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A Study Of Reflections Of George Eliot's Religious And Philosophical Thought As Seen Through Characters In Adam Bede And Middlemarch

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T.D.W.

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my loving husband, Mr. Ernest J. West, for his moral support and unlimited patience; Mrs. Carrie Dabney, my mother, who provided words of encouragement, and to Regina A. West, my daughter, for being so sweet and understanding.

T.D.W.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

George Eliot, the first English novelist to move in the vanguard of the thought and learning of her day, added new scope and dignity to the English novel.

Neither profundity of thought nor quantity of learning is necessarily an asset to the novelist; there have been great novelists who lacked both, and there are scholars and philosophers who have written bad novels. But a powerful mind operating naturally through the medium of fiction does produce novels with merits all their own, and George Eliot, who had an eye for character, and an ear for dialogue, and a clear sense of the social and economic conditions which govern men's daily living, as well as unusual intelligence and knowledge, can be said to have made the novel intellectually respectable without losing anything of its qualities of liveliness or entertainment.[1] George Eliot, who was both idealist and agnostic and derived both idealism and her agnosticism from her own intellectual inquires into moral and religious questions, had had her own answer to these

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[1]James Oliphant. Victorian Novelist. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965), p. 1067.

difficulties; she was too intelligent to ever try to solve a moral problem by mere sentimentality.[2]

In all her fiction, George Eliot was concerned with moral problems of character. but she never abstracted her characters from their environment in order to illustrate their moral dilemmas.

It must be remembered that George Eliot was one of the Victorian sages as well as a novelist, one of those who worried, thought, and argued about religion, ethics, history and character with all the concern felt by those most receptive to the currents of new ideas flowing in on Victorian thought. She was most sensitive to their implications. A sage whose moral vision is most effectively communicated through realistic fiction is an unusual phenomenon-or at least was unusual at the time when George Eliot began to write. If it has become less unusual since, that is because George Eliot by her achievement in fiction permanently enlarged the scope of the novel.

All that agnostic science and philosophy had to teach, George Eliot accepted. She accepted its doctrine of descent, its new psychology, and its theories of society and human destiny. Philosophy was to her more than an abstract theory of the universe; into it entered a tender sympathy for all

human weaknesses, a profound sense of mystery of existence, and a holy purpose to make life pure and true to all she could reach.[3]

As one reads the works and life of George Eliot he becomes interested in why her life was filled with confusion and unrest. He wonders why she seemed unstable in her beliefs that are so thoroughly reflected in the lives of her characters. A consideration of this seeming need or uneasiness led the reader to attempt to discover whether the religious and philosophical thoughts of George Eliot's characters are really George Eliot's thoughts or the thoughts of individuals who influenced her.

The purpose of this study is to trace the development of Dinah Morris and Mr. Irwine in Adam Bede and Mr. Farebrother in Middlemarch, to give evidence that they are reflections of George Eliot's own religious and philosophical thought and understanding.

The writer selected only those works which clearly depict religious and philosophical thought; therefore, this study will be confined to character portrayal, character interaction, and character reaction to situations when these situations have philosophical and religious overtones. The writer has chosen Dinah Morris in Adam Bede as a religious

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[3]John Hollaway. The Victorian Saga. (London: Macmillan, 1953), pp. 78-81.

and philosophical reflection, Mr. Farebrother in Middlemarch and Mr. Irwine in Adam Bede as religious and philosophical reflections.

The writer is cognizant of the many studies made on the religious characters of George Eliot. She acknowledges with some indebtedness the attempts and findings of the following scholars who have completed master's thesis of related works:

Burbaker, Mora E. Religion Motifs in George Eliot's Adam Bede and Middlemarch. University of Texas, 1953,

Edens, Agnes. The Place of Religion in George Eliot's Novels. University of Texas, 1931.

Levine, George L. Determinism in the Novels of George Eliot. University of Minnesota, 1959.

Martin, Christine. Predominant Theories in Selected Works of George Eliot that Reflected Her Life and Her Time. Prairie View A. & M. College, 1957.

Tucker, Houston, C. George Eliot's Ideal Self: A Study of Subjective Influences on Her Prose Fiction. Vanderbilt University, 1959.

However, not any of the research examined revealed an exhaustive study of George Eliot's treatment of religious and philosophical thoughts as reflected in her novels.

This study is based on the hypothesis that in the novels Adam Bede and Middlemarch, through the characters Dinah Morris, Mr. Farebrother and Mr. Irwine, one is able to trace George Eliot's own religious philosophical thought.

In chapters I and II the writer will attempt to show the background and development of George Eliot's religious and philosophical influences. Chapters III and IV, will further support the hypothesis that Eliot's characters are reflections of her own religious and philosophical thought or understanding.

It is hoped that this study will be of some value to students who might profit by seeing George Eliot's technique of weaving her philosophical and religious thoughts into the fabric of her works and producing realistic novels which have withstood the test of time.

CHAPTER I

GEORGE ELIOT'S RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

George Eliot was born Mary Ann Evans at Arbury Farm in Warwickshire on November 22, 1819. When Mary Ann was born, England was seething with economic misery and political unrest. The Battle of Waterloo was still a recent event, and the French Revolution only a little less recent. In the light of what happened in France, religious observances were seen as a patriotic duty: the landed gentry on one side, and the large employers of labor on the other, lost no time in enlisting God on the side of firm government. In the year of George Eliot's birth, conditions of many workers in England were not very different from slavery. The curse of Adam was heavy upon these workers' land. The landscape was flat, with no rivers, no lakes, no hills or valleys. The only water to be seen was the brown water of the canals. Anglicanism, preeminently the religion of the ruling class, was flourishing side by side with Evangelical Dissent, the extreme of Protestantism which was the religion of the common people.

In the home George Eliot had deep religious influences. Her father, Robert Evans, was the dominant influence on her life. He had strong religious respect for whatever was

customary, including an acceptance of the rites of the Established Church. His religion was of a simple semi-pagan kind, consisting of revering whatever was customary and respectable; it was necessary to be baptized, else one could not be buried in the churchyard, and to take the sacrament before death as a security against more dimly understood perils; it was of equal importance to have the proper pall-bearers and well-cured hams at one's funeral, and to leave an unimpeachable will.[1]

Clearly Robert Evans was the law and the prophets for Mary Ann, and if she had glimpses of the outside world, the views of her father represented ultimate truth, or were taken as indisputable assertions of matter of fact.

In early years George Eliot had acquaintances among members of various creeds: Evangelicals, Methodists, and Baptists had influences upon her religious thought.[2] The first meaningful influence outside the home was felt when she was nine years old and a boarder at Mrs. Wallington's school in Nuneaton, in 1828-32. There Eliot met a Miss Lewis whose influence was to be a strong and lasting one.

Mary Ann's attachment for Miss Lewis came about because Miss Lewis met the basic needs in the girl's nature. The fact that she was such a lonely girl from childhood made her

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[1]Gerald W. Bullett. George Eliot. (New York: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 10.

[2]Letters, VI, 163.

more receptive to anyone who offered or seemed to offer understanding, direction, and sympathetic instruction. For example, Mary Ann was a talkative person; therefore, she needed utterance. She wanted to be good; therefore, she followed the strong Evangelical pattern set before her by Miss Lewis. The pattern set by Miss Lewis included attending prayer meetings and organizing clothing clubs for the needy. The Evangelicals had always made much of prayer meetings. Many of them, even now, guage man's spiritual progress by his readiness to pray extempore. Thus, Mary Ann became active in organizing such meetings among girls. The Evangelicalism of Miss Lewis considered it sinful to be occupied with feminine vanities like dress, and worldly accomplishments like dancing and singing. Many innocent amusements were condemned; all were suspected; therefore, the only pleasure Mary Ann allowed herself was that of reading, but reading of a very strict kind which included; Young's Night Thoughts, an essay on "Schism" by professor Hoppus of the London University, the Evangelical Milner's Church History, Isaac Taylor's Ancient Christianity, and the Oxford Tracts.

Being the recipient of Miss Lewis and, thus, Evangelicalism, for another characteristic of Eliot's nature, was a natural reaction for her to model herself or imitate persons she adored. Mary Ann states in her letters, "I was single-minded in my emotional attachments, my ambition was always to

pattern my life after the person I adored, I tried to make myself into an angel of rectitude to suit Miss Lewis."[3] So Mary Ann abased herself at Miss Lewis's feet, trying to please her Evangelical governess. If Miss Lewis considered all worldly pleasures sinful; therefore, it followed that Mary Ann, too, must turn her back on frivolous amusement and think of her soul's welfare.

Mary Ann became an easy convert to Evangelicalism not only because of Miss Lewis's strong influence, but also because Mary Ann was at the age when sacrifice or self-abnegation of one phase or another allured the devotee to any creed... The girl voluntarily put herself in the bondage of the new dispensation.[4] Although the Evangelicals were concerned mainly with the salvation of souls, their religion was primarily of feeling and duty. It has been previously noted that the Evangelicals concerned themselves with projects of benevolence and worship. Thus their missionary work and enterprises were centered around the forming of clothing clubs which provided clothes for the less fortunate people, prayer meeting, and the teaching of the Bible. They were inclined to take human poverty and suffering for granted. They seemingly felt that suffering was God's way of letting one know

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[3] Ibid., VI, 167.

[4] Blanche C. Williams. George Eliot. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 19.

that he was one of the elect. However, it was felt that even the elect needed discipline; therefore, they led a successful agitation for the strict observance of the Sabbath.[5]

Evangelicalism furnished Mary Ann with the essential properties of her mind: conception of God, election, duty, responsibility, and man's awful destiny that were to remain with her until the end, long after she had ceased to be a Christian, much less an Evangelical Christian. It taught Mary Ann to believe that religion took the place of books, that instantaneous conversion was possible, and that emphasis should be placed on human duty-not only might an individual influence the life of another, but he might be responsible for another man's soul. In fact, she began to believe, as did the Evangelicals, that it was one's duty to be more interested in saving one's own soul.[6]

Later Mary Ann was to free herself from the Evangelical bondage; yet submitting to it, she was developing the character whose ideal was duty, and whose constant recognition was the inevitability of effect from cause. This concept of life came when she rejected Christianity which did not believe that religion and morality were separate, and believed that God is more important than man.[7] But to think these Evangelical

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[5] Ibid., p. 45.

[6] Ibid., p. 22.

[7] Ibid., p. 59.

years were lost years of George Eliot's understanding of life would be a superficial idea, for it was during these years that she began to develop her particular sensitivity and awareness.

The final religious influence on Eliot was what she referred to as Calvinism. The term here refers to the emphases found in her country among Baptists and Methodists on the Sovereignty and the grace of God and among some Baptists, particularly on predestination and election. Her interest in these beliefs began when Mary Ann was thirteen.[8] At that time her father removed her from Miss Wallington's school and sent her to a school headed by the Misses Franklin, daughters of a Baptist minister. The transfer did not alter the friendship with Miss Lewis. But due to the tone of the school, Mary Ann was able to diversify her activities--especially her reading. She revealed in her correspondence with Miss Lewis, her early governess, that she was reading a great deal of miscellaneous literature.[9] At the Franklin's school she read history, ancient and modern; scrap poetry picked from Shakespeare, Cowper, Wordsworth, Milton; newspaper topics; morsels of Addison and Bacon; Latin verbs, geometry, entomology, and chemistry.[10]

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[8] Ibid., p. 64.

[9] Eliot, op. cit. p. 190.

[10] Leslie Stephens. George Eliot. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1902), p. 16.

Despite her indulgence in reading materials which were considered sinful by the Evangelicals, she maintained a deeply religious attitude. At the Franklins, the same as at Miss Lewis's, Mary Ann became a leader at prayer meetings in the school and organized clothing clubs and other charitable activities among the poor of the town.[11] Although her involvement in such activities was a carry-over from her Evangelical training, her dedication now stemmed from her sense of duty to Calvinism. According to Cross: "Mary Ann with her chamleon-like nature soon adopted the Franklin's religious views with intense eagerness and conviction."[12] She was especially affected by the Baptist sermons which stressed the absolute sovereignty of God and his unmerited grace as the source of man's salvation. The Calvinists placed emphasis upon man's freedom and held that God's sovereignty was so exercised as to be co-operable with the freedom of man, however, they taught Mary Ann to believe that God selected a certain few, the elect, for eternal salvation and abandoned the rest, the mass of mankind, to eternal damnation, and material prosperity was interpreted as one of the signs of election.[13]

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[11] Ibid., p. 25.

[12] Ibid., p. 26.

[13] Margaret Crompton. George Eliot. (London: Thomas Yseloff, 1960), p. 56.

The Calvinists were highly emotional; therefore, if one trembled and had chills at prayer meeting he was believed to be one of the chosen. Understandably then, when Mary Ann was taken to church with the Misses Franklin, she would burst into tears. The chanting of the choir seemed to her like the voice of the Almighty Himself.[14]

Methodists who were Calvinist-inclined also influenced Eliot. Constant association with her relations in Wirksworth was responsible for this interest. Mrs. Samuel Evans, Eliot's aunt, was an ardent Methodist preacher and an exponent of the Methodist doctrines.[15] Dressed in a severe sort of Quaker costume, Mrs. Evans went about the country preaching and converting. Mary Ann became a devoted admirer of this pious and courageous aunt, and this enabled Mrs. Evans to play a vital role in influencing Mary Ann's life religiously.[16]

The influence exerted by Mrs. Evans was not that of alerting Eliot's established belief, but that of intensifying those beliefs; for if there were differences in some of the tenets of Evangelicalism and Calvinism, both Baptist and Methodist, there were two major principles on which they all

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[14] Ibid., p. 60.

[15] Charles Gardner. The Inner Life of George Eliot. (London: Sir Isaac, Pitman and Sons, 1912), p. 89.

[16] Ibid., p. 90.

agreed-that of the sovereignty of God and the need for the individual to give of himself in the service of God.

One might conclude that Eliot's involvement in Evangelicalism-Calvinism enabled George Eliot to accept the way of life demonstrated by Jesus, the need for sacrifice or self-giving, the belief which affirmed at once the littleness and the eternal significance of the individual human being, and the inescapable truth that we are members one of another.[17] George Eliot maintained to the end of her life, the ethical idealism Christianity had taught her in her Anglican home at Griff, at the Evangelical school of Miss Wallington, and at the strongly Calvinistic institution of the Misses Franklin.[18] Her puritanism, her worship of duty, rested all her life upon the consciousness of an inner reality, which did adhere to the creeds readily identified with the Divine.[19]

However, as Eliot grew older, she evolved her own religious attitudes. This rejection, which came during her early twenties, was not one which denied the wisdom of Jesus or the inspiration of his example, but which rejected the

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[17]William Dawson, George Eliot. (New York: F. H. Revell and Company, 1886), p. 45.

[18]Lord David Cecil. Early Victorian Novelist. (Indianapolis: The Bob-Merrill Company, 1935), p. 65.

[19]Ibid., p. 68.

system of beliefs invented by a succession of theological committees during the four centuries that followed Jesus's death, and in particular the doctrines of the exclusive incarnation of God in an historical person who is also the Second Person of the Trinity.[20] Eliot's rejection of Chrisitianity resulted from her reading Isaac Taylor's Ancient Christianity.

Even before leaving Griff to move to Coventry where her father went to live after his retirement in 1841, George Eliot had begun to read serious theological works, but perhaps it was Taylor's Ancient Christianity which, more than any other book, "first shook the foundation of George Eliot's orthodoxy"[21] or made the first negative influence upon her Christian belief. The general effect of this book convinced her that morality was not dependent upon dogma or theology. Haight quoted George Eliot's husband and biographer John Cross, as saying, "I am inclined to think it (Taylor's book) had its influences in unsettling her views of Christianity."[22] The Hansons too believed that it was Taylor whom Eliot referred to as "my jewel Taylor"[23] who strengthened her

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[20] Ibid., p. 75.

[21] Bullett, op. cit., p. 36.

[22] Gordon S. Haight (ed), The Letters of George Eliot. (New York: Oxford University, 1954), p. 38.

[23] Laurence and Elizabeth Hanson, Marian Evans and George Eliot. (London and New York: Oxford University, 1954), p. 98.

predisposition to the idea that morality was not necessarily dependent upon religion. According to the Hansons, "Taylor must have convinced her that dogma and piety of the ancient Christians were largely external and superficial-matters of mere fore."[24]

However, more important, perhaps, was the weakening of her ascetic tendencies, which must have been the result of openly considering his allegations against the ascetic practices of the pristine church. This, coupled with her own observation that many of her acquaintances, "although professed and often zealous Methodists," led her to a knowledge that religious dogma and morality could be independent of each other.

Finally, the chasm between the belief which Eliot held during her early years and those which were becoming a part of her during her later years widened. This was caused by an incident which involved a Calvinistic woman who had been convicted of lying and believed that God was not concerned with her actions. It then occurred to Mary Ann that it was not creed that made one a good person, for that was common to all. It was one's innate goodness that shed a glamour upon creed. Rightly or wrongly Mary Ann had no use

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[24] Ibid., p. 101.

[25] Ibid., p. 104.

for religion divorced from morality, and, the distinction once made, she began to perceive that in point of human goodness, which was her chief concern, there was nothing to choose between the believers in a supernatural revelation and the unbelievers. From that moment, if not before, she was a humanist, heart and soul.

"Calvinism", George Eliot then reported, "is Christianity, and that granted, it is a religion based on pure selfishness."[26] One needed not ask whether Christianity could be identified with Calvinism, or whether antinomianism or pure egoism was in reality a logical deduction from Calvinism. It was clear that George Eliot might have been led to one conclusion that moral nature could not be the product of dogma. She made up her mind that the beauty of character was in no sense the product of the creed. Nor, on the other hand, had it produced the immorality of coarse hypocrites. When George Eliot rejected Christianity, it was to find herself in an austere world, where faith counted for nothing and duties for everything.

By 1842, George Eliot had outgrown completely and abandoned the Christian orthodoxy of her youth and began to seek an adequate substitute. When she found herself without a speculative basis for her ideals of individual

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[26] Letters, I, 15.

excellence, she clung all the more resolutely to the principles instilled in her Evangelical upbringing, though she abondoned the dogmas which gave them authority and sanctity. She erected those moral principles of Evangelicalism into a philosophy, which she believed to be established, ratified, and sanctified by the admonitions of life itself.[27] But this did not suffice, so it was at this point that Mary Ann turned to the philosophical teachings of Charles Bray, Charles Hennell, Auguste Comte, and Ludwig Feuerbach.

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[27]Ernest Albert Baker. The History of the English Novel. (London: H. F. and C. Witherby, 1950), VIII, pp. 225-26.

CHAPTER II
GEORGE ELIOT'S PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES

In chapter one the writer endeavored to trace the development of George Eliot's religious beliefs and to present those influential forces behind these beliefs. An endeavor was also made to show why, as she grew older, Eliot chose to reject these early religious attitudes which she evolved.

This chapter will show the influence that pantheism and positivism had on George Eliot's philosophical thought. Here, as in chapter one, attention will be given to the motivating forces behind this development of the views, pointing out those which she accepted only temporarily and those which she maintained throughout her life.

In April, 1842,Mary Ann Evans wrote Francis Watts: "I feel with Coleridge that "the notion of Revelation abandoned, there is a tendency toward pantheism,and that the personality of the Diety is not to be maintained quite satisfactorily apart from Christianity."[1] Evans's break with Christianity did not, then, involve a complete revolution in her world view; for although some of her beliefs underwent radical

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1 Letters,I, p. 136.

change, many were simply cast into a new form.[2] Her belief in the affinity or moral and religious views made it imperative that she reformulate her religious views. Pantheism, identifying the material with the spiritual, the natural with the supernatural, permitted the intimate combination of sensuous force and spiritual passion of realism and moralism.[3] Thus, pantheism provided a foundation for this reformulation.

The philosophy of Charles Bray, a renown pantheist, provided the first guidelines by which Eliot was able to rechannel her beliefs. First, she renounced her early idea of special Providence. Through Bray, she came to believe that Providence would destroy God's highest gift to man-the relationship of invariable cause and effect which man can study and to which man can adapt his conduct.[4] If Providence could change his relationship," reasoned Bray, "man could never be sure that he could depend on anything."[5] Eliot's renunciation of a special Providence, then was replaced by various

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[2]Bernard Paris. Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), pp. 11-12.

[3]Ibid., p. vi.

[4]Charles Bray. The Philosophy of Necessity. (London: Longman, Green, and Roberts, 1863), p. 43.

[5]Ibid., p. 416.

deterministic doctrines. She readily accepted Bray's theory of Necessity. According to Bray:

> It is too much the practice of priesthood to separate the religious and the temporal, to promise compensation in heaven for that which has been taken away in life that such a doctrine has placed a drag on man's progress and improvement.[6]

"Although our supposed freedom of will and of action is a delusion," Bray suggests, "We are determined by mental constitution and circumstances, and only knowledge of causes can make us masters to our own condition for good or ill."[7] Thus, Bray offers alleviation from the imposition placed on man by the priesthood; for the idea is that once man is aware of certain causes, he can direct his actions; therefore, man will receive compensation here for his actions and such compensation will depend on the cause and consequence of that action. Bray's deterministic view that every act, however small and unimportant, leads to inevitable consequences coincides with Eliot's own belief that there is no possible act, however small, which does not merit careful consideration before it is performed.[8]

In addition to the fact that Eliot felt that every action required merited consideration, she also held that the

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[6] Ibid., p. 89.

[7] Ibid., p. 95.

[8] Ibid., p. 98.

repetition of good or wrong acts provided direction which people follow. As Cooke expressed it, "Eliot held that experience gives new character to the inward life, and at the same time determines its motives and its inclinations."[9]

Bray's doctrine of Necessity extended beyond the mental to the physical. Bray believed that "the mind presents itself under the same condition of invariableness of antecedent and consequences as all other phenomena."[10] To Eliot, the difference in the degree of force exerted by antecedent and consequence on the mental and the degree of force exerted by antecedent and consequence on the physical lay in the complexity of the phenomenon.[11]

By the time Eliot was twenty-one, her philosophical views had taken specific shape; the pattern for this shape had been Bray's pantheistic doctrines. But Eliot did not stop here. She chose pantheism in order to strengthen her present understandings and to acquire additional knowledge of the source from which she had derived a satiable substitute for her early religious beliefs. Another strong

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[9]George Cooke. George Eliot: A Critical Study of Her Life, Writings, and Philosophy. (Boston: J. R. Osgood and Company, 1888), p.

[10]Bray, op. cit., p. 99.

[11]Ibid., p. 101.

influence and motivation was Charles Hennell, an exponent of pantheism.

Charles Hennell, it is said, liberated Eliot from fear and restrictions of Evangelicalism and yet permitted her to maintain a belief that gave significance to life.[12] According to him:

> Man will come to see nature as the source of his truth and the object of his veneration. Man's hope lies in the fact that nature's God given law is progress, a movement towards that kingdom on earth that was at the center of Christ's teachings (hence in Christian theism God reveals himself and his purpose for man through nature...the hieroglyphics are ineffectable; the tablet is continually in view; time, then, must ever bring men nearer to Nature's great revelation, the full knowledge of God.[13]

Nature then, felt Hennell, was the primary source of man's revelation and the source of all his desires. It could be relied upon to provide direction, purpose, and ultimate happiness, he thought.[14] Through Hennell's writings Eliot's concept of the theory of cause and consequence and its relationship to the constitution of man's nature were broadened. Of this theory, Hennell offers the following explanation:

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[12]Charles Hennell, Christian Theism. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1839), p. 50.

[13]Ibid., p. 56.

[14]Ibid., p. 90.

> The Natural Consequences of actions becomes...the Scripture of God's will concerning the conduct of man. It is at once man's purpose and salvation (happiness) to put himself in harmony with the will of God as it is revealed in the constitution of human and physical nature.[15]

In Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Chrisitianity, Hennell rejected Christianity as a divine revelation. Natural reason emancipated Christianity from the letters of written precepts, and allowed it to advance with advancement of mankind.[16] Therefore, Hennell considered his work not an attack upon Christianity, but a service to it. Hennell acknowledged that we are permitted "a view far from perfect of the real character of Jesus, but he felt that enough is seen of his benevolent doctrine, attractive character and elevated designs to assure that his influence upon man will never cease."[17] Nevertheless, Hennell did not concede that Jesus's influence upon man was evidence that he was of a higher office. The writer concludes that there can be little doubt of the impact of Hennell's Inquiry on George Eliot's mind.

The full impact of this belief is further noted in a letter of November, 1841, in which she warned Miss Lewis:

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[15]Ibid., p. 100.

[16]Charles Hennell. Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity. (London: Smallfield and Son, 1883), p. vii.

[17]Ibid., p. viii.

"My engrossment in the most interesting of all inquires might lead to results which would startle you, but my one desire is to know that truth, my only fears to cling to error."[18] The startling results to which Eliot referred included her entire repertory of pantheistic beliefs, and chief among these beliefs was Hennell's theory which denied the divinity of Jesus. Eliot agreed with Hennell's idea relative to Jesus's superior morality and to the effects of his influence on the lives of man. Therefore, her revolt was not one against Christian morality per se, but one against Christian morality as envisioned by Miss Lewis and the Evangelicals. Edward Wagenknecht says, "George Eliot's revolt was solely intellectual and at no time moral...It was inevitable that George Eliot should spend the rest of her life attempting to preserve the Christian morality without supernatural sanctions."[19]

Further substantiation is found in a letter to Martha Jackson in December, 1841, during or just after George Eliot's intensive study of the Bible and her reading of Hennell, she indicated her total acceptance of pantheism, and expressed her longing for some way in which she could hasten the acquisition of knowledge to make up for girlish miseducation and idleness.

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[18] Letters, I, p. 200.

[19] Edward C. Wagenknecht. Cavalcade of the English Novel from Elizabeth to George VI. (New York: 1943), p. 332.

From the pantheists Eliot had discovered the existence of Laws of Invariability, but because she had begun to suspect their pantheistic explanations, she felt a need to discover a new explanation; therefore, by 1852 Eliot had been introduced to positivism in which she found answers that she claimed had not been provided by the pantheists; thus, she became re-engaged in the reformulation and redirection of her basic beliefs. Eliot's knowledge of positivism came through her readings of Comte, often referred to as the father of positivism, and Ludwig Feuerbach whose influence on Eliot was perhaps even greater than that of Comte. Prior encounter with these two great positivists had convinced Eliot of much of their philosophical way of thinking.

The positivists, furthermore, provided an understanding of man, nature, and society; and facts about human condition which made Eliot's sense of religious orientation in the cosmos clearer. It is interesting to note at this point, that from the positivistic philosophers, she derived the premises upon which her understanding of moral and religious phenomena were based. The positivists depicted society as an evolving organism. This conception of society appears to have originated with Comte's discussion of social statics, which is "the investigation of the laws of action and reaction of the different parts of the social system." This positivistic conception of society as an organism profoundly

influenced George Eliot's vision of the human condition. She states the following:

> Society stands before us like that wonderful piece of life, the human body, with all its various parts depending on one another. And because the body is made up of so many various parts, all related to each other, all are likely to feel the effect if any one of them goes wrong.[20]

Eliot, on the whole, was fond of pointing out that one man would influence a vast number of individuals whose sphere or activity was remote from his own. Since the effects he produced in others continued beyond his death, the individual had an impersonal immorality. This, he consciously experienced and enjoyed imaginatively in life, for the imagination made the future live in the present. The cosmology of science would not permit George Eliot to imagine a personal existence beyond the grave, but it did enable her to imagine an impersonal existence in and through others. In place of the conventional heaven, she envisioned: "...those immortal dead who live again. In minds made better by their presence."[21] In short, Eliot believed that each man's effort should be to live in such a way that his influence will likewise persist. She freely expresses this idea:

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[20]George L. Levine. "Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot." Publication of the Modern Language Association of America. LXXXVII, No. 3, (June, 1962), p. 268.

[21]Paris. op. cit., p. 45.

> So to live is heaven
> to make undying music in the world.[22]

Auguste Comte, a superior positivist, greatly influenced George Eliot's own philosophical and moral views. His philosophy did not provide all the specific answers to all her questions; however, his theories provided a method by which she could derive her own answers. In opposition of the discovery and origin of cause, Comte held that only the phenomena itself deserved speculation. This is what he claims:

> By speculating upon causes, we could solve no difficulty about origin and purpose. Our real business is to analyze accurately the circumstances of phenomena, and to connect them by the natural relations of succession and resemblance.[23]

Where Hennell had provided nature as the corresponding entity for supernatural phenomena, the positivists considered science to be the entity. In that acceptance of natural sciences involves a high intellect, it is conceivable that Eliot, the intellectual, could direct her thinking along the path of scientific reasoning. Perhaps the most significant aspect of Comte's influence on Eliot's philosophical outlook had to do with that of providing answers to questions of meaning, end, value, and in giving man a sense of religious orientation in the cosmos. Comte insists that prior to the individual's capability of accepting his own answers, he must necessarily have

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[22] Ibid., p. 46.

[23] The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte. trans. Harriet Martineau, 3 vols., (London, 1896) I, 15ff.

passed through three stages-those of the Theological, the Metaphysical, and the Positive. The first stage he contended, was one in which causes (origin and purpose) of all effects were sought and one which accepted the influence of the supernatural and accepted nature or the abstract; and the final is derived from the first two stages, Comte felt, he was then prepared for the positive. The first two stages are important in that they provide the necessary theories which must precede observation, the first step involved in the positive method of problem solving. Based upon observation and facts, other theories and hypotheses are formed. According to Comte:

> At this stage "explanation" is conceived solely in terms of empricial hypotheses or laws which describes the constant relations which hold among classes of observable phenomena.[24]

Comte not only saw the positivistic method as a means of supplying answers, but he envisioned it as the basis for a new "religion of humanity", the characteristics of which would be that of enlightenment and dedication to the Principle of love and Service.[25] Questions relative to social and

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[24] Ibid., p. 128.

[25] Ibid., p. 129.

moral problems were treated by Comte in the same manner as those involved in the intellectual. He felt that there could be a social reorganization based on the observation of social elements in their mutual relation, thereby forming a whole so that the elements can be treated in combination. According to him:

> Because of the dynamic interconnection of the social elements, the fate of each individual is largely determined by the state of the whole, and the state of the whole is modifiable by the actions of individuals. Therefore, the regeneration of social doctrine must establish a new spiritual authority which will become the basis of the final system of human society and the philosophy will teach all classes submission to moral requirements of their position, and the vague and stormy discussion of rights will be replaced by calm and precise determination of duties.[26]

As Eliot did not accept Comte's system of reorganization, she felt that his ideas on this subject were artificial and arbitrary. She did, however, agree with most of Comte's analysis of the condition of society and of what society needs. George Eliot agreed with Comte that feelings were as important as intellect, that duties were a more important consideration than rights, that one's loyalties must be transferred from heaven to earth, that the object of one's devotion must be humanity, and that there is a need for universal love.

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[26] Ibid., p. 131.

The other positivist to exercise an appreciable amount of influence on George Eliot's philosophical attitudes was Ludwig Feuerbach. It was her study of him combined with her own philosophical thinking that led Eliot to her final interpretation of Christianity. In his book, The Essence of Christianity, Feuerbach wrote:

> In religion, consciousness of the object and self-consciousness coincide...here may be applied, without any limitation, the proposition: the object of any subject is nothing else than the antithesis between human nature in general and the human individual; that consequently, the object and contents of the Christian religion are altogether human.[27]

The influence of such ideas upon George Eliot's understanding of religious experiences cannot be overestimated. In a letter to Sara Hennell, written April 29, 1854, Eliot wrote, "With the idea of Feuerbach I everywhere agree."[28] His distinction between dogma and morality, his rejection of an objective supernatural being, his strong emphasis upon the importance of feeling, his agreement with Comte on the place of love as the universal uniting principle, and his insistence that man is the object of religion were ideas which easily commended themselves to George Eliot's mind at this time.

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[27]Ludwig Feuerbach. The Essence of Christianity, trans, George Eliot. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857), p. 274.

[28]Letters, II, 153.

George Eliot accepted Feuerbach's position that man is to be loved for man's sake, that "love should be immediate, undertermined by anything else than its object, and that benevolence and justice are strong only in proportion as they are directly and inevitably called into activity by their proper objects."[29] Also she accepted Feuerbach's denial that the determinal to morality was that of an after-life in which are meted out rewards and punishments.

Morality, felt Eliot, had value in its own right, in the present, and was not dependent upon the rewards of a future life and that a substantial basis for morality was in the principle of pleasure and pain. She wrote, in a letter of May 8, 1869, to Mrs. Harriet B. Stowe: "As healthy, sane human beings we must love and hate--love what is good for mankind, and hate what is evil for mankind."[30] It seems that Eliot's understanding of Feuerbach's doctrines led her nearer to a new religion-that of Humanism and Morality. In that the principles of this new religion paralled those of Christianity, future references to Eliot's Christianity will necessarily have to do with those Christian doctrines which involved human morality. Bullett says, "George Eliot totally rejected the system of belief

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[29] Letters, IV, 56.

[30] Letters, V, 60.

demonstrated by Jesus, but she never rejected the way of life demonstrated by Jesus or the need of sacrifice or self-giving..."[31] Eliot's position was agnostic, not atheistic. She, like the positivists, preferred to base beliefs on what could be observed and experienced, rather than upon the unseen. Consequently, her concern was turned toward man instead of God. She could see human need, and especially the need for morality in improving the life which human beings lived together.

Having exposed herself to various religious and philosophical doctrines, George Eliot was eventually to establish a personal code of beliefs. Incorporated in this code were modified versions of her early Christian andpantheistic theories, along with those principles of positivism which we were acceptable to her.

Another of the doctrines which influenced Eliot's thinking was that of determinism. She embraced the idea that a person was largely determined by his circumstances and by his own causes, and by exertion of his will; he could, to some extent, rise above his circumstances. Thus, despite the fact that a person had definite limits, he was faced with alternatives within those limits, and it was his duty to elect the most responsible alternatives. As Jerome Thale put it, "The

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[31]Gerald W. Bullett. George Eliot. (New York: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 135.

moral process she deals with can be described as choosing one's life."[32] Moral choices were made, of course, in terms of the options which were available in one's world. Further, she held that the repetition of good or evil acts was largely determined in the development of character; the past determines the present, and the present determines the future. Though accepting the doctrines of determinism, and humanism and morality, George Eliot did reject most vehemently that of Providence. Her belief in the relationship of cause and effect was so strong that she considered it pernicious and capricious to rely upon expectation of some unnatural intervention.

Ultimately, altruism, love of others, and renunciation of selfish interests in favor of the welfare of others became dominate factors with Eliot although she had outgrown the ascetic tendencies of her youth. She clung to the idea (confirmed by Comte and Feuerbach, particularly), that renunciation of selfish concerns in the interest of one's fellows was the only way to gain one's own ultimate contentment with life. Cooke states, "Her thought was that we should live not for self, but for humanity. What so many ardent

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[32]Jerome Thale, The Novels of George Eliot. (New York: 1959), p. 143.

souls have been willing to do for the glory of God she was willing to do for the uplifting of man."[33]

Having arrived at her own code of ethics through her religious and philosophical influences, George Eliot showed reflections of these influences in some of her characters, and the writer will point out these influences in selected characters portrayed in Eliot's novels.

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[33]Cooke, op. cit., p. 234.

CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES REVEALED IN THE CHARACTER DINAH MORRIS

In the previous chapters the writer has attempted to prove that George Eliot had religious and philosophical influences that affected her writing. As a result of these influences the writer will attempt in this chapter to prove that Dinah Morris, a Methodist preacher in the novel Adam Bede, is a reflection of George Eliot's religious and philosophical thought and will point out those philosophies of Bray, Comte, and Feuerbach in Dinah Morris' character that support this point of view.

The greatest motive for the novel Adam Bede was a story told George Eliot by her Methodist aunt, Elizabeth Samuel Evans, about her visit with a condemned criminal. This condemned criminal was an ignorant girl who had murdered her child and refused to confess. Aunt Elizabeth prayed with the girl, led her to confess, and the girl was executed. While George Eliot asserted that there was not a simple portrait in Adam Bede, she admitted that the prototype for Dinah Morris was her aunt, and that Dinah's character grew out of recollections of her.[1] The character, however, reflected Eliot's

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[1] Letters, II, 502f.

belief of sacrifice and self-giving, and supported Eliot's religious dogmas and morality by identifying herself with the sorrows of her neighbors, and reflected George Eliot's support of altruism, love of others, and renunciation of selfish interests in the behalf of others. In order to support the idea of religious and philosophical influences Eliot reveals, through the character Dinah Morris, the three preceding qualities that the writer will be concerned with in this chapter.

Moral teachings of Christianity were held in high regard by George Eliot, What was important to George Eliot, the researcher finds, was not the beliefs embodied in Dinah's sermons or words, but the consistency which existed between Dinah's professions and her moral action. In the light of George Eliot's position concerning dogma and morality, it might be safe to say that Eliot considered Dinah's dogmatics to be really inconsequential, so long as in her life she demonstrated genuine morality and feeling for others. It was certainly not Dinah's theology which attracted George Eliot; it was her power to feel, to enter into the joys and sorrows of her fellows, that generous stirring of neighborly kindness so completely hers. There was an integrity in Dinah because her creed was expressed concretely through deeds without dichotomy of dogma and morality which George Eliot found to

be so obnoxious among many professing Christians. It was Dinah's ability to feel with her neighbors and her willingness to minister to them in their sorrows which made her admirable. This was clearly seen by her aunt, Mrs. Poyser. When Dinah was going to see Lisbeth Bede after Thias Bede's death, Mrs. Poyser in her candid way told her "...for you're one as is allays welcome in trouble Methodist or no Methodist."[2] George Eliot's high regard for the moral teachings of Christianity, despite her rejection of dogma, and this ethic was, for her, an ethic of feeling which identified itself with the sorrows and longings of men. "Christianity", Eliot feels, "is the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and has the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages."[3] George Eliot treated Dinah with sympathy and serious approval instead of laughing at her. In recalling the words of George Eliot, "I have no longer any antagonism toward any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves...I have the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christianity of all ages."[4] Because of this the researcher finds that Eliot reveals in Dinah an unerring delicacy and

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[2] Adam Bede, p. 38.

[3] Leslie Stephens. George Eliot. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1902), p. 69.

[4] Letters, III, 230.

nobility of feeling; and her sermons are expositions of that side of her creed which clearly ought to appeal to one's better nature.[5] Favorable treatment of Dinah has provided support to the contention in the second chapter that Eliot stressed feeling over intellect. Dinah was hardly sophisticated, but she was drawn powerfully to other people, especially those who suffered. Thale was in general correct, one might think, in saying that Dinah had feeling and sympathy which were lacking in the other main characters of the novel. He said, "She was able to feel for others."[6] Thale thought that "In Dinah, George Eliot may be giving a phenomenological description of Christianity at its best."[7] Christianity transcends the limits of the natural man through grace, and Dinah "was never left to herself; but it was always given her when to keep silent and when to speak." Neighborly kindness and love for others may be seen again with Dinah Morris's contact with Hetty, the poor little helpless girl who had murdered her child and was convicted to be hanged the next day. Dinah Morris, possessing love for others, goes to her in order to persuade her to make a confession. Hetty is a most pathetic figure, bewildered, deserted, and in immediate

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[5]Stephens, op. cit., p. 70.

[6]Jerome Thale, The Novels of George Eliot. (New York: Columbia University Press. 1959), p. 29.

[7]Ibid., p. 29.

prospect of the gallows, and is quite unable to make any opposition to the woman, Dinah Morris, who comes to her with the first message of love from outside the prison. Dinah appears to be a woman with a beautiful soul, and she does her duty with admirable tact and tenderness. Dinah is the only character in Adam Bede whose world is large enough to include both feeling for others and renunciation.

George Eliot's support of altruism, love of others, and renunciation of selfishness in behalf of others found full expression in Dinah Morris. George Eliot did believe in the renunciation of selfish concerns in the interest of others, but she outgrew the rigid ascetism of her youth. It is the opinion of the writer that George Eliot attempted to demonstrate in Dinah as surely as she did in Dorothes Brooke in Middlemarch and Maggie Tulliver in Mill on the Floss-though, admittedly, not as explicitly--that the strict ascetic had a narrow and perverted outlook on life. George H. Creeger affirmed that this was true when he said that Dinah was "no more a complete personality at the beginning of Adam Bede than Hetty." "Dinah was all heart; she lacked head."[8] Creeger later added that Feuerbach must receive the credit for Eliot's idea of the "total man" (heart and head).[9] He

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[8]George H. Creeger. "An Interpretation of Adam Bede," English Literary History. XXIII (September, 1956), 224.

[9]Ibid., p. 230.

advanced a helpful insight in the distinction he made between selfishness and the renunciation of selfishness; "Selfless is a word used frequently in describing (Dinah), but selfless means not only something different from selfish; it also means lacking in self." He saw Dinah "a kind of unwillingness to become fully involved in life."[10] It may be argued, therefore, that Dinah's asceticism and her self-renunciation tended to be a denial of actual selfhood. Here might be recalled the words of Dinah, in which she renounced self by telling Adam, "All my peace and my joy come from having no life of my own," and in which she expressed her fear that in marrying Adam she would "live for my own delight."[11] She was afraid to experience joy or comfort lest she would become a "lover of self."

George Eliot was aware, one may think, that Dinah was not a whole person, and that she misappropriated the true renunciation of selfishness when she went so far as to renounce herself (or Creeger would have it, she did not represent a healthy balance of heart and head). It was this flaw in Dinah's character that George Eliot intended to correct by having Dinah marry Adam. Toward the beginning of the story, Dinah told Seth Bede that she was called to snowfield. It had come upon her mind that "Sister Allen, who's

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[10] Ibid., p. 236.

[11] Adam Bede, p. 490.

in a decline, is in need of me." She had already opened her Bible, and the first words her eyes fell upon gave her a "clear showing of the Lord's will."[12] Seth remonstrated that Dinah should stay at Hayslope and become his wife. In reply, Dinah informed Seth that she loved him as a Christian brother, but that she was not free to marry: "God has called me to minister to others, not to have any joys or sorrows of my own, but to rejoice with them that do rejoice and to weep with them that weep."[13] Dinah's practice of renouncing her own desires came into serious conflict with her love for Adam. Dinah began to flush at the sight of Adam and to thrill at his presence. After Adam and Dinah had confessed their love for one another, Dinah was suspicious of her own desires, and insisted that another (God's) will would have them part. After Adam gently remonstrated, "Who put this great love in our hearts? Can anything be holier than that?" Dinah replied:

> Yes, Adam, I know marriage is a holy state for those who are truly called to it, and have no other drawing; but from my childhood upward I have been led towards another path; all my peace and my joys have come from having no life of my own, no wants, no wishes for myself, and living only in God and those of his creatures whose sorrows and joys he has given me to know. Those have been very blessed years to me, and I feel that if I was to listen to any voice that would draw me aside from that path, I should be turning my back

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[12] Ibid., p. 508.

[13] Ibid., p. 34.

> from the light that has shone upon me, and darkness and doubt would take hold of me.[14]

Her love for Adam had created uncertainty about God's will for her. She insisted that she must wait for some clear guidance from God. She feared that possibly marriage was a temptation to be resisted and thus stated:

> It seems to me as if you were stretching out your arms to me, and beckoning me to come and take my ease, and live for my own delight, and Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, was standing looking towards me, and pointing to the sinful, and suffering and afflicted. I have seen that again and again when I have been sitting in stillness and darkness, and a great terror has come upon me lest I should become hard, and a lover of self, and no more willingly the Redeemer's cross.[15]

Adam assured her that he would never stand between her and her conscience, but Dinah insisted that she must go back home and wait for some clearer "leading." She believed that, in time, "our duty will be made clear."[16]

Dinah's self-renunciation formed what was perhaps a beautiful idea. Stephen implied that Dinah has "a tendency to be insipid," and that "She is a little too good...for this world. I have difficulty in obeying the summons to fall upon my knees and worship Dinah."[17] Bullett wrote that Dinah "is

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[14] Ibid., p. 525f.

[15] Ibid., p. 526.

[16] Ibid., p. 528.

[17] Stephens, op. cit., p. 72.

at best an ideal figure, with scarcely a touch of individuality, and at her less than best she was too conscious of her author's partiality, nor was she altogether free from sanctimoniousness,"[18] The Hanson missed the whole point, in the writer's opinion, in their belief that Adam and Dinah were lacking in faults, that they were "too perfect" for the imagination, and that "their marriage (contrived at Lewes's suggestion) robbed Dinah of her last hope of life."[19] How the Hanson could suppose that George Eliot intended Adam to be faultless is somewhat beyond the imagination. The writer feels just as Adam gained tolerance and understanding in the course of the story, so Dinah became a more complete person.

Creeger thought it a "serious flaw in the novel" that "we are permitted to see the process by which Dinah was enabled to overcome her fear (of becoming fully involved in life, and having her own joy)."[20] Though this be true, George Eliot did, nevertheless, wish to show that Dinah developed in character, that she became involved in life as a real woman, that she was capable of normal emotions. This was not to say

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[18]Gerald Bullett, George Eliot. (New York: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 184.

[19]Laurence and Elizabeth Hanson. Marian Evans and George Eliot. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 206.

[20]Creeger, op. cit., p. 237.

that Dinah lost her faith or her ideals when she consented to marry Adam. She was convinced that it was "the Divine Will". She told Adam, "My soul is so knit to yours that its is but a divided life to live without you. And this moment, now you are with me, and I feel that our hearts are filled with the same love. I have a fulness of strength to bear and do our heavenly Father's will, that I had lost before."[21]

In conclusion, George Eliot's own religious and philosophical opinions are reflected in her treatment of Dinah Morris. First of all, George Eliot indirectly affirmed her opinions that there was no necessary connection between religious dogma and morality. It was true that she granted Dinah integrity and consistency in both, dogmatics and deeds, but George Eliot's emphasis was upon Dinah's morality--her willingness to minister to those in need. Dinah's willingness to serve her fellows was never questioned or treated derisively. George Eliot's belief in altruism, love for others, and renunciation of selfish interests in favor of the welfare of others were epitomized in Dinah. Yet she implied that rigid asceticism and renunciation of selfhood were not to be presumed to be the same as healthy altruism and renunciation of selfishness. Dinah finally found her fulfillment in

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[21]Adam Bede. op. cit., p. 550.

[22]Ibid., p. 556.

an ordinary domestic role in which she could serve others, and have joy and satisfactions of her own. George Eliot's emphasis upon feeling could hardly be conveyed more graphically than in Dinah. Dinah was not intellectual, but neither was she a sentimentalist. She had imaginative sympathy for the plight of her fellows, awareness of their condition, and a strong desire to serve them in their necessity. George Eliot's tolerance was reflected, both in her treatment of Dinah, and in Dinah's own relationship to the members of Hayslope community, a setting in Adam Bede. Dinah was never vindictive, nor was she--Bullett's opinion notwithstanding--oppressively sentimonious in her dealings with her acquaintances.[23] Beneath the Methodist phraseology and Biblical quotations was a genuine concern for an acceptance of the persons to whom she ministered, She never retaliated against her Aunt Poyser's insulting remarks about Methodism and women preachers. She showed the highest respect to the Anglican priest, Mr. Irwine. Even in her relationship to Hetty, her antithesis in the novel, she was not condescending. The difficult scene in which Dinah persuaded Hetty to confess her crime showed Dinah to be tolerant and understanding. To employ an old religious cliché, Dinah hated the sin, but not the sinner.

George Eliot's own history of involvement in Evangelicalism as a young person, her respect for her Methodist

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[23]Bullett. op. cit., p. 186.

preacher aunt, and her own large nature, all contributed to her handling of Dinah. She rejected Dinah's beliefs, but she drew the Methodist woman preacher lovingly and respectfully.

Of equal importance in the revealing of George Eliot's philosophical influences are two Anglican priests, Mr. Irwine in Adam Bede and Mr. Farebrother in Middlemarch who will be treated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES REVEALED IN THE CHARACTERS MR. IRWINE IN ADAM BEDE AND MR. FAREBROTHER IN MIDDLEMARCH

In chapters one and two the writer has attempted to prove that George Eliot had religious and philosophical influences that affected her writing. In this chapter the writer will attempt to prove that Mr.Irwine, an Anglican priest in Adam Bede, and Mr. Farebrother, an Anglican priest in Middlemarch, are unquestionable reflections of George Eliot's philosophical influences. An attempt will also be made to point out those philosophies of Bray, and Comte in support of this point of view.

George Eliot had no illusions about Mr. Irwine, but she admittedly stated that she was partial to him, for he was an embodiment of practically all that Eliot held to be good and true. The writer is of the opinion that Mr. Irwine did not conform to the popular image of what a clergyman should be. Seemingly, George Eliot devoted the fifth chapter of Adam Bede to pleading his case so that the reader would hold him in high esteem. He was appealing to the reader mainly because he was tolerant and sympathetic. It is evident that Mr. Irwine, as well as Mr. Farebrother reflected George Eliot's

philosophical beliefs that morality has value in its own right and is not dependent upon Christian dogma. Reflections were also shown in altruism, renunciation, and determinism. The aforementioned philosophical beliefs will be treated in support of the point of view that Eliot's philosophical influences are reflected in Mr. Irwine and Mr. Farebrother. Recognition will be given first to Mr. Irwine, Rector of Broxton, Vicar of Hayslope, and Vicar of Blythe.

Mr. Irwine epitomized George Eliot's idea that morality has value in its own right and is not dependent upon Christian dogma. Substantiation of this belief is brought out by George Eliot's statement that Mr. Irwine thought "the custom of baptism more important than its doctrine."[1] Further substantiation is found in the statement, "The religious beliefs that peasants get from the church are slightly dependent on a clear understanding of the liturgy of a sermon."[2] The writer assumes that Mr. Irwine's tolerance, feeling, indulgence, and sympathy formed a morality which was not at all dependent upon Christian dogma.

Mr. Irwine's tolerance is first seen in his interview with Joshua Rann, Hayslope's shoemaker in Adam Bede. Joshua had come to speak to Mr. Irwine about the activities of

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[1] Adam Bede. op. cit., p. 69.

[2] Ibid., p. 69f.

Methodists in the community. He thought that Mr. Irwine should "take measures" against Will Maskery, the Methodist who had referred to Mr. Irwine as a dumb dog and an "idle shepherd." Mr. Irwine who did not have it in his nature to be vindictive, tells Joshua: "We must 'live and let live,' Joshua, in religion as well as in other things."[3] Mr. Irwine thought it would only dignify the statement against Maskery. Not only did Mr. Irwine have tolerance for others, but he also had great feeling and sympathy for others.

When Arthur Donnithorne, a young squire in Adam Bede, admitted to Mr. Irwine that he was the father of Hetty Sorrell's baby, Mr. Irwine realized that this was no time for accusations. Proof of Mr. Irwine's feeling and sympathy is given in George Eliot's statement, "Every other feeling was thrown into abeyance by pity, deep respectful pity, for the man, Adam who sat before him."[4] Mr. Irwine knew of Adam's unconfessed love for Hetty. He felt that his sympathy and feeling should be directed to Adam who was inwardly hurt over Hetty's misdeeds or sin. Irwine's words to Adam at this time were pious or pretentious; they were down-to-earth and simple: "Adam my dear driend, you have had hard trials in your life. You can bear sorrow manfully, as well as act manfully: God

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[3] Ibid., p. 60.

[4] Ibid., p. 421.

requires both tasks at our hands, and there is a heavier sorrow coming upon you than any you yet have known. But you are not guilty--you have not the worst of all sorrows!"[5] These words of Mr. Irwine are important for two reasons: first, they embrace George Eliot's beliefs, that while men may not be able to change their circumstances; they can, nevertheless, find their duty within their circumstances; secondly, the words show the largeness of Mr. Irwine's nature. It was striking that while Mr. Irwine had pity for Adam, his greater sympathy was with Arthur, who had committed the misdeeds that had brought the terrible consequences. Not only did Mr. Irwine possess tolerance; he was a reflection of George Eliot's altruism and renunciation.

Mr. Irwine was an exponent of Bray, Comte, and Eliot's altruism and renunciation. He spoke for George Eliot--and reflected Bray's influence on her--when he told Arthur: "A man can never do anything at variance with his own nature. He carries within him the germ of his most exceptional action; and if we wise people make eminent fools of ourselves on any particular occasion, we must endure the legitimate conclusion that we carry a few grains of folly to our ounce of wisdon."[6] The emphasized sentence recalls Bray's

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[5] Ibid., p. 521.

[6] Ibid., p. 177.

insistence that a person cannot act contrary to his mental constitution. He can learn from the pain or pleasure which is consequent upon his actions, and he can will to choose the most responsible of the alternatives put before him in his circumstances. Irwine, like George Eliot, held the individual responsible for his actions. It is evident that Mr. Irwine not only was representative of Bray, Comte, and Eliot's altruism and renunciation, but he was a spokesman for George Eliot's determinism.

Evidence of Mr. Irwine's determinism is shown in George Eliot's introduction of him to the reader. George Eliot tells the reader:

> His was one of those large-hearted, sweet-blooded natures that never know a narrow or a grudging thought, epicurean, if you will, with no enthusiasm, no self-scourging sense of duty; but yet, as you have seen, of a sufficiently subtle moral fibre to have an unwearying tenderness for obscure and monotonous suffering. It was his large-hearted indulgence that made him ignore his mother's hardness towards her daughters, which was more striking from its contrast with her doting fondness towards himself; he held it no virture to frown at irremediable faults.[7]

From this one learns not only that Irwine was large-hearted, tender towards suffering, and indulgent, but in the last line something about George Eliot's determinism. The passage contains a certain amount of humor, directed at Mr. Irwine's

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[7] Ibid., p. 69.

mother, but the suggestion that Mr. Irwine holds it "no virture to frown at irremediable faults" sounds much like Bray's insistence that it is useless to blame a person for what he is considering the fact that, given his circumstances and mental constitution, a person could not act differently. Other utterances of Mr. Irwine's determinism are found in his interview with Arthur. In Mr. Irwine's interview with Arthur Donnithorne, Arthur tries, but cannot bring himself to discuss his affair with Hetty--it becomes apparent that Mr. Irwine is more a determinist than he is a Christian. He speaks to Arthur about "certain alterative doses which man may administer himself by keeping up pleasant consequences before his mind."[8] Obviously, this statement is simply Bray's idea that men may learn by the principle of pain and pleasure. Irwine speaks for George Eliot--and reflects Bray's influence on her--when he tells Arthur: "A man can never do anything at variance with his own nature. He carries within him the germ of his most exceptional action; and if we wise people make eminent fools of ourselves on any particular occasion, we must endure the legitimate conclusion that we carry a few grains of folly to our ounce of wisdom."[9] The emphasized sentence seems to call Bray's insistence to a person cannot act contrary to his mental constitution.

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[8] Ibid., p. 178.

[9] Ibid., p. 178.

Though it is true that one cannot act contrary to his mental constitution, one can, however, have a part in the shaping of his constitution. He can learn from the pain or pleasure which is consequent upon his actions, and he can will to choose the most responsible of the alternatives put before him in his circumstances.

The writer has tried to point out George Eliot's philosophical influences as reflected by Mr. Irwine. Of equal importance are the philosophical reflections revealed in the character, Mr. Farebrother, an Anglican priest in Middlemarch.

Observation shows that Mr. Camden Farebrother did not have the maturity of Mr. Irwine; in fact, he had two significant weaknesses: drinking and gambling. But he had his creator's favor because he was sensitive to the needs of his neighbors. He was a person of warmth and friendliness, and he was unpretentious. Even though Mr. Farebrother lacked the maturity of Mr. Irwine, he had some striking similarities to Mr. Irwine. For instance, his sermons, like Mr. Irwine's, were concerned with heavy doctrinal matters. Though he had the reputation of being a good preacher, his sermons, one must infer, were concerned with matters of practical morality rather than with dogma. Mr. Farebrother was weak in dogma, but strong in essential morality, another illustration of George Eliot's belief that morality is not dependent upon dogma.

Farebrother was honest and unpretentious, and his honesty and unpretentiousness carried sufficient moral weight, in George Eliot's mind, to offset the mild worldliness implied in his gambling and smoking. Further substantiation of Farebrother's morality is given toward the end of Farebrother's conversation with Lydgate, a character in Middlemarch, when they were discussing the infirmary chaplaincy; two of the main strengths of Farebrother's character became evident; his tolerance and his unpretentiousness. Farebrother knew that if Lydgate voted for him, Bulstrode, the banker in Middlemarch, would be offended and would become Lydgate's enemy. Several weeks after this conversation in Farebrother's home, Lydgate was trying to determine how he should cast his vote for the infirmary chaplaincy. His reflections, along with George Eliot's interpolations, told the reader a great deal about Farebrother. For one thing, Lydgate saw "an unusual delicacy and generosity," in Farebrother's careful warnings that it would not be to his professional interest to vote for Farebrother against Bulstrode's desire... Some awareness of Farebrother's quality caused Lydgate to be a little defiant. George Eliot informed the reader, of "the critical strictness of persons whose celestial intimacies seemed not to improve their domestic manners, and whose lofty aims were not needed to account for

their actions."[10] Here George Eliot indirectly registered her own objection to the distance which existed, in so many instances, between dogma and actual morality. In Mr. Farebrother one discerned the tolerance, altruism, renunciation of selfish interests and forgiveness which George Eliot held to be the substance of true morality.

A tribute to Mr. Farebrother's generosity and altruism is shown when Fred Vincy, a divinity student, requested Mr. Farebrother to represent him to Mary, the lady Farebrother had a secret love for, and find out whether she cared as much for Fred as he did for her. Mr. Farebrother set aside his own love for Mary in order to represent Fred. After discharging his duty to Fred, Mr. Farebrother returned home, "having gone magnanimously through a duty much harder than the renunciation of whist, or even the writing of penitential meditations."[11] Further proof of Mr. Farebrother's generosity and altruism in his relationship to Fred and Mary was given when Farebrother went to the Green Dragon, a billards room, and called Fred away to warn him of the possibility of losing Mary should he begin losing money at gambling again. Mr. Farebrother confessed to Fred his own feeling for Mary, and was honest enough to admit an inclination to keep silent, to take the chance of Fred's "going to the dogs" so

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[11] Ibid., p. II, 96.

that his own chances with Mary would be enhanced. "But," says the Vicar, "I had once meant better than that, and I am come back to my old intention. I thought that I could hardly secure myself in it better, Fred, than by telling you just what gone on in me. And now, do you understand me? I want you to make the happiness of her life and your own, and if there is any chance that a word of warning from me may turn aside any risk to the contrary--well, I have uttered it."[12] Mr. Farebrother's friendly warning to Fred amounted to a renunciation of his own desires in behalf of others, a principle of importance in George Eliot's understanding of morality.

The two Anglican clergymen discussed in this chapter were representatives of what George Eliot considered to be mature persons. They were men capable of immense tolerance and sympathy. Except for ordination, office, and religious garb, there was nothing distinctively Christian about either of them. Mr. Irwine, much more than Mr. Farebrother, was a George Eliot determinist, and neither of them was a Christian dogmatician. In interpersonal relationship, both priests proved to be men of feeling. They were altruistic, free from personal resentments, and in the best sense of the term, self-renouncing in behalf of their neighbors. In

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[12] Ibid., p. II, 260f.

conclusion, one may say that Mr. Irwine and Mr. Farebrother were mature representatives of George Eliot's religious and philosophical opinions.

Thus these characters, as was previously shown in the character Dinah Morris, reflect in the novels Adam Bede, and Middlemarch, George Eliot herself, and her philosophies.

CONCLUSION

The writer in this study has attempted to show the development of George Eliot's religious and philosophical beliefs from the Evangelical-Calvinistic influences of her childhood to the pantheistic and positivistic philosophies of her adulthood. From the pantheistic philosophies of Charles Hennell and Charles Bray to the positivistic philosophies Auguste Comte and Ludwig Feuerbach, George Eliot reflects for beliefs in which she held so strongly in two of her novels, Adam Bede and Middlemarch, through the characters Dinah Morris, Mr. Irwine, and Mr. Farebrother.

Of all the characters in George Eliot's novels it was Dinah Morris, perhaps, who came closest to being an orthodox, Evangelical Christian as she represented the Christian dogma in which George Eliot believed: altruism, renunciation of self, feeling, and tolerance.

It was the writer's attempt to present further proof that George Eliot's philosophical and religious influences are revealed in characters in her novels in the portrayal of Mr. Irwine, and Anglican priest in Adam Bede and Mr. Farebrother, an Anglican priest in Middlemarch in belief that morality has

value in its own right and is not dependent upon dogma. Effort was made to show how both priests reflected George Eliot's altruism, freedom from personal resentment, and self-renunciation in behalf of their neighbors. Thus, George Eliot, an exponent of the nineteenth century novel, as an individual and as a novelist reveals herself and her times vividly through her characters who reflect her thinking.

The writer trusts that this study will be of some value to students who might profit by seeing George Eliot's technique of weaving her philosophical and religious thoughts into the fabric of her works and producing realistic novels which have withstood the test of time.

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