Friedrich Nietzsche is known as one of the most important of modern philosophers. His controversial thought included the claim that "God is dead," which was a remarkable claim given the long religious and intellectual history of Western Civilization.

Below is an excerpt from Nietzsche where he talks about the death of God. (It is also available in Files.) Also, keep in mind that Nietzsche's writing if often very difficult.

**--Write a 1 to 2 page explanation of what he means by this in this excerpt.  Also, how are Nietzsche's views of God and Christianity examples of Modernism as an intellectual movement?**

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**FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: On the Death of God**

108. New Struggles. —After Buddha was dead people showed his shadow for centuries afterwards in a cave, – an immense frightful shadow. God is dead: but as the human race is constituted, there will perhaps be caves for millenniums yet, in which people will show his shadow. —And we—we have still to overcome his shadow!

124. In the Horizon of the Infinite. —We have left the land and have gone aboard ship! We have  broken down the bridge behind us, – nay, more, the land behind us! Well, little ship! look out! Beside thee is the ocean; it is true it does not always roar, and sometimes it spreads out like silk and gold and a gentle reverie. But times will come when thou wilt feel that it is infinite, and that there is nothing more frightful than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt itself free, and now strikes against the walls of this cage! Alas, if  homesickness for the land should attack thee, as if there had been more freedom there,—and there is no “land” any longer!

125. The Madman.—Have you ever heard of the madman who on a bright morning lighted a lantern and ran to the market-place calling out unceasingly: “I seek God! I seek God!”—As there were many people standing about who did not believe in God, he caused a great deal of amusement. Why! is he lost? said one. Has he strayed away like a child? said another. Or does he keep himself hidden? Is he afraid of us? Has he taken a sea-voyage? Has he emigrated?—the people cried out laughingly, all in a hubbub. The insane man jumped into their midst and transfixed them with his glances. “Where is God gone?” he called out. “I mean to tell you! We have killed him,—you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Wither does it now move? Wither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction?—for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we console ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest that the world has hitherto possessed, has bled to death under our knife,—who will wipe the blood from us? With what water could we cleanse ourselves? What lustrums, what sacred games shall we have to devise? Is not the magnitude of this deed too great for us? Shall we not ourselves have to become Gods, merely to seem worthy of it? There never was a greater event,—and on account of it, all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto!”—Here the madman was silent and looked again at his hearers; they also were silent and looked at him in surprise. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, so that it broke in pieces and was extinguished. “I come too early,” he then said, “I am not yet at the right time. This prodigious event is still on its way, and is travelling,—it has not yet reached men\*s ears. Lightning and thunder need time, the light of the stars needs time, deeds need time, even after they are done, to be seen and heard. This deed is as yet further from them than the furthest star,—and yet they have done it!”—It is further stated that the madman made his way into different churches on the same day, and there intoned his *Requiem aeternam*

*deo* [Requiem for the eternal god]. When led out and called to account, he always gave the reply: “What are these churches now, if they are not the tombs and monuments of God?”

343. What our Cheerfulness Signifies.—The most important of more recent events—that “God is dead,” that the belief in the Christian God has become unworthy of belief—already begins to cast its first shadows over Europe. To the few at least whose eye, whose suspecting glance, is strong enough and subtle enough for this drama, some sun seems to have set, some old, profound confidence seems to have changed into doubt: our old world must seem to them daily more darksome, distrustful, strange and “old.” In the main, however, one may say that the event itself is far too great, too remote, too much beyond most people\*s power of apprehension, for one to suppose that so much as the report of it could have reached them; not to speak of many who already knew what had taken place, and what must all collapse now that this belief had been undermined,—because so much was built upon it, so much rested on it, and had become one with it: for example, our entire European morality. This lengthy, vast and uninterrupted process of crumbling, destruction, ruin and overthrow which is now imminent: who has realised it sufficiently to-day to have to stand up as the teacher and herald of such a tremendous logic of terror, as the prophet of a period of gloom and eclipse, the like of which has probably never taken place on earth before? . . . Even we, the born riddle-readers, who wait as it were on the mountains posted ‘twixt to-day and to-morrow, and engirt by their contradiction, we, the firstlings and premature children of the coming century, into whose sight especially the shadows which must forthwith envelop Europe should already have come—how is it that even we, without genuine sympathy for this period of gloom, contemplate its advent without any personal solicitude or fear? Are we still, perhaps, too much under the immediate effects of the event—-and are these effects, especially as regards ourselves, perhaps, the reverse of what was to be expected—not at all sad and depressing, but rather like a new and indescribable variety of light, happiness, relief, enlivenment, encouragement, and dawning day? . . . In fact, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel ourselves irradiated as by a new dawn by the report that the “old God is dead”; our hearts overflow with gratitude, astonishment, presentiment and expectation. At last the horizon seems open once more, granting even that it is not bright; our ships can at last put out to sea in face of every danger; every hazard is again permitted to the discerner; the sea, our sea, again lies open before us; perhaps never before did such an “open sea” exist.

347. Believers and their Need of Belief .—How much faith a person requires in order to flourish, how much “fixed opinion” he requires which he does not wish to have shaken, because he holds himself thereby—is a measure of his power (or more plainly speaking, of his weakness). Most people in old Europe, as it seems to me, still need Christianity at present, and on that account it still finds belief. For such is man: a theological dogma might be refuted to him a thousand times,—provided, however, that he had need of it, he would again and again accept it as “true,”—according to the famous “proof of power” of which the Bible speaks. Some have still need of metaphysics; but also the impatient longing for certainty which at present discharges itself in scientific, positivist fashion among large numbers of the people, the longing by all means to get at something stable (while on account of the warmth of the longing the establishing of the certainty is more leisurely and negligently undertaken): —even this is still the longing for a hold, a support; in short, the instinct of weakness, which, while not actually creating religions, metaphysics, and convictions of all kinds, nevertheless—preserves them. In fact, around all these positivist systems there fume the vapours of a certain pessimistic gloom, something of weariness, fatalism, disillusionment, and fear of new disillusionment—or else manifest animosity, ill-humour, anarchic exasperation, and whatever there is of symptom or masquerade of the feeling of weakness. . . . Belief is always most desired, most pressingly needed, where there is a lack of will: for the will, as emotion of command, is the distinguishing characteristic of sovereignty and power. That is to say, the less a person knows how to command, the more urgent is his desire for that which commands, and commands sternly,—a God, a prince, a caste, a physician, a confessor, a dogma, a party conscience. From whence perhaps it could be inferred that the two world-religions, Buddhism and Christianity, might well have had the cause of their rise, and especially of their rapid extension, in an extraordinary malady of the will. And in truth it has been so: both religions lighted upon a longing, monstrously exaggerated by malady of the will, for an imperative, a “Thou-shalt,” a longing going the length of despair; but religions were teachers of fanaticism in times of slackness of will-power, and thereby offered to innumerable persons a support, a new possibility of exercising will, an enjoyment in willing. For in fact fanaticism is the sole “volitional strength” to which the weak and irresolute can be excited, as a sort of hypnotising of the entire sensory-intellectual system, in favour of the over-abundant nutrition (hypertrophy) of a particular point of view and a particular sentiment, which then dominates—the Christian calls it his faith. When a man arrives at the fundamental conviction that he requires to be commanded, he becomes “a believer.” Reversely, one could imagine a delight and a power of self-determining, and a freedom of will, whereby a spirit could bid farewell to every belief, to every wish for certainty, accustomed as it would be to support itself on slender cords and possibilities, and to dance even on the verge of abysses. Such a spirit would be the free spirit par excellence.

357. To look upon nature as if it were a proof of the goodness and care of a God; to interpret history in honour of a divine reason, as a constant testimony to a moral order in the world and a moral final purpose; to explain personal experiences as pious men have long enough explained them, as if everything were a dispensation or intimation of Providence, something planned and sent on behalf of the salvation of the soul: all that is now past, it has conscience against it, it is regarded by all the more acute consciences as disreputable and dishonourable, as mendaciousness, femininism, weakness, and cowardice,—by virtue of this severity, if by anything, we are good Europeans, the heirs of Europe\*s longest and bravest self-conquest. When we thus reject the Christian interpretation, and condemn its “significance” as a forgery, we are immediately  confronted in a striking manner with the Schopenhauerian question: Has existence then a significance at all?—the question which will require a couple of centuries even to be completely heard in all its profundity.

377. We Homeless Ones.—Among the Europeans of to-day there are not lacking those who may call themselves homeless ones in a way which is at once a distinction and an honour; it is by them that my secret wisdom and *gaia scienza* ["gay science," a kind of free spirit] is especially to be laid to heart! For their lot is hard, their hope uncertain; it is a clever feat to devise consolation for them. But what good does it do! We children of the future, how could we be at home in the present? We are unfavourable to all ideals which could make us feel at home in this frail, broken-down, transition period; and as regards the “realities” thereof, we do not believe in their endurance. The ice which still carries has become very thin: the thawing wind blows; we ourselves, the homeless ones, are an agency that breaks the ice, and the other too thin “realities.” . . . We “preserve” nothing, nor would we return to any past age. . . . We are, in a word—and it shall be our word of honour!—good Europeans, the heirs of Europe, the rich, over-wealthy heirs, but too deeply obligated heirs of millenniums of European thought. As such, we have also outgrown Christianity, and are disinclined to it—and just because we have grown out of it, because our forefathers were Christians uncompromising in their Christian integrity, who willingly sacrificed possessions and positions, blood and country, for the sake of their belief. We—do the same. For what, then? For our unbelief? For all sorts of unbelief? Nay, you know better than that, my friends! The hidden Yea in you is stronger than all the Nays and Perhapses, of which you and your age are sick; and when you are obliged to put out to sea, you emigrants, it is—once more a faith which urges you thereto!

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