



# **Victoria University Of Bangladesh**

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## *Answer to the question no: 1*

The speaker of the poem acknowledges the declining standing of Christianity and views it as unable to withstand the rising tide of scientific discovery expressing a crisis of faith. Humankind's central and unique position in the universe is cast into doubt by new research and intellectual inquiry. Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* written in the Victorian era acknowledges and laments the loss of religious faith caused by advancements in various fields at the time: a few examples include evolutionary biology, geology archaeology and Bible textual analysis. The transitional figure of the beach the hazy line between land and sea echoes the poem's sense of a turning point in history. So the poem asks the reader to think about what people lose when they move away from the (discussable) certainty of Faith. According to the speaker losing faith means losing certainty. In terms of its sights and sounds, the Dover beach itself seems to represent this loss. The poem does not initially provide any indications that the loss of faith is its primary topic. Instead it starts by describing the setting in which the speaker is standing. At first the lyrical beauty of the descriptions of the sea and the sound of the pebbles on the beach masks the eternal note of sadness that is revealed at the end of stanza. The speaker's sense of loss is hinted at by this sudden onset of sadness, which is more fully expressed later in the poem. The poem suggests two important concepts by using the sea as a symbol First and foremost major shifts in society's fabric occur subtly the speaker senses a gradual but inevitable loss of faith in this historical juncture through the beach's slow repetitive movements. Second relating the decline in religious belief to the motion of the waves suggests that these kinds of historical shifts occur in cycles or waves. In fact the speaker imagines the ancient Greek playwright Sophocles experiencing the same sadness as the speaker does right now when he hears the sadness in the sea. That is the speaker sees a parallel between the imminent irrelevance of the Christian God and the irrelevance of the classical Greek gods in the speaker's time. That does not imply that religious belief will return rather it merely indicates that something will emerge to replace it in this instance, the dominance of science. In the third stanza the speaker's position regarding this loss of religious faith becomes clear. The world was once full and bright because of faith's certainty which provided comfort and joy. Thus melancholy is represented by its loss. In addition the Sea of Faith used to reach

every ocean but it is now withdrawing. The poem is basically saying that people all over the world are losing faith which makes sense given how far science had come at the time. In the poem's final couplet the speaker reaffirms that scientific progress is a loss rather than a gain by stating that the new era will bring about confused alarms of struggle and flight and ignorant armies clash by night. To put it another way the speaker is of the opinion that advances in science will only result in scientific rather than spiritual certainty and will increase the amount of doubt and questioning (which is in fact an essential component of the scientific method of inquiry). Therefore, the poem conveys a sense of resignation overall. The speaker challenges the reader to consider whether this loss of faith is progress or a wrong turn and fully acknowledges that the change that is taking place is as inevitable as the rising and falling of waves. Therefore *Dover Beach* is a deeply pessimistic poem that embodies the grief that some felt at the prospect of the loss of religion and challenges the dominant values of its time. Even in the 21st century this questioning remains relevant urging readers to consider whether their own lives are spiritually fulfilled.