

THE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT

RELIGIOUS GLEANINGS FROM TENNYSON'S POETRY

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## PREFACE

The study of "Enoch Arden" and "Idylls of the King" during High School days instilled in me a keen admiration for Tennyson. After more extensive study I noted the religious element to be very pronounced in a great number of his poems. The disagreement among various authors as to the influence of Tennyson on the spiritual life of the people of his time aroused my interest. The purpose of this paper is to point out the service of the author during the scientific age, when atheism was working great havoc, in keeping alive in the hearts of Englishmen the smoldering flames of a dying faith.

While it is true that Tennyson accomplished much in this field, certain very grave limitations in his activity need to be elucidated. These will be presented in the course of the thesis.

In the preparation of this work I wish to acknowledge the kindly assistance of Reverend Marshall L. Lochbiler, S.J. and Mr. Giovanni Giovannini, Professors of English at the University of Detroit.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SCIENTIFIC AGE

In the present twentieth century struggle between wealth and poverty, religion and atheism, democracy and communism, it is a consolation to turn back and see that other generations have passed through similar crises and that in spite of gloomy forebodings and predictions of disaster, serenity and tranquillity have again prevailed. After the Teutonic Invasions we find the civilization of Europe gradually arising from a chaotic state under two dominant influences--The Roman Catholic Church and Feudalism. These two shaped the course of history for several centuries. Then the Renaissance, followed by the Reformation, overthrew the established order and we have new forces gradually evolving which burst forth in full intensity in the nineteenth century, shaking society to its very foundation and producing radical changes in every walk of life. These changes were political, social, industrial, and religious. The early part of the century saw the French Revolution, the overthrow of the Feudal System, the rise and fall of Napoleon and his defeat at Waterloo. In other countries also we find a series of revolutions. In Holland, Spain, Denmark, and Sweden as also in every German state large or small, the rulers granted constitutions and many liberties. In England by a series of reform bills the government had become exceedingly liberal and democratic. We may well summarize the political changes of the nineteenth century by saying that the governments throughout Europe made gigantic strides toward democracy.

Great as were the changes wrought in the political field in this century they can hardly be said to surpass those in industry. While France was having her political revolution with terrible slaughter, England was quietly working out an even greater revolution, an industrial revolution, which was to change the living conditions and daily life of millions of men and women throughout the world. Things which had been used and conditions that had existed for centuries changed at first slowly and then very quickly. Through the deep interest in science and investigation wonderful discoveries and inventions were made which caused the factory system to take the place of home manufacture, cities of villages, good roads and railways of poor means of transportation, steam and later electricity of hand or water power, and telegraphy and telephone of slowly delivered messages.

All of these changes brought disadvantages as well as advantages. There were now new social problems with which to cope. People moved to the cities, lived in close, unhealthful quarters and labored from sunrise to sunset. A sharp class distinction arose between the capitalists and the laborers.

Along with these changes in government, society, and industry there came also a radical change in the attitude toward religion. In the sixteenth century the Renaissance through its interest in the ancient classics aroused the spirit of investigation and study, and we have following close upon its heels its aftermath in the form of the Reformation which may be classed as the religious side of the Renaissance. In this religious

upheaval we have really a revolt against the established religion--the Roman Catholic Church. Thus after a severe struggle we find Protestantism and Catholicity existing side by side for three centuries. Then in the nineteenth century not only the Roman Catholic Church but any established church becomes the object of attack. Apparently Darwinism was ringing the death knell for all revealed religion as it seemed that science and revelation stood in open contradiction, that science would triumph, and revelation would necessarily have to give way. Today, in spite of all predictions to the contrary, religion still remains the beacon light for millions of enthusiastic believers, and evolution merely a hypothesis. Nevertheless the struggle was a hard and bitter one with varied results. On the part of many it meant an absolute overthrowing of all religious beliefs and the acceptance of atheism. Others, not willing to condemn completely all religion, accepted the position of agnostics--believing that neither the nature nor the existence of God, nor the ultimate character of the universe can be known. Some deeply concerned in the entire religious situation through a thorough investigation finally turned back to the Roman Catholic Church. Among this number were Newman (later cardinal) and his friends who through the Oxford Movement were led to see that the modern Roman Catholic Church is the same as the early Christian Church, and, having the courage to follow their conviction, in 1845 joined the Catholic Church. This led to many more conversions, and in 1850 Pope Pius IX reorganized the Catholic Church in England by establishing

dioceses and appointing bishops.<sup>1</sup>

The clearest and truest reflection of a people with its varied interests, occupations, and struggles is always to be found in the literature produced at the time. Casting, therefore, a critical glance into the mirror of the nineteenth century writings, we find, generally speaking, that they fall into two periods--the Romantic and the Victorian. The Romantic, extending from 1780 to 1837, and the Victorian from 1837 to 1900. In order, however, to understand more clearly the attitudes in this century we must first view the tendencies in the eighteenth century. This period is named the age of classicism because the authors consciously strove to imitate in their writings the works of the ancient Greek and Latin poets. Dryden and Pope are typical of this movement. Then followed a reaction, and in the Romantic period we have Wordsworth as a typical representative, stressing nature particularly in his poetry. The Victorian period is marked by realism with Tennyson and Browning as the most prominent poets. Although it is impossible to classify a writer exclusively as a classicist, a romanticist, or a realist, because every writer whether ancient, medieval, or modern, includes in his writings to a more or less extent each of these elements, yet it is usually not difficult to determine which form predominates in a particular author. For definitions of these three terms we refer to William Chislett:

"Classicism, then, means limitation of subject, adherence to established form, order reason, restraint, simplicity, clarity, soberness and good sense."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Betten and Kaufmann, "Modern World". Pp. 709-10.

<sup>2</sup>William Chislett, "The Classical Influence in Eng. Lit. in the 19th Cent." Chapter I.

These characteristics predominate in Greek, Roman, and French literature.

"Romanticism involves impatience with limitation, rule, order, reason, soberness, and restraint and shows a preference for strangeness, emotion, imagination, fancy, intuition, mysticism, individualism, passion, impulse, revolution, liberty and even license."<sup>1</sup>

The English and German writers are more romantic than classical.

"Realism supports the evidence of the senses and records facts that have been observed and verified. It marks the supplanting of classical authority and romantic imagination by Science. To the realist the individual is neither constrained by precept nor freed by positing his own world, but is the product of his inheritance and environment."<sup>2</sup>

Realism coupled with naturalism predominates in French, Russian, German, and to a smaller degree in English literature during the second half of the nineteenth century. However in the nineties we find Symbolism or Modern Romanticism with its theories of impressionism and mysticism supplanting the older forms.

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<sup>1</sup>William Chislett, op. cit. Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SCIENTIFIC AGE AS REFLECTED IN TENNYSON

In choosing some one to give us a true picture of this vast complexity above described, whither shall we turn? We might choose Macaulay who gives us a correct historical account, but he cannot make us realize the feelings and emotions of the time; we might choose Darwin, Huxley, or Spencer who may give us a perfect explanation of science or philosophy but they touch upon only one angle of the vast panorama; we might choose a novelist like Dickens who can rouse his readers to sympathy and action but he can only mention those things which pertain to his story; but instead of any of these we choose Tennyson, the poet, who lets the spirit wander where it will, who delves into history, science, philosophy, or sociology to produce the desired effect; who may make the reader shout for joy or weep in sympathy; who lived almost the entire century, namely, from 1809 to 1892; who finally stands as an accurate, impartial witness since he actively partakes of no particular phase but views all of them. Now that we have chosen our representative for the century let us see how he fits into the scheme outlined above. Since Tennyson started to write at a very early age we find his literary productions appearing in both the period of romanticism and of realism. Tennyson's poems fit perfectly into this scheme. As evidences of romanticism we need only mention "Idylls of the King" and "The Princess" leaving the reader to supply scores of others. "In Memoriam" perhaps best reflects the age of realism since

it deals so intimately with the conflict between science and religion. Although the works of Tennyson reflect in subject matter principally the romanticist and the realist, yet in the firm and finely polished means of expression we note the classicist.

Investigation also shows that the scope of his writing is immense. He concerns himself with all of the various phases of the complicated nineteenth century, whether social, industrial, political, or religious. In our more detailed study of the author, however, we shall confine ourselves to the religious phase as expressed in his poetry.

On the whole his religious poetry groups itself around the great struggle between science and religion. Although the faithful were supremely confident in the words of our dear Savior, "Upon this rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," and were firmly convinced that religion would ultimately triumph and bring order out of chaos, yet we should not underrate Tennyson as a definite force in keeping alive the smoldering embers of faith in the hearts of many wavering between Christian belief and agnosticism or atheism. He is called the outstanding religious teacher of the age. Just how conscious he was of his position is not evident. He probably had no definite intentions of being exactly a teacher, but he did feel that the real value of poetry lies in its moral force. Robert F. Horton says:

"No worker for men whose work lies in philanthropy, in statesmanship, in the reform of abuses, in personal ministry, or in public teaching, ever played his part more

manfully and consistently than Tennyson."<sup>1</sup>

Realizing the great need of the nineteenth century for a religious teacher to safely guide the erring pilgrims through this labyrinth of perplexities and to place again the beacon light of faith in clear view, let us see why Tennyson succeeded well enough to be rated by many critics the religious teacher of the century. Robert Horton undoubtedly strikes at the very root of the matter when he says:

"He did not set out to be a teacher, nor was he even conscious of his work in that capacity. He wrought as an artist. As an artist he succeeded. As an artist he won the ear of the world. He became a teacher because he was what he was. All unconsciously his personality, his practice, his ideals, his principles, were breathed through his verse. In the long run it is himself that the great artist expresses; the form is the result of his labour on his art, the substance is produced by his labour on himself."<sup>2</sup>

When a poet sets out with the definite purpose of preaching, his work usually resolves itself into a failure, because the reader of a poem seeks delight and does not care to receive a sermon. So we find that Tennyson is the most didactic in those poems in which he has the least intention of being so, since the works in which he definitely aims to teach become uninteresting. We may know from personal experience that it is not a powerful sermon or a series of "do's" and "don't's" that has wrought the greatest effect upon our lives, but perhaps an appealing story which enkindled our hearts with heroic resolves or a poem that stirred our souls with emotion. The most perfect teacher of all times is our Blessed Savior and how did He proceed? Let

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<sup>1</sup>Robert F. Horton, "Alfred Tennyson--A Saintly Life", Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

us linger for a moment amid a crowd of eager listeners clustered around Jesus in Palestine. We do not hear a series of warnings and exhortations, but rather a story, a parable. Now it is the story of the Prodigal Son, now of the sower of seeds, and again of the shepherd. But note the result. Sorrow penetrates the soul of the sinner, firm resolves are made, and we find a Magdalen bathing her Master's feet with her tears.

Again we see that our Savior is a successful teacher because he is a living example of what He preaches. May we not also attribute Tennyson's success largely to the same reasons? In the first place he teaches through pleasing little tales in poetry and allows the reader to make his own interpretations and applications. This is clearly shown in "Enoch Arden" and "Idylls of the King". Glancing at the life of Tennyson we find that he is one of the few great poets whose life is exemplary. We can see clearly that he became a teacher because he portrayed his own personality, practices, ideals, and principles in his verse. In other words, Tennyson's poetry is Tennyson.

"Experience is the best teacher" is a very true saying and we may also say that one who has experienced the results of doubt and has ultimately made faith triumph can most effectively teach others the way to faith. This is the third reason why Tennyson was so successful as a religious teacher.

The unique quality of the spiritual element in his poetry consists in the fact that this great religious teacher had little religion himself. He never made a definite statement of his beliefs because he said he would not be understood if

he did. In his childhood, of course, the spiritual atmosphere was not lacking since he was brought up in the home of his father, a clergyman. His early poetry expresses this faith in which there is no tinge of doubt. But as he came in touch with the atheistic teachings at Cambridge this faith soon gave way to agnosticism. Then through years of doubt he struggled on, trying to reason out for himself the spiritual element in life, until he finally arrived at some rather vague conceptions which may be termed his religious beliefs. What a pity that a man of such sterling character and high ideals did not cry out with Newman, "Lead kindly light, amid encircling gloom", so that under divine guidance and inspiration he might have arrived at a secure haven where all his doubts would be solved and he might have stood side by side with Cardinal Newman as a great spiritual and intellectual star in the Catholic Church. With such a faith permeating his poetry he might have stood in the lime-light as the religious teacher of the nineteenth century. However because of his complete dependence upon his own intelligence and ability he scattered seed which could bring forth no better fruit than a rather vague conception of God and immortality.

In considering the determinating causes of this spiritual trend in Tennyson's poetry, we must first of all study his surroundings. Since he was the son of a minister and had a good mother he was brought up in a Christian environment. Hence he imbibed the simple childlike faith which knows no doubt, and we find in "Poems, by Two Brothers", one seemingly written by Alfred Tennyson which is entitled, "Why Should We

Weep for Those Who Die?" It reads as follows:

"Why should we weep for those who die?  
They fall--their dust returns to dust;  
Their soul shall live eternally  
Within the mansions of the just.

"They die to live--they sink to rise,  
They leave this wretched mortal shore;  
But brighter suns and bluer skies  
Shall smile on them for evermore.

"Why should we sorrow for the dead?  
Our life on earth is but a span;  
They tread the path **that** all must tread,  
They die the common death of man.

"The noblest songster of the gale  
Must cease, when Winter's frowns appear;  
The reddest rose is wan and pale,  
When Autumn tints the changing year.

"The fairest flower on earth must fade,  
The brightest hopes on earth must die;  
Why should we mourn that man was made  
To droop on earth, but dwell on high?

"The soul, th' eternal soul must reign  
In worlds devoid of pain and strife;  
Then why should mortal man complain  
Of death, which leads to happier life?"

In "A Memoir" by his son we are told that his aunt, a rigid Calvinist, marveled because she had been chosen for eternal salvation while most of her friends were to be damned. One day she said to her nephew, Alfred, that when she looked at him she was reminded of the words of Holy Scripture, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." We can easily picture the influence of such doctrine on the sensitive mind of Tennyson. This in addition to the fits of despondency to which his father was subject had a marked influence on his life. It is recorded that one dark night Alfred went out into the churchyard, threw himself on a grave, praying that he might die.

Tennyson's father was a Hebrew and Syriac scholar and perfected himself in Greek so that he might teach his sons. It was undoubtedly here in the home that Alfred became so familiar with the Bible, the knowledge of which he displays so profusely in his writings. Edna Moore Robinson in her book "Tennyson's Use of the Bible" lists in several ways the biblical quotations used by him. In one of them she shows that by using these quotations a connected story of the Old Testament can be formulated.

Since religion played so important a part in Tennyson's early life we can well see that it must have become an integral part of him and permeated his whole being. Next let us place this individual at Cambridge in an atmosphere contrasting absolutely to all his previous experiences. The faith and trust of childhood in an all powerful and loving Creator is brought face to face with unbelief and atheism. The thought at first was repelling, but through constant association with such principles the spirit of doubt gradually penetrated his naturally reflective mind. Nor was Tennyson one who could lightly place aside such an all important question. His mind was constantly at work trying to find some solution to the difficulty. Consequently we see him investigating every possible clue that may offer a solution to his difficulty. He became a member of a society which bore the name of the "Apostles". Here politics, religion, and philosophy were freely discussed. We also see him turning to mysticism and spiritualism to get a suitable answer. Finally he emerges after

many years of doubt and struggle with certain vague conceptions of the fundamental Christian beliefs.

Although Tennyson's nature and surroundings made him turn toward the spiritual, the death of Arthur Hallam, his most intimate friend, made him dwell most intently on the meaning of it all. This experience brought forth the famous "In Memoriam". Here then we have the reasons why Tennyson's poetry contains so much of the spiritual element. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh." Since these thoughts were uppermost in his mind they naturally found expression in his poetic works. In fact, Tennyson was extremely careful that no view should be expressed in his poems which did not exactly correspond to his own sentiments.



## CHAPTER III

### THE BELIEF IN GOD

In analyzing the means by which Tennyson gave expression to his belief we wish to consider his religious convictions as expressed in his poetry.

"His creed, he always said he would not formulate; for people could not understand him if he did; but he considered that his poems expressed the principles at the foundation of his faith."<sup>1</sup>

We may therefore look upon Tennyson's poems as expressing his own spiritual convictions, and we here note three fundamental teachings, namely, the belief in God, the belief in free will, and the belief in immortality.<sup>2</sup> In this division we shall consider the evidences of Tennyson's belief in God, and his conception of the nature of this Infinite Being. At the basis of all religious conviction there is, of course, a belief in a Supreme Intelligence. But just what idea did Tennyson have of God? Was it the idea of Pantheism, which looks upon the universe as a whole as God, or did he believe in a personal God, a God who loves us and watches over us? In childhood we of course know that Tennyson believed in a personal God. His prayer and poem already quoted are sufficient evidence of this. But after he had come in contact with the worldly surroundings of Cambridge his view was completely changed. Now he is tossed to and fro on waves of doubt. In "Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive

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<sup>1</sup>W.F.D. Stockley, "The Faith of "In Memoriam"", Catholic World 120:801-9 Nov. '25.

<sup>2</sup>E. H. Sneath, "The Mind of Tennyson", passim.

Mind" we find that he is grappling in a struggle with this enemy. He would like to feel again that childlike trust and confidence in God which was so ardent while at his mother's knee. The opening words,

"O God! my God! have mercy now, I faint, I fall," may at first sight be called an expression of faith, but proceeding to the next line,

"Men say that Thou  
Didst die for me,"

we see a marked indication of a lack of it. He does not feel that he can accept the teachings of his childhood although he realizes its consolation.

"How sweet to have a common faith."

Yet he thinks,

"It is man's privilege to doubt,  
If so be that from doubt at length  
Truth may stand forth unmoved of change  
An image with profulgent brows  
And perfect limbs, as from the storm  
Of running fires and fluid range  
Of lawless airs, at last stood out  
This excellent and solid form  
Of constant beauty."

Again we have toward the end of the poem a picture of a lamb rejoicing in all the beauty surrounding him when suddenly, "Short pains run thro' his warm heart," a "Shadow falls," and drawing "his forehead earthward", he dies.

Then comes the telling question:

"Shall man live thus, in joy and hope  
As a young lamb, who cannot dream  
Living, but that he shall live on?"

Continuing from this point:

"Shall we not look into the laws  
 Of life and death, and things that seem,  
 And things that be, and analyze  
 Our double nature, and compare  
 All creeds till we have found the one,  
 If one there be? Ay me! I fear  
 All may not doubt, but everywhere  
 Some must clasp idols. Yet, my God,  
 Whom call I idol? Let Thy dove  
 Shadow me over, and my sins  
 Be unremember'd and Thy love  
 Enlighten me. O, teach me yet  
 Somewhat before the heavy clod  
 Weighs on me, and the busy fret  
 Of thy sharp-headed worm begins  
 In the gross blackness underneath."

Here Tennyson well expresses his "double nature", his changing notions, first voicing his doubts of the existence of a Supreme Being, and then directing a prayer to Him Whom he has thus insulted. Then he ends the poem with a condemnation of his own attitude:

"O weary life! O weary death!  
 O spirit and heart made desolate!  
 O damned vacillating state!"

This position in Tennyson is an excellent example not only of his mind but of the general nineteenth century attitude toward religion. Kant, Jacobi, Hamilton, and Mansel take the position that God is unknowable to the "Reason" or "Understanding" of man but that He is nevertheless apprehensible through "Practical Reason" or through "Faith". Tennyson takes about the same stand. He looks upon God not as an object of which we can have definite proof or knowledge but rather an object of faith. He accepts the view of the Agnostic in so far that he says the existence of God cannot be proven and is therefore unknowable. This position is shown in the opening stanza of the Prologue to "In Memoriam":

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove."

A little later in the prologue we find,

"We have but faith: we cannot know,  
For knowledge is of things we see;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness: let it grow."

In "The Ancient Sage" a similar sentiment is expressed:

"Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one.  
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no,  
Nor yet that thou art mortal--nay, my son,  
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,  
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,  
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
Nor yet disproven. Wherefore thou be wise,  
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith."

This then is the attitude of the agnostic--neither the nature nor the existence of God, nor the ultimate character of the universe can be known. We may consider it a sort of middle course or attempted compromise between materialism and the ancient or Christian faith whose followers accept the doctrines of their Founder, Jesus Christ. Although Tennyson was never a Catholic, yet the religion of his childhood recognized God as the Creator of the universe and Jesus as the Son of God. What would therefore be more natural than that Tennyson after coming in contact and being influenced by the theories of the materialists, should seek a middle course. He thinks it wiser to cling to the "sunnier side of doubt", which to him is synonymous with faith.

Considering "proofs" in regard to the existence of God, there are four arguments generally advanced, namely,

1. The argument from the laws of nature, or teleological argument--that since all nature is obedient to law there must necessarily be a lawgiver, and this lawgiver is God.
2. The argument from the universal belief of mankind--the belief in the existence of a Divine Power presiding over the world has always been universal, and since this belief is an expression of the collective reason of humanity, it must, therefore, be true.
3. The argument from the origin of mind--that since scientists claim that there was a time when nothing existed but inert matter, and the mind cannot spring from inert matter, there must have been some Being capable of calling things into existence at His word.
4. The argument from contingence--everything in the visible world is contingent, contingent beings require for their support a self-existent being, and the self-existent being is God.<sup>1</sup>

Strange to say these arguments had little force with Tennyson because, assuming the position of a skeptic, he wanted something visible and tangible as a proof. The first argument from the laws of nature which points out the apparent harmony and design in nature he fails to see. In the LV poem of "In Memoriam" we read:

"Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life,

<sup>2</sup> Rev. M. Sheehan, "Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine", pp.1-24

"That I, considering everywhere  
Her secret meaning in her deeds,  
And finding that of fifty seeds  
She often brings but one to bear,

"I falter where I firmly trod,  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar-stairs  
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope."

These lines express the view that nature is too prodigal and is the result of chance rather than design. In the lines immediately following he says that even the types have not been preserved since thousands of types of former ages have passed out of existence. Then considering man he wonders whether his fate will be the same. Yet he concludes:

"Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed,"

that "Behind the veil, behind the veil," is a sufficient explanation. The CXXIV division of the same production states:

"I found Him not in world or sun,  
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye,  
Nor thro' the questions men may try,  
The petty cobwebs we have spun."

In the words "the questions men may try", Tennyson probably refers to the other arguments offered by theologians for the existence of God. These he considers merely as "petty cobwebs" men "have spun". Rejecting therefore, all of the ordinarily advanced "proofs" of the existence of God, he takes the stand that we should cling to faith because life is meaningless without it.

Just as Tennyson wavers between faith and unbelief, so

also he seems very uncertain as to his conception of God. In the prologue to "In Memoriam" he apparently recognizes a personal God and also the divinity of Christ for he says:

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,"

It is also recorded that once a friend walking with him in his garden inquired what he thought of Jesus Christ. He remained silent for a moment, then stopping beside a flower he said:

"What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to my soul. He is the sun of my soul."<sup>1</sup>

Not all critics agree that Tennyson here admitted his belief in the divinity of Christ. Stephen Gwynn in "Tennyson, a Critical Study" says that he does not think that Tennyson's belief in Christ as the Son of God can be proven from any of his writings not even from the opening lines of "In Memoriam". If the poet had a firm conviction of the divinity of Christ we would certainly expect many evidences of it in his poems since there are so many beautiful ideas which could have been woven into his productions from this source. Yet beyond the above mentioned prologue we find only another mention about the Son of God becoming man in the "Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind" with the words:

"-----Men pass me by;  
Christians with happy countenances--  
And children all seem full of Thee!  
And women smile with saint-like glances  
Like Thine own mother's when she bow'd  
Above Thee, on that happy morn  
When angels spake to men aloud,  
And Thou and peace to earth were born."

<sup>1</sup>Hallam Tennyson, "Alfred Tennyson--A Memoir by His Son", pp. 420, Vol. II.

We feel that we have sufficient evidence to say that Tennyson believed in a personal God although he does not hesitate to consider the apparent contradictions to such a faith and the possibility of an impersonal God. His poem "The Human Cry" portrays the Christian conception of God:

"Hallowed be Thy name--Halleluiah!  
 Infinite Ideality!  
 Immeasurable Reality!  
 Infinite Personality!  
 Hallowed be Thy name--Halleluiah!

"We feel we are nothing,--for all is Thou and in Thee;  
 We feel we are something,--that also has come from  
   Thee;  
 We know we are nothing,--but Thou wilt help us  
   to be.  
 Hallowed be Thy name--Halleluiah!"

The entire prologue of "In Memoriam" is directed to a personal God in the form of a prayer. Besides there are repeated instances throughout his works where prayers are addressed to God. This always implies the belief in a personal God because prayers to an impersonal God would be a contradiction.

In his poem "The Higher Pantheism" we no doubt find expressed his own personal views because it was sent to the Metaphysical Society and deals with the relation between the finite and Infinite. The opening stanzas are as follows:

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas,  
           the hills and the plains,--  
 Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of  
           Him who reigns?

"Is not the Vision He, tho' He be not  
           that which He seems?  
 Dreams are true while they last, and  
           do we not live in dreams?"

These lines express the pantheistic conception of God, namely, that the universe, taken as a whole is God. The last



words incorporate the idealistic conception which presents the proposition that matter has no reality and that mind is the only true reality. Later in the poem he absolutely contradicts Pantheism when he says:

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears,  
and Spirit with Spirit can meet--  
Closer is He than breathing, and  
nearer than hands and feet."

Here God is recognized as a Spirit independent of nature and also as personal. Pantheism in its very nature excludes the belief in a personal God. The concluding stanzas once more emphasize the inadequacy of the human mind to comprehend the supernatural and that it must rest in faith:

"Law is God, say some; no God at all,  
says the fool,  
For all we have power to see is a  
straight staff bent in a pool;

"And the ear of man cannot hear, and  
the eye of man cannot see;  
But if we could see and hear, this  
Vision--were it not He?"

In "The Ancient Sage" the present existence is called the "phantom-shore" or "shadow-world". Also on several occasions Tennyson speaks of instances when to him the spiritual seemed more true than reality. In Mrs. Bradley's diary is found a record of Tennyson's words in regard to these experiences:

"Yes, it is true that there are moments when the flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the Spiritual the only real and true. Depend upon it, the Spiritual is the real: it belongs to one more than the hand and foot. You may tell me that my hand and my foot are only imaginary symbols of my existence, I could believe you; but you never, never can convince me that the I is not an eternal

Reality, and that the Spiritual is not the true and real part of me."<sup>1</sup>

To Frederick Locker-Lampson he said:

"After all, what is matter?"  
 "I think it is merely the shadow of something greater than itself, and which we poor, shortsighted creatures cannot see."<sup>2</sup>

Although we may concede from the evidence given that Tennyson's conception of God was both personal and idealistic, yet we must not neglect to consider the principal objection he found to this belief and how he answered it. In "A Memoir by His Son" we find the following:

"An Omnipotent Creator Who could make such a painful world is to me sometimes as hard to believe in as to believe in blind matter behind everything."<sup>3</sup>

This then is the reason why he found it difficult to believe that God is Love. He could not reconcile the misery, suffering, sin, and even death with the thought of a loving Creator. Yet he clings to faith for he says:

"Yet God is love, transcendent, all-pervading! We do not get this faith from Nature or the world. If we look at Nature alone, full of perfection and imperfection, she tells us that God is disease, murder, and rapine. We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognises that there is not one fruitless pang, just as there is not one lost good."<sup>4</sup>

The same attitude shown in his personal writings is also evident in his poetry. In the poem "Faith" he considers the imperfections and tragedies of nature which do not seem to indicate the guidance of a divine Hand. Still he is ready to

<sup>1</sup>Hallam Tennyson, op.cit. Vol. II pp.90

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. pp. 69

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Vol. I pp.313

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. pp. 314

allay his fears with the thought that God is wiser than man.

So we read:

"Doubt no longer that the Highest is the  
wisest and the best,  
Let not all that saddens Nature blight thy  
hope or break thy rest,  
Quail not at the fiery mountain, at the  
ship-wreck, or the rolling  
Thunder, or the rending earthquake, or  
the famine, or the pest!"

To find Tennyson's attitude in regard to human misery and suffering we turn to "The Ancient Sage":

"My son, the world is dark with grief and graves,  
So dark that men cry out against the heavens."

This is the view of man, but the following lines offer a solution:

"Who knows but that the darkness is in man?  
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;  
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then  
Suddenly heal'd, how wouldst thou glory in all  
The splendors and the voices of the world!  
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet  
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore  
Await the last and largest sense to make  
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,  
And show us that the world is wholly fair."

What an inspiring answer to an all-important question!

Here Tennyson may well vie with any theologian. In the first place he attributes the "darkness" to man. The grief and suffering is the result of man's transgression of God's law. Yet God can transform an evil to a good as is shown in the example of a blind or deaf individual. When sight and hearing are restored the person may glory the more in their possession. Similarly man will manifest greater exultation in eternity for the possession of those things which were deficient here in this life. At a later date, in "Doubt and Prayer" he admits that it

is a result of sin that we misinterpret the sad experiences of life and credit them to "Blind Fate". Man does not like to place upon himself the cause of his misfortunes but would rather blame some outside force or even deny the existence of a loving Creator.

We may conclude therefore in regard to Tennyson's view of God, that he assumes the position of the Agnostic, namely, that we cannot know, yet he is willing to believe where we cannot prove. Furthermore he has an idealistic conception of a personal God despite the fact that in the face of so much suffering here on earth such a thing is hard to believe. He feels, however, that "the darkness lies in man" and he is ready to "trust the larger hope".

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BELIEF IN FREE WILL

Although Tennyson may have rendered a great service as a religious teacher by leading others back to faith through the analysis of his own struggle yet this service can be only secondary, because there is such vagueness and wavering in his own faith and because we are not ready to accept his version of divine truth. Coming however to the second fundamental belief reflected in his poetry, namely, freedom or the belief that man has a free will, his services are extremely valuable. A problem that has at all times been the subject of much discussion and speculation is that of freedom of the will. In ancient Greece we find Socrates pondering over this weighty subject and from then to the present it has assumed extreme importance in philosophy. During the age of Tennyson particularly, when there was such marvelous activity in the fields of science and philosophy, the question assumed increased importance. The Darwinian theory, by contradicting the literal interpretation of the account of the creation in the book of Genesis, questioned divine creation and accepted a materialistic view. This together with the psychological and philosophical teaching of the age, that man is not master of his actions, but rather his actions are a result of the innate nature of man over which he has no control, was extremely dangerous to morality. Tennyson made this not merely a matter of reflection, but realizing the tremendous significance of this question, championed the cause

of free will. That this is his position is evinced not only in his poetry but also in gleanings from his personal life. Among his poetry we find "The Idylls of the King", "De Profundis", "Despair", "Will", "Wages", "In Memoriam", "The Ancient Sage", "The Promise of May", "By an Evolutionist", "The Making of Man", and "The Dawn" all either by direct statement or implication upholding the doctrine of free-will or showing the results of the use or abuse of free will.

His son records that,

"Free-will and its relation to the meaning of human life and to circumstances was latterly one of his most common subjects of conversation."<sup>1</sup>

In the same source we find this statement:

"Take away the sense of individual responsibility and men sink into pessimism and madness."<sup>2</sup>

In "A Memoir" it is also recorded:

"The lines that he oftenest repeated about Free-will were, 'This main-miracle that thou art thou, with power on thine own act and on the world.' Then he would enlarge upon man's consequent moral obligations, upon the Law which claims a free obedience, and upon the pursuit of moral perfection (in imitation<sup>3</sup> of the Divine) to which man is called."<sup>3</sup>

Having thus established Tennyson's position on free will from external evidences we shall now turn to a consideration of his poetry. Since Tennyson during his boyhood was closely associated with the Calvinistic creed with its doctrine of predestination it made him realize the futility of a life in which the freedom of the will is denied. "Will" perhaps states

<sup>1</sup>Hallam Tennyson, op.cit. Vol. I, pp. 316

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. pp. 317

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

his stand most clearly:

"O, well for him whose will is strong!  
 He suffers, but he will not suffer long;  
 He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong.  
 For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,  
 Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,  
 Who seems a promontory of rock,  
 That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,  
 In middle ocean meets the surging shock,  
 Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd.

"But ill for him who, bettering not with time,  
 Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended Will,  
 And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,  
 Or seeming-genial venial fault,  
 Recurring and suggesting still!  
 He seems as one whose footsteps halt,  
 Toiling in immeasurable sand,  
 And o'er a weary sultry land,  
 Far beneath a blazing vault,  
 Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,  
 The city sparkles like a grain of salt."

The first stanza commends the one "whose will is strong", the one who will make a sacrifice and even suffer for the sake of that which he knows is right. By constant practice in overcoming temptations his will becomes so strong that it may well be compared to a firm rock which no raging waves can overturn. The second stanza condemns the one who through repeated submission to temptation permits his will to grow ever weaker. His progress becomes more and more difficult, and he may be compared to some one attempting to cross a hill of sand where advance becomes practically impossible. He emphasizes the psychological fact that the constant recurrence of an evil establishes a bad habit which only sheer force can overcome.

In "Wages" Tennyson uses only another way of expressing the same idea when he says:

"Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle,  
 to right the wrong--  
 Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover  
 of glory she;  
 Give her the glory of going on, and still  
 to be.  
 The wages of sin is death."

If the will were not free there would be no need "to fight" and "to struggle" since it would be all in vain. Again, why speak of sin and its punishment if there is no free will, since sin is a wilful transgression of God's law?

"Despair" gives us a very gloomy atmosphere where the darkness of human hearts buried in the doctrine of predestination leads husband and wife to attempt suicide. The woman is drowned but the man is rescued. In the poem the man gives his reasons for attempting to take his life and the following is taken from his words:

"What! I should call on that Infinite Love  
 that has served us so well?  
 Infinite cruelty rather that made ever-  
 lasting hell,  
 Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us,  
 and does what he will with his own;  
 Better our dead brute mother who never has  
 heard us grown."

Here the author cries out against fatalism, a doctrine which denies free will. It is a perverted concept of the omniscience of God. Through His omniscience God knows how we are going to make use of our free will and therefore He knows whether we will be saved or lost, but we have not been predestined for heaven or hell.

An excellent expression of Tennyson's view is found in the closing lines of "De Profundis":



"-----who wrought  
 Not Matter, nor the finite-infinite,  
 But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,  
 With power on thine own act and on the world."

In these words we have a lucid statement of the belief that man is master of his own actions and that he may direct them toward his own good and that of the world or toward their ruin.

Tennyson believed that the body of man was descended from the animal but not the soul. Therefore he taught that the soul should rule over the body. This is shown in the poem "By an Evolutionist". In the opening line we have:

"The Lord let the house of a brute to the  
 soul of a man."

The second part of the poem gives the argument:

"If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat  
 finer than their own,  
 I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the  
 royal voice be mute?  
 No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag  
 me from the throne,  
 Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule  
 the province of the brute."

Although "The Promise of May" has been criticized because it is too didactic, yet we may well turn to it for information on this point. How well the character Philip Edgar expresses the current trend of psychology and the evil influence on those who imbibe it. These are his words:

"This author, with his charm of simple style  
 And close dialectic, all but proving man  
 An automatic series of sensations  
 Has often numb'd me into apathy  
 Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road  
 That breaks off short into the abysses--made me  
 A quietist taking all things easily."

This is an easy way indeed for youth to excuse its indul-

gence and excess, but Tennyson shows the evil results of such teaching. After five years spent in self-gratification and in bringing misery and ruin to others Edgar soliloquizes:

"I have ranged the world, and sat  
 Thro' every sensual course of that full feast  
 That leaves but emptiness.  
 Poor Eva! O my God, if man be only  
 A willy-nilly current of sensations--  
 Reaction needs must follow revel--yet--  
 Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he must  
   have  
 Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny?  
 Remorse then is a part of Destiny,  
 Nature a liar, making us feel guilty  
 Of her own faults."

The first three lines are an admission that no true and lasting happiness can come from a seeking of earthly pleasures. What follows is really a convincing argument in favor of freedom of the will. We all readily admit that some one guilty of crime is likely at some time or other to feel remorse for what he has done, but remorse is distress excited by guilt, and we must therefore conclude that the perpetrator of the deed must in some measure feel himself to be responsible or else there could be no remorse.

Since Tennyson was in close contact with the world, he knew in what ways man most frequently misuses his freedom and which violations are the most detrimental to the individual and to society. In the following pages we shall endeavor to show certain points in which the author tried to influence his readers toward righteous actions. At times as in "The Promise of May" this was done by direct precept, but more often through pleasing tales or terse statements which imprint themselves indelibly upon the minds of the readers.

As a means of obtaining true and lasting happiness our poet points particularly to the doing of one's duty and following the dictates of conscience. In "Oenone" we find this so beautifully expressed:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power,  
 Yet not for power (power of herself  
 Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,  
 Acting the law we live by without fear;  
 And, because right is right, to follow right  
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

Well might the flaming youth of to-day take the first two lines of the above quotation for their motto. "Self-reverence"--respect for self, because the body is the "temple of the Holy Ghost", and because of man's eternal destiny--will put an end to sins of excess and self-indulgence; "self-knowledge"--a recognition and admission of one's faults and weaknesses--will prevent a needless exposing to dangerous occasions of sin; and "self-control"--the exercising of the freedom of the will in the right direction--will develop good habits and gain mastery over temptations. These three, therefore, will lead to "sovereign power"--power over one's self in every crisis and power to exert influence over others.

"The Palace of Art" represents an artist who builds a palace embodying all the arts and wisdom of the world in beautiful symbolism, but he realizes that it is all in vain since he has excluded love and service of humanity. So he leaves his pride or his castle and descends to the lowly cottage to serve his fellowmen. The picture may also be taken to represent a soul that in its pride and selfishness excludes itself

from the love and service of others, but through dreadful pain is led to repentance, descends from its arrogance, and stoops to charity. The soul is heard to cry:

"-----I am on fire within.  
There comes no murmur of reply.  
What is it that will take away my sin,  
And save me lest I die?"

A little later she finds a solution:

"'Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said,  
'Where I may mourn and pray'."

Thus by living by the wayside where she may serve others in humility and charity she finds salvation.

In "Lady Clara Vere De Vere" we find the short but not easily forgotten counsel:

"'Tis only noble to be good.  
Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
And simple faith than Norman blood."

The last stanza is an invitation to Lady Clara, but in reality to all the wealthy to help the poor and the orphans in their need and distress. A similar attitude is shown in the poem "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" where Tennyson designates as the most proper topic of conversation:

"How best to help the slender store,  
How mend the dwellings, of the poor,  
How gain in life, as life advances,  
Valor and charity more and more."

Charity is viewed from another angle in "The Captain". It shows the sad consequences of uncharitableness. It opens with the words:

"He that only rules by terror  
Doeth grievous wrong,  
Deep as hell I count his error."

The poem then tells of the horrible fate of the captain

who mistreated his crew. When they neared the ship of the enemy they refused to fire a gun and both captain and crew perished.

Upon the death of the Duke of Wellington Tennyson wrote an ode in which we find the tribute:

"Who never spoke against a foe."

"Sea Dreams" relates a tale in which a city clerk is deceived by a rogue and invests all his savings in a "supposed" mine. When the clerk discovered the deception he cried out against him in his anger, but his wife interposed:

"Was he so bound, poor soul?-----  
 So are we all; but do not call him, love,  
 Before you prove him, rogue, and proved, forgive.  
 His gain is loss; for he that wrongs his friend  
 Wrongs himself more, and ever bears about  
 A silent court of justice in his breast,  
 Himself the judge and jury, and himself  
 The prisoner at the bar, ever condemn'd.  
 And that drags down his life; then comes  
   what comes  
 Hereafter."

This gives us not only a lesson of love toward our enemies and a willingness to forgive, but also the misery of one who has wronged his neighbor. The reference to the court of justice is particularly impressive and appropriate. Nor does the author neglect to tell us that after all the suffering and mental agony here in this life there will also be a retribution in the next world.

For a final example of charity as taught by Tennyson we turn to "Enoch Arden". Here we note particularly the spirit of sacrifice on the part of Enoch. We read the prayer:

"Save them from this, whatever comes to me."

Enoch then leaves for a distant land for the sake of his wife and children. After a number of years spent upon a lonely island as a ship-wrecked sailor he returns to find her married to another. He does not wish to destroy her happiness and so prays:

" O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou  
 That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,  
 Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness  
 A little longer! aid me, give me strength  
 Not to tell her, never to let her know."

From these lessons of charity we shall now turn to Tennyson's treatment of love and woman. Probably the best means of judging the character of the mind and the quality of genius of an author is through a study of his treatment of this subject. Love has always been an inspiration for poetry and it is in writing love-poetry that we find many poets at their best. Wordsworth, Burns, and even Arnold have written well on this theme, and Tennyson is no exception. Tennyson's love poems are more like those of Wordsworth than of Burns; Wordsworth, however, allows Nature to overshadow love, while Tennyson is not neglectful of nature yet woman has at least as prominent a place as nature. The manner in which the various poets treat woman may easily be traced to the surroundings of their childhood. In Byron we see traces of an evil heritage; in Shelley, theories of free-love; in Burns, the effects of association with the coarser element of society; but in Tennyson an atmosphere of purity and refinement. How well his poems reflect the peaceful, loving, and devotional atmosphere of his own home where his affectionate and vigilant mother was

ever busy administering to her beloved ones, moderate and restrained in joy, patient and resigned in sorrow and adversity. When we are acquainted with his surroundings it is not difficult to understand how he persevered in a blameless life, exercised such vigilance over himself, and had such a respectful attitude toward woman. He chose as his model for womanhood his own mother. In many of his poems he has pictured woman but always with the same delicacy and charm which is so alluring. He becomes passionate in his descriptions, but never beyond the bounds of propriety and purity. In several of his poems we have portrayed in the characters, his own mother. The poem entitled "Isabel" reveals his mother as follows:

"Eyes not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed  
 With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,  
 Clear, without heat, undying, tended by  
 Pure vestal thoughts in the translucent fane  
 Of her still spirit; locks not wide-dispread,  
 Madonna-wise on either side her head;  
 Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign  
 The summer calm of golden charity."

Perhaps even a more accurate picture is found in "The Princess":

"Not learned, save in gracious household ways,  
 Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,  
 No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt  
 In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise-----  
 -----Happy he  
 With such a mother! faith in womankind  
 Beats with his blood, and tho' he trip and fall  
 He shall not blind his soul with clay."

From this we get a vision of a rather timid, gentle and delicate woman with the breath of sanctity ever about her. Mr. Horton produces a letter written by Mrs. Tennyson to her son at the time of the publication of the "Idylls".<sup>1</sup> In it she

<sup>1</sup>Robert F. Horton, "Alfred Tennyson--A Saintly Life".

says that she has constantly prayed that he might direct his talents toward the service of God by impressing "the precepts of His Holy Word on the minds of others". She is delighted to see that he has done so and feels that he is of the same opinion since his writings prove that he is. Who can estimate the influence of such a solicitous and interested mother on the life and works of her son?

Having found the source of Tennyson's inspiration we may now consider a few points on his method of treating love. In the first place we note its outstanding purity. We are shown the love of a brave knight rather than that of a profligate, spiritual passion rather than earthly. Very rarely does he mention the fleshly side of love. In one of his earlier poems "The Sisters" we do find it, but this is because he is trying to imitate the ballad style. However he adds the terrible condemnation:

"She died: she went to burning flame,  
She mixed her ancient blood with shame."

He metes out the direst punishments upon any one who dares to desecrate or prove unfaithful to human love. "The Promise of May" which has already been mentioned was written particularly as a warning to those who lightly regard this matter. Edgar in trying to defend his profligacy says:

"-----if you will bind love to one forever,  
Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,  
As years go on, he feels them press upon him,  
Begins to flutter in them, and at last  
Breaks thro' them, and so flies away forever;  
While, had you left him free use of his wings,  
Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying?"

Then follows Eva's answer or the truly Christian view:



"But all that sounds so wicked and so strange;  
 'Till death us part'--those are the only words,  
 The true ones--nay, and those not true enough,  
 For they that love do not believe that death  
 Will part them."

The evil consequences of such a doctrine are shown by the death of Eva, the wrecking of the happiness of her sister Dora, the sickness of the father, and the miserable condition of the guilty one.

The baser side of love is also portrayed in the unlawful love of Guinevere, but the author shows the spiritual side rather than the fleshly side. Her sin is the cause of the downfall of the great kingdom of chivalry which Arthur had erected. We see therefore, that Tennyson dwells rather upon the spiritual and moral consequences and the selfishness of the guilty one, than on the sin itself. At the same time we note a delicacy and reverence in his attitude. This regard for womanhood and its entire sincerity is characteristic of all his work. A great number of his poems describe women and a surprisingly large number bear the name of a woman as their title. Comparing the women of Tennyson with those of other poets we note a marked difference. When we consider Shakespeare, for whom we have the greatest respect, we can hardly admire his female characters. Some of them are pictured as monsters of vice and cruelty, as for example, Lady Macbeth. Byron gave us women who were weak and foolish and possessed no strength of character. That Tennyson's treatment of women was in marked contrast to that of most authors is clearly shown in the attitude of Bulwer Lytton who in mockery calls

Tennyson "school-miss Alfred". The current opinion was to regard this attitude as a weakness in Tennyson, but it in reality showed his nobility of spirit. It was the outcome of his early training, the influence of his mother, and his own purity.

Parallel with reverence for womanhood Tennyson also teaches the sanctity of marriage and the reward of faithfulness of man and wife. Such a lesson was particularly needed in this age when divorces became more and more frequent. His stand is well summed up in the teachings of the ancient Church, "Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." "Sea Dreams" gives us a beautiful picture of mutual love and fidelity of husband and wife. "Enoch Arden" and "Queen May" picture the tragic side. In "Idylls of the King" we have a glimpse of what might be done if Arthur and Guinivere were loyal:

"Then might we live together as one life,  
And reigning with one will in everything  
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,  
And power on this dead world to make it live."

Although Tennyson has given woman the proper reverence and respect yet he does not place her upon an equal with man in intellectual and business ability. This is the regular nineteenth century view. Our author would no doubt be greatly astonished if he could view the importance which woman has assumed in the intellectual and business world of to-day. Yet we must admit that his attitude would have provided this womanhood, which he has so delicately depicted, with a much better safeguard than she finds in her present position. This argu-

ment on the intellectual status of woman is skilfully delineated at great length in "The Princess". Because of his reverence for woman he places certain restrictions and limitations upon her. He does not wish her power to be uselessly expended in social activities. Her sphere is the home where she may illuminate the family circle with her gentle rays. Would that the twentieth century woman might imbibe a little of Tennyson's sound reasoning.

"The Princess" deals with a group of women who attempt to live entirely withdrawn from men and to direct all their efforts toward intellectual pursuits. In spite of their admirable endeavors they are made to realize that such a course cannot survive. They are forced to admit that,

"The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink  
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free."

The conclusion again gives us Tennyson's position in regard to woman and her place in life:

"For woman is not undeveloped man  
But diverse: could we make her as the man  
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,  
Not like to like, but like in difference.  
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;  
The man be more of woman, she of man;  
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,  
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;  
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,  
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind:  
Till at the last she set herself to man  
Like perfect music unto noble words;  
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,  
Sit side by side, full-summed in all their powers,  
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be."

We may therefore conclude that it would be difficult to overestimate Tennyson's service to society by his repeated emphasis on purity and chastity. Never has the contrary vice

been mentioned by him except with loathing and hatred. It is a reflection of his own personal life and attitude. Well might he have said these words of himself:

"My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure."

Having pointed out the evidences of the doctrine of free-will in Tennyson's poetry and having made precursory glances at various poems of his in which this doctrine was manifested, we shall now consider in a more detailed manner what may perhaps be considered his outstanding moral production, "The Idylls of the King". In this the author aims to show the ruinous consequences of breaking the divine order. He himself has called it "the dream of man coming into practical life, and ruined by one sin". The knights of King Arthur bind themselves "to reverence their conscience as their king", and yet through an evil example the court is corrupted until only three or four of Arthur's knights are left untainted.

Various interpretations have been given to these "Idylls", but we must first consider the meaning of the poet himself before we can judge. He says in the "Dedication to the Queen":

"-----Accept this old imperfect tale  
New-old and shadowing Sense at war with Soul,  
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost  
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain-  
peak,  
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still: or him  
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one  
Touched by the adulterous finger of a time  
That hover'd between war and wantonness,  
And crowning and dethronements."

Here the author claims its purpose to be moral rather than historical. We must take him at his word that it shadows

"Sense at war with Soul". Many critics from this try to place an entire allegorical interpretation upon the poem. Personally, I prefer the attitude of Van Dyke<sup>1</sup> and Boas<sup>2</sup> who find it impossible to interpret the story as a pure allegory, but prefer to consider it a parable. An allegory is a story in which the characters are not really men and women but virtues and vices under the disguise of human beings. The reader is definitely made to feel that this character is not really a knight but Courage or Temperance, and that fair lady is not a human being but Purity or Faith. Such a presentation immediately makes us disinterested. But if instead we have real men and women who in their behavior clearly portray certain virtues we retain a far greater interest in the narrative. In "The Idylls of the King" the characters are real, they are flesh and blood, and after this fact has been established no matter how many allegorical figures and passages appear the story is no longer an allegory but a parable which has a secondary moral or spiritual significance.

The "Idylls" have indeed a great number of allegorical figures. Knowles states that Tennyson said to him:

"By King Arthur I always meant the soul, and by the Round Table the passions and capacities of a man.--There is no grander subject in the world than King Arthur."<sup>3</sup>

The Lady of the Lake, representing Religion, gives to the King his sword Excalibur, which may be looked upon either as the spiritual weapon with which the soul fights temptation, or else the temporal power of the church. We find the follow-

<sup>1</sup>Henry Van Dyke, "Studies in Tennyson", pp. 277.

<sup>2</sup>F. S. Boas, "Idylls of the King in 1921". Nineteenth Century 90: July-Dec. 1921. <sup>3</sup>Ibid.



tainly something very distinct and different from the gay, active figures, Gareth and Lynette, riding through the forest. These then are allegorical fragments, but something quite distinct from the real characters of the story. To try to interpret the entire story as an allegory would only resolve into failure. Van Dyke states the case thus:

"Suppose you say that Arthur is the Conscience, and Guinevere is the Flesh, and Merlin is the Intellect; then pray what is Lancelot, and what is Geraint, and what is Vivien? What business has the Conscience to fall in love with the Flesh? What attraction has Vivien for the Intellect without any passions? If Merlin is not a man, 'Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?' The whole affair becomes absurd, unreal, incomprehensible, uninteresting."<sup>1</sup>

When however we have a story of men and women real and life-like, we become interested and eagerly follow their course through the narrative. No matter then how important and outstanding the moral may be its emphasis is only secondary. The characters of the story are the real substance, and the allegorical presentations are merely reflections. We have, therefore, in "The Idylls of the King", a tale or parable with the purpose of picturing "Sense at war with Soul". With this intention in mind we shall consider the "Idylls".

King Arthur is supposed to be the ideal man in whom the spirit has conquered sense and he holds undisputed sway. His great task is to create about him a kingdom in which the subjects make his noble principles and ideals their own. In this great task the principal enemies are the evil passions in the hearts of his subjects. The combat, however, is not merely a

<sup>1</sup>Henry Van Dyke, "Studies in Tennyson", pp. 283-4.

spiritual and internal one, but it becomes manifest in the struggle between the evil and the good.

In "The Coming of Arthur" doubt casts a suspicion as to whether Arthur is a true king. On the other side we have faith represented in those who stand by King Arthur. Leodogran, the father of Guinevere is wavering, not knowing which side to believe. Finally, he has a dream in which Arthur stands out in heaven as crowned. So faith conquers, and Guinevere is given to Arthur as his wife. Thus the right of Arthur to the throne is established, and Arthur is ready to begin his great task.

Then we have "Gareth and Lynette". This conflict centers around high ambition and false pride. Lynette comes to ask for help from King Arthur and is given Gareth who is thought to come from the lower ranks, but is willing to fight his way upward so that he may at last be ranked among the noble knights of the Round Table. Lynette, coming from the upper class, in her pride scorns and despises him and calls him "Sir Kitchen-knave" and "Sir Scullion". He, however, undaunted fights her battles successfully, and at last makes her see that true knighthood is determined not by the name but by the deed.

As yet all seems to be well in Arthur's court, but in "Geraint and Enid" trouble appears. Whispers of the love between Lancelot and Guinevere are abroad and are beginning to taint the rest of the court. As a result Geraint in his jealousy becomes suspicious of his own wife Enid and so we have a conflict of jealousy against loyalty. He makes her ride before him and they pass through many dangers and adventures un-



til her loyalty finally conquers and we again have a victory of the soul over sense.

In "Balin and Balan" more hostile influences appear. The old king at the tributary court of Pellam is becoming a rival of King Arthur. Balin and Balan are two brothers. Balin is strong, impulsive, and unable to control himself. Balan has mastered his passions and displays great self-control. Through the deceit of Vivien they become engaged in a struggle and we have a conflict between force under the control of soul and force under the control of sense. Both are mortally wounded but we see the true victory in their last words. Balin said:

"Goodnight! for we shall never bid again  
Goodmorrow--Dark my doom was here, and dark  
It will be there."

But his brother replied:

"Goodnight, true brother here! goodmorrow there!"

In the above, apparently sense conquers, but in reality it is the soul. In "Merlin and Vivien" sense is victorious. The old magician portraying intelligence is ensnared by the cunning of Vivien.

"Lancelot and Elaine" shows the conflict between purity and passion. The maid of Astolat, pure as a lily, stands in striking contrast to Vivien. Elaine's purity gives charm, grace, and simplicity to all her actions. She gives her love to Lancelot, who is noble but unworthy of her. Lancelot stands between two loves, that of Guinevere and that of Elaine. His guilty passion conquers and he turns to Guinevere.

The conflict in "The Holy Grail" is between superstition and true faith. The knights who make only a material, external

quest for the Holy Grail are unsuccessful, but those who seek it within themselves through the practice of purity and conquest of self are successful. Among this number we find Galahad and Percivale, Bors and repentant Lancelot.

In "Pellas and Ettarre" we have another victory on the side of sense. Pelleas like Elaine is good and pure in spite of the evils about him. He sees only the good and noble ideals of earlier days. He loves Ettarre but she despises him and Gawain betrays him. Pelleas rushes madly forth conquered by the treachery and wickedness of those about him.

The real hero of "The Last Tournament" is the fool. He knows that Guinevere is false to the king and that the knights are disloyal. He is aware of all the danger that is threatening yet he is resolved to cling to the King unto the bitter end. On the other hand we have Sir Tristram, an absolute contrast to the fool and a typical representative of the infidelity, treachery, and wickedness of the court. After winning the prize in the "Tournament of the Dead Innocence" he is murdered. When Arthur returns home Guinevere has disappeared and only the fool is there to greet him. A fool, yes, but also a soul faithful to the end.

The Idyll "Guinevere" gives the conflict between Guinevere who has consented to sinful love and King Arthur the model of perfection, who forgives his wife although she has been the cause of the ruin of his kingdom, but he leaves her in a convent to do penance for the remainder of her days.

In "The Passing of Arthur" we see the death of the king with his kingdom about him in ruins. King Arthur, however,

comes out as victor since he confidently looks forward to a blessed eternity where he may reap the reward of his toils. In him the soul has triumphed over sense.

The greatest defect in the poem is no doubt the absolute perfection of King Arthur if we consider him as a human being. He is so perfect that he is no longer human. If he is supposed to have conquered sense completely before the opening of the story, then, realizing his own struggles, we would expect him to have compassion on others when confronted with temptation. It is surprising also, that he does not for a moment consider that he may in a way be responsible for Guinevere's fall through his indifference and neglect. He simply regards himself as incapable of committing a fault. However, we are quite willing to overlook this defect in view of the fact that he has successfully depicted the great truths of life.

At the very foundation we have the great moral truth that sin is the origin of all evil, hence, until it is overcome, we need have no hopes for a perfect society. We are also shown that the more exalted the position of an individual the greater his responsibility and the more disastrous the consequences of his sin. Side by side with this truth we have the teaching that man has power to resist these evil impulses through the exercise of his will or the powers of his soul. By so doing he not only saves his own soul, but helps others on the path of righteousness. Love forms the basis of the story, but Tennyson shows particularly that it must be kept within bounds. Finally through Guinevere he shows that faith

may triumph over sin, and forgiveness be obtained through true repentance. We may, therefore, consider "The Idylls of the King" as practically a summary of Tennyson's teaching in regard to freedom of the will.

Nevertheless we wish to stress the fact that although Tennyson upheld a high moral standard and advocated self-control, yet he had no sympathy for asceticism. Like other authors of his day he speaks of,

"-----fat monks, beering priests, bluff  
Harrys and iron-worded Luthers."<sup>1</sup>

He is extremely antagonistic in his treatment of Philip and Mary, the leading Catholics of the time. On the other hand he makes Cranmer a conscientious Christian. Fallen Guinevere is made to say to the Sisters:

"So let me be a nun like you."

Then she soon becomes a nun and abbess. Such things are extremely offensive to the Catholic mind. In spite of this attitude he says,

"-----pretty things about the "Heavenly Bridegroom", the "Crucifix", the "Blood of God", the "Blessed Sacrament", the "Maid-mother", the "Angels", the "Saints", the "Confession and forgiveness of sin", Martyrdom, too, and chastity and mortification, and other grandeurs characteristically Catholic are treated with decent reverence."<sup>2</sup>

We will take just one poem, "Saint Simeon Stylites", for an example. Here he holds up to ridicule the severe penances performed by Saint Simeon in particular, but by all ascetics in general. The picture we get of St. Simeon from his poem

<sup>1</sup>George Lee C. S. Sp., "Tennyson's Religion", American Catholic Quarterly, XXV, Jan. 1900, pp. 119-32. <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

is that of a very proud overbearing man who performs his penances for public praise and admiration. How different this is from the real saint whom we have learned to love and reverence although we dare not imitate.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY

The third religious belief upheld by Tennyson, namely, the immortality of the soul, links very closely to what has already been said on the belief in God. The quotations given to express his doubt and the reasons for his belief might just as well apply here. Once accepting the belief in God, the belief in everlasting life becomes merely a corollary of the former. We wish, however, to consider now the various stages in Tennyson's religious belief. Sneath distinguishes four periods that may be definitely recognized.<sup>1</sup> The first is a period of trusting uncritical belief with undisturbed confidence in God. The second period begins at the time he experiences the "first rude shocks of doubt". The third consists of a painstaking inquiry and study of the grounds of belief in the light of science and philosophy. The fourth period reflects an attitude of comparatively undisturbed repose in the belief of immortality.

The first period coincides with the time he spent with his parents under the influence of the faith professed by his father. Here there is no tinge of doubt, but only firm trust in God and hopes of immortality. Who can doubt the faith expressed in "Why Should We Weep for Those Who Die?"

"The soul, the eternal soul must reign  
In worlds devoid of pain and strife;  
Then why should mortal man complain  
Of death, which leads to happier life?"

<sup>1</sup>E. Hershey Sneath, "The Mind of Tennyson", pp. 111

In the poem "Remorse" also written during this period, we see the other side of the picture, namely, what awaits him who has violated God's law and spent his life in sin.

"-----for well  
 I know the pangs that rack me now  
 Are trifles, to the endless hell  
 That waits me, when my burning brow  
 And my wrung eyes shall hope in vain  
 For one small drop to cool the pain,  
 The fury of that madd'ning flame  
 That then shall scorch my writhing frame!"

-----  
 "How shall I brook to hear each crime,  
 Here veil'd by secrecy and time,  
 Read out from thine eternal book?  
 How shall I stand before thy throne,  
 While earth shall like a furnace burn?  
 How shall I bear the with'ring look  
 Of men and angels, who will turn  
 Their dreadful gaze on me alone?"

This vividly portrays the punishment awaiting the wicked--punishments which no misery or suffering here on earth can equal. It acknowledges the belief in a judgment where all the deeds will stand revealed as in an open book. These two poems, therefore, clearly show Tennyson's view of immortality--the Christian view, of everlasting bliss for the good and eternal punishment for the wicked.

In the second period we note a great change. There is no longer the simple childlike faith but phantoms of doubt and unbelief harass the soul. This may have been partly due to the general unrest of the period and partly to the skeptical atmosphere in which he found himself at Cambridge. His poem entitled, "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind" best reflects his position at this time. It opens with a prayer to God for help in his miserable condition. We

note that it is the question of immortality which particularly concerns him:

"How sweet to have a common faith!  
 To hold a common scorn of death!  
 And at a burial to hear  
 The creaking cords which wound and eat  
 Into my human heart, whene'er  
 Earth goes to earth, with grief, not fear,  
 With hopeful grief, were passing sweet!"

He longs for the early faith instilled by his mother, but finds it impossible to believe it now. His prayer brings no relief and the mental unrest and spiritual anguish is expressed in the words:

"O weary life! O weary death!  
 O spirit and heart made desolate!  
 O damned vacillating state!"

How well this explains Tennyson's position at this time as well as that of any one who loses his faith and trust in God and immortality. It constitutes a real crisis. To such a soul two courses are open--either to rest in faith and place complete confidence in the teachings of Christ and the Church, or to face "the spectres of the mind" and conquer them. Tennyson chooses the latter course, and we thus come to the third period--a painstaking inquiry and study of the grounds of belief in the light of science and philosophy. This period covers approximately fifty years of his life. During this time he seems to be constantly wavering. At times he expressed great doubt and despair and then again faith. Throughout the period the subject of immortality is under consideration and he tries to consider the reasons for, and those opposed to this belief. Apparently he is fairly well convinced in his



own belief when he completed "In Memoriam", and his works from that time on show rather an attempt to give to others the reasons for his belief. Yet even in these years we note an occasional hint of doubt.

The first evidence of thoughtful reasoning on the subject is found in "The Two Voices". The tempting voice argues the uselessness of life and the possibility of suicide as a remedy. The subject tempted presents the value of life and the individual obligation to protect it. He says:

"I toil beneath the curse,  
But, knowing not the universe  
I fear to slide from bad to worse."

Later in the poem he considers that the dead give no evidence of life and show no reaction to anything done in their presence. But the poet reflects:

"Why is man not in dreamless ease,  
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,  
Not make him sure that he shall cease?"

"Who forged that other influence  
That heat of inward evidence,  
By which he doubts against the sense?"

The argument here is that the "inward evidence" contradicts the "outward evidence" as obtained through the senses. Although the dead show no signs of life yet man doubts these external evidences and hopes for eternal life. This contradiction between the spirit and the outward evidence Tennyson considers as an argument in favor of immortality.

The voice continues that there is other evidence against the belief, namely, that

"To begin, implies to end."

To this the poet answers that man seems to have intimations of having had a pre-existence. He says he has no proof that he was first in "human mold" and may have come "thro' lower lives". Then follows an argument which many consider one of the strongest in favor of the belief in immortality, that man constantly desires "more life" and a "fuller" one than he has here:

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,  
No life that breathes with human breath  
Has ever truly long'd for death.

"'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want."

That the subject of immortality was at this time a matter of great concern to the author may be gleaned from the "Memoir":

"When I wrote "The Two Voices", says Tennyson to his son, "I was utterly miserable, a burden to myself and to my family, that I said, 'Is life worth anything?'"<sup>1</sup>

The next poem to be considered is "In Memoriam". It is perhaps the most representative of the spirit of the age as well as of our question under consideration. It portrays the struggle of a great soul with the doubts and fears which science has induced, and the victory of hope in immortality. The immediate occasion of this great poem was Tennyson's deep personal grief caused by the death of his friend Arthur Hallam. In its character it is an elegy expressing the heartbreaking sorrow and exquisite workmanship of a great poet. As he wrote lyric after lyric, animated by this sorrowful theme, the poet's grief became less personal and he depicted the general grief of human-

<sup>1</sup>Hallam Tennyson, op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 193 n.

ity mourning for its dead, and questioned immortality. Gradually the poem expresses first a universal doubt, and then a universal faith, a faith resting not on reason or philosophy, but on the inborn instinct of immortality. The poem outlines three years, slowly tracing the course from bitter sorrow and doubt to calm peace and hope, and ending with a noble expression of courage and faith. Though Darwin's greatest books had not yet been written, science had already changed many of the older views of life, and Tennyson, although living apart from the great turmoil, was yet greatly interested in all the problems of the day, and in this poem gave his answer to questioning humanity.

In "A Memoir" Tennyson's words in regard to "In Memoriam" are recorded:

"It must be remembered that this is a poem, not an actual biography. It is founded on our friendship, on the engagement of Arthur Hallam to my sister, on his sudden death at Vienna, just before the time fixed for their marriage, and on his burial at Clevedon Church. The poem concludes with the marriage of my youngest sister Cecilia. It was meant to be a kind of "Divina Commedia" ending with happiness. The sections were written at many different places, and as the phases of our intercourse came to my memory and suggested them. I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole, or for publication, until I found that I had written so many. The different moods of sorrow as in a drama are dramatically given, and my conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through Faith in a God of Love. 'I' is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking thro' him."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hallam Tennyson, op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 304.

The poem may be divided into four periods:

1. Grief--moods of indignation and bitter sorrow
2. Beginning of Hope--Soul refuses to despair
3. Peace--Solace comes
4. Joy--based upon Faith and Hope.

The poem opens with a prelude, but since it was written after the rest of the poem was completed we shall also leave its consideration to the last, because it gives Tennyson's position in regard to his faith at that time.

During the first period we find the gloom and sorrow which at first follows upon the death of a loved one. The grief is a very personal one and Tennyson in the early poems of "In Memoriam" reflects on the various incidents connected with the life and death of his dear friend. His grief is especially oppressive because he does not have a firm faith through which he may confidently hope for a reunion with the departed. He is led to consider the reasons for and against the belief in immortality. In our references to the poem we shall dwell only on those parts which deal with this problem.

In the XXXI poem he mentions Lazarus brought back to life. Tennyson reflects on the fact that Lazarus might have revealed so much in regard to the future life and yet he remained singularly silent on the matter. Then after a declaration of the happiness of a simple faith comes Tennyson's main reason for his belief in immortality, namely, that life is meaningless if the soul be not immortal:

"My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for evermore,  
Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is;

"This round of green, this orb of flame,  
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks  
In some wild poet, when he works  
Without a conscience or an aim.

"What then were God to such as I?  
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose  
Of things all mortal, or to use  
A little patience ere I die;

"'Twere best at once to sink to peace,  
Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
To drop head-foremost in the jaws  
Of vacant darkness and to cease."

Then follows a remarkable comparison of the spirit's departure at death and the departure of a bride from her father and mother. Both are mingled with sadness but the bride may return at times while the spirit has given its last farewell. Then Tennyson fears an eternal separation because of his vast inferiority to his friend. He wonders what the life of the spirit is like, how it compares with this life, and how the spirit beholds those left behind. He shrinks from Pantheism and expects recognition of friends and a separate identity hereafter. He expresses the belief that our departed friends are deeply concerned in us for he says in the LI division:

"Be near us when we climb or fall;  
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours  
With larger other eyes than ours,  
To make allowance for us all."

Although he realizes the faults and shortcomings in his own life, he trusts,

"-----that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,

To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

"That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete."

It is with the above quotation taken from the LIV poem that we come to the second period, when the soul has placed aside the darkest aspects of death and begins to hope. In the LV division he considers that experience and nature may refute immortality but he comes to the conclusion:

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope."

Now the poet expresses misgivings because his love is so lowly and inferior to that of his friend, nevertheless he trusts that the spirit retains tender recollections of its former influence, home, and friend. A little later there is an expression of regret that one so promising should have died so young, however, there is a consolation in the thought that all fame fades and it is enough to know that his friend was such a one as would have achieved fame, and may at the time be achieving it elsewhere.

At length Tennyson tries to reason how Arthur would have taken his death and he tries to do likewise. It is with this thought that we come to the third period. In lyric LXXXII we have another expression of his belief in immortality when he views death as a step in the onward march toward completer life:

"I wage not any feud with Death  
 For changes wrought on form and face;  
 No lower life that earth's embrace  
 May breed with him can fright my faith.

"Eternal process moving on,  
 From state to state the spirit walks;  
 And these are but the shatter'd stalks,  
 Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

"Nor blame I Death, because he bare  
 The use of virtue out of earth;  
 I know transplanted human worth  
 Will bloom to profit, elsewhere."

The LXXXV poem dwells on the reception of the souls in the great beyond and of their more complete life:

"The great Intelligences fair  
 That range above our mortal state,  
 In circle round the blessed gate,  
 Received and gave him welcome there;

"And led him thro' the blissful climes,  
 And shoe'd him in the fountain fresh  
 All knowledge that the sons of flesh  
 Shall gather in the cycled times."

Later, in the XCIV lyric, we note another of Tennyson's views, namely, that communication with the dead is not impossible, yet difficult to attain, for he says:

"How pure at heart and sound in head,  
 With what divine affections bold  
 Should be the man whose thought would hold  
 An hour's communion with the dead.

"In vain shalt thou, or any, call  
 The spirits from their golden day,  
 Except, like them, thou too canst, say,  
 My spirit is at peace with all."

One evening while rereading Arthur Hallam's letters he seems to have another of those strange experiences where he is apparently removed from this world and becomes entirely spiritual. Even as a boy he is said to have been familiar

with strange psychological conditions and uncanny "seizures". He would dwell on the sound of his name until a kind of hypnosis was induced. The condition at this particular time he expresses in the following lines:

"So word by word, and line by line,  
The dead man touch'd me from the past,  
And all at once it seem'd at last  
The living soul was flash'd on mine."

Finally in the XCVI lyric faith emerges from the long struggle with doubt and we come to the fourth period. The lines are very expressive of Tennyson's struggle. His view is that,

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
-----than in half the creeds."

Then he graphically describes his own battle with Doubt and the comforting result:

"He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them; thus he came at length

"To find a stronger faith his own,  
And Power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone,

"But in the darkness and the cloud,  
As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
While Israel made their gods of gold,  
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud."

With the above words Tennyson declares that faith has conquered over doubt, and from this point we see a marked change in the tone of the lyrics. Hope and even joy predominate. It is in this last division that we find many beautiful expressions of his belief in immortality. The CXX poem is outstanding in this regard:



"I trust I have not wasted breath:  
I think we are not wholly brain,  
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,  
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

"Not only cunning casts in clay;  
Let Science prove we are, and then  
What matters Science unto men,  
At least to me? I would not stay.

"Let him, the wiser man who springs  
Hereafter, up from childhood shape  
His action like the greater ape,  
But I was born to other things."

Yet the question is still under consideration because in the CXXIV lyric he says:

"I found Him not in world or sun."

After this follow many spiritual thoughts, but they pertain more to the belief in God and to His nature, and shall therefore be omitted here. As has already been stated the Prologue was written after the rest of "In Memoriam" had been completed. Tennyson's position here is, that he is willing to believe in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul although he cannot prove it. Among other poems published toward the end of the third period we find "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava" to have in the Epilogue a positive statement of Tennyson's belief in immortality:

"The man remains, and whatsoe'er  
He wrought of good or brave  
Will mould him thro' the cycle-year  
That dawns behind the grave."

"The Ancient Sage" has already been mentioned in connection with the discussion of Tennyson's belief in God, but we find in the same poem also arguments in favor of our present point. He gives a description of one of his strange experi-

ences already mentioned in "In Memoriam". He here realizes that he is more spiritual than material, and he accepts this as one of his principal arguments in favor of immortality.

In "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After", the poet calls immortality "the leading light of man". After commenting on the universality of the belief, he finally affirms that such noble traits of human character as goodness, truth, purity, and justice "crumble into dust" if we rob them of immortality:

"Truth for truth, and good for good! The  
                   Good, the True, the Pure, the Just--  
 Take the charm 'Forever' from them, and  
                   they crumble into dust."

The poem "Vastness" probably marks the close of the third period and in it we have stated his principal reason for the belief in the immortality of the soul, namely, that everything in life is useless and meaningless without it. This is followed by a profession of his own belief:

"What is it all, if we all of us end but in  
                   being our own corpse-coffins at last?  
 Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence,  
                   drown'd in the deeps of a meaningless Past?"

"What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or  
                   a moment's anger of bees in their hive?---"

"Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love  
                   him forever: the dead are not dead but  
                   alive."

From 1833 to 1889, therefore, we find Tennyson's poetry giving repeated consideration to man's final destiny. He has given the matter careful thought and study. He has examined the argument of sense--no life is apparent after death; that of the skeptic--"To begin implies to end"; that of the mate-

rialist--man is merely a part of nature; that of the pantheist,--man's identity is absorbed after death and is mingled with God and Nature; and finally that of the Agnostic,--man is unable to obtain any knowledge in regard to his immortality.

The arguments in favor of the belief in immortality have not been neglected: Man has an innate desire for life; a being so highly endowed as man cannot perish; man has "intimations of his immortality"; the fact that man hopes for immortality in spite of the external evidence against it; life would be worthless without immortality; evolution shows continual progress and man being the highest type of creation will move to a higher destiny; the Justice of God requires it; and man at times is conscious of the spiritual life.<sup>1</sup> These are the reasons that Tennyson considers and which he accepts as proof of the immortality of the soul. Yet he takes the same attitude as he did toward the belief in God, namely, that we can never know but must rest in faith.

This brings us to the fourth period in Tennyson's attitude toward immortality. He has faced his doubts and conquered them. Now there is a period when peace, joy, and confident trust are beautifully revealed in his poetry. In the poem "Faith" we read:

"Thro' the gates that bar the distance comes  
a gleam of what is higher.  
Wait till Death has flung them open."

The poem entitled "The Silent Voices" reveals a longing for the rest and happiness of the life beyond the grave:

<sup>1</sup>E. H. Sneath, "The Mind of Tennyson", passim.

"When the dumb Hour, clothed in black,  
 Brings the Dreams about my bed,  
 Call me not so often back,  
 Silent Voices of the dead,  
 Toward the lowland ways behind me,  
 And the sunlight that is gone!  
 Call me rather, silent voices,  
 Forward to the starry track  
 Glimmering up the heights beyond me  
 On, and always on!"

"God and the Universe" gives a great hope and consolation to one about to part for his eternal home:

"Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the  
 limit of thy human state,  
 Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that  
 Power which alone is great,  
 Nor the myriad world, His shadow, not the  
 Silent Opener of the Gate."

In all of these poems we find no note of doubt or fear, but supreme trust and confidence in what is to meet him when he breathes his last. We will close this section with the poem "Crossing the Bar" which also in the mind of Tennyson expresses his final position, since he requested that it be printed as the last in the collection of his poems:

"Sunset and evening star,  
 And one clear call for me!  
 And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
 When I put out to sea,

"But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
 Too full for sound and foam,  
 When that which drew from out the boundless  
 deep  
 Turns again home.

"Twilight and evening bell,  
 And after that the dark!  
 And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
 When I embark;

"For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place  
 The flood may bear me far,  
 I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
 When I have crost the bar."

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In our summary let us call to mind a quotation from Blackwood's Magazine of seventy years ago:

"It (speaking of Tennyson's poetry) is a rosary of golden beads, some of them gemmed and radiant, fit to be set in a King's crown; but you must tell them one by one and take leisure for your comment while they drop from your fingers."<sup>1</sup>

We have selected just a few of these golden beads and have endeavored to make a worthy comment as they dropped from our fingers, but we cannot help voicing our regret that Tennyson did not have the firm rock of Catholic faith as a foundation for his attractive poetic structures. Resting as they do on the sands of a vague, indefinite faith, they can never withstand the attacks of close scrutiny. What fruits might not have been brought forth from the literary productions of a man of such sterling character, great genius, and untiring efforts, if he had had as a foundation the ancient faith of his forefathers! Then indeed he might have been hailed as the religious teacher of the nineteenth century!

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<sup>1</sup>George Lee, C. S. Sp., "Tennyson's Religion", American Catholic Quarterly, XXV (Jan. 1900), 119.

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