affectation in many of the ancients. Having criticized Livy for drawing "the Romans of every period in the costume of his own times,"<sup>29</sup> he invents speeches only when they would authenticate "the peculiar views of [a] party or time"—for instance, Servius Maluginensis' opposition to the Licinian laws (R, 2:48ff.). And yet, while taking care to antiquate the language appropriately so as to preserve the flavor of the period ("and

if ye had ever found me to be your enemy, it had been ill done in you to have tried me yet again this seventh time"), Arnold cannot help finding in Maluginensis' situation a somewhat anachronistic vindication of the uses of Christian revelation. He similarly superimposes the perceptions of one culture upon another when he advises his audience to read Chatham's speech against the Franco-American coalition in order to duplicate the drama of Appius Claudius's arguments against peace with Pyrrhus (R, 2:497). Both cases suggest the extent to which Arnold's appreciation for particularity remained controlled by private typologies.

Of course, allusions or comparisons to more modern events also allowed Arnold to tap the strong enthusiasms and vivid memories of his audience and to use them to charge characters with more immediate significance. Arnold exploits both the awe and the patriotism of the English by comparing Hannibal's sixteen-year struggle against Rome to Napoleon's against England; the personal magnetism of the warrior is balanced against the moral necessity of his defeat in both cases (R, 3:63). He encourages his readers to view with greater sympathy the apparent mixture of faith and scepticism in Scipio's behavior by suggesting his resemblance to Cromwell. Such comparisons easily shade into projections of desired similarities, however. Arnold decides that given Scipio's "nobleness of soul," he must have felt the contemporary reverence for the invisible and the divine (R, 3:384-85). What appears to be hypocrisy Arnold explains as the result of conflict in one longing to believe, yet repelled by the "palpable falsehood" of Paganism. What seem to us to be time-bound assumptions are of course to Arnold permanent truths that render charges of anachronism irrelevant.

Arnold's insistent faith in heroism controls his attempts to illuminate the minds and characters of great men, so that these figures become not so much fully realized individuals as fulfillments of his own ideals. In Scipio's case he sides with Livy because his "truer feeling . . . taught him that a hero cannot be a hypocrite." For Arnold, the stature of both Hannibal and Scipio endowed them with a manifest personal "ascendancy" that he assumes must have overpowered the minds and allegiances of lesser men. In the absence of conclusive data, he finds no bars to the best construction of equivocal behavior, as when he assumes that Hannibal's fervent patriotism was what enlisted his support of action that wore the appearance of savage cruelty (R, 3:133). This devotion to his country's honor becomes the keynote

of Arnold's reconstruction of Hannibal's state of mind. He follows the classical sources in portraying Hannibal as haunted night and day by "his strong sense of being the devoted instrument of his country's gods to destroy their enemies" (R, 3:70). His own inventions reinforce this characterization as they expand the reader's capacity for sympathy and imagination. Here, for instance, he encourages us to think with Hannibal riding beneath the walls of Rome:

If anything of disappointment depressed his mind at that instant; if he felt that Rome's strength was not broken, nor the spirit of her people quelled, that his own fortune was wavering, and that his last effort had been made, and made in vain; yet thinking where he was, and of the shame and loss which his presence was causing to his enemies, he must have wished that his father could have lived to see that day, and must have thanked the gods of his country that they had enabled him so fully to perform his vow. (R, 3:246)

The reader's satisfactions are complex. Not only is he for the moment privy to the great man's thoughts; confident of the superior strength of the unified state and the ultimate piety of the hero's intentions, he can also give himself over to the vicarious pleasures of both vengeful victory and poignant defeat.

The individuality of Arnold's characters, especially his heroes, is finally subsumed by the ethical imperatives they serve. On the broader stage of western history, Rome's ends outweighed Hannibal's in importance and necessarily qualified Arnold's final estimation of his defeat. Arnold acknowledges the ability of great individuals like Hannibal to embody the history and "the living spirit" of an entire nation. He pays homage to others whose own hands had shaped the course of time—to Philip of Macedon, for instance, or to Dionysius of Syracuse, "who outtopped by his personal renown the greatness of the events in which he was an actor" (R, 1:438). But his belief that the state was "the ultimate power in human life" had to put into perspective even the greatest heroes. Ultimately, great men could act permanently only by forming great nations: "brave and able as Dionysius was, active, and temperate, and energetic," he failed because "he left behind him no beneficial institutions; he degraded rather than improved the character of his countrymen" (R, 1:475). Hannibal's selfless devotion to the good of his nation made him a Hector to Scipio's Achilles, but was inadequate to compensate for Carthage's inherent cultural deficiencies. Perhaps Arnold is warning himself as much as his audience against "our tendency . . . to ad-

mire individual greatness far more than national." Rome's triumph, he insists, demonstrated "the wisdom of God's providence. . . . It was clearly for the good of mankind, that Hannibal should be conquered: his triumph would have stopped the progress of the world." He urges those who regretted Hannibal's defeat to consider how isolated Carthage was, and how ill-fitted to "bind together barbarians of every race and language into an organized empire, and prepare them for becoming, when that empire was dissolved, the free members of the commonwealth of Christian Europe" (R, 3:64-65). Admiration for individual preeminence was finally less important than—and perhaps distracted from—reverence for the providential, which operated on the level of the nation.

Here was a more challenging dramatic problem: Arnold's didactic purposes required that the identity of the state be realized with as much intensity as that of its great individuals. He follows the romantic historian's lead in seeking "national personality" in phenomena such as race, language, religion, and institutions. In the *History* he provides periodic if necessarily sketchy inventories of various aspects of Roman culture—their art and literature, their religious festivals, their public works, and the sources of their wealth—in order to establish the character of the people at important junctures (R, 1:ch. vi; 2:446 ff.). He also follows his contemporaries in assuming that certain political traits were innate to certain "races." The love of institutions and order, the reverence for law, and the subordination of individual to social good characterized both the Greeks and the Romans, needing only the addition of Teutonic morality and domestic virtue to produce a racial mixture uniquely suited to promote Arnold's ideal Christian democracy. Arnold uses laws to reveal "the deliberate mind" of a society. This was particularly true of property laws, since in his moralized political order the possession of property "calls forth and exercises . . . forethought, love of order, justice, beneficence, and wisdom in the use of power," thereby determining the social maturity of a given civilization (L, 19). Arnold tries, for instance, to incorporate his investigations of various land tenures into a "sort of Domesday Book of Italy after the Roman Conquest" (LC, 514) that would, like England's, reveal social as well as economic relationships.

Although he believed that a state's political history at times obscured its "infinitely more important" social condition, in most places in the *History of Rome* he had in large part to rely on the former to gauge the latter. In its first half, his sympathy and interest



focus on the struggle of the commons to gain legitimate power, his criticisms on the obstructions created by burgher and aristocrat to such "natural" progress (R, 1:229; 2:19-20; 2:271-72). In volume 3, however, his sympathies begin to shift, in part because the aristocracy had shown itself willing to share power gradually, but more importantly, because he found in them a needed embodiment of the "spirit, and wisdom, and power of Rome" (R, 3:64), of a collective heroism to counterbalance Pyrrhus and Hannibal. Believing that "against a whole nation of able and active men the greatest individual genius of a single enemy must ever strive in vain" (R, 2:463-64), Arnold needed to make the aristocracy demonstrate the same purity of motive he expected from great heroes. The "unyielding magnanimity" (R, 3:64) with which the Roman aristocracy devoted themselves to the defense of the commonwealth against Hannibal—their fidelity under duress (R, 3:158), their willingness to endure personal sacrifice (R, 3:191), their generosity to the commons and the colonies in the face of a greater danger without (R, 3:169)—all support Arnold's claim that they deserved their ascendancy (R, 3:342). Roll calls of great Roman families were the easiest way to individualize this group. Elsewhere Arnold tries to render the nation imaginatively palpable by re-creating the collective experience of citizens, just as he had tried to reconstruct the thoughts of great men. A series of particulars sketches in the Romans' fears at learning of Hannibal's approach (R, 3:244), for instance, or their jubilation after Hasdrubal's defeat at Metaurus (R, 3:377-79). Without data to support such particularity, however, he more often has to treat the nation metaphorically: Rome was the rock standing unshaken in the torrents of war, the special agent of divine providence, against which even the greatest powers were fated to struggle in vain (R, 3:146, 244).

Arnold's attempts to objectify his conception of national life finally carry less narrative weight or interest than his more conventional efforts at military history. Even if the ancient annals had not justified this emphasis, Arnold's belief that military heroics excited "our deep sympathies" would have. Battles had to be either useful or uplifting to justify inclusion: campaigns deserved full coverage only when they contained valuable military lessons or were so striking as to command "the imaginations and moral feelings of all ages and countries." Unlike the "feeble bickerings" of the decaying Greek states, the "varied and eventful story" of Hannibal's Italian campaigns laid such a claim on soldier and general reader alike; so too did

the Sicilian wars, preserving as they did "the immortal names of Syracuse and Archimedes" (R, 3:260). Arnold was convinced that the truth about combat could be discovered neither by those who placed all the good on one side, nor by those "unbeliever[s] in all heroism," who brought "every thing down to the level of a common mediocrity; to whose notions, soldiers care for nothing but pay or plunder, and war is an expensive folly, with no fruit but an empty glory" (L, 301). He takes care in his own accounts to weigh the various merits of conflicting sources, reminding his audience, for instance, of the reasons each side would have for misrepresenting the circumstances of the original Pyrrhic victory at Asculum (R, 2:509) and allotting praise and blame to both sides where due. Guided by his own faith in heroism, however, he willingly credits Livy's claims that when Nero revealed his secret plan to destroy Hasdrubal's reinforcements, his troops "felt the glory of their mission, and shared the spirit of their leader"—that, spurred on by the "universal enthusiasm" of the people, "the soldiers would scarcely receive what was offered to them: they would not halt; they ate standing in their ranks; night and day they hastened onwards, scarcely allowing themselves a brief interval of rest" (R, 3:369). And yet, notwithstanding the traditions preserved and the reverence inspired by military history, Arnold never forgets that other virtues outweigh the soldier's: he criticizes Nero's injustice and inhumanity toward the vanquished as much as he does Hasdrubal's decision to face certain death with his troops rather than escape to serve his country once again (R, 3:375-76).

The moral power of military history depended upon the historian's ability to make it vivid and comprehensible to a general audience. Arnold draws upon a variety of devices to personalize and make immediate his battle scenes. The Napoleonic wars were still fresh in memory and charged with emotion; hence, Sentinum becomes the Austerlitz of the second Samnite War (R, 2:346), and Hannibal's deliverance of Capua is likened to Napoleon's of Dresden (R, 3:231). To convey a clear and concise idea of military tactics, Arnold presents them in layman's terms and often from the point of view of participants. It is more than a mere rhetorical flourish, he claims, to compare the destruction of the Carthaginian fleet at Syracuse to the "destruction of the giants by the thunder of Jove" (R, 1:466)—such was the comparison actually suggested to eyewitnesses "amidst the excitement and enthusiasm of the actual spectacle." The queer but deadly instruments that helped deliver the city a second time come to

life through the eyes of the astounded Romans. Those who were not shot at through loopholes by invisible enemies saw long poles "like the arms of a giant" dropping stones on their heads and grappling hooks reaching down to upset their ships. So daunted by these "strange and irresistible devices" did they become that, "if they saw so much as a rope or a stick hanging or projecting from the wall, they would turn about and run away, crying 'that Archimedes was going to set one of his engines at work against them' " (R, 3:286-87). The audience is clearly meant to share in the enemy's amusement at such spectacles and to see the human side of warfare.

Closeups on individuals afford another means of humanizing the scale of battles and of personalizing even the most legendary experiences. In Hannibal's crossing the Alps, our interest focuses as much on the personal drama as on the military feat. We join Hannibal at the summit where, according to Polybius, he tried to rally his despairing troops:

He called them together; he pointed out the valley beneath, to which the descent seemed the work of a moment: "That valley," he said, "is Italy; it leads us to the country of our friends the Gauls; and yonder is our way to Rome." His eyes were eagerly fixed on that point of the horizon; and as he gazed, the distance between seemed to vanish, till he could almost fancy that he was crossing the Tiber, and assailing the capitol. (R, 3:89-90)

The infectious self-confidence that arouses his troops at Cannae in the face of daunting odds again impresses us with the power of Hannibal's personality and the extent of his daring and ambition. The narrative that follows this closeup is typical: Arnold counterpoints the main lines of the traditional account with a limited amount of analysis and picturesque detail. He opens with the obligatory review of the troops, but also captures small details of weather that help one to visualize the scene: the dusty wind that blew into Roman faces, the rising sun that "flashed obliquely on their brazen helmets . . . and lit up the waving forest of their red and black plumes" (R, 3:139). He attempts some explanation of the Romans' strategic mistakes and furnishes comparisons to help his readers grasp the scene: the Roman army advanced like the English column at Fontenoy, the final carnage found parallel only in the Greeks' butchery of the Persians at Plataea. For the most part, everyone acts in character in this set piece: the stones of the Balearian slingers fall "like hail" on the Roman line, the Numidians pursue the enemy with unwearied speed and unpar-

ing ferocity, the Romans struggle on "against all hope by mere indomitable courage" (R, 3:140-42).

Arnold's battle pieces remain largely conventional: they preserve "details too famous to be omitted" and do not significantly modify the standard accounts. However, what Hare called Arnold's "singular geographical eye" supplied observations that were genuinely original. Arnold was among the first to adopt an attitude that soon became customary: that the historian had a duty to visit sites in person, to confirm the accuracy of his descriptions but also to sympathize with and understand events more fully. His use of detail gathered in such trips also anticipated techniques used by later historians to draw the reader into the scene. He frequently included "personal recollections" from his Roman travels in the *History* because he thought they would "give an air of reality to the narrative greater than it ever could have from maps" (LC, 549). His references to the geography of present day Ascoli, for instance, help explain the success of Pyrrhus's elephants against ancient Asculum (R, 2:505). Having seen "those strange masses of rock which rise here and there with steep cliffy sides" out of the Rhone makes it easier for him to understand how a detachment of Hannibal's troops were able to cross it and cut off the Gauls (R, 3:76). Elsewhere, he recalls the modern day scene only to stress past differences. The famous harbor of modern Carthegena was in ancient times a lagoon so shallow that at low tide Scipio's troops could cross it on foot, giving credence to their general's claims that Neptune himself had intervened on their behalf. Although the country around the Metaurus River was in Arnold's day an "open, joyous, and habitable region," Hasdrubal was trapped while retreating through it because "the dark masses of uncleared wood still no doubt in many parts covered the face of the higher plain," and the river below, "not to be judged of by its present scanty and loitering stream, ran like a river of a half cleared country, with a deep and strong body of waters," thus preventing his passage (R, 3:372). Arnold's frustration over the vagueness of Polybius's account was compounded by his fear that "accustomed as we are . . . in the present century, to regard the crossing of the Alps as an easy summer excursion, we can even less than our fathers conceive the difficulties of Hannibal's march, and the enormous sacrifices by which it was accomplished," confronted as he was by glaciers instead of the blue lakes and "the bright hues of the thousand flowers, which now delight the summer traveller on the Col of the Little St. Bernard!" (R, 3:480-81). Geographical evidence af-

forded a measure of eye-witness credibility to the historian, of eye-witness participation to the reader. Placing the reader in the scene gave historical imagination a habitation. Overlaying the familiar present with a stranger, wilder past then made sharper the need for a conscious act of projection preliminary to sympathy and understanding, a conscious surrender of modern assumptions and scepticism preliminary to accurate vision.

Arnold's keen interest in geography helped make his accounts of military campaigns among the most graphic and immediate in the *History*, at least in part because visiting sites afforded a kind of first-hand insight that his fragmentary and contradictory sources would always deny him. In the final analysis, however, the *History of Rome* was innovative in neither its artistry nor its scholarship. Despite his belief in the importance of the social and personal dimensions of the past, the *History* remained predominantly a political history, for Arnold lacked the visionary powers to illuminate the lacunae in his sources. As both Stanley and Hare acknowledged, his strength lay in "combining what was already known, rather than in decyphering what was unknown" (LC, 160; R, 3:viii). He admired "the richness of [Niebuhr's] learning and the felicity of his conjecture" all the more because he could not share them, could not duplicate the "personal characters and . . . distinct events" that the German divined so confidently. On the other hand, despite his keen sense of his own dramatic failures in this regard, the dimensions of his history are true to his own predilections. The nation, as represented by its internal political development, was more important than "personal characters"; the central fact of Roman history was its fulfillment of providence by military defeat of Hannibal. The Roman annals needed a critical and chastening appraisal, but only so that their tale of national triumph could be accepted with a more "scientific" certitude, and their life of the state be read in moral terms.

Arnold's faith in the order and benevolence of God's world, in the living reality of those supreme truths which study of that world could only vindicate, unified his life and thought to a degree that many in later periods could only envy. This faith remains a major source of his appeal and importance for contemporaries. It gave him the confidence to meet head-on the forces that threatened disunity in his society. When demographic as well as ideological forces were driving a wedge between Church and State, he tried to reunite them by redefining their roles, making religion practical and government moral.

## *History as Practical Evangel*

Realizing the danger of allowing scientific and historical modes of analysis to be sufficient to an understanding of the world, he co-opted both and enlisted them in the service of belief. Seeing that in a modern age faith would weaken unless it could be made both intellectually and spiritually acceptable, he devised an interpretive model that could acknowledge the validity of new critical methods without abandoning to them the fundamental bases of belief. Dedicated to progress but well aware of the limitations of a strictly Utilitarian conception of it, he substituted the higher usefulness of historical lessons for the calculus of pain and pleasure. Sensing how deep was the channel of conservatism in English life, but appreciating the strength of the current of change working against it, he offered an organic model of development that would accommodate both, making reform the highest respect for one's forefathers, as well as the fulfillment of one's duties to the present.

Arnold's skill in reconciling potentially subversive impulses becomes clear when his approach to history is put in perspective. In his understanding of national identity, in his broadened conception of the range of data needed to document that identity, in his respect for myth, legend, and other forms of imaginative literature as source materials, and in his concern for resuscitating the life of the past rather than merely recording events, he was deeply influenced by romantic historiography. His organic model of change and progress also owes much to romantic thought, as does his reverence for the past as something that touches us "in the divinest part of our nature." But his deepest temperamental biases were more in harmony with the systematizing "philosophical" spirit of the Enlightenment. He too tended to view all history as a repository of facts that could be shown to document general laws once inductive methods were applied. He also believed that such laws could then be used deductively to judge specific cases, and to offer practical guidance for the present. Although he could appreciate the specificity and uniqueness of certain kinds of historical data, his intellectual bent was pervasively generalizing and essentially anti-historicist: data were useful only when they had been categorized according to universal types. Imaginative sympathy with past events could move him deeply but never convert him, for he went to the past as one of the faithful seeking confirmation, not as a doubter seeking proof. Resuscitation of the past was the result, not the cause, of conviction; it allowed him to experience and to represent more fully those particular cases that confirmed what he

needed to believe were eternal laws. Knowing that he lacked evidence for the kind of fully realized, fully dramatized narrative he advocated, he still chose Roman history; Rome's ability to illustrate laws of development strategically important for his own day quite outweighed its sketchiness in unique "biographical" detail.

But if his methods were similar to those of eighteenth-century historians, his ends were different in ways that fundamentally transformed his means. In his hands a philosophical, scientific view of history confirmed the validity of those very moral truths that the Enlightenment historian had intended to explode. The regularity that Arnold's scientific laws confirmed lay not in the static duplication of the same standards for all ages but in the recognition of relative standards for different stages of growth. The order of these stages gave a scientific regularity to the historical process, a regularity that made comparison and generalization about similar stages and the overall pattern of history possible, without necessitating that specific phenomena in given stages be uniform from culture to culture. Arnold's "science of man" was fully compatible with Christian belief; for him, the authority of the natural order and the authority of the moral order were one and divine, so that the pursuit of truth could only end in the better understanding of God's will.

Arnold's attitude toward historical study was highly influential for his contemporaries because it answered so many of their needs. Here was a scholar who embraced the methods of German erudition and introduced a new scientific rigor into historical study, thus promising to put history's truths on an objective basis. Here too was an artist whose narratives were both imaginatively satisfying and braced with a healthy dose of didactic uplift. But most importantly, here was a great religious teacher who reassured his age that history, rightly understood and properly applied, could be shown to confirm society's fundamental ethical beliefs and give eloquent testimony to a divinely ordained order. He could convince the public that the historian had a vital and noble role to play as sage and teacher, one who could derive the laws of history and show how these could be used to guide society through what often seemed like a troubled future. Arnold's concrete contributions to historical scholarship in England were not so important as this tone of high moral seriousness and practicality that he lent to it. It would be heard again and again in the Inaugural lectures of Regius Professors of Modern History, which after his tenure tended to be manifestos of the historian's assumptions about the morality

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and practicality of historical study.<sup>26</sup> Although he didn't live long enough to give his theories full embodiment, he provided a statement of purpose and direction that would not be seriously challenged until much later in the century.

What Arnold found in history, he had himself brought to it. The deepest foundations of his faith admitted no challenges, and so inevitably all endeavors—intellectual, artistic, scientific, political, pedagogical—wound up confirming faith. Followers who set out to examine the bases of belief with the same intellectual rigor but without the foregone conclusion that they were true found them all too susceptible to erosion by scientific and historical modes of criticism, and were left without an adequate means of coping with the relativism that resulted. Arnold's supreme confidence in the certainty of belief was the gift of an earlier age, but his attempts to make Christian ethics a major force in secular life retained its appeal even when the rare unity of the intellectual and the spiritual that Arnold achieved had broken down. History, as the best proof of a divine order for believers and the best alternative to one for those who doubted, would play a major role in this process of secularization in the years that followed.