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Grace in the Arts:

THOMAS HARDY: The Tragedy of a Life Without Christ

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I. Introduction

A. Why Read an Agnostic?

The evangelist Charles Finney stated: "I cannot believe that a person who has ever known the love of God can ever relish a secular novel...Let me visit your...books. What is here? Byron, Scott, Shakespeare and a host of triflers and blasphemers of God."² To that list Finney would have undoubtedly added Thomas Hardy the agnostic. Therefore, why read such a writer?

First, there are solid biblical reasons for reading worthwhile non-Christian literature. Frank Gaebelien popularized the maxim: "All truth is God's truth" — no matter what the literary source. The apostle Paul believed this idea, for on at least three occasions (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33; Titus 1:12) he quoted from secular sources. Paul was obviously versed in more than the Bible.

Second, if we desire to understand the mindset of the non-Christian culture, then we must be aware of the particular philosophies and notions rampant at any given time. Great literature is usually an index to cultural concepts.

Third, if we would have a heart for unbelievers, then we need to grasp where and how their head is functioning. Thomas Hardy himself spoke of the "ache of modernism." The Christian who has experientially understood that life without Christ is a tragedy should have an ache in his or her heart for unbelievers to find the fulfillment that is in Christ.

To counter Finney, then, read the playboy Byron's magnificent biblical poem "The Destruction of Sennacherib"; read Sir Walter Scott, who operated out of a Christian consensus; and read Shakespeare (as a past article in this journal indicates: JOTGES, Spring, 1991; pp. 47-63).

B. Who Was Thomas Hardy?

If you had literature's leading lights—James Barrie (author of Peter Pan), John Galsworthy, Edmond Gosse, A. E. Housman, George Bernard Shaw, Rudyard Kipling, as well as the prime minister of England—as your pallbearers (as Thomas Hardy did), you'd have to be thought rather important. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) never graduated from college, yet he received honorary doctorates from the universities of Aberdeen, Bristol, Cambridge, and Oxford. Hardy's five most important novels (in chronological order) are *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*.³ Hardy also wrote over 900 poems and more than 40 short stories. He was considered the greatest writer of English tragedy in his time. Thus, W. M. Parker (editor of Sir Walter Scott's letters) could call Hardy "the greatest imaginative genius of modern times."⁴

II. The Biblical Hardy

A. Biblical Allusions

How many seminary graduates could identify who Ahimaaz and Aholibah are or where they are found in the Bible? How many Bible-literate people could quote from Psalm 102? Do you know where Jared and Mahaleel are in Scripture? All of these items—and (literally) hundreds more—are found by way of biblical allusion in Thomas Hardy's novels.

Thomas Hardy was steeped in classical and biblical literature. Marlene Springer, who wrote a book devoted explicitly to this subject, claimed that as an author, Hardy "out-alluded virtually every allusionist..."⁵ This agnostic was virtually a walking Bible concordance! Indeed, I would pit Hardy against any seminary graduate today (and bet big bucks—if I were a betting person) as a sure wager to win any Bible knowledge proficiency test. Hardy read the Bible in both Latin and Greek. Desmond Hawkins declared that Hardy "was more certainly influenced by [the Bible] than any novelist writing today."⁶ I think Hawkins's evaluation would stand undisputed.

The heading to this section of the Journal is "Grace in the Arts." What theologians call "common grace" is functioning in the life of this agnostic to make his pessimistic works so riddled with biblical allusions. Also, God's grace is apparent in allowing this agnostic 88 years of life in which he might even trifle with that grace (2 Pet 3:9).

Thomas Hardy had considerable biblical background. His life-dream as a child was to be a parson. He played the violin in church as a youth. He taught Sunday School. His hero, folk-poet William Barnes, was a Christian. His best friend was the brother of the Bible commentator H. C. G. Moule, Anglican bishop of Durham. Hardy read numerous theological works up until his mid-twenties, presumably in preparation for the professional ministry. In fact, this agnostic never stopped attending, and taking communion in the Anglican church—even after his first (evangelical) wife died!

Thomas Hardy's works are replete with scriptural allusions. One frequent declaration heard in church history classes is that if our NT had been destroyed, it could almost be replaced by quotations culled from the early Church Fathers. Almost the same could be said—with forgivable exaggeration—with reference to Hardy's writings.

I have read 9 of his 14 novels and all of his 947 poems. Below are tabulated my count of biblical allusions in 9 of Hardy's major novels. In the left hand column are listed figures in which Hardy supplies general references to Christian terms, phrases, ideas, and so forth. In the right hand column are listed numbers from each book for sentences containing an allusion where some rather specific Scripture verse or passage can be

cited. Naturally, there is some subjectivity involved in the placement of these two sets of figures.

Title	General Allusions	Specific Allusions to Scripture
Under the Greenwood Tree	74	11
A Pair of Blue Eyes	84	41
Far from the Madding Crowd	154	79
The Return of the Native	124	71
The Mayor of Casterbridge	76	41
The Woodlanders	85	35
Tess of the D'Urbervilles	428	110
Jude the Obscure	456	112
The Well-Beloved	35	18
Hardy's Complete Poems	212	147
TOTAL	1728	665

As can be seen from the statistics compiled above, there are Christian books these days in which one could not find as many references to Scripture as one could find in this agnostic's literature.

The sections in Hardy's books that are a special repository for biblical allusions are those where his rustics speak. These conversations between rural folk are salted with Scripture—sometimes insightful, sometimes confused and superstitious. For instance, when one rural character gets scared, he recites the Lord's prayer, then the Ten Commandments, followed by "dearly beloved brethren," which is what his church experience prods him to remember (FMC, chap 8). One rustic child was erroneously named Cain, since his mother got the name in the Bible story mixed up with Abel's (FMC, chap 10).

One of Hardy's other rustics complains, "I was sitting at home looking for Ephesians, and I says to myself, 'Tis nothing but Corinthians and Thessalonians in this danged Testament" (FMC, chap 21). (Perhaps childhood sword drills would have helped him!) Another country fellow speaks erroneously of "King Noah...entering into the ark" (FMC, chap 42). Still another rustic figure recites the names of "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John" when he fears the devil is near him (RN, chap 3).

At this juncture I would like to provide a brief sampling of some specific scriptural allusions from Hardy's novels:

At the end of *Under the Greenwood Tree* one finds Hardy quoting Jer 2:32 ("Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?") in connection with Fancy Day's vanity over her clothes. "Even to half my kingdom" in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* echoes Mark 6:23.

The Return of the Native (chap 6) mentions "the witch of Endor [who] called up Samuel." Also in this novel Hardy shows his knowledge of the Greek NT (2 Pet 2:4) by twice using the term "Tartarian."⁷

The Mayor of Casterbridge refers to "Jacob in Padan-aram" with his ring-straked sheep. In The Woodlanders (chap 14) we meet "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Tess of the D'Urbervilles has one of its characters use Job's words (3:1-3): "I wish I'd never been born." On more than one occasion a character in Jude the Obscure cites 1 Cor 4:9 ("we are made a spectacle," etc.). The Well-Beloved refers to "the elect lady" (2 John 1; Part 3, chap 5) and "those who knew not Joseph" (Exod 1:8; Part 3, chap 8).

In one case the very name of the novel (A Laodicean) reflects biblical language (Rev 3:14). Often Hardy's characters' names reflect biblical borrowing (such as, Bathsheba, Gabriel, Jude, Laban, etc.) and tip us off to the given character's character as well. For example, Bathsheba unintentionally attracts by her beauty, and Gabriel Oak is as sturdy as his name implies.

B. A Biblical Plot

In The Mayor of Casterbridge Thomas Hardy largely modeled his story-plot on the biblical interrelationship between Saul and David. This thesis has been detailed significantly in an article by Julian Moynahan.⁸

The novel itself states that Michael Henchard, the lead character and mayor, "felt like Saul at his reception by Samuel" (chap 26). The book revolves around the relationship of an older head of government (Mayor Henchard) to a younger man (Donald Farfrae). As the plot progresses, the older becomes jealous of the younger and eventually is replaced as government leader by the younger (as Saul was by David).

Numerous themes in The Mayor of Casterbridge clearly parallel the Saul-to-David biblical narrative. First, the older is attracted to the younger particularly by his musical ability. Second, the younger (Farfrae) is described as "ruddy and of a fair countenance" (compare this with 1 Sam 16:12 and 17:42). Third, Henchard is famed for his impulsive moodiness (similar to Saul's mental ups and downs). Fourth, the younger saves the older's reputation from a goliath of failure. Fifth, the older gets jealous of his rival when he hears people praising the younger and wishing Farfrae were in the elder's place. Thus, Farfrae becomes "an enemy" of Henchard.

Moreover Michael Henchard consults a wizard-like weather forecaster in a way similar to that of Saul consulting the witch of Endor. Farfrae, like David, also has opportunities to wreak revenge on the one who hates him, but the younger man refuses the course of vengeance. In fact, Henchard tries explicitly to kill Farfrae at one point. Also in the novel the hideout of certain bad characters is called "the Adullam of all the surrounding villages" (chap 36). The Mayor of Casterbridge concludes just as the book of 1 Samuel does—with the tragic death of its tragic figure.

This then is the biblical Hardy—the very fabric of his language, the vast amount of biblical allusions, the derived names of certain characters, and the framework of one entire novel are all colored extensively by a mind immersed in the thought-world of Scripture. Tragically, however, such biblical flavoring is far from the whole story. Therefore, we now turn to the unbiblical Hardy.

III. The Unbiblical Hardy

A. His Abandonment of Christianity

Hardy's thought-forms were often Bible-tinctured, but his basic philosophy was anything but biblical. What happened to one who grew up dreaming of becoming a Christian minister and who read theology in preparation for that profession?

Unfortunately there is no clear-cut before-and-after traceable in his biography. Nor does there seem to have been a specific crisis marking such a shift in thought. Terry Coleman wrote: "At the beginning of [1861] Hardy was probably still a Christian, and at the end [of 1866] he certainly was not, and of the process by which this charge came over such a mind we know nothing."⁹ While it isn't quite true to say "we know nothing," we certainly have no definitive data on a distinct turning-point in Hardy's turning away from Christianity. Robert Gittings observed that "until the age of 26 [Hardy] still considered entering the Church [ministry]."¹⁰

While we may not be able to pinpoint some watershed experience in which Hardy abandoned orthodox Christianity, there are clearly some contributing causes for his forsaking the faith.¹¹

The first of the contributing causes to Hardy's apostasy is a hard one to pin down with definitive evidence, yet I suspect that every Hardy biographer would concur that some mysterious romantic attachment was at the root of bitterness in Hardy's life. Biographers have suggested at least five different love affairs in Hardy's early life. One researcher, Lois Deacon, postulated on the basis of plausible evidence that Hardy had had a five-year affair with Tryphena Sparks, whom he thought to be his cousin. Then he discovered that Tryphena was the illegitimate daughter of his own sister, who herself was the illegitimate daughter of his mother.¹² Thus, he broke off an engagement. Some interpreters even claim they had an illegitimate child together who is represented by the character called Little Father Time in *Jude the Obscure*. Whether Lois Deacon's specific hypothesis is factual or not, something very unaccountable and suppressed in Hardy's relationship with women seems necessary to account for his turning sour on life as well as this theme in his writing.

Second, Hardy's best friend (and mentor)—Horace Moule, the brother of evangelical commentator H. C. G. Moule—committed suicide. Moule's father and his brothers are to some extent the prototype for Angel Clare's father and family in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In this book the clerical father is described as "an evangelical of the evangelicals" (chap 25) and an "unimpeachable Christian" with a "Pauline view of humanity" (chap 26). Nevertheless, Horace Moule, a Cambridge graduate, became an alcoholic and committed suicide. This tragedy unquestionably had a devastating effect upon Thomas Hardy.

Third, Hardy was influenced by "the yeasty ideas of his formative years," such as "evolution [and] the new morality."¹³ Darwin's *Origin of the Species* was published when Hardy was nineteen years old. Hardy read Darwin, Spencer, Comte, and Schopenhauer. A nature "red in tooth and claw" (to borrow Thomas Hobbes's phrase) is a major theme in Hardy's novels.

Fourth, some scholars have asserted that (like the painter van Gogh) Hardy was rejected upon application to Cambridge University as Jude Fawley was in *Jude the Obscure*. Such a bitter rejection might partly account for his anti-Christian attitude.

Fifth, one occasion may have cemented Hardy's convictions away from Christianity. Leslie Stephen, editor of *Cornhill Magazine*, was influential in Hardy's writing experience. In fact, Hardy described Stephen as "the man whose philosophy was to influence his own...more than that of any other contemporary."¹⁴ Stephen called on Thomas Hardy "on 23 March 1875 to witness his renunciation of the holy orders [to the Anglican ministry] he had taken in 1855..."¹⁵ By affirming Leslie Stephen on that occasion, Hardy was issuing a sort of declaration of agnosticism.

B. His Poisoned Philosophy

To say that Hardy is not known for his novels ending "happily ever after" is an understatement! In his writings "all things work together" for the worst—to parody Rom 8:28. In *The Woodlanders* Grace Melbury watches her truest love, Giles Winterbourne, die. She was "bitter with all that had befallen her—with the cruelties that had attacked her—with life—with Heaven" (chap 43). Schoolmaster Phillotson remarks, "Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society; and we can't get out of it if we would" [JO, Part 5, chap 8]. In *Desperate Remedies* Mr. Springrove says, "There's a back'ard current in the world, and we must do our utmost to advance in order just to bide where we be."¹⁶

Most readers of Hardy label him a pessimist. His books tend to get more bitter in the consecutive order of their writing with the bitterest novels (*Tess* and *JO*) coming at the end of his novel-writing career.

Hardy consistently denied that he was a pessimist, preferring to call himself a "meliorist," that is, one who was neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but believed the world could be made better if we all worked at it. Sheila Sullivan said Hardy was "prepared to face the worst an indifferent universe might have to offer, but who believed nevertheless that the will to live persists, and that no life is entirely without its consolation."¹⁷

C. His Philosophical Predicament

If there is a God, then God can be blamed for the tragic mess on this planet (some would reason). However, if there is no God, who or what is there to blame for such rotten happenings? This dilemma tends to be Hardy's philosophical predicament. To let God be or not be—that is the question (i.e. ½ la Shakespeare's *Hamlet*). Somewhere G. K. Chesterton (the Anglican debater-turned Roman Catholic) takes Thomas Hardy to task for playing both sides of the fence. If there is no God, why spend your time railing in the direction of heaven?

This dilemma emerges in a conversational interchange between Sue Bridehead and her first husband (to whom she eventually returns), Richard Phillotson (in *JO*). She admits that her penchant for not wanting to sleep with her lawful husband is wrong, yet she exclaims: "It is not I altogether that am to blame!" Phillotson then responds, "Who is then? Am I?" To his remark Sue counters, "No—I don't know! The universe, I suppose—things in general, because they are so horrid and cruel!" (*JO*, Part 4, chap 3). Thus, the big question is: Who do you blame if you're an agnostic?

D. His Invented Ironies

In one's fiction a writer can control his or her world. Thus, through the mouths of his characters, Hardy inevitably reflects his own pessimistic world-view. Many writers have used a technique called *deus ex machina* (woodenly rendered, a "god out of a machine"). This technique was literally used in ancient drama when a mechanical device would be employed in order to let a "god" down on stage to serve as a rescuer from the characters' predicament.

Thomas Hardy used almost a reverse approach to the *deus ex machina* technique. He invented ironical incidents in order to show a perverse world-order in operation. For instance, an inexperienced sheepdog (in *FMC*) drives Gabriel Oak's entire flock over a precipice, thereby bankrupting Oak and altering the course of Gabriel's entire life. Or, Tess sticks a future-determining note under Angel Clare's door—only to have the paper stick under the carpet so that Angel never reads her moral confession. Thus, on one small act hinges huge significance for Tess. Marlene Springer said that Hardy "saw all of life as a collage of ironies."¹⁸

There are three classic cases of these inserted ironies where Hardy seemed to be taking his best and most brutal potshot at the orthodox Christian view of God. All three involve Christian hymns. In *Tess*, before her family is about to be evicted from their home (due to poverty and Tess's refusal to succumb to her relentless seducer, Alec D'Urberville), Tess asks her little brothers and sisters to sing. They select a hymn they knew entitled "Joyful"! Thus, Hardy gets in his digs at Christian joy when life is caving in around the sexually-faithful Tess.

There is a second hymn referred to in *Tess*. It is also sung on a heart-wrenching occasion (Chapter 51). The hymn runs:

"Here we suffer grief and pain;

Here we meet to part again.

In heaven we part no more."

There is a chime of compassion in the Christian's heart as the agnostic Hardy comments after the hymn: "If she could only believe what the children sang." Yes, if only...

Probably the bitterest ironical twist in Hardy's novels appears in his last and, by common consent, bitterest book, *Jude the Obscure*. Jude and Sue have several children together. They also unofficially adopt the child by Jude's first (legal) marriage. Because of his gloomy disposition, the child is nicknamed "Little Father Time." When the family has a desperate time securing a room together (because Jude and Sue have never been legally married), Little Father Time bewails the news that there is yet another child on the way. More children, more problems. Because this originally unwanted child is so morose, he hangs the other two children and then commits suicide himself. Martin Seymour-Smith quotes Ian Gregor as calling this incident the "most terrible scene in Hardy's fiction—indeed it might reasonably be argued in English fiction."¹⁹ Ironically, however, just as the horrendous hanging and suicide are discovered, a nearby church organ peals out a rendition of the seventy-third psalm: "Truly God is loving unto Israel." Consequently, Hardy takes his hardest knock at the Christian concept of a loving God in a cruelly destructive world. Thomas Hardy was the obverse to Robert Browning's optimism: All's wrong with the world!

E. His Agnostic Appraisal

Hardy's pen was dipped in acid. A significant part of his own life-story is reflected in *Jude the Obscure*. Like Jude, Hardy had been a stonemason's apprentice. Like Jude, Hardy had been enamored of the famous university — which closed its doors to him. Like Jude, Hardy had his lifelong sexual struggle of flesh versus spirit. Like Jude, Hardy had wanted to be a ministerial student and later rejected Christianity. And—like Jude—Hardy had faced the "arrows of outrageous fortune."

As a result of his rejection of Christianity, Hardy adopted an embittered, agnostic stance —claiming not really to believe in a God, yet relentlessly flailing away at Someone or something out there. In country music vernacular, he kept singing a "Somebody-done-somebody-wrong song."

The author's appraisal—in the form of agnosticism—of what was going on in our world took the form of using roundabout phrases for the Supreme Power that Christians call "God." Thus, Hardy will speak of an "unconscious will" or an "Immanent Will" or "the Prime Cause." In *The Woodlanders* Hardy uses the expression "the Unfulfilled Intention." This "Prime Force" is without moral value and is oblivious to people's pain.

Once one has abandoned the supernatural, all that is left is the natural world. Consequently, Hardy's "Unfulfilled Intention" in nature is described in *The Woodlanders* (chap 7). Here the trees are suffocated by "huge lungs of fungi." Hardy writes: "The leaf was deformed... the lichen ate the vigor of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promised sapling." Nature does not present a pretty picture in Thomas Hardy's books.

For Hardy, what happens to inanimate nature also happens to human nature. One of the saddest passages in literature is the concluding summary in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. For several hundred pages the reader has looked over the shoulder of Tess while she is raped, is abandoned by her too-good legal husband, is forced to wander and take menial, starvation-level jobs, is pestered repeatedly by her old seducer, and waits on her abandoning husband to return from South America. Finally, Tess breaks. In order to keep her maternal family from starving, Tess finally returns to her original, wealthy seducer, Alec, only then to have her sickening husband show up. Then Tess murders Alec out of love for her husband. Consequently, Tess is hanged. This scene Hardy milks for all it's worth by proclaiming that "the President of the Immortals" had finally done savagely toying with Tess—a "moral woman" (so Hardy proclaims her).

A Christian reader resultantly feels that beneath Hardy's text there is a subtext that constantly suggests: I want you Christians to see your malevolent "God" for all He's worth. In *The Woodlanders* one female character bewails: "if heaven would only give [me] strength—but heaven never did."

Thus, the Hardyan conclusion (in *Tess*, chap 37) is:

"God's not in his heaven;

All's wrong with the world."

IV. A Lesson Learned from an Agnostic

There is a scene in Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, which may epitomize Hardy's dilemma probably better than any other. The scene also reveals precisely the predicament of a

world that has forsaken the true God who has uniquely revealed His love in Jesus Christ.

In *A Pair of Blue Eyes* two men are in love with one woman—Elfride. While Elfride is watching for the ocean steamer that is bringing one of them home (Stephen Smith, to whom she first promised marriage), she has fallen in love with the second one, Henry Knight. While Henry and Elfride scan the horizon, he slips and falls over a precipice. Henry hangs on for dear life.

While Henry is hanging on for his life, his eyes turn to see a trilobite fossil embedded in the cliffside (symbolizing the recent emergence of a Darwinian world-view). Obviously the skeletal remains can do nothing to save Knight from his life-threatening predicament. In other words, evolution provides no salvation, no ultimate answer.

Knight's rescue finally comes when Elfride moves away from the scene and removes all of her (extensive Victorian) underwear so as to weave it rapidly into a rescue-rope. It is sensually suggestive. (Thus, the only salvation in this pessimistic post-Darwinian world is the sex-and-love relationship between the genders, Hardy implies.)

This scene speaks volumes. What's left to make life tolerable in a Darwinian world? With a supernatural genesis abandoned and no supernatural afterlife guaranteed, Hardy logically proceeds to the natural genesis of human life—namely, sexual romance. (We have not explored this major Hardyian sub-theme here, but Hardy has been called "the father of the modern sex novel"²⁰ although his writings on this score are relatively tame by comparison with today's uninhibited pornographic explicitness.)

Without the invasive grace of God, what does an unbeliever have to live for? As T. S. Eliot put it in *Sweeney Agonistes*:

"Birth, and copulation, and death.

That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:

Birth, and copulation, and death."²¹

I believe that reading an agnostic such as Thomas Hardy should make a believer's heart bleed for the raw and pained condition of a thinking-and-feeling unbeliever. The deplorable end-run of Hardy's philosophy is fleshed out by his own tragic character, Little Father Time, who committed suicide.

No wonder Hardy spoke of "the ache of modernism." Should we not feel for those who live unhappily now and, unless they put their faith in Jesus and His atonement, will live unhappily ever after? Like Thomas Hardy, his character Angel Clare had forsaken his evangelical roots. Therefore, Angel Clare experienced the "chronic melancholy which is taking hold of the civilized races with a decline of a belief in a beneficent Power."²¹

One of the most poignant passages in Hardy is when the about-to-be-hanged Tess says to her lover Angel Clare: "Do you think we shall meet again after we are dead?" (Tess, chap 58). To this question Angel, the modernist or religious liberal, has nothing to say. What a contrast with the apostle Paul, who buoyantly asserted that while "they...have not hope," "we believe that Jesus died and rose again," and so we shall "meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:13, 14, 17).

Thomas Hardy the agnostic is a parable of the tragedy of a life without Christ.

Endnotes

1Dr. Townsend returns to our "Grace in the Arts" section for another literary analysis from an evangelical perspective of a well-known writer. Previous subjects have included Herman Melville and Somerset Maugham (JOTGES, Spring 1989, pp. 55-66), Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, and others (JOTGES, Autumn 1990, pp. 53.64). Ed.

2Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 62.

3Where it seems necessary in the body of the text, I will employ the abbreviations FMC for *Far from the Madding Crowd*, RN for *The Return of the Native*, MC for *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Tess for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and JO for *Jude the Obscure*.

4*The Genius of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Margaret Drabble (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 47.

5Marlene Springer, *Hardy's Use of Allusion* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1983), 1.

6Desmond Hawkins, *Hardy the Novelist* (Newton Abbot, UK: David and Charles, 1950), 73.

7The Greek word containing "hell" in this verse is *tartarwsas*.

8Julian Moynahan, "The Mayor of Casterbridge and the Old Testament's First Book of Samuel: A Study of Some Literary Relationships" in *Biblical Images in Literature*, edited by Roland Bartel with James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw (New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), 71-88.

9*The Genius of Thomas Hardy*, 16. While Coleman's choice of words is unfortunate and unbiblical (still a Christian?), his point is actually that Hardy at one time called himself a Christian and later ceased doing so.

10Robert Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1975), 46.

11 There is insufficient evidence to be certain whether Hardy ever believed in Christ for eternal life. When I comment on his "forsaking the faith," I am referring to his decision to no longer profess to be a Christian.

12 The Genius of Thomas Hardy, 19-23.

13 Hawkins, Hardy the Novelist, 97.

14 The Genius of Thomas Hardy, 34.

15 Martin Seymour-Smith, Hardy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 182.

16 Quoted by Marlene Springer, Hardy's Use of Allusion, 92.

17 The Genius of Thomas Hardy, 39.

18 Springer, Hardy's Use of Allusion, 15.

19 Seymour-Smith, Hardy, 532.

20 Hawkins, Hardy the Novelist, 67.

21 Quoted in Stuart Barton Babbage, Man in Nature and Grace (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 98.

22 The Genius of Thomas Hardy, 57.

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Thomas Hardy created in Tess not a standard Victorian heroine but a woman whose intense vitality shines against the bleak backdrop of a dying way of life. The novel shocked contemporary readers with its honesty and remains a timeless commentary on the human condition. Fiction / Poetry. Her choice, and the tragedy it provokes, lie at the centre of Hardy's ambivalent story. Fiction / Poetry. Read online. Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928), in both philosophical attitude and artistic technique, firmly belongs in this modern tradition. While Hardy could imitate popular forms and create popular novels such as *Desperate Remedies*, an imitation of Wilkie Collins's detective novel, or *The Hand of Ethelberta*, an imitation of the social comedy popular at the time, when he wished to write a serious novel, one that would truly express his vision of humanity's situation in the universe, he could find no. Hardy's use of the traditional patterns of tragedy and pastoral, combined with his rejection of the old myths that formerly gave meaning to these patterns, resulted in a peculiar distortion as his novels transcended their original patterns. Thomas Hardy was an immensely shy person, who surrounded his house, Max Gate in Dorchester, with a dense curtain of trees, shunned publicity and investigative reporters, and when visitors arrived unexpectedly, slipped quietly out of the back door of his house in order to avoid them. So that no one should penetrate this mask of shyness, Hardy kept a rigid control over what aspects of his life were to be divulged and what were not. His first wife, Emma, behaved in a similar way, at least as far as her and her husband's letters to one another were concerned: she burnt all that she could lay her h

Hardy wrote continually during the architect phase of his life. He wrote unpublished poems which idealized the rural life. He wrote serialised novels. He portrays the disposal of a soldier's corpse in undignified terms. Hardy regards human being as always ready to participate in the game of warfare, without ever learning a lesson from past wars. Innocents, like the boy Drummer Hodge, are sacrificed meaninglessly. Hardy imagines modern warfare as the apocalypse.

"A Tragedy of Two Ambitions," from Wessex Tales, works some of the same ground that Hardy would cover a few years later in *Jude the Obscure*, and like the novel it also works over some of the material from his own life. Cornelius and Joshua are sons of a millwright, a small tradesman in much the same social position as Hardy's own father, who was a small builder. We first meet them studying the Greek New Testament, the book from which the call of the flesh will distract Jude. The two are training for ordination into the Anglican priesthood, as Hardy himself considered doing in *sp*. What we see in this passage is that this world cannot satisfy us. Only Christ can, but, a decision must be made for Christ. Comments. Post comment. More from Pitts Baptist Church. The Value of Peace of Mind in the Coming Year and Beyond - Audioadded 2 days ago. The Forgotten Figure of Christmas - Audioadded 1 week ago. Immanuel, God is with Us - Audioadded 2 weeks ago. About us Terms Privacy policy Support. Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928), in both philosophical attitude and artistic technique, firmly belongs in this modern tradition. While Hardy could imitate popular forms and create popular novels such as *Desperate Remedies*, an imitation of Wilkie Collins's detective novel, or *The Hand of Ethelberta*, an imitation of the social comedy popular at the time, when he wished to write a serious novel, one that would truly express his vision of humanity's situation in the universe, he could find no. Hallet Smith has described the pastoral as constituting the ideal of the good life: In the pastoral world, nature is the true home of humankind, and the gods take an active concern in human beings' welfare; the inhabitants of this world are content and self-sufficient.