RELIGION IN THE POETRY OF

ALFRED LORD Tennyson

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ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

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CHAPTER I

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN THE AGE OF TENNYSON

Prior to the nineteenth century the theory of the universe, the origin, purpose, and destination of man were for the most part in the Western world explained satisfactorily by the theory of the Christian religion. But around 1800 the seed sown by Francis Bacon some two centuries earlier broke forth in an open war between science and religion. Although we of the present age like to think of the Victorian period as placid and uneventful, it was in reality far from this. The natural sciences were beginning to modify the long-established explanations of the universe and put new interpretations on the Bible. The development of science and rationalism brought about a clash with religious ideas, and men ceased sharing a general view of the universe and a common judgment of what constitutes the good in life. The conflicting forces at work seemed to be directed toward a rationalistic victory, for men were beginning to turn to individual reason in an effort to master the perplexities of life.

The term rationalism, which is broad enough to include and demand a reasonable explanation of the universe in scientific
terms, had its beginning for the Western World in the seventeenth century. Lecky, in The History of the Rise and Influences of Rationalism in Europe, explains the expression as follows:

By the spirit of rationalism, I understand not any class of definite doctrines or criticism, but rather a certain cast of thought, or bias of reasoning, which has during the last three centuries gained a marked ascendancy in Europe... At present, it will be sufficient to say, that it leads men on all occasions to subordinate dogmatic theology to the dictates of reason and of conscience, and as a necessary consequence, greatly to restrict its influence upon life. It predisposes men, in history, to attribute all kinds of phenomena to natural rather than miraculous causes; in theology, to esteem succeeding systems the expressions of the wants and aspirations of that religious sentiment which is planted in all men; and, in ethics, to regard as duties only those which conscience reveals to be such.¹

With the revival of knowledge and learning in the eighteenth century, science began to push its way onward, regardless of the obstacles created by religion, until it had claimed for rationalism a bold and open war upon the existing theological tenets. Although the Church itself believed that the doctrines of religion were above the reason and authority of man, many of its members sought to abandon the early theories of creation, which had, they believed, been used only until some more suitable explanation appeared. This Age of Enlightenment refused to believe in mysteries or miracles, but insisted that reason be used to explain all doubts and

that the authority of the Church and State should be limited and subordinated to the principles of reason and the interest of the individual members of society. The rationalists of the eighteenth century regarded the universe as motionless, explaining its position by a mathematical ordering or by the theories created by the Newtonian world machine. The conceptions were obtained, not from experience, but from innateness. There was in existence a general tendency among thinkers of superior intellect to "exalt reason at the expense of authority." Man and his institutions were included in the order of Nature and scope of recognized methods. Every man was to seek truth through the medium of his own reason. For the rationalists the function of God was nothing more than "that of starting the machine in the first place; since then, God has not needed to concern himself with the operation of his perfect creation, and his sole value intellectually, aside from giving a scientific explanation of the origin of things, was to guaran-
tee that the world was operated upon a moral basis, that it was permeated by a moral order that would punish in hell the unrighteous and reward the righteous." Nature, to the eighteenth-century mind, meant the whole of creation, a

2  J.E. Bury, A History of Freedom of Thought, p. 29.
creation which was made by a rational God according to a rational plan.

In the nineteenth century, however, the spirit of free inquiry became extremely modified. Randall writes that the "initial steps in the transformation of the eighteenth century world into that of the next century were marked by a strong current of reaction against the scientific methods of the ideals of the Age of Reason."

The conflict between dogma and reason began to influence every human being, for even the conduct of the ministers was changed. "The Church, the symbol of authority in religion and the sources of faith, had lost its powers to persuade or impel obedience. Firm and secure in her privileges, her dignities, and her possessions, she had lapsed into a quiet worldliness which utterly obscured in the person of many of her priests and bishops a sense of the sacredness of their mission." They were Christian leaders, to be sure, but they were almost entirely untouched by spiritual fervor. One critic writes:

The Church, it has often been said, was asleep; and loud are the denunciations against the officials who permitted and shared the slumber. Certain it is that if the sheep looked up hungry they were not fed.

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4 Ibid. p.295.
6 Ibid., p.18.
The clergy cannot, however, be justly condemned for "yielding to forces" which could not be avoided or repelled by anyone in England.

We find, scattered through the reviews of the period, plaintive evidence that belief in the concept of God's purpose toward man and the comfort found in Him seemed to be waning. One critic records:

The mighty Empire of France, with whom we are now so closely and so intimately connected, has abolished the Church as an engine or power of State. Another great Empire of increasing growth and wonderful power, the United States of America, with whom our intercourse is almost daily augmented, acknowledges religion only as a civil right; the State has no religion. In their splendid temples at Washington, the Catholics, the Church-of-England man, the Presbyterian, the Quaker, offer up their praises together, in harmony to the most High, according to their respective forms of worship. Can we, in such a condition of the civil polity of these two great and inspiring nations, maintain our extraordinary church establishment—the cruel and oppressive system of tithes—the useless cathedrals? Can we do all this in peace and quiet, in the face of the universal feeling of man?7

The Church, unable to cope with the problems peculiar to religious thought of the time, was without force or strength to offer spiritual relief to men. "Her days of visitation had come upon her; her very foundations seemed to be disintegrating under the implications of an enlarging body of scientific truth that appeared to controvert some of her dearest tenets."8

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7As quoted by J.G. Lemaistre, "How Will It Work?" Quarterly Review, XLVIII (December, 1832), 554-555.

With the resulting changes and readjustments in the conflicting religious and scientific thought, men were forced in some way to react. For many people of the century certain prevalent conclusions concerning the universe and creation could be accepted, but results contrary to reason were inconceivable. Although the rationalism of the nineteenth century lost much of the narrowness and harshness necessary under the negative criticism of the eighteenth century, men were either "too rational or not rational enough." Religious leaders, subdued by the conquering march of science and rationalism, retreated to the sublime heights of faith.

The appeal to faith developed in the Victorian age into an evangelical orthodoxy. "Its main features," writes Randall, "are primarily the result of the reaction against the eighteenth century rationalism." From this development the theologians of the Victorian period are separated into four groups, the Evangelicals, who at the start were the most powerful; the Noetics, who embraced rationalism, and their successors of the Broad Church; the followers of Coleridge; and by far the most interesting of all, the exponents of the Catholic Reaction, which is known in England as the Oxford Movement. The Catholic

\[9\] Randall, op. cit., p. 393.  
\[10\] Ibid., p. 391.  
\[11\] Walker, op. cit., p. 85.
Reaction, of course, is a necessary part of the Romantic Revival, which is opposed to the belief that the universe can be explained by the reason of man.

Because men were destroying the biblical chronology which had been used for thousands of years and were substituting the word inspiration to explain all religious notions, the position of the Evangelicals was favorable when they were thrown into the current of religious life. The religious leaders, by picking and selecting among the miracles of the world, devised astonishing hypotheses to restore the doctrine of the fall with the theory of evolution. And although the idea of an unfailing book was accepted by the people with no thought of its being fallible, the impression of an undeceiving church was inconceivable.

But what is the Church of England coming to teach today? As Mr. Beeby has pointed out, its clergy of all schools have united to throw this old belief to the winds...and how general movement has become he illustrates by reference to a work recently issued by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, especially intended to meet the attacks of rationalism. According to this manifesto, the Fall has nothing to do, in a literal sense, with the disobedience of any primaeval ancestor. The child, says the author, is born, 'absolutely without consciousness of sin.' The Fall comes when the faculty of conscience awakens..."The Fall means the struggle of the twofold nature of man."

12 W.H. Mallock, "Free Thought in the Church of England," Nineteenth Century, LVI (September, 1904), 390.

13 Ibid., p.389.
The character or attitude born of Protestantism, rather than that born of the Church of Rome, appealed to the evangelical precepts of the clergy. "The more earnest among them devoted themselves to efforts for moral and social reform." Their religion during the nineteenth century was "the moral cement" of English society. The evangelical religion put an end to the barren rationalism of the eighteenth century; it substituted immediate experience for reasonable demonstration, direct knowledge for indirect, in the religious sphere, and so circumvented the skepticism whom the apologists were impotent to overcome; it brought the feelings once more into repute, and aided the nineteenth century reaction against the narrow intellectualism of the eighteenth; it gave a new meaning and an independent value to religion; it promoted individualism and emancipation from the bondage of ecclesiasticism; and, above all, it vitalized and revived religion throughout the length and breadth of the land. On the other hand, it brought back much of the old system, including many of its most obnoxious features which rationalism had relegated to oblivion, as it was supposed, forever. It turned its face deliberately toward the past instead of toward the future in its interpretation of man and his need. It sharpened the issue between Christianity and the modern age, and promoted the notion that the faith of the fathers had no message for their children. Becoming identified in the minds of many with Christianity itself, its narrowness and medievalism, its emotionalism and lack of intellectuality, its crass supernaturalism and Biblical literalism, its want of sympathy with art and science and secular culture in general, turned them permanently against religion. In spite of the great work accomplished by evangelicalism, the result in many quarters was disaster.15

14 Walker, op. cit., p. 84.

The Evangelicals, unable to pass on their positive assets, gave way to the first followers at Oxford to rebel against authority and accept reason. The Noetics, as they called themselves, were the liberals who were later shunned by Newman and his followers. The term noetic, explained by Walker, "is rationalistic softened through the mist of the Greek language, so that to clerical ears it did not suggest all the dire association of the latter word." The needed improvement of the noetic teachings was supplied by the ideas of the German philosophy, which was dreaded in England almost as much as rationalism. Although it may seem odd that in religion this spirit could be related to the Oxford Movement, the mystic element, which involved the feeling rather than the understanding, appealed to the Tractarian minds. Germanism, however, was strongest in bringing about a change from the Noetics to the Broad Churchmen, for it worked in harmony with the appeal to faith.

The Catholic Reaction in England was possibly an effort to restore to the people the faith which had been abandoned by the infinity of free thought in the eighteenth century. It appeared, however, to the masses engulfed by rationalizing thought as a scheme to "put back the clock of thought" by several centuries. The Movement was begun in 1833 by a group

16 Walker, op. cit., p. 93.
of Oxford religious leaders, Pusey, Keble, and Newman, whose
desire was to free the Church of England from the stiff,
methodical position which seemed to make vital religion im-
possible. The young men of the movement sought spiritual
encouragement by delving into the Christianity of the early
centuries. "They urged a return to some of the practices
which had prevailed before the sixteenth century, and by their
sincerity, their intellectual power, and their conviction,
they began a revival of religious earnestness which left a
permanent mark upon the Church of England." Newman and his
friends published Tracts for the Times, attempting to guide a
"neglectful generation" to the acceptance of the principles of
the Anglican Church. The Tractarians, as they called themselves,
failed to succeed in their mission, for the liberalism of the
middle class still held a firm position in England. A
prominent critic, whose intention was "not to quarrel with
the school," wrote fifty pages on the affirmation "that the
Scriptures were not the sole and absolute rule of faith."
Possibly an excerpt of his "argument" will be indicative of
the opposition to the Oxford Movement.

It is now about ten years since the founders of this school
set about achieving their great miracle of putting the
'dial' of the world 'ten degrees backwards.' Their first

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R.E. Bos and B.M. Hahn, Social Backgrounds of English
Literature, p.216.
proceedings were comparably moderate. They had arrived at the conclusions that the Church of England had become more 'Protestant than Reformation;' that the spirit of the English Church resides rather in the Liturgy than in the Articles; that certain 'great and precious truths had nigh gone out of date, and that certain high 'gifts' and prerogatives of the Church had come to be cheaply rated.

To diffuse their views they commenced that remarkable series of publications well known by the name of Oxford Tracts, at an early stage of which appeared Mr. Newman's Via Media, or middle road to heaven, between Romanism and Protestantism. This Via Media appeared to many as nothing more or less than the 'old Roman road' uncovered and made passable. What was thus early suspected was in due time made manifest. No matter how moderate the first pretensions of these writers, it was soon seen that their systems of doctrine and ritual was fast assuming a form not essentially different from that of undisguised Romanism. Flushed with success, and forgetting all caution, they rapidly developed, partly in Tracts and partly in separate works, principles at which the Protestant world stood aghast. In a word, the system closely resembled that of Rome; it was, as geometricalians say, a similar figure, only with not so large a perimeter.18

Newman in 1845 entered the Church of Rome. "Several English Protestants followed his example, and the Roman Catholic group in England, strengthened by distinguished converts, assumed a position of influence such as it had not possessed since the Reformation." By an increase in number and influence, the High Church party soon exerted a real impression upon the life of England.

Although Tennyson was not influenced by the Oxford Movement, it is significant in nineteenth century thought because it illustrates under what conditions rationalism was at work.

18 Edinburgh Review, LXXVII (April, 1843), 504.
19 Amy Cruse, The Victorians and Their Books, p.37.
The Tractarians failed to see that rationalism was a needed but unwelcome factor in replacing a complacent acceptance of time-worn creeds. To deny reason in the origin and purpose of man does not promote progress—it proves only a hindrance. Rather than accept rationalism as did the Agnostics and Noetics of the age, the followers of Newman preferred to hide behind the sacred foundation of authority and refused to differ from that which "had been received for thousands of years." Only when the results of criticism supported Catholic doctrines was reason permitted. It seems impossible, then, that any employment of knowledge could have existed. "Though the seed sown was knowledge, the crop reaped was Ignorance."

The subject of rationalism and theology has led us far into the Victorian period. It is now necessary to return to the beginning and trace another line of causation. Although science usually is not included in a discussion of speculative thought, the subject cannot, without losing sight of all the forces at work, be disregarded in the nineteenth century.

Prior to the development of the theory of evolution by Darwin, Spencer, and Lyell, the phenomena of nature were explained as chance. Men actually recognized no plan of production in nature; their ideas of the universe were congealed into the word catastrophic. Lecky states that before the Theory of Descartes, which was the first attempt to establish a theory of the universe, "the different motions of the heavenly

bodies had been for the most part looked upon as isolated, and the popular belief was that they as well as all the atmospheric changes were effected by angels." Hence, it is certain that the interpretations of creation were obtained in a similar manner. The spirit of inquiry in the Victorian period, however, incited many free-thinkers to question the old story of creation. As the investigation progressed, men concluded that creation was no sudden act, but a gradual process which had continued through millions of years.

Disaster was shaking man's faith in life. Doubts concerning the actual existence of true species in nature became evident. Scientists disturbed man's complacent acceptance of God and shocked him with doubts concerning the change of separate groups of beings. Charles Lyell's summary in chapter thirty-seven of his Principles of Geology (1830-33), gives the "conclusions reasonably deduced of the conditions or changes in animal and vegetable life existing everywhere":

There is a capacity in all species to accommodate themselves to a certain extent to a change of external circumstances, this extent varying greatly according to the species...When the change of situation they can endure is great, it is usually by some modification of the form, colour, size, structure, or other particulars; but the mutations, thus superinduced are governed by constant law, and the capability of so varying forms are part of the permanent specific character...From these considerations it appears that species have a real existence in

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Lecky, op. cit., p.282.
nature, and that each was endowed, at the time of its creation, with the attributes and organization by which it is now distinguished. 22

The theory was naturally shocking to the people because of the imposing narrow interpretation of the Bible. The conflict endured, however, for even before Lyell's emphasis upon the uniformity of nature's processes became known, men were at work with astronomy, and books on the observations of stars began to be published. The astronomer, however, like the scientist, was unfavorably received. Man felt that each discovery brought him closer and closer to complete disaster. Through his discoveries in the scientific world, however, the astronomer sensed a closer union with God and the universe, a communion with higher forces of Eternal Spirit. A critic writing in the Quarterly Review of 1828, defends the scientific discoveries of the century:

While astronomy thus affords to our intellectual nature a field commensurate with its highest efforts, it is fraught with no less advantages to our moral being.... Among sciences, indeed, where man is the tyrant, who can expect him to be the moralist or the philosopher?... Under this conviction the astronomer must feel his own comparative insignificance, and amidst the sublimity and grandeur of the material universe, the proudest spirit must be abased, and fitted for the reception of those nobler truths which can be impressed only on a humble and softened heart. 23

Although there were private observatories at Dublin, Edinburgh, Oxford, and Cambridge, the government contributed

22 As quoted in the Quarterly Review, LI (March, 1834), 236.
23 Quarterly Review, XXXVIII (July, 1828), 2.
nothing toward their support. The same author continues:

Can we as a nation, be indifferent to the part we are to take in these intellectual achievements? When we look at the state of science on the Continent, pursued by academicians freed from the embarrassments of professional labour, and when we look at the numerous and well appointed observatories, we shrink from the comparison which is thus forced upon our attention. We feel as if it were a species of treason to record the fact that within the wide range of the British Islands, there is only one observatory and scarcely one supported by the government.24

This impediment to scientific progress was not brought about directly by the Church. Rather, the Church served as a conditioner of public opinion, and the government, in obedience to popular sentiment, was reluctant in supporting scientific experiment.

Nevertheless, science progressed in promoting new ideas of the universe. William Whewell, in considering "general physics with reference to natural theology," recognized the connection between God and science.

Although the records of inspiration demand and deserve our implicit belief, our most unreserved confidence, the time appears to have nearly arrived, when science and conviction ought to walk hand in hand with faith. The re-examined and accumulated results of the researches of geologists, and the combined labours of astronomers and mathematicians, cannot have been extended for the mere entertainment of those who have devoted themselves to such pursuits. They point to a higher destiny. The more successfully the sciences have been cultivated, the brighter and the more numerous have become the signs, and as, we may add, the demonstrations of the existence of the Omnipotent Intelligence by whom all things were made.25

24 Ibid., p.15.
25 Quarterly Review, L (October, 1833), 6-7.
Although a conciliation between science and religion seemed impossible under the controversy of creed and belief, reason in time replaced complacency and century-old beliefs.

In 1844 a new wave of scientific evidence cropped up to disturb the century. Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, published anonymously, caused such an outburst that the author, in the second edition, attempted to explain its purpose. Although his work was not an effort to proclaim a new theory of creation, most of his readers regarded him as atheistic and irreverent. The book, he said

is not primarily designed, as many have intimated and as the title might be thought partly to imply, to establish a new theory respecting the origin of animated Nature...the purpose is to show that the revelation of the works of God presented to our senses and reason, is a system based on what we are compelled for want of a better term to call Law; by which is not meant a system independent or exclusive of Deity, but one which only proposes a certain mode of His working.26

The entire scope of life became altered suddenly by science, and the people were unable to interpret the Bible according to the new knowledge. Some, probably people of restless intellect, however, accepted the theory and speculated as to whether there could possibly be an even better explanation of the universe. And, although the author, Robert Chambers, presented some inaccurate and ridiculous statements in his book, he prepared the way for greater books that were to come.

26 Cruse, op. cit. p.84, quoting Robert Chambers, Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation.
Perhaps Disraeli's *Tancred*, which indirectly kept alive the principles of *Vestiges*, best illustrates the denial or eager acceptance of the theory and the further existence of conflict between science and religion. Tancred, a clever young man, calls on Lady Constance, with whom he is in love.

The following conversation occurs:

After making herself very agreeable Lady Constance took up a book which was at hand, and said, 'Do you know this?' And Tancred, opening a volume which he had never seen, and turning to its title-page, found it was *The Revelations of Chaos*, a startling work just published, and of which a rumour had reached him.

'No,' he replied, 'I have not seen it.'

'I will lend it you if you like; it is one of those books one must read. It explains everything, and is written in a very agreeable style.'

'It explains everything!' said Tancred. 'It must, indeed, be a very remarkable book!'

'I think it will just suit you,' said Lady Constance. 'Do you know I thought so several times while I was reading it.'

'To judge from the title, the subject is rather obscure,' said Tancred.

'No longer so,' said Lady Constance. 'It is treated scientifically; everything is explained by geology and astronomy, and in that way. It shows exactly how a star is formed; nothing can be so pretty! A cluster of vapour, the cream of the milky way, a sort of celestial cheese churned into light. You must read it, 'tis charming.'

'Nobody ever saw a star formed,' said Tancred.

'Perhaps not. You must read the Revelations; it is all explained. But what is most interesting is the way in which man has been developed. You know, all is development. The principle is perpetually going on. First, there was nothing, then there was something; then, I forget the next, I think there were shells, then fishes; then we came, let me see, did we come next? Never mind that, we came at last. And the next change there will be something very superior to us, something with wings. Ah! that's it; we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows.'

"The history of the theory of evolution," writes Somervell, "is itself an example of 'evolution' in the looser sense of the word." The principles of evolution were not thrown upon the public at once; rather, the development was placed before the people gradually as the scientific knowledge was discovered. One can easily see, from the conversation between Tancred and Lady Constance, how divergently the subject of evolution was discussed.

Fifteen years passed before scientists were prepared to give the relation between science and religion. In the meantime religious leaders throughout England were struggling to "reconstitute themselves according to the ideas which, directly or indirectly, had been the outcome of the Oxford Movement."

Darwin and Spencer, working differently toward the same conclusions, were doing work on the theory of evolution. Although Darwin was influenced by Lyell's Principles of Geology, the theory of natural selection occurred to him after studying Malthus's Essay on Population.

Darwin's Origin of Species was published in 1859, causing a serious and bitter outcry from the people. The public,

29 Cruse, op. cit., p. 90.
30 Somervell, op. cit., p. 127.
refusing to see the theory as a great constructive idea, regarded evolution as a brutal attack upon biblical truths. The Romau Catholics agreed with Cardinal Manning in rejecting the theory as "brutal philosophy—to wit there is no God, and the Ape is our Adam." The world, to the nineteenth-century mind, was created in six days, but according to Darwin's theory, this orthodox belief could not be accepted.

The Origin of Species was not the first nor the last conflict born of science in the nineteenth century. Scientific education was advancing at every moment. The majority of men, subdued by the onmarch of scientific materialism, were convinced that life was not worthy living. Many found refuge for their despair in the "ivory tower of art," while others, realizing that it was impossible to solve among themselves the outcome of human reason, were lost in complete disillusionment. Is it any wonder, then, that in the nineteenth century men who saw science and invention "opening illimitable and fantastic vistas into the unknown" and who saw their spiritual life "cracking before the advancing billows of criticism and analysis," should feel obscurely that unaccountable forces had been released, that vast and hidden tides were sucking them out from the old familiar roadstead to some unknown and restless ocean?

Victorian England, to be sure, felt the need of a poet of its own, one who could lift them from the humiliating trials of

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31 Nicolson, op. cit., 2-3. 32 Ibid. p.3.
daily life, the conflict of their thoughts to some new way of living, to some 'clear walled city of the sea.' They wanted rest. Tennyson, looking at the universe from within, was applauded by England for giving to the generation his interpretation of the truths of religion and science. Amid all the uncertainties of the time, he recognized the necessity of faith and traced through nature

One God, one law, one element
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.\(^{33\text{a}}\)

\(^{33\text{a}}\) *In Memoriam*, pp. 11.142-44.
CHAPTER II
BELIEF IN THE REALITY OF GOD

While Tennyson was attending Cambridge, the conflicts between the Church of England, the Church of Rome, and the Tractarians of the Oxford Movement were disturbing the minds of the age. Tennyson, however, was not touched by the Sunday afternoon sermons of Newman at St. Mary's, which brought a disquieting condition to many young men of the time. "He was not exposed to the hectic atmosphere of the Oriel Common Room ... or the boisterous conviction of Hurrel Froude." Tennyson's mind was not diverted by Newman to the Middle Ages nor was his attention directed by John Keble to the inspiring verse of the beliefs and practices of the Church. Although the religious thought of Cambridge in Tennyson's time recognized the evidence of science and historical discoveries, the blight of criticism became so shocking that the members were forced to react against the materialism of the age. While the Tractarians found refuge for their emotional appeal in the Church of Rome, the Cambridge theologians, writes Harold Nicolson, had

a very trying time indeed. Some of them lost their faith completely; a few relapsed into a mystic form of theism;

many became merely agnostic; others, like F. D. Maurice, fell back on the comforting if rather insecure theory that in the end would come "the sure triumph of order, beauty, and love over confusions, divisions and hatred. But the great majority—the vast perplexed majority—were frightened and appalled by the logical position in which they found themselves. They wanted to be assured that all was really for the best; they desired to discover some compromise which while not outraging their intellect and their reason, would none the less soothe their conscience and restore their faith—if not completely, at least sufficiently to allow them to believe in some ultimate purpose, and, more important still, in the life after death."

Although Tennyson was temporarily subdued by the conflicting conditions of the nineteenth century and by the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam, he did not permanently lose his faith. To be sure, while so many of those about him "were thrown upon the thorns of unbelief, he almost alone among the poets of his time, faced the revelations of the new science and brought them into harmony with the eternal verities of religion." Astronomy was more to him than a bare string of facts; it was a key opening the door to imaginative vision. He saw the world whirling in limitless space among other stars past telling; the story of the heavens spoke to him like the revelation of a human face. He knew the surface of the earth minutely, and he drank eagerly the knowledge which could tell him how the rocks took their shape, why this was ribbed and that twisted. And pondering on the relation between higher and lower types, he actually thought out for himself in some vague form Darwin's great hypothesis. Thus nothing could induce him to see in science an enemy to be baffled and fought with, but rather an ally or a guide. . . . The world, sick at heart with hearing door after door crashed in the face of its most intimate hopes, welcomed his utterance, which told them that beyond the

\[2\] Ibid., p. 262.

\[3\] Wm. E. Smyser, Modern Poets and Christian Teachings, p. 22.
facts which science could explain there lay others utterly inexplicable except upon a supposition that would leave to man his aspirations. In short, Tennyson pro-
pounded a via media between dogmatic Christianity and
dogmatic materialism, and the compromise was welcome. 4

Tennyson was in earnest consideration of the reason for the faith which much of the science and philosophy of the time denied. "Through his faith in the spiritual intuitions he was able to emerge from the mists that shut him in, into a clearer atmosphere where free sky and stars were visible"5 to lead the souls who were lost in "a sunless sea of doubt."

—Although the conditions under which Tennyson passed his earlier years were also favorable, he suffered a great loss when Hallam died. To be sure, his father had instilled in him the value of the virtuous and spiritual, and although he had "taken Orders without any very strong leaning towards the ser-
vice of souls,"6 he "faithfully strove to do his duty and was considerably in advance of his age in his theological opinions."7

Thus, Tennyson obtained from his father a position allowing him, "when creeds were crumbling and dogmas were passing away,"8 to cling to faith beyond the forms of faith."9 But he had not been prepared in the development of his faith for the shock of the death of Hallam, and he was unable for many years to turn

6 Hugh T'anson Fausset, Tennyson, A Modern Portrait, p. 8.
9 The Ancient Sage, 1. 69.
from his soul this forlornness which became his master. While the bitterness of this despair and the confusion of the age endured, Tennyson struggled to renew and establish his faith in a God who is, who is personal, and who is essential justice and love. And it must be remembered that, though at times he seems to overcome his despair, this haunting wail of fear and loneliness pierces at moments through the undertone of all his poetry until at last he "emerges with the inspiration of a strong and steadfast faith in the love of God for man, and in the oneness of man with God, and of man with man in him."^{10}

It may seem that Tennyson constructed a firm foundation for doubt and a feeble structure for faith, but, in compromising, his religion was for himself and his generation a comfort in the uncertainties of the age. "Compromise," writes Stephen Gwynn, "is never very picturesque, and Tennyson, British in this as well as in everything else, held in religion to what was essentially a compromise."^{11} It was, answers Harold Nicolson, "But it was not a facile or a feeble compromise; it was a compromise which caused him bitter searchings of heart, devastating reactions, and agonizing uncertainties."^{12}

Tennyson struggled, when his faith was disturbed by the religious changes occurring in the thirties, to believe in "that God which ever lives and loves," and the fight with his own doubts made him ponder the question of the reality of God


^{11} Gwynn, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

^{12} Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 263.
and the meaning of human life. As he was not a "born believer," he was unable to accept things on authority. Rather, he inquired

into the laws
Of life and death, and things that seem,
And things that be, and analyse
Our double nature, and compare
All creeds till we have found the one,
If one there be.13

He boldly exclaims 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.

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.14

But immediately he calls this his dream and recognizes that he is only

An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light;
And with no language but a cry.15

Like so many people of his age he wanted desperately to cling to his old faith, to believe in man as a divine creation with a divine purpose. But he could not be happy in a blind faith; his intellect and his honesty would not let him refuse to accept facts. There was a life-long effort to arrive at a satisfactory relationship between the two.

Harold Nicolson has said, "The problem which he set himself to solve was in its essence that of reconciling science

13 Supposed Confessions, II. 172-77.
14 In Memoriam, LIV, II. 5-12.
15 Ibid., II. 18-20.
to religion . . . He wanted to be liberal, broadminded, intellectual, to look beyond the disputes of creed and dogma to something higher and more essential. But the book of Genesis had been proved scientifically incorrect, and the great problem was to prove that there is a God. Proof he found impossible to achieve; therefore he found solace in evolving the formula; "God is love." But in looking about him he saw no evidence of a God of love. He observed instead that

... nature is one with rapine, a harm
no preacher can heal;
The mayfly is torn by the swallow, the
sparrow is speared by the shrike,
And the whole little wood where I sit
is a world of plunder and prey.

How could such a world be the handiwork, the divine creation of an omnipotent God of love? Skeptically, he pondered the question:

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

Suppose, then, that man is not of God, as we have thought.
Suppose we are a godless world whirling through space to a purposeless annihilation.

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?

---

20 Vastness, 11. 33-34.
But Tennyson would not tolerate such a concept. It was so horrible as to be unthinkable and unbearable. To the philosopher, God is unknowable to the understanding and reason, but he is perceived through faith. To this Tennyson applied his theology; his gradual recovery from the formless dark to the visionary enabled him to "justify God in his essential being and nature as unknowable." But let us see how this position of faith was developed and strengthened. By considering the two Locksley Hall poems as two distinct periods in Tennyson's struggle, it is evident that the poet went through an intense condition of disillusionment. The philosophy embodied in The Ancient Sage will best illustrate his ultimate victory.

Almost every reader believes the first Locksley Hall poem to be natural and healthy, whereas the second poem is a pessimistic product of abnormality. This view seems perfectly plausible and correct at first glance. The attitude given in a life so youthful and honest in the first poem is destroyed and denounced by the creator of the ideal in the second poem. Perhaps most readers fail to see that Tennyson, in an effort to purge the souls of his age from the corruption of finite things and to illustrate the divine good, tends to neutralize or compromise his religion. The results were often an appeal to the romantic, giving an endless dream about the far-off future. (The doubts of God's love and Nature's goodness were whirling through Tennyson's mind.) The pain and throb of despair in which men were forced to question the true identity

of the Creator, clearly manifest in other of Tennyson's poems, are symbolized in *Locksley Hall* by the grief of love and the general disappointment of one individual. One critic writes that the story is the

external and spiritual life of one man. The hero is a youth, and Tennyson said that the whole poem "represents young life, its good side, its deficiencies, and its yearnings;" but he is old enough to have suffered—in particular, to have been disappointed in love—and hence to be in the familiar mood of one who feels that he is old, and that life has been tested and has turned to ashes. One of the fascinating things about this character is that he stands for young England in the period when "Locksley Hall" was written . . . It was a period when new science and new invention were opening up undreamed-of things. . .

Tennyson seems to delineate the common disillusioned feelings of one man through the portrayal of a homely incident. We hear the vague, dispirited murmuring of youth against the world's hard discipline. To be sure, there is no apparent theology in the two poems. But compare with a verse from *In Memoriam* lines from the first *Locksley Hall*:

What words are these have fallen from me?  
Can calm despair and wild unrest  
Be tenants of a single breast,  
Or sorrow such a changeling be?  

and

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn the earlier page.  
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!  

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,  
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life.

---


23In *Memoriam*, XVI, ll. 1-4.
Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield, 
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field. 24

It is evident that the mood is one of pessimism. The romantic idealism present, however, saves the whole of the poem from pessimistic despair, where in time the idealism gives way to a lesser romantic devotion and becomes definite and clear. The romantic spirit embodies the attitude that God, who is, in reality, afraid of His own world, is revealed to man only through mystical experiences. He recognizes our being, sees that we are dust, and occasionally we catch a glimpse of Him. Yet He places us in the future saying, "Look at me if you can," and becomes no part of our lives. Without knowing the real meaning of the word, the cry of "forward" is sounded in an effort to obtain someday the Holy Grail or perfect life.

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see, 
Saw the Vision of the world; and all the wonder that would be. 25

The God here is not the God of the future, God has not shown Himself to the people, and He is somewhere sleeping, unaware of the awful conditions that progress and science have produced. It is up to the individual to find Him. Still, the note wrung from "one increasing purpose" seems to be the spirit of pessimism rather than optimism, for how far into the future is this "promise of the coming?" When will God, who is obscured to our vision by the veil of science, reveal Himself to man?

Eye, to which all order festers, all
things here are out of joint;
Science moves, but slowly, slowly,
creeping on from point to point.

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a
lion, creeping higher,
Glares at one that nods and winks
behind a slowly-dying fire.26

The so-called pessimism in the second Locksley Hall poem is
merely the explicit statement of this very thought. Tennyson's
son says, "My father said that the old man in the second
Locksley Hall had a stronger faith in God and in human goodness
than he had had in his youth."27 Tennyson himself realizes
that unless God is here now, how can he believe that he is any-
where? The dreams of a hopeful future are useless unless the
present holds some meaning. The dreams seem comparable to the
imaginary perfect existence in other planets:

Hesper-Venus were we native to that
splendour or to Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in,
fairest of the evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage,
craft and madness, lusts and spite,
Roaring London, roaring Paris, in the
point of peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward
on a star so silver-fair
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur,
"Would to God that we were there?"28

His thoughts in time result in a surrender of the far-off opti-
mism:

26Ibid., II. 134-36.
27Ibid., op. cit., II, 329.
What are men that He should heed us?
Cried the king of sacred-song?
Insects of an hour, that hourly work
Their brother insects wrong.

While the silent Heavens roll, and
Suns along their fiery way,
All their planets whirling around them,
Flash a million miles a day.\(^ {29}\)

It is impossible to designate the vastness of the process of
the world in secular terms. Although there is manifest an
extreme condition of doubt in the entire plan of the universe,
growth is recognized:

\[
\text{Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,}
\text{And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.} \(^ {30}\)
\]

Hence, the inevitable progress is not really progress at all,
and the reality of progress vanishes in thinking of the immense
powers of the world. Tennyson is engulfed by the oppressive
immensity of time and space in which all theological dogmas are
submerged,

\[
\text{Forward, backward, backward, forward in the immeasurable sea,}
\text{Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to you or me.}
\]

\[
\text{All the suns--are these but symbols of innumerable man,}
\text{Men or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?} \(^ {31}\)
\]

How can he be certain of the powers of the universe?

\[
\text{Many an aeon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,}
\text{Many an aeon too may pass while earth is manless and forlorn,}
\]

\(^ {29}\)Ibid., II. 201-4. \(^ {30}\)Ibid., II. 198-99. \(^ {31}\)Ibid., II. 193-96.
Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—
pools of salt, and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—
chains of mountain, grains of sand. 32

Even now, he can repeat youthful dreams of the future
peace and perfection of humanity. Then possibly there may
come an "end after madness" for this world:

Every tiger madness muzzled, every
serpent passion killed;
Every grim ravine a garden,
every blazing desert till'd.

Robed in universal harvest up to
either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all
her warless Isles. 33

To be sure, these dreams seem difficult, but in the background
is seen a picture of an inevitable physical death of the
planet. But warless? "Can it, till this outworn earth be dead
as yon dead world the moon?" 34 The dreams pass and in their
place are gloom and mystery.

But does the real secret of this pessimism lie in the
original abandonment of the actual world for the world of
dreams? It seems that this pessimistic mood was assumed by
seeking the far-off ideal and refusing to accept it as it is in
human existence. Possibly an attempt to escape the outcome is
made by throwing off the romantic mood. It is in this idea
itself that the second poem reveals a much more wholesome out-
look on life than the first Locksley Hall poem. Tennyson has
had time to renew his faith in an omnipotent, all-loving God.

32 Ibid., ll. 205–8. 33 Ibid., ll. 167–70.
34 Ibid., l. 174.
If this is God's world, the sins, struggles, and imperfections of Nature are merely expressions of His will. The aspect and course of Nature appears to have alternately encouraged and disheartened the poet; her calm beauty was seen to cover unmerciful indifference. Formal theology brought him no comfort. He himself believed in the scientific discoveries of the age, but his imagination was haunted by the fear that the knowledge would corrupt the belief in a spiritual life for many who were unable to see its greatness. Without the struggles of sin, there could be no just realization of good. To be certain, this aspect of God's nature was difficult for Tennyson to accept, for it was regarded at first as His remoteness. However, the realization did not apparently take from the divine, and Tennyson is able now to command his age to

Follow light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.35

With a new faith in mind, Tennyson exclaims that it is encouraging to see the universe whirling in the furrows of change, but realizes that

Ere she reach her earthly-best, a God must mingle with the game.36

He recognizes God in the earth's entire make-up, regardless of its conflicts, mysteries, sins, and turmoils. Even then he senses "those about us whom we neither see nor name."37 The poet seems certain that, in all the many secrets of life upon

37 Locksley Hall: Sixty Y. A., 1. 272.
which Evolution casts no light, there is a living presence:

Only that which made us, meant us to be
mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless
Heavens within the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless,
thro' the human soul,
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless
outward in the whole.\textsuperscript{38}

By accepting the world as it is, assuming and believing that it must be the creation of a divine plan, rather than by living an existence of gloom and disillusionment by waiting for the "far-off divine event," belief in the present, all-loving God provides a life freer from doubt and sorrow. Tennyson seems to indicate, in the words of the old man, that life is not a procession, but a game in which the most should be obtained. He himself wants to be a part of God's world, to love now without the aggravating cry of "forward!"

You, my Leonard, use and not abuse your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier brother men,
Served the poor and built the cottage, raised the school and drained the fen.\textsuperscript{39}

The grandfather's apology for wasted dreams and behaviors includes not only the sorrowful and fearful part of his life, but also the true expressions of God's nature. The fight is worthwhile, for it has planted him firmly in faith and belief in God. In his youth he wanted to "forsake this present life

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, ll. 209-12. \textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, ll. 265-68.
because it is narrow." In the final outcome, however, the present life is the only one in which God can be found. We feel that the old squire has left with us a desire to accept this seemingly narrow and limited life and make it full and complete. Hence, through this pessimism Tennyson has developed a real faith in the actual world. He accomplishes this by the disease of disillusionment and despair—the romantic aspect is dead and in its place is substituted a hope for the reality. He sees the universe, this life, as the kingdom whose lord is Love.

God is the Sun of Love,

dimly seen
Here, till the mortal morning mists of earth
Fade in the noon of heavens, where creed and rod
Shall bear false witness, each of each, no more,
But found their limits by the larger light,
And everstep them, moving easily
Thro' after-ages in the love of Truth,
The truth of Love.40

The path which Tennyson followed in establishing a knowledge and belief in God is now evident. He realized that it was essential to identify himself with the world in an effort to secure happiness in the divinity of God. Between the times of publication of the first and second Locksley Hall poems, Tennyson's affirmation that God and Man as personal beings constitute the only reality is developed in many shorter poems. It must be remembered that the God in the first Locksley Hall was threatened by science and materialism. Man was regarded as a "bundle of sensations," formed by a mechanical pattern; God was recognized as unknowable and therefore an unretainable reality in man's

mind. Tennyson in time found that God to man is that which
the man himself cannot be.

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art
the reason why,
For is He not all but thou, that hast
power to feel 'I am I'?\footnote{41}

Man has been by God endowed with a separate existence; therefore, he can see only that which is reflected through himself,

For all we have power to see is a straight
staff bent in a pool.\footnote{42}

But God is found everywhere about man. His entire life reflects
the vision of God:

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

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit
with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer
than hands and feet.\footnote{43}

This growing love of God is one of faith rather than one of
knowledge. The vision of God is held by man by a selfconscious-
ness of the finite. The true reality is found only in the mind
of man. And just as man is given power of faith to know God,
he is also endowed with a reality of free will.\footnote{44} In the nine-
teenth century men were not only troubled with the

\footnote{41}{The Higher Pantheism, 11. 7-8.} \footnote{42}{Ibid., 1. 16.}
\footnote{43}{Ibid., 11. 1-2, 11-12.}
concerning the processes of creation in a growing and living universe, and the intuitions of the heart concerning the reality of spirit and the Personality of God.\footnote{Smyser, op. cit., p. 82-83.}

His poetry indicates that his interest was not merely speculative but practical, for he insists that if the "sense of individual responsibility" be taken away, "men sink into pessimism and madness."\footnote{Tennyson, op. cit., I, 317.} In the poem entitled \textit{Will}, he recognizes this gift of man—the reality of freewill:

\begin{quote}
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 largest wave 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.\footnote{Will, ll. 1-9.}
\end{quote}

Free-will is regarded by the poet as "the power on thine own act and on the world."\footnote{De Profundis, l. 56.} In the spiritually central lines of The \textit{Idylls of the King}, this is manifested as a recognition of man's power of self-determination:

\begin{quote}
In moments when he feels he cannot die
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God of vision.\footnote{The Holy Grail, ll. 916-18.}
\end{quote}

In linking the reality of free-will with that of virtue, Tennyson realizes that it is in eternal activity only that virtue could find complete self-realization. Man must, then, have free-will, for

\begin{quote}
The wages of sin is death; if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the must,
\end{quote}
To rest in a golden grove, or to
bask in a summer sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and
not to die. 49

In attempting to establish a belief that God and Man make
up the only true relationship or reality, Tennyson protests
against the Calvinist conception of God and life in Despair.
According to the words prefixed to the poem, it is based on
the following incident:

A man and his wife having lost faith in a God, and hope
of a life to come, and being utterly miserable in this,
resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is
drowned, but the man is rescued by a minister of the sect
he had abandoned. 50

Almost cursing the minister, the man explains his conduct.
Discouraged by the harsh experiences of life, they could derive
no hope or comfort from the conceptions of God and man's rela-
tion to Him as presented in the theology of the sect to which
they belonged. Their theology was one of fatalism.

See, we were nursed in the dreary night-fold
of your fatalist creed. 51

A God of cruelty rather than a God of Love would be given with
such a creed:

What! I should call on that infinite
Love that has served us well?
Infinite cruelty rather that made everlasting
Hell,
Made us, foreworn us, foredoon'd us, and does
what he will with his own;
Better our dead brute mother who never has
heard us groan! 52

A rejection of the belief in a personal God and in the reality
and immortality of the soul is the outcome of such a teaching.

49 [Wages, ll. 6-10.]
50 [Despair, Preface.]
51 [Ibid., IV, l. 21.]
52 [Ibid., XVII, ll. 95-98.]
Lean in to "the darker side of a Godless doom" and shouting "the dark side of faith and a God of eternal rage." The disillusioned man found no hope or comfort to be derived from "the human heart and the age" with its infidel writings and "know-nothing books."

Have I crazed myself over their horrible infidel writings? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see,
of the popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and the
owls are whooping at noon,
And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill and
crows to the sun and the moon
Till the Sun and the Moon of our science are
both of them turn'd into blood,
And hope will have broken her heart, running
after a shadow of good;
For their knowing and know-nothing books are
scatter'd from hand to hand—
We have knelt in your know-all chapel too
looking over the sand.

The views expressed in the poem cancel freedom and man's significance to God. Tennyson wrote at the end of Despair: "In my boyhood I came across the Calvinist Creed, and assuredly however unfathomable the mystery, if one cannot believe in the freedom of the human will as of the Divine, life is hardly worth living."

It is in The Ancient Sage that a definite exposition of Tennyson's philosophy is found. With the realization that Evolution and Reversion work together, that earth can never "gain her heavenly—best" until "God has mingled with the game."

53 Ibid., II, 1. 6. 54 Ibid., VII, 1. 39.
55 Ibid., XVI, 1. 93. 56 Ibid., 11. 67-94.
57 Tennyson, op. cit., I, 317.
Tennyson is immediately confronted with the nature of God's love. There came into existence in the nineteenth century a bare and snarling attitude of mind which was opposed to any idea which should not be made readily perceptible through the senses. The youth, "worn from wasteful living" in The Ancient Sage is a character of this type; to Tennyson knowledge was limited to "the things we see," but we are enriched by the reality of the spirit in faith. We find the poet's clear and ultimate separation of knowledge and faith in 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.  

To be sure, this love grasped by faith cannot be proved, for

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

Returning to The Ancient Sage, which is said to be more subjective than In Memoriam, the youth allows the sage to read his "scroll of verse" which reveals an agnostic view of life. Tennyson, through the sage's replies, rebukes this kind of theism whose language is merely

How summer-bright are yonder skies,  
And earth as fair in hue  
And yet what sign of aught that lies  
Behind the green and blue?

Man's inward feeling, enriched by his faculty of judgment, releases knowledge greater than that received from the outward senses.

58 In Memoriam, Prologue, ll. 1-4.  
59 Ibid., ll. 17-20.  
60 The Ancient Sage, ll. 23-26.
If thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
into the temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, thou'rt thou canst not know;
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
But never yet hath dipt into the abyss,
The abyss of all abysses, beneath, within
The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
Or even than the Nameless is to me.
And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,
Nor understandeth bound nor boundlessness,
Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.

Man, then is to know God, not by sense, but by plunging into
his own being and listening to the abiding voice of his Master,
The soul feels God by dipping into the abyss of the boundless,
not by merely skirting along the surface. The belief that
these images are phenomenal soon disappears with the understand-
ing of the Divine Being which proves the entire system of beings:

And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

Although it seems that we are in a darkness unable to see the
light, in time a larger knowledge will be gained,

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.

As the youth continues to unroll his strange scroll,
Tennyson makes us feel that he, in an effort to recognize all
the restriction of the finite, is justified in finding the

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61. The Ancient Sage, ll. 31-48. 62. Ibid., ll. 49-51.
63. Ibid., ll. 178-81.
consciousness of reality through the higher faculties of nature and the heart. Tennyson does not assume the agnosticism of Huxley, the attitude that man knows of God nothing beyond material phenomena. The very essence of the individual’s inability to attain the secrets and mysteries of the whole creation and God is expressed by the poet in the lines Flower in the Crannied Wall.

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is. 64

Then how are we to know or prove the unknowable, since

...from when this earth began—
The Nameless never came
Among us, never spoke with man,
And never named the Name. 65

No, nothing can be proved. Since man is unable to prove his existence in the world, the time, or reality, then it is impossible to disprove them. Hence, what we must do is look to something higher than rationality, for faith is superior to proof.

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. 66

64 Flower in the Crannied Wall.
65 The Ancient Sage, 11. 53-56. 66 Ibid., 11. 56-67.
Only by cleaving "ever to the sunnier side of doubt" can man hope to survive the struggle. Only by going beyond the range of knowledge can one reach the territory of faith, a faith which "reels not in the storm of warring words," "spies the summer thru the winter bud," and "finds the fountain where they wail'd Mirage!"

The youthful cynic, however, cannot believe in a Power behind the senses, even if there be one, it is probably an unconscious, unmindful power, as if "of the Gods gone blind who see not what they do." He cannot conceive of a Power which is

So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of man,
A beauty with defect—til That which knows,
And is not known, but felt throu' what we feel...

But even though we "feel that we are nothing,"

We feel we are something—that also has
come from Thee!
We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt
help us be.

God is not known but

...felt throu' what we feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed and shape it at the last
According to the Highest in the Highest.

To the Agnostic the only real power is Time. Time itself will eventually bring all things to ruin and destruction.

What Power but the Years that make and
break the vase of clay,
And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
The bloom that fades away?
What rulers but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow?

67 Ibid., 11. 84-87. 68 The Human Cry, 11. 2-3.
69 The Ancient Sage, 1. 87-90. 70 Ibid., 11. 92-95.
The sage reminds the youth that Time to us, "who creep from thought to thought," is relative, and we judge by the effects of Time. But Time

... with the Nameless is nor day nor hour. 71

As the wise old sage comments against the materialism of the scroll, we catch echoes of Tennyson's doctrines which are becoming increasingly apparent in his poetry as he establishes a profound belief in God. The relativity of Time and its in-applicability to the Deity becomes a definite principle with the poet. This belief that the Deity cannot be used in accordance with Time is manifest in The Princess, which was written before The Ancient Sage.

Let there be light and there was light; 'tis so:
For was, and is, and will be, are but is;
And all creation is one act at once,
The birth of light: but we that are not all,
As parts, can see but parts, now this now that,
And live, perform, from thought to thought, and make
One act a phantom of succession; thus
Our weakness somehow shapes the Shadow, Time. 72

The images and ideas that are produced by man are earth-like, not true; the darkness is in man, not in reality.

My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
So dark that men cry out against the heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness is in man? 73

The youth, convinced now from the sage's last statement that his is the practical view of life, exclaims, in almost the same philosophy as that of Omar Khayyam, that

The griefs by which he once was wrung
were never worth the while—
But vain the tears for darkened years
as laughter over wine,

71 Ibid., l. 102.  72 The Princess, III, ll. 323-30.
73 The Ancient Sage, ll. 171-72.
And vain the laughter as the tears,
0 brother, mine or thine,
For all that laugh, and all that weep
And all that breathe are one
Slight ripple on the boundless deep
That moves, and all is gone.74

The sage answers:

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the deep.75

Again the youth bursts forth with the philosophy, "Eat and
drink, for tomorrow you may die":

Yet wine and laughter, friends; and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall.76

The sage, in an effort to explain to the Agnostic that although
life is sometimes "so dark that men cry out against the heav-
ens," explains to him that people are not "worms and maggots of
today without their hope of wings." Tennyson himself fought
long and hard to see the good in Nature, and his doctrines are
not uncritically accepted. The proofs of the being and nature
of God are best explained by the teleological design in philo-
sophy with which Tennyson was, no doubt, familiar. In the
poet's time the design argument, which included harmony and
adaptation of logical means to ends, fitted into the scientific
and theological controversies because of the influence of the
mechanical conceptions of Nature. Instances of adaptations,
of final causes in Nature, were proof to many of the existence
of God.77 But it is not so with Tennyson:

74 Ibid., ll. 185-90.
75 Ibid., ll. 191-94.
76 Ibid., ll. 195-96.
77 J. W. Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth
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.78

Here Tennyson confesses that he is unable to find God as a personal intelligence in Nature. Thus he anticipates the position of modern science, which has its own natural way of accounting for the adaptation of organism to function and of organism to environment, without recourse to "final causes" and without reference to the deliberate act of Deity.79

Indeed, Tennyson does not find Nature revealing to him design or purpose, but his poetry does indicate that he appealed to Nature more than once on this subject and always with the same result.80 Yet

that Love which is and was
My Father and my Brother and my God
was found everywhere as God's greatness. Although Tennyson marveled at the wilder aspect of Nature and felt

... the dewy-tassell'd wood,
shado'ving down the horned flood,82
he knew that Nature alone, "full of perfection and imperfection, tells us that God is disease, murder, and rapine."83

The suffering found throughout the universe troubled the poet, "for these seemed to militate against the idea of an Omnipotent and All-loving Father."84 The tremendous amount of pain and sin in the world caused him to wonder "what is all of it worth?"

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78 In Memoriam, CXXIV, 11. 5-8. 79 Beach, op. cit., p. 409.
80 Sneath, op. cit., p. 82. 81 Doubt and Prayer, 11. 6-7.
82 In Memoriam, LXXXVI, 1. 6.
83 Tennyson, op. cit., 1, 314. 84 Ibid., p. 313.
What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy,
Varying voices of prayer?
All that is noblest, all that is basest, all
That is filthy with all that is fair?
What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom,
or a moment's anger of bees in their hive?  

But just when his "faith had fall'n asleep" and a voice had whispered, "believe no more,"

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

This faith, which enables Tennyson to feel again that life is worthy and to believe in the good of evil, "is obtained from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognizes that there is not one fruitless pang." He exclaims, in his final conclusion of the good and evil of life,

Oh, yet we trust [not know] that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill
To pangs of Nature, sins of will
Defects of doubt, and taint of blood.

This faith reveals to Tennyson a belief that God is personal. Thus, God is revealed to him in the person of Christ. Although many critics refuse to think that Tennyson "believed Christ to be in any literal sense the Son of God," it seems certain that he finds God in Christ. Indeed, he could not formulate his creed because people would not understand him. Rather, he considered that his poems expressed the principles.

85 Vastness, XVI, 11. 31-32.
86 In Memoriam, CXXIV, 11. 13-16.
87 Tennyson, op. cit., II, 247.
88 In Memoriam, LIV, 11. 1033-36.
89 Gywnn, op. cit., p. 63.
at the foundation of his faith. He formulated his own religious creed in these words: "There's something that watches over us; and our individuality endures; that's my faith, and that's all my faith." He thought with Arthur Hallam that "the essential feelings of religion subsist in the utmost diversity of forms," that different "language does not imply difference in real faith." It is impossible, Tennyson told his son, "to imagine that the Almighty will ask you when you come before Him in the next life what your particular form of creed was; but the question would be: Have you been true to yourself, and given up in My name a cup of cold water to one of these little ones?" According to the poet's son, "religion was no nebulous abstraction for him, and he eagerly read all notable works within his reach relating to the Bible, and traced with deep interest such fundamental truths as underlie the great religions of the world." It would be folly, of course, to cite such lines as "The Life indeed" or "Him who died for me" as proof of his views. His belief, however, that Christ receives the souls of the dead, that "He is the Word of God that breathed human breath and wrought on the faith with human deeds," enables Tennyson in his faith to feel that God's nature as Love is not a matter of knowledge, but one of faith.

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91 Tennyson, op. cit., I, 309. 92 Ibid., p. 308.
93 Stopford Brooke, Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life, p. 19.
94 Sneath, op. cit., p. 106.
find divine love in the "eagle's wing or insect's eye," or indeed, anywhere in Nature, he was convinced that God must be revealed to man through faith. It is wisdom's choice, when reason is futile, to cling to faith in the final victory of good. He looks to faith to

Doubt no longer that the Highest is the wisest and the best
Let not all that sadden Nature blight thy hopes or break thy rest,
Quail not at the fiery mountain, at the shipwreck, or the rolling Thunder, or the rending earthquake, or the famine, or the pest. 95

It is only through a universal hope of good that man can expect to understand his God, for He is "the power in darkness whom we guess," 96 "That which knows, and is not known." 97

Glancing once more to The Ancient Sage, we find Tennyson established in the belief that God and the spiritual are the only real and true. The light and shadow by which the skeptic lives are only names. The Absolute is beyond all.

95 Faith, II, 2-5.
96 In Memoriam, CXXIV, 1. 4.
97 The Ancient Sage, 1. 86.
CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION

Since the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species in 1859, men have been shocked by the term evolution. They have abused its meaning, criticized and analysed its thought until the word has come to mean danger. Perhaps if evolution could be spoken of as a process rather than as a sudden change, men could reconcile themselves to this reasoning. To thinking minds it seems incredible not to think of progress, change, and development. The extreme confusion caused in the nineteenth century by the subject of evolution has already been discussed. (Tennyson, however, not only kept his faith amid the conflict of science and religion, but he proclaimed a more noble and forceful knowledge of the cosmos through the development. A scientist, writing when the most trying disputes were felt, says of Tennyson:

In the conflict between Science and Faith, our business was to accept the one without rejecting the other; and that he achieved. Never did his acceptance of the animal ancestry of man, for instance, upset his belief in the essential divinity of the human soul, its immortality, its supremacy, its eternal destiny.\(^1\)

Many opposers of evolution find argument with its meaning in linking the term with Darwin. Darwin lived at the time of Tennyson. His Origin of Species provided many theories

\(^1\)Hallam Tennyson, Tennyson and His Friend, p. 285.
already familiar to the minds of the age. It is a known fact, indeed, that Tennyson was acquainted, in an unformulated attitude, with the provision of mutability of species and cosmic changes long before Darwin's book was published. Since he was an exact contemporary of the scientist, he was not amazed by the book, for he was studying, possibly, the same thing from a philosophical point of view. Tennyson's knowledge of the theory of evolution comes from astronomy rather than biology, however. Even down to the time of Dante astronomy was the basis of all religions. (His interest in astronomy and geology is plain from reading any of his works. Evidence of his interest is found in every biography, and his son's Memoir of him gives sufficient evidence of his discussions, thoughts, and interests concerning science. Even at the age of fourteen he was writing verses which revealed a knowledge of the heavens. | Timbuctoo, the prize-winning poem of 1829, is proof of his scientific interests:

The clear galaxy
Shorn of its hoary lustre, wonderful,
Distinct and vivid with sharp points of light,
Blaze within blaze, an unimagined depth
And harmony of planet-girdled suns
And moon-encircled planets, wheel in wheel,
Arch'd the wan sapphire.

The Western world has for centuries been familiar with the story of creation told in the first chapters of Genesis. The discoveries and investigations by Galileo, Copernicus, and others were accepted with no tremendous shock. Toward the

\textsuperscript{2}Timbuctoo, 11. 101-7.
close of the eighteenth century, however, men began to wonder about the inhabitants of the planet and were at once confronted with the question of what species really are. Although the Swedish naturalist, Linnaeus, devised a systematic classification of organisms, and recognized that variable species have been produced on the universe through hybridism, his work was supplemented by that of George Cuvier, who succeeded in separating animals into families. He found at length through his geological studies that the same species never occurred in two succeeding strata and that they were immutable. He realized that since there had been cataclysms occurring in the earth, man had no clear idea of the operative forces. Tennyson himself speaks of this in *In Memoriam*:

They say
This solid earth whereon we tread
In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, men recognized in the theory of creation a series of obvious phases which had moulded the earth. The belief included the theory of "special creation." It was also popular to assume that everything originated from a few forms. Naturally, this brought to light the reason for the various developments. It was evident that some species which were now extinct were similar to those now in existence, and too, others had not been destroyed but had survived the changes or forces in the earth.

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3 *The Encyclopedia Americana*, XVII, 425.

4 *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, VI, 911.

5 *In Memoriam*, CXVIII, 11. 7-11.
As the evidence toward plan and creation was introduced, the belief that each unit belonging to the earth was created separately and distinctly began to crumble. One critic writes:

According to Owen and Agassiz, and many others, the higher forms have been created by the Deity according to one vast underlying plan, and one clear sign of this underlying plan is the fact that the embryonic stages of the higher organisms as they develop resemble successively different lower organisms.6

The most significant work done with the theory of development comes from Lamarck, a French scientist. He suggests that "new forms resulted from new needs produced by change of environment, the new organs being strengthened by use and handed on in a strengthened form to the offspring."7 This would, of course, be of significance in relation to the idea of higher species evolving from lower ones. Lamarck's theory introduced the idea of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.

Early in the nineteenth century, a very distinct and profitable investigation was being made concerning the embryonic forms of life in man and animals. K. E. von Baer's book, The History of the Development of Animals, which established the theory that all animals in the beginning of their development are essentially alike, was translated into English in 1826. Tennyson was then fifteen. Perhaps a verse from The Palace of Art is a reference to this growing idea:


7 Somervell, op. cit., p. 127.
'From shape to shape at first within the womb
the brain is moulded,' she began
'And through all phases of all thought I come
Unto the perfect man.'

It is not difficult, then, to see that in this inquiring atmosphere Tennyson found time to contemplate his views.

Possibly the most significant fact contained in the Memoir is that his tutor while at Trinity was William Whewell. An excerpt showing some of his progressive ideas in science has already been indicated in Chapter I. While at Trinity, Whewell became Professor of Mineralogy, and through his interests in geology, was admitted to the Royal Astronomical Society and the Geological Society. He was interested in all the natural sciences. Although he did not agree with Sir Charles Lyell's proof that the earth's changes shown by geological evidence were not necessarily brought about by cataclysms, he reviewed his book and expressed a great admiration for his scientific ability. In 1845 Whewell had published a book called Of a Liberal Education, in which he advocated the university's teaching a more extended curriculum of natural sciences. It was in 1847 that Tennyson's The Princess was published, involving the same argument. To be sure, this man who wrote books on astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, education, and geology proved a most influential teacher in Tennyson's study of the sciences.

Too, some of the most recognized scientific leaders had

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8The Palace of Art, rejected stanzas.
9Potter, op. cit., p. 324.
10Encyclopedia Americana, XXIX, 255.
professorships at Trinity while Tennyson was there. With such men as Sedgwick, Peacock, and Whewell, it was only natural that the atmosphere for scientific study was congenial.

Although science was pushing forward her shocking ideas, in the period from 1820 to the publication of Darwin's book few people believed in the theory of mutability of species. The most important scientists of the time, Herschel, Sedgwick, Owen, Lyell, and Agassiz, did not believe in the theory even after Darwin's book came out. The men who were making progress in the idea, Lamarck, Robert Chambers, Goethe, and Erasmus Darwin, were not well-known to the public as scientists. To be sure, the mist and confusion spread by science was serious, but many people believe that the actual theory or hypothesis of evolution was in existence far earlier than it was. Of course, men of all kinds were interpreting evidence by geology, biology, and astronomy, but not until the idea was formulated did men really see it as evolution. There was, however, a concept coming into popular thought in the period from 1820 to 1860. Men began to see in the living world a unity and a relation of each single part to the other. It is here that Tennyson's thought fits pre-eminently into the idea of Nature as evolving higher species. There is sufficient evidence to show that anatomical similarities are found in animals and plants.\textsuperscript{11} The opposer of mutation and the mutationists held this belief. Few people, however, believed that this "unity exists because the varying species are descended

\textsuperscript{11}Henry E. Crampton, \textit{The Doctrine of Evolution}, p. 48.
from common ancestors. Of course, this theory was modified after Darwin's publication.

All through Tennyson's work is sounded the keynote of "Forward, forward let us range." This idea of progress is found in every phase of his thought. His treatment of evolution was broad-minded and sensible, for above all the blast and roar of the subject, the paramount desire of progress was heard. Perhaps to many there is no distinction in the nineteenth-century belief of an evolution of Nature and one of species. But in recognizing a distinction, one can see that it is impossible to have one without the other. Does Tennyson believe that the material or spiritual aspect of man's life will be in time changed? If he could conceive of a more perfect earth, of progress in the entire make-up of the cosmos, then certainly his belief included a progression of the soul to equal the perfection of the physical world. If Nature could bring about a change in species, then with evolution of things there would come the mutability of species. It is evident that Tennyson saw an inevitable continuity of the processes of evolution in both the shaping and developing of the earth and man. "The moulding of the planet and of man was to him an unbroken record." The cosmogonic ideas of the heavens and the earth reveal his thought upon the ancient history of the planet and and its inhabitants. The system of the earth to Tennyson is governed by

12 Potter, op. cit., p. 328.
Astronomy and Geology, terrible Muses.  

He was able to contemplate the earth's processes by the study of science. The Nebular theory, which applies the general concept of evolution to astronomy, did not fail to arrest the poet's attention. He pictures, in some rejected verses from The Palace of Art, the soul's studying astronomy:

Hither, when all the deep unsounded skies
Shuddered with silent stars she clomb,
And as with optic glasses her keen eyes
Pierced through the mystic dome,

Regions of lucid matter taking forms,
Brushes of fire, hazy gleams,
Clusters and beds of worlds, and bee-like swarms
Of Suns, and starry streams.  

Again the origin of the universe in terms of this theory is explained by Lady Psyche in The Princess:

This world was once a fluid haze of light,
Till toward the center set the starry tides,
And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast
The planets; then the monster, then the man;
Tattooed or weaved, winter-clad in skins,
Raw from the prime, the crushing down his mate;
As yet we find in barbarous isles, and here
Among the lowest.  

Through his sensitiveness to all the new fields of thought being opened to mankind, Tennyson sought tediously to trace the development of the universe in an effort to determine the process of existence.

What be those crown'd forms high over the sacred fountain?
Bards, that the mighty Muses have raised to the heights of the mountain,

14 Parnassus, I. 16.
15 The Palace of Art, rejected stanzas.
And over the flight of the Acast Goddesses, 
help me up thither!
Lightning may shrivel the laurel of Caesar, but
mine would not wither.
Steep is the mountain, but you, you will help me
to overcome it,
And stand with my head in the zenith, and roll
my voice from the summit,
Sounding for ever and ever thro' Earth and her
listening nations,
And mixt with the great sphere-music of stars
and of constellations. 17

Never did he think of this science as the antithesis of reli-
gion:

What be those two shapes high over the sacred
fountain
Taller than all the Muses, and huger than all
the mountain?
Of those two known peaks they stand ever
spreading and heightening.
Poet, that evergreen laurel is blasted by more
than lightning! 18

And geology and astronomy were in alliance—

Look, in their deep double shadow the crown'd
ones all disappearing!
Sing like a bird and be happy, nor hope for
a deathless hearing!
"Sounding for ever and ever?" Pass on! the
sight confuses—
These are Astronomy and Geology, terrible
Muses! 19

Tennyson refers to the stellar formation in Lucretius by
explaining the collision of meters to form eddies. He calls
attention to the same idea in God and the Universe:

Must my day be dark by reason, O ye Heavens,
of your boundless nights,
Rush of Suns, and roll of systems, and your
fiery clash of meteorites? 20

The vastness and beauty of the universe is felt when,

19 Ibid., II, ll. 5-9.
20 God and the Universe, ll. 2-3.
With a half-glance upon the sky
At night he said, "The wanderings
Of this most intricate Universe
Teach me the nothingness of things,"
Beyond the bottom of the eye. 21

The phenomenal stages in the evolutionary processes are seen
in random passages:

There sinks the nebulous star we call the Sun,
If that hypothesis of theirs is sound. 22

The sun is merely a portion shaped from a nebula, and the moon,

A planet equal to the Sun
Which cast it. 23

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...A single misty star,
Which is the second in a line of stars
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing. 24

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The fires that arch this dusty dot--
Yon myriad-worlded ray--
The vast sun-clusters' gather'd blaze,
World-isles in lonely skies,
Whole heavens within themselves, amaze
Our brief humanities. 25

***
In utter darkness closed the day, my son--
But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the heavens
Her shadow crown'd with stars--and yonder--out
To northward--some that never set, but pass
From sight and night to lose themselves in day. 26

Now that we have seen some of Tennyson's employment of

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21 The Character, 11. 1-6. 22 The Princess, IV, 11.1-2
22 To E. Fitzgerald, 1. 18.
23 Merlin and Vivien, 11. 505-10.
24 Epilogue, 11. 23-25.
25 The Ancient Sage, 11. 199-204.
astronomical aspects of the universe, it is necessary to re-
view his occupation with geological processes which are de-
scribed as the change and progress of the earth. Attributing
"blind beginnings" to the early stages of development in the
universe, Tennyson passes on to the phase of which men do have
evidence. From a molten layer the earth was formed:
The solid earth whereon we tread
In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms;
The seeming prey of cyclic storms.

The earth was changed after the coming of land and water:
There rolls the deep where grew the tree,
0 earth, what changes has thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

Too, the land was torn by the water and earthquakes:
The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Eonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be.

As part of the work and arrangement of the changes, earthquakes
are again alluded to:
...great goddess...
Who causest the safe earth to shudder and gape,
And gulf and flatten in her closing chasm
Doomed cities, hear.
Whose lava-torrents blast and blacken a province
To a cinder, hear.

And all the fragments of the living rock
(Huge blocks, which some old trembling of the world
Had loosen'd from the mountain, till they fell
Half-digging their own graves).

Tennyson thinks of the past, as a process, in evolutionary

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27 In Memoriam, CXVIII, 11. 7-11. 28 Ibid., CXXXIII, 11. 7-11.
29Ibid., XXXV, 11. 9-12. 30 The Cup, II, 11 301-4.
31Lover's Tale, II, 11. 44-47.
terms in Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After:

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses, passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the planet's dawning years.
Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes fallen away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.32

Again in the same poem this feeling of time, limitless where evolution is concerned—"aeonian music measuring out the steps of Time,"33 is viewed in its progress and continuity.

Many an Aeon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born.
Many an Aeon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn.
Earth so huge and yet so bounded—pools of salt and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand!34

Although at times the earth's changes seem to depress Tennyson, he recognizes them as essential to a higher and more progressive universe:

For tho' the Giant ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break, and work their will;
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul?35

And in Love Thou thy Land, he insists that we who love the land try to encourage a gradual, firmly established change:

For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Through many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.

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32 Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After, 11. 39-42.
33 In Memoriam, XCV, 1. 41.
34 Locksley Hall, 11. 201-3.
Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease,
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.36

An explicit expression of Tennyson's hope for progress in
the future is found in Locksley Hall:

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies
of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down
with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there
rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the
central blue.37

He considers the earth still as very young, and with a
"million summers" of time to become perfected.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes
earth will be. . .
I have seen her far away--for is not Earth
as yet so young?--38

This is evidence in itself of Tennyson's belief in the evolu-
tion of the spiritual in man. He is not here speaking merely
of the physical world, but of man also. It seems only natu-
ral, then, that Tennyson is contemplating a belief in the pro-
gress of the body and soul. "It seemed to him in his maturity
that the Process visible in external Nature, which had pro-
duced man, was also taking place in the moral Nature of Man
himself."39

36 Love Thou Thy Land, ll. 37-44.
37 Locksley Hall, ll. 121-24.
38 Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After, ll. 163, 166.
39 William Rutland, Tennyson and the Theory of Evolution,
I quote again a passage from *Love Thou thy Land*:

For Nature also, cold and warm
And moist and dry, devising long,
Through many agents making strong
Matures the individual form.

Since the idea of progress is mingled everywhere with the idea of astronomical or cosmic evolution, it seems that Tennyson does anticipate a higher race. However, this is difficult to prove, for when we find a verse which reads,

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things,

we are immediately confronted with a verse which contains one demolishing phrase:

. . . All low things range
To highert But I cannot change.

One critic, arguing against Tennyson's believing in the mutability of species, says of the verse from *Love Thou Thy Land*:

That the spirit of nineteenth-century evolutionary philosophy is in the lines nobody can question. But the actual concept of organic evolution is another matter. Nature "devising long" and maturing "the individual form" sounds very much like the idea of unity in animal organization and the theory of an evolving Nature. As we have previously seen, it was perfectly possible for a thinker to believe that Nature matured the form of individuals and even of species, without believing that one specific form developed from another.

Hence, poetry can imply many different and varied interpretations, often the actual meaning left for the reader to assume. So it is with evolution in Tennyson's work. I have studied

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42 Potter, op. cit., p. 335.
the poetry dealing with evolutionary subjects in relation to
the external evidence taken from the "Memoir" concerning sci-
ence, evolution, and Darwinism. I believe that speaking of
gradual progress in the unity of all things that the poet in-
cluded the spiritual as well as the material.

Some of the poetry in which Tennyson used evolutionary
terms was written before Chambers' "Vestiges of Creation.
Hallam Tennyson says that the sections of "In Memoriam" which
deal with evolution were read to his father's friends before
"Vestiges" came out. Tennyson told his son, "I want you to get
me a book which I see advertised in the "Examiner"; it seems to
contain many speculations with which I have been familiar for
years, and on which I have written more than one poem."43
Although the book is an unformulated theory of evolution, it
was the first publication which contained some of the ideas
of change then under discussion. By comparing some of Chambers'
ideas with those of the poet, one can see that Tennyson was
advanced in his age in scientific thinking. Chambers says of
organic creation:

We have seen powerful evidence that the construction of
this globe and its associates, and inferentially of all
the other globes of space, was the result, not of any
immediate or personal exertion on the part of the Deity,
but of natural laws which are expression of His will.
What is to hinder our supposing that the organic crea-
tion is also a result of natural laws, which are in like
manner an expression of His will? . . . The Great Ruler
of Nature has established laws for the operation of in-
animate matter which are quite unswerving . . . It is
clear, moreover, from the whole scope of the natural
laws, that the individual, as far as the present sphere

43 Tennyson, op. cit., I, 222-23.
of being is concerned, is to the Author of Nature a con-
sideration of an inferior moment. Everywhere we see the
arrangements for the species perfect; the individual is
left, as it were, to take his chance amidst the melee of
the various laws affecting him.  

Compare with two well-known verses from *In Memoriam* the thoughts
expressed by Chambers:

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.

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

Tennyson expresses his dream about moral law, established by
Lyell and strengthened by Chambers, then familiar to evolution-
ary thought of the time.

That nothing walks with aimless fact;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void
When God hath made the pile complete.

The idea of a universal law is sound throughout the poet's
work. He describes, in *The Two Voices*, his purpose in life:

As far as might be, to carve out
Free space for every human doubt,
That the whole mind might orb about.

To search thro' all I felt or saw,
The springs of life, the depths of awe,
And reach the law within the law.

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44 As quoted in Rutland, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
45 *In Memoriam*, LV, 11. 5-12.
46 Ibid. LIV, 11. 5-8
47 *The Two Voices*. 11. 156-41.
Eternal law is explained in To the Duke of Argyll:

Thro' all the yells and counter-yells
Of feud
And faction, and thy will, a power to make
This ever-changing world of circumstance,
In changing, chime with never-changing Law.

Although he adheres to the conclusion of science concerning law, he does in no manner accept the ideas made by scientific materialism.

God is law, say the wise;
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

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.

In In Memoriam he identifies himself with everlasting law:

Oh, was thou with me, dearest, then,
When I rose up against my doom,
And yearned to burst the folded gloom,
To bare the eternal Heavens again;

To feel once more, in placid awe,
The strong imagination roll
A sphere of stars about my soul
In all her motion one with law.

Perhaps the most direct statement of his belief in "this ever-changing world . . . with never-changing Law" and the belief also, of a higher life, is found in De Profundis:

48 To the Duke of Argyll. 11. 8-11.
49 The Higher Pantheism, 11, 13-16.
50 In Memoriam, CCXL. 11. 1-8.
Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep
Thro' all this changing world of changeless law,
And every phase of ever-heightening life,
And nine long months of antenatal gloom,
With this last moon, this crescent--her dark orb
Touch'd with earth's light--thou comest...

Thus, Tennyson's philosophical attitude based upon scientific knowledge causes him to wonder about the pre-existence of the soul. Perhaps his soul, he thinks in The Two Voices, has been existing in another place, either higher or lower. Too, he may have drifted free in a spirit until birth. No matter where the soul originated, he can remember nothing, but he realizes that there is something

That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams--
Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.

Tennyson's concern with foetal development is best seen in In Memoriam. Not only is the description of a new person given but also the hope that the being will carry with it the elements of a perfected humanity.

A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved thro' life of lower phase,
Result in man, be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

51 De Profundis, I, 11, 5-10.
52 The Two Voices, 11, 320-34.
No longer half akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did
And hoped and suffered, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit. 53

Potter says that the poet’s speculation with the pre-existence of the soul,

If through lower lives I came—
Though all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame—, 54

means only that Tennyson

is writing about the transmigration of souls, and the lines refer not so much to material as to spiritual progress—a sort of semi-evolutionary idea that appears more than once in the writings of eighteenth-century thinkers. The idea of past experience becoming consolidated in the frame as well as the mind is distinctly important . . . and injects the idea of physical change into these speculations concerning the soul. But from the lines themselves we cannot be at all sure whether Tennyson was thinking of changes in species or of the same idea that he reflects in his Cambridge discussion, that the human body in its embryonic stages has resemblance to lower organisms. 55

True, as the critic states, we cannot be positive of Tennyson’s belief; however, my contention that Tennyson believed in the mutability of species is strengthened by what another critic, William Rutland, says of the poet. "... Tennyson had been strongly impressed by the idea that in the Cosmic Process man might be displaced by a higher species, as he had himself displaced the species which had preceded him." 56

A passage from Maud confirms this statement:

A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and Master of Earth,
For him the high sun flamed and his river billow-
ing ran,
And he felt himself in his force to be nature's
crowning race.
As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe
for his birth,
So many a million of ages have gone to the shap-
ing of man.
He now is first, but is he the last? Is he not
too base? 57

Much has been written concerning Tennyson's belief that
Nature is cruel and murderous. To be sure, he was sensitive
to her harshness, but he did not fail to see in her some
goodness. Gwynn's discussion of this is worthy of quotation:
The tale of man's victories over nature filled him with
pride; but Science was more to him than a recital of dis-
coversies, or of such exploits as Mr. Kipling delights to
celebrate. It gave a new beauty and significance to what
was already beautiful. One cannot rightly separate Tenny-
son's observation of Nature from his interest in physical
Science. He looked at Nature with the eyes of a lover
awake to every loveliness, from the dimness of far-off
hills to the delicate markings of a tiny flower at his
feet; but he always looked with the eyes of one trained
in the School of Science. 58

Nature revealed to Tennyson a cosmic process according to
law, which had through the ages formed the planet from a
nebula, conditioned organic existence, and developed life
from low systems. And this process eventually brought about
man. "If, indeed, the Cosmos make for good," writes another
critic, "and evolution be a moral as well as a material law,"

57 Maud, I, iv, 11. 31-36.
58 Stephen Gwynn, Tennyson, p. 80.
Men may come to think of these later Tennysonian utterances as they thought of the Messianic Eclogue of Virgil, as the foreshadowing of a new dawn of human hope. They may look back to Tennyson as no belated dreamer, but as a leader who in the darkest hour of the world's thought would not despair of the destiny of man. They will look back on him as Romans looked back on that unshaken Roman who purchased as its full price the field of Cannas, on which at that hour victorious Hannibal lay encamped with his Carthaginian host.59

Although Nature may seem crude and destructive in her work,

one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal,
The May-fly is torn by the swallow, the swallow spear" by the shirke,
And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder and prey,60

all changes are inevitably for the good:

Is there evil but on earth? Or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword, 'Evolution' here.
Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.61

It seems that Tennyson entertains a belief in the survival of the fittest:

... And below, stuck out
The bones of some vast bulk that lived and reared
Before man was.62

And again in In Memoriam:

A discord, Dragons of the prime,
That tear each other in their slimes,
Were mellow music match'd with death.63

60Maud, I, iv, 22-24.
61Locksley Hall; Sixty Years After, 11. 197-200.
62The Princess, III, 11. 293-95. In Memoriam, LVI, 11. 27
Even though Darwin established the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, it seems to have been in the poet's mind long before there was external evidence of its validity. He says:

finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

and

Nature red in tooth and claw. 54

And in The Palace of Art, Tennyson, expressing a definite belief in the evolutionary processes, apparently believes in Darwin's hypothesis. Potter is able to see that the poet's conception is "that the simpler organisms are the less perfect, that as the ages go on the forms of life become more varied, more complex, and closer to perfection." 65

All Nature widens upward, evermore
The simpler essence lower lies;
More complex is more perfect, owning more
Discourse, more widely wise. 66

In Memoriam has always been Tennyson's most quoted poem. His individual desire to establish, spiritually, belief in the evolutionary process of life is obvious in this poem as well as in many others. After the death of Hallam, when Tennyson was plunged into the deepest sea of sorrow, he could feel no meaning in the development of Nature. Perhaps man is just a part of the waste. In reasoning with himself, however, he

64 Ibid., LVI. 1. 15.
65 Potter, op. cit., p. 336.
66 The Palace of Art, rejected stanzas.
tries to think of his confusion of love and death, not in terms of organic nature alone, but in the aspect of a spiritual process;

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant laboring in his youth;  
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;  

...They say
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began...
Till at the last arose the man;

Who thro' and branch'd from clime to clime
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;

and he advises,

...Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

Through the process of development, Man has become the highest type in existence. He, however, carries with him, just as did his predecessors—"I, the finer brute rejoicing in my hounds—"68 the herald of a higher race. "The spiritual evolution," writes Rutland, "within Man's moral nature suggests, for the individual, 'a higher place' beyond the fetters of matter."69 The same critic suggests for the lines,

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. 70

67 In Memoriam, CXVIII.  
68 By An Evolutionist, 1. 5.  
69 Rutland, op. cit., p. 28. 70 In Memoriam, CXX
'The science of the future may teach man to act from childhood like the greater ape; in my time it was not so, for I was born to a better heritage.'\textsuperscript{71} Potter, quoting Tennyson's statement that this was "spoken ironically against materialism, not against evolution,"\textsuperscript{72} believes this is the poet's way of saying that "the way God has worked in producing the present living world can teach man how to improve himself (as man) by subduing and rising above the baser tendencies within him."\textsuperscript{73}

At the end of \textit{In Memoriam} we find what is possibly the most thorough belief in the mutability of species. Tennyson comes at last to man's actual progress:

\begin{quote}
A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved through life of lower phase
Result in man, be born and think,
And act and live, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race.

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffered, is our seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man that with me trod
This planet was a noble type
Appearing ere his times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God.

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{71}Rutland, \textit{op. cit.}, footnote, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{72}Tennyson, \textit{op. cit.}, I, 323.
\textsuperscript{73}Potter, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 338.
\textsuperscript{74}\textit{In Memoriam}, CXXI, 11. 135-40, 45-56.
The brutal element spoken of is interestingly discussed by another critic, Stopford Brooke. He says:

"It is—That our body comes from the brute, and carries the brute with it; that in the body, the soul met with the brute, and had to conquer the brute. In that admixture, the worry and the battle, the confusion and torment of it all, were contained. This battle, repeated in every individual, is repeated also in the whole race. It ended quickly enough for the individual, for he was transferred to a higher world, beyond the brutal elements; but is was to reach an end for the whole race with as infinite a slowness as it had been conducted in the past. Aeon and aeon was to pass before man, as a whole would reach his perfection." 75

It is interesting to see that Tennyson was still concerned in later years with the evolutionary process. In 1888, he defined his position to his son, who says, "He conceived that the further science progressed, the more the Unity of Nature, and the purpose hidden behind the cosmic process of matter in motion and changing forms of life, would be apparent." 76 The idea of "working out the beast" spoken of early in Tennyson's life is written of in By An Evolutionist in "the character of an avowed evolutionist." 77

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 thy province of the brute.

75Stopford Brooke, Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life, p. 444.


77Raymond Alden, Tennyson, p. 336.
I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I
gaze at a field in the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the
sloughs of a low desire,
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the
Man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life
with a glimpse of a height that is higher.78

And the survival of the old keynote, "Forward, forward let
us range, "is heard in old age in a poem entitled The Dawn:

Red of Dawn!
Is it turning a fainter red? So be it, but
when shall we say
The ghost of the brute that is walking and
haunting us yet and be free?
In a hundred, a thousand winters: Ah, what
will our children be,
The men of a hundred thousand, a million
summers away?79

Again, in still a later poem, a full declaration of the prin-
ciple of a continuous development of man is given:

Where is one that, born of woman altogether
can escape
From the lower world within him, moods of
tiger, or of ape?
Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning
age of ages
Shall not aeon after aeon pass and touch him
into shape?80

To be concerned so early in life with "whether the develop-
ment of the human body might possibly be traced from the ra-
diated vermicular molluscsous and vertebrate organisms" and
to face in poetry the religious inferences which may be as-
sumed from such a doctrine is proof enough of Tennyson's

79The Dawn, 11. 5-9.
80The Making of Man, 11. 1-4.
originality and deep thinking. "To be overwhelmed and mastered by the material and mechanical, even to the extent of being blind to the existence of every other aspect is common and human enough. But to recognize to the fullest the reign of law in Nature, the sequence of cause and effect, the strength of chain-armour of necessity which men of science weave, and yet to discern in it the living garment of God—that is poetic and divine." Evolution in the process has been an infinitely long time, certainly beyond the grasp of the human mind. And although evolution denotes change, the change is always for the better of existence. Tennyson, then, accepted change as exemplified in evolution as a part of progress toward an ultimate perfection—perfection of the physical world, of man's intellect, and of his soul.

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age,—for mine I knew not,—help me as when life begun;
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.

81 Tennyson, _T. and Friends_, p. 284.
82 _Locksley Hall_, 11. 179-182.
CHAPTER IV

IMMORTALITY

Tennyson struggled to establish a belief in the everlasting soul of man in an age when immortality was being denied. With materialism repealing the reality of the soul and weakening the significance of the Scriptures, belief in immortality became less and less prevalent. For more than half a century the poet was absorbed in this fight, laboring from the time of his panic-stricken bewilderment at Hallam’s death until the completion of In Memoriam.

Although Tennyson was not unaccquainted with grief and death when Arthur Hallam died, he did rest in an unquestioned, artless belief in which he accepted his faith through the tradition of his family and society. Most contented men never questioned the theory of the Christian religion until science demanded a change of complacent doctrines. To be sure, young people saw no reason in assuming beliefs contrary to those accepted by their families and the church. Hence, secure in the belief that God created the world in six days, issued the Ten Commandments for man to live by peacefully, set aside the seventh day as one of worship, and promised an everlasting life in heaven for the God-fearing, Tennyson was willing for a while to remain. This unaffected position
existed in some of the Poems by Two Brothers. Why Should We Weep for Those Who Die? expresses this self-satisfying attitude:

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

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.²

That Tennyson is giving expression full of devotion to the soul is evident in Love and Death.

Love wept and spread his sheeny vans for flight;  
Yet ere he parted said, "The hour is thine;  
Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,  
So in the light of great eternity  
Life eminent creates the shade of death;  
The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,  
But I shall reign forever over all."³

Love shall never die, for without love there is no soul.

In The May Queen the unafraid, unprobing voice is heard when death is near.

I thought to pass away before, and yet alive I am;  
And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the lamb.  
How sadly, I remember, rose the morning of the year!  
To die before the snowdrop came, and now the violets here.  
O, sweet is the new violet, that comes beneath the skies  
And sweeter is the young lamb’s voice to me that cannot rise,

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1. The poem has been attributed to both Tennyson and his brother; however, if Tennyson did not write it, he at least accepted the ideas involved.


And sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers that blow,
/And sweeter far is death than life to me that long to go.

Although the poem was written after Tennyson had "heard Time flowing in the middle of the night, and all things creeping to a day of doom," he seems to rest temporarily in a state of reconciliation with his thoughts. In the first two poems, however, one thing is of utmost importance—nothing has yet demanded that he ask, "Why should I live? If the souls of men were immortal, as men have been told," then there would be a need for "one God, one law, one element."

The particular period in which Tennyson was not troubled with doubts was very short, indeed. "His early 'heaven and happy views' may be said to have received their first shock at the university, where the inquiring minds of many associates set Tennyson also inquiring." When he went to college, the atmosphere was, of course, "tense with the death struggle, as it then seemed, between faith and science." It was inevitable that the questioning, along with the gradual maturing of his mind should produce a conflict. All the thoughts that had been left unturned had now been uncovered accompanied by

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4 The May Queen, 11. 53-60.
5 The Mystic, 11. 33-40.
6 Despair, XVIII, 1. 99.
7 Morton Luce, A Handbook of Tennyson's Works, 17.
8 Stephen Gwynn, Tennyson, A Critical Study, 64.
a rude suspicion that there might really be no life after
death. One of the early poems representing this spiritual
struggle is The Two Voices. His rationalization of the sub-
ject of immortality finds him as a frightened, morbid spirit
"crouched broodingly over thoughts of death." The poem,
written in the form of a dialogue between his weaker and
stronger self, consists of a skeptical voice begging him to
renounce life and a voice of faith imploring him to see the
"worth of life," The jeering voice bids this "mould of hopes
and fears," this belief that man is the crown of creation,
to give up this useless idea, for there "comes the check,
the change, the fall, pain rises up...there is one remedy
for all." In insisting upon the insignificance of one single
person in such a complex arrangement, man is driven back
on an ambition to go forward by the tormenting whispers of
the mocking self. The stronger part of his soul, sensing
some wider despair than that already prompted by the probing
voice, perceives at last the deliberate hush of threatening
suicide.

A still small voice spake unto me,
"Thou art so full of misery
Were it better not to be?"

Yet how can he be certain that the striving and the search
end with the decay of the body? This present existence with all its petty and trivial woes may be simple in comparison to the struggle after death.

... I toil beneath the curse,
But, knowing not the universe,
I fear to slide from bad to worse. 12

As the question of immortality comes into view, the menacing voice instills drop by drop the poison of doubt. Tennyson begins to doubt the significance of life on this earth compared to the vastness of the "hundred million spheres" of space. His spirit is so infected with the profoundness of doubt that he is induced to study the significance of the human brain compared to the immensity of time.

Forerun thy peers, thy time, and let
Thy feet, millenniums hence, be set
In midst of knowledge, dream'd not yet.)

Thou hast not gain'd a real height,
Nor art thou nearer to the light,
Because the scale is infinite.

'T were better not to breathe or speak,
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek. 13

The gibing voice of his weaker self assumes a greater force until we hear at last the complete denial of immortality of the soul;

A life of nithings, nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth! 14

12 Ibid., 11. 229-31. 13 Ibid., 11. 88-96.
14 Ibid., 11. 331-33.
The treacherous suggestions leave the stronger self with no outward evidence of immortality; hence, the idea of conscience, the instinctive theology, "the heat of inward evidence" is used to fight. To be sure, man's hopes and ideals never expect an earthly completion.

Here sits he shaping wings to fly;
His heart forebodes a mystery;
He names the name Eternity.15

Since he is a moral, rational being, man naturally constructs an ideal relationship between himself and God:

That type of perfect in his mind
In nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind---

He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro' thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.16

Tennyson, possessed of "a kind of spiritual vision of immortal life,"

Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn,
Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn,18

"falls back upon a still more tentative theory of Metempsychosis" in his struggle:

15 Ibid., ll. 289-91.
16 Ibid., ll. 292-97.
17 E. Hershey Sneath, The Mind of Tennyson, 130.
18 The Two Voices, ll. 304-06.
Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height,
Some yearning towards the lamps of night.
And although the still voice laughs, he continues;
Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with Mystic gleams
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams.
Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.21

At last the ever-present hope that God is love enables the
stronger voice to cast off the insidious remarks of skepticism.
He no longer hears the cry, "We find no motion with the dead;"
but he wants to feel,

...although no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love.23

He affirms, after a stern-willed desire to throw aside the
numbing misery which darkens his mind and clogs his powers,
that it is life, not death, that he longs for.

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

Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which all pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.24

It is not too late, in spite of death and disappointment, to
seek a newer world, to begin again, to continue until the

20 The Two Voices, 11. 316-63. 21 Ibid., 11. 379-81.
22 Ibid., 1. 279. 23 Ibid., 11. 445-47.
24 Ibid., 11. 394-99.
ultimate reunion is reached. Faith seems to be recovering, for the poet realizes that his love is not lost, but his object of love is gone.

Even before *The Two Voices* was written, Tennyson's conflict found expression in *Remorse* and *Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind*. *Remorse* is seldom ever included in any edition of Tennyson's poetry. The device of an imaginary character, used extensively in later poems, clarifies the religious conflict which has arisen within him. 25

0 God! my God! have mercy now. I faint, I fall. Men say that Thou Didst die for me, for such as me, 26 Patient of ill, and death, and scorn...

This opening cry for mercy is far removed from the "death which leads to happier life" which was felt in the springtime of Tennyson's faith. Paralyzed by despair and discontentment, he now feels that the sufferings of Christ,

Among the thorns that girt Thy brow, Wounding Thy soul, 27

are not sufficient to give him relief. The entire poem is one of vacillating faith, in which, no doubt, Tennyson was afraid of his own entanglement of thought. Doubt would have been to his family a wretched, evil thing.

...Men pass me by;
Christians with happy countenances--

27 Ibid., 11. 6-7.
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 the happy morn
When angels spake to men aloud,
And Thou and peace to earth were born. 28

Why can he not believe?

...Ask the sea
At midnight when the crisp slopes waves
After a tempest rib and fret
The broad-imbased beach, why he
Slumbers not like a mountain tarn?
Wherefore his ridges are not curls
And ripples of an inland mere?
Wherefore he moaneth thus, nor can
Draw down into his vexed pools
All that blue heaven which hues and paved
The other? 29

If such behavior is not possible for the sea, then belief is
impossible for him. He is forlorn, "moved from beneath with
30
doubt and fear." He cries out in terror for a "common faith...
31
a common scorn of death!"

And at a burial to hear
The creaking cords which wound and eat
Into my human heart, whence'er
Earth goes to earth, with grief, not fear
With hopeful grief, were passion sweet. 32

He cannot now feel this tranquility of "hopeful grief." He
recalls the happiness of his childhood when he was a "trustful
33
infant on the knee," knowing "nothing beyond his mother's

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28 Ibid., ll. 19-26.
30 Ibid., l. 138.
32 Ibid., ll. 35-39.
29 Ibid., ll. 125-35.
31 Ibid., ll. 33-34.
33 Ibid., l. 41.
eyes." He wonders why her prayer for him cannot be of benefit to him, she who was "great in faith." Perhaps it is the sin of pride that makes him feel that he would be praying to an uninterested God.

I think that pride hath now no place
Nor sojourn in me. I am void
Dark, formless, utterly destroyed.  

(Absorbed in the wrestle between doubt and faith, he longs for the "unsunn'd freshness of youth" which strengthened him when he "went forth in quest of truth." He says that "it is man's privilege to doubt," for someday truth may reveal itself from its obscurity. Is man to act as an animal, neither suspecting nor fearing that his life will not continue beyond death? It is man's duty to tangle with doubt, for it is only by ridding himself of complacent ideas that he is able to possess truth.

Shall we not look into the laws
Of life and death, and things that seem,
And things that be, and analyse
Our double nature, and compare
All creeds till we have found the one,
If one there be?  

Fearing, however, that contentment is at present impossible, he cries even louder for guidance:

... Oh teach me yet
Somewhat before the heavy clod
Weighs on me, and the busy fret.

34 Ibid., l. 44.  
35 Ibid., l. 130-22.  
36 Ibid., l. 140.  
37 Ibid., l. 141.  
38 Ibid., l. 142.  
39 Ibid., l. 172-77.
Of that sharp-headed worm begins 40 In the gross blackness underneath.

There is yet no evidence, even at the close of the poem, that Tennyson could find rest.

0 weary life! 0 weary death! 0 spirit and heart made desolate! 0 damned vacillating state.41

The poem, as a whole, is an indication that Tennyson is paving the way for a reflective consideration of immortality, already found in The Two Voices. It is impossible, since his faith has lost its authority by the scientific progress of the century and because of the death of Hallam, to feel secure in a mere acceptance of life. Hence, the poet, assuming a broad-minded attitude unusual to many in the trying conditions, sought to explore the subject of immortality according to the interpretations then being made by science and philosophy. The incentive was not merely personal, for he found in time that his struggle was a struggle familiar to many in the nineteenth century. It is necessary to keep in mind that Tennyson, in his attitude of investigation, is sometimes engulfed by the complication of mind and soul, but at other times he seems completely secure in faith. The poetry written before and after the publication of In Memoriam is proof of the earnestness with which he endeavored to find spiritual comfort for himself and the doubtful of his age.

40 Ibid., ll. 183-87. 41 Ibid., ll. 188-90.
The entire subject of immortality became so perplexing to Tennyson that one question was paramount in his mind. Is life worth living? He wrote: "I was so utterly miserable, a burden to myself and to my family, that I said, 'Is life worth anything?'" One cannot expect a poet, the teacher of humanity, to offer a solution to man's most confusing fear without first living with the danger and doubt. With the conclusion of the poem, however, a vision of happy people going to church and a feeling that "heaven opens inward, chasms yawn," enables Tennyson to know by "inward evidence" that "there must be an answer to his doubt." The power of reflection, absent from Supposed Confessions, enables him to answer in The Vision of Sin that "life is not worth living if it does not continue, if love is not immortal in God and in us." The question is not, however, asked in this manner. Rather, is there hope in the end for sensual pleasure? The wayward youth in the story, ignoring his soul, receives the answer from God in a language which no man can understand. Thus, Tennyson, with a conscious effort to interpret for his age the lawfulness of doubt, delves into the darkness of a sensuous man's sin and stresses the inevitable outcome of his immortality. Perhaps it is here that one critic is justified in saying,

42 Hallam Tennyson, Memoir, 193.
43 Ibid., p. 214.
In his religious poems Tennyson depicted the depths of despair that he might more effectively urge his message of hope; he plunged his readers once and again into "the sunless gulf of doubt" that they might more fully realize the consolation of sunlight faith.  

Assuming the belief that all existence ends after death, man can either rid himself of the insignificance of life or he can obtain from life, through the senses, the fullest possible existence. The voice endorsing suicide holds the former belief; the second inference is the philosophy advocated by the tired, old sinner. The cry, sounded against a life offering nothing except drink by Omar Khayyam's sinner, is heard in The Vision of Sin as that of despair.

Fill the cup, and fill the can: 
Have a rouse before the morn: 
Every moment dies a man, 
Every moment one is born.

The sinner, having drunk the depths of pleasure, feels the wine poison his body and hears his voice as a weird mixture of fluttering dances. "The youth who rides the horse of the soul, winged with aspiration and imagination, weighs the horse down, for he has already been mastered by the flesh." He gradually sinks the senses of his soul into the pit of sin until he does care for neither love nor pleasure of life. Tennyson, without making the boy speak of his doom, passes on him by skillfully presenting the diverse comments. He sees the mystic mountain

44 William M. Payne, The Greater English Poets of the Nineteenth Century, p244.
wherein the lives of human beings are being destroyed.

Once more rose the mystic mountain-range
Below were men and horses pierced with worms,
And slowly quickening into lower forms. 47

And, as the poet attempts to penetrate the Divine purposes of God, voices from the mountain come to contemplate the youth's ruined and wasted life. Perhaps it is a stroke of poetic genius, or better still, a delicate and sensuous knowledge of God's power and guidance that Tennyson introduces, in the voice of the third spirit, the twinge of conscience. The fact that the sinner, in his desperation, proved that he was troubled by a conscience is evidenced by the fear of where his doomed soul is destined. Remorse, mentioned previously as a poem of immortality, seems similar in character to The Vision of Sin, at this point. An old man, worn from an evil, mislived life, ponders his future existence.

With too much conscience to have rest,
Too little to be ever blest,
To yon vast world of endless woe
Unlighted by the cheerful day
My soul shall wing her weary way. 48

Although the views concerning eternal punishment are interpreted in an exaggerated manner, the old man admits a knowledge of God and heaven and an endless hell.

How shall I cast my shroud away,
And come into the blaze of day?
How shall I brook to hear each crime,

47 The Vision of Sin, ll. 207-10. 48 Remorse, ll. 16-19.
Here veil'd by secrecy and time, 49
Read out from thine eternal book?

Even though the sinner in The Vision of Sin cries,

Fill the cup, and fill the can
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up;
And is lightly laid again, 50

he can reflect his own origin and destination—a destiny of
immortality of heaven or hell. Although there is no question
as to where the soul of the sinner is going, is the downward
slope avoidable?

At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope?'
To which an answer peal’d from that high land
But in a tongue no man can understand;
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made himself an awful rose of dawn. 51

This passage, as significant of the entire poem, is often
conceived in many different ways. When asked for an ex-
planation of the passage, Tennyson replied: "Poetry is like
silk with many changing colours. Every reader must find his
own interpretation, according to his ability or sympathy with
the poet." Accordingly, then, The Vision of Sin as a unity
is not a complete declaration of the poet's theory of im-
mortality. Rather, Tennyson's reasoning of man as a rational,
moral person enables him to proclaim immortality on the basis
of the sensual man's final realization of a Supreme Being.

49  Ibid., ll. 52-56.
50  The Vision of Sin, ll. 167-70.
51  Ibid., ll. 219-24.
52  Tennyson, op. cit., II, 393.
Through the recognition of the youth's doom, immortality is perceived, and the human being is brought face to face with God in the sight of death.

This same question of personal immortality which was the basis of The Two Voices as well as The Vision of Sin is continued in In Memoriam. Although the pros and cons presented in the previous poems are included in In Memoriam, progress in thought and feeling is observed. The interpretations placed on the poem are exceedingly diverse, for Tennyson is developing from a condition of gloom and despair to an enlarging faith. The poet explains the character of the poem as follows:

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 concluded with the marriage of my youngest sister, Cecilia. It was meant to be a kind of Divine Comedy, 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.

Even in realizing that the race continues though the individual dies, Tennyson feels that his own grief is no less. He believes that love is great enough to include grief,

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53 Ibid., pp. 304-5.
but he fears that in time he will become indifferent to
death and lose even grief. To many, who have not felt sorrow
because they have not experienced love, life is meaningless.
But to Tennyson, life had been beautiful and he had been
truly blessed with Arthur Hallam's friendship.

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, what'er befall;
I feel it when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.54

The only answer to the despair in life is immortal life in
God who is Immortal Love. Tennyson wants to believe that
God "wilt not leave us in the dust; thou madest man...thou
art just." The desire instilled in man for "more life and
fuller" was not brought about by a ruthless God. The poet
believes this faith to come from Christianity.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.56

He bases a conclusion upon human life itself that man could

54 In Memoriam, XXVII, ll. 5-16. 55 Prologue, ll. 1-12.
56 In Memoriam, I, ll. 1-4.
find no benefit in this life if he possessed no immortality.
If life ceases with death, if man is not "to live for ever-
more," then existence is of little significance.

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. 57

He feels that even an existence for the purpose of Love would
not be worthwhile, for the sweetness of love depends upon a
belief in immortality. Tennyson believes that without personal
immortality, it would be best

... at once to sink in peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease. 58

For consolation, he pretends that his loss of Hallam
is the same as that of a family's loss of a daughter in
marriage. The analogy, however, saddens him, for from the
dead no messages are sent. The poet even fears that the soul
of his friend may progress from "high to higher" until their
friendship could not be continued. So thinking,

...of when sundown skirts the moor
An inner trouble I behold,
A spectral doubt which makes me cold,
That I shall be thy mate no more. 59

57 Ibid., XXXIV, 11. 1-8.
58 Ibid., 11. 13-16.
59 Ibid., XLI, 11. 17-20.
And although he sees immortality as a fact, Tennyson finds himself in a state of despair, for he realizes that their relationship has changed and that he and Hallam are parted.

Tho' following with an upward mind
The wonders that have come to thee,
Thro' all the secular to-be,
But evermore a life behind.50

He feels a certain mood of contentment, however, when he thinks that Hallam might become his teacher in the next world:

And what delights can equal those
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
When one that loves but knows not, reaps
A truth from one that loves and knows?51

This realization prompts him to further questioning, which, in new terms, might interpret the secrets of the world. If there be a possibility of a reunion, upon what conditions will their friendship be based? In thinking that perhaps the soul carries with itself no memory of the first life, Tennyson is depressed, for he feels that the personality should be ever increasing in vitality. He wants to believe that

...no shade can last
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past.62

The view, held by some sects, that any one personality will vanish, allowing the individual soul to be thrown into "the

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60 Ibid., 11. 21-24. 61 Ibid., XLIII, 11. 9-12.
62 Ibid., XLVI, 11. 5-8.
general soul" is denounced by Tennyson. "The doctrine says that human beings are but fragments struck off from the universal souls depending for their separateness and sense of individuality upon temporary and probably physical conditions. These conditions being cancelled, the individuality ceases, and the fragments of the human souls are absorbed into the universal soul, human consciousness being swallowed up in the divine." Tennyson, seeing this as a "faith as vague as all unsweet," had much rather see complete extinction after death.

Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal souls from all beside.64

These questions again throw Tennyson into the depths of sorrow, and he utters a prayer that he might in some way feel Hallam's presence.

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And the wheels of being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And life, a fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is low,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

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64  In Memoriam, XLVII, 11. 6-7.
Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day. 65

But is it true that

we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread? 66

At last Tennyson is able to answer in the affirmative, for
the dead shall look him "through and through" and make al-
lowances for human faults.

By rationalizing his faith, Tennyson was able to pass
from personal sorrow to universal sorrow and now from his
own evil to the evil of the world. It is evident that
Tennyson's struggle of faith was affected by contemporary
thought in that he called forth his best faculties in an
effort to master his doubt. The poet, contemplating the destiny
of man by the interpretations of nature made by science,
describes his age as one in which

Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secrets from the latest moon. 67

For decades men have looked to Nature for an answer to the
perplexing questions of life. It may be that now she can
give a clue to man's immortality.

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave

67  Ibid., XXI, ll. 18-20.
Derives it not from that we have
The likeliest God within the soul.

He finds, however, that Nature can give him no comfort.

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through 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.

Even the belief that she is "careful of the type" she makes
is untrue, for she cries,

'A thousand types are gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go.'

The spirit and breath to Nature are synonymous. Her kingdom,
as she herself points out, is not one lined with Love, but
a creation "red in tooth and claw."

'Thou makest thy appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death;
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more....'

Hence, man can know nothing.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

But the reasoning of Nature is not applicable to man.

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,

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68 Ibid., LV, 11. 1-4. 69 Ibid., 11. 13-20.
70 Ibid., 1. 7. 71 Ibid., LVI, 11. 3-4.
72 Ibid., 11. 5-8. 73 Ibid., 11. 25-28.
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With revine, shriek'd against his creed—

All that man, who "loved, who suffered countless ills...who battled for the True and Just," has done distinguished him from the other things in life. Assuming that he is endowed with a conscience, a will, and the power of faith, the soul is inevitably destined to continue its existence. Tennyson, declaring that he does not envy the beast "to whom a conscience never wakes," holds an earnest desire to know that his soul will not cease after death. As we reach the climax of the poem, we begin to feel that Tennyson is actually believing in a future existence of the soul. He then begins to consider the possibility of seeing the spirit of his lost friend,

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. 77

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74 Ibid., ll. 9-16. 75 Ibid., ll. 17-18.
76 Ibid., l. 33. 77 Ibid., XCIV, ll. 1-6.
The faith, the vigour, cold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,
And keen thro' wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead men touch'd me from the past,
And all at once it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine. 78

Tennyson now speaks of Hallam, who had been "perplex'd in faith, but pure in deeds," and hopes that he, too, can gather strength and face "the spectres of the mind." But with the conclusion of the section, Tennyson's mind runs on toward universal matters. "From this point onward in the poem the concentration of thought lessens; or say rather, the eye focuses itself to a wider prospect. Through all the moods of memory one can follow the widening of the circles from the central commotion. In a sense the earlier moods are reviewed in calmer judgment, and what is stated at first as the passionate clinging to a hope becomes now settled conviction." Thus, Tennyson concentrates on the "unending cycles of time," and considers man's spiritual significance with the scientific aspect of humanity:

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day

78 Ibid., XCV, 11. 29-36.
80 Ibid., XCVI, 1. 9.
81 Alden, op. cit., 82.
For ever nobler ends, they say
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last rose the man.\footnote{In Memoriam, CXVIII, 11. 1-12. Sneath, op. cit., p. 145.}

In describing man's continuous rise from the beast to man, Tennyson realizes that the very essence of truth in science teaches that there is something beyond to crown this struggle. To believe, then, in the great progressive movement in Nature with man involved is to believe in the immortality of human truth and love.

Who throw and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or crown'd with attribute of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore.\footnote{In Memoriam, CXVIII, 11. 13-20. Ibid., 11. 21-24.}

The lesson from this struggle of life, which is "heated hot with burning fears, dipp'd in baths of hissing tears, and better'd with the shocks of doom," teaches us to

Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.\footnote{In Memoriam, CXVIII, 11. 13-20. Ibid., 11. 21-24.}

As it is impossible to determine the chronological order of the poems in \textit{In Memoriam}, it is equally as difficult to show a complete line of Tennyson's belief in immortality.

Through the entire poem is woven the thread of the past and the
memories of a departed life. At times when the poet seems established in faith, the thought of his grief and sorrow appears and he is once again plunged into doubt. Too, the materialistic and agnostic conceptions of life, which succeeded invariably in tearing the structure of his building faith, cast him endlessly into the depths of his soul in an effort to produce some hopeful evidence of a relief to his problem. Thus, assuming a mood of depression encouraged by the scientific materialism, Tennyson disapproves of the view that man originated from figureless, undeveloped clay and was organized only to be broken up and later returned to clay. Broadly speaking, human beings are only "cunning casts in clay," and only a mass of clay remains when death strikes. Tennyson loathes the materialistic views, but being unable to present a further explanation of the origin and nature of all men, he seeks refuge in a blind faith.

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.88

87 Ibid., CXX, 1. 5. 88 sneath, op. cit. p.147.
89 In Memoriam, CXX, ll. 1-12.
His blind faith, unwillingly accepted, is proof that Tennyson believed instinctively in something higher, something that goes beyond scientific proof.

Although Tennyson believed in the science which includes a continuous progress, he recognizes that there must be a certain permanence found in the spirit of man. It is the consciousness of this belief that he is able to find within himself the Infinite Reality. Perhaps the profoundness of his struggle and effort to establish a belief in the immortality of the soul was quickened and sharpened by his inability to find by reasoning with himself "The Power in darkness whom we guess." "But an inner experience, which in the early days of The Two Voices he spoke of as that of others rather than of himself, he has now made his own."

The hills are shadows, and they flow From form to form, and nothing stands, They melt like mists, the solid lands, Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell And dream my dream, and hold it true; For tho' my lips may breathe adieu, I cannot think the thing farewell.

Once more declaration for belief is given:

That which we dare invoke to bless; Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt; He, They, One, All; within, without; The Power in darkness whom we guess,—

I found Him not in world or sun, Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye,

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90 Alden, cp. cit., 324. 91 In Memoriam, CXXIII, ll. 1-12.
Hart thro' the questions men may try,
The petty webs we have spun.

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, 'believe no more,
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep,

A warmth within the breast would wait
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, 'I have felt,' 92

It is apparent that Tennyson is firmly convinced that the soul is not destroyed after death but lives forever. The mystery and complexity of the universe demand a belief in the future. Without immortality the religions of the world would lose their meaning, life, its virtue, man his patience, and creation its vitality. Hellan's voice can be heard on "the rolling air," and he is felt not only as "some diffusive power," 93

Eternal form shall still divide 95
The Eternal Soul from all beside, 96

but he is "mix'd with God and Nature." Perhaps the idea that Hellan's soul is mingled with "all the world" seems to contradict or cancel Tennyson's desire for personal immortality. One critic, accepting the verse as inconsistent with the poet's desire, makes allowances for the statement by saying that it "seems to be an expression of a temporary mood or faith..." 97

92 Ibid., CXXIV, 11. 1-16. 93 Ibid., 1. 1.
94 Ibid., 1. 7. 95 Ibid., 11. 6-7.
96 Ibid., 1. 11.
rather than a licensed poetical expression. Temporary faith, it must be said, because it does not reflect any permanent belief on his part. It is opposed to the general tendency of his thought and belief." 97 Possibly a better explanation is given by Alden. "By a kind of new Platonism, he identifies his aspiration toward union with him and that toward reunion with the eternal Source of humanity. But this, unlike the vaguer mysticism of the Orient, of Plato, of Shelley, still has place for personality. The 'living will' does not yield itself, or submerge at all into the Whole, like stream and ocean, but endures all vicissitudes." 98 To be sure, by identifying himself with God, Tennyson is confident that the soul is capable of progress.

My love involves the love before;  
My love is vaster passion now;  
Tho' mix't with God and Nature thou,  
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;  
I have thee still, and I rejoice;  
I prosper, circled with thy voice;  
I shall not lose thee tho' I die. 99

And as the reflective consideration of the question of immortality ceases, Tennyson sings exuberantly in the following stanza:

O living will that shalt endure  
When all that seems shall suffer shock,  
Rise in the spiritual rock,  
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure.

97 Sneath, op. cit., pp. 150-51.  
99 In Memoriam, CXXX, 11. 9-16.
In the Prologue to *In Memoriam*, which was probably written after the entire poem was complete, Tennyson upholds a firm belief in immortality, trusting now in a complete God of love.

Thou madest Life in Man and brute;  
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot  
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

(Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;  
Thou madest man, he knows not why,  
He thinks he was not made to die;  
And thou hast made him; thou art just.)

It seems evident, then, that the poet has, after almost two decades of struggle, escaped with a calm but victorious faith from the slumping depths of an extremely thoughtful and rationalizing doubt. He writes in 1871 to a childhood friend, explaining the eventual emerging from a state of uncertainty to a sure faith. The letter reads:

You cannot catch the voice, or feel the hands, or kiss the cheek; that is all; a separation for an hour, not an eternal farewell. If it were so, that which made us would seem too cruel a Lover to be worshipped, and could not be loved.

Hence, we see that Tennyson, not only in fulfilling a poetic mission but also in proving to himself the need for personal immortality, was not weak and insincere as he has often been called. Perhaps without reading *In Memoriam* and the other poems dealing with immortality, one would be unable to see the unity of so noble an inquiry. To be sure, his reflective mind led him into other mysteries, but he never lost sight of his

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100 Prologue, 11. 6-12.  
101 Tennyson, op. cit., I, 105.
goal. He recognized later, as is evidenced by the Prologue, the apparent insincerity of his jumbled mind, calling his verses "confusions" and "wild and wandering cries." Aside from the personal contentment of his soul, the important result of this determined fight was his coming at last "to find a stronger faith his own," until he dealt more thoroughly with the serious doubts of his age. He is now able to say to the skeptical, unbelieving world that although "men is like a thing of nought" in the "boundless plan," he "who has deeply lived, suffered and thought, could not doubt the soul's continuous progress in after-life." He comforted a generation that "had begun secretly to fear that God was to be outlawed" by making the people conscious of an intuition of the soul's immortality. When questioned by a stranger "as to his belief in a hereafter," he wrote: "I sympathize with your grief, and if faith mean anything at all it is trusting to those instincts, or feelings, or whatever they may be called, which assure us of some life after death." Man realizes that there are moments when he feels he cannot die and knows himself no vision to himself.

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102 In Memoriam, XCVI, 1. 17.  Tennyson, op. cit., I, 32.
103 Tennyson, op. cit., I, 32.
104 Anson Fausset, Tennyson, A Modern Portrait, p. 55.
105 Tennyson, op. cit., I, 495.  Ibid. p. 495.
106 Ibid. p. 495.
107 The Holy Grail, 11. 916-17.
but in the nineteenth century men felt that he was only "one slight ripple on the boundless deep, that moves and all is gone," But Tennyson exclaims:

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the deep. 109

He confesses about the consciousness of his immortality:

For more than once when I
Sat alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And pelt into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
They were strange—not mine—and yet no shade
Of doubt,
But utter clearness, and th'o' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a Shadow world. 110

Tennyson, in giving to men the profoundest religious wants,
tells his age that through faith "all life needs is possible
to will." Thus, believing, man is at times carried through
super-normal experiences in which "the mortal limit of the
Self is loosed" and the soul is brought "beyond the gates
of birth and death." "Throughout his life," says his son,
"he had a constant feeling of a spiritual harmony existing
between ourselves and the outward visible Universe, and of

112 In Memoriam, CXI, 1. 132.
the actual Immanence of God in the infinitesimal atom in
the vastest systems." He often had a trance experience,
explains his son, through which he possessed a thorough
knowledge of his own immortality. Tennyson himself writes:

A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite
up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This
has generally come upon me thro' repeating my own
name two or three times to myself silently, till all
at once, as it were out of the intensity of the con-
sciousness of individuality, the individuality itself
seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being,
and this is not a confused state, but the clearest of
clearest, the surest of surest, the weirdest of weirdest,
utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laugh-
able impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it
were) seeming no extinction but the only true life. 114

Unlike the voice that half a century earlier cried,

I am forlorn,

Too shaken; my own weakness fools
My judgment, and my spirit whirls,
Moved from beneath with doubt and fear, 115

he now sings of immortality as the "twilight of eternal day."

Without the belief, man's virtues and efforts would "crumble
into dust."

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt,
being true as he was brave;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd
yet he look'd beyond the grave. 117

113  
Tennyson, op. cit., I, 319.
114  
Ibid., p.320.
115  
Supposed Confessions, II. 135-38.
116  
In Memoriam, I, I. 16.
117  
Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After, II. 59-60.
Such a message is not an occult one. Since man is a rational animal, he identifies himself with "the truths that never can be proved" and becomes an owner of immortality. Men is not to be "blown about the desert dust or seal'd within the iron hills," but he can

Follow Light, and do the Right—
for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel
seated in the vacant tomb. 120

The subject of immortality never disappears from Tennyson's mind, and its importance is found in many of his poems which date past his period of discontentment. The little poem entitled Wages illustrates the poet's realization that the best from life is obtained only by the desire to progress upward. Because of its brevity, I shall quote the entire poem:

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
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 wages of virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die. 121

118  Ibid., ll. 71-72.  119  In Memoriam, LVI 1. 20.
120  Looksley Hall, B.A., ll. 278-79.  121  Wages
The poet, in *The Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,* does not find it difficult to think of Wellington's finding new opportunities for his great powers after death.

We doubt not that for one so true
There must be other nobler work to do
Than when he fought at Waterloo.\(^{122}\)

The last verse of the *Ode,* though hackneyed now by constant quotation, never loses its beauty for a belief in immortality.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust...
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him,
God accept him, Christ receive him.\(^{123}\)

The faith which once was hidden by the disillusionment of death and by scientific materialism has found escape from its obscurity and is restored in spirituality to the soul of Tennyson. The poet realizes that in his state of calm assurance, the mysteries of life, the fears, and the doubts have vanished and in their place "the white light of perfect faith plays upon the graves of buried doubts." He has suffered through "the sunless sea of doubt" in his age and has emerged from the spiritual dismay onto a strong, sunlight sea of faith. Far beyond

A hundred ever-rising mountain lines, \(^{124}\)
And past the range of Night and Shadow

Tennyson sees

The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision.\(^{125}\)

\(^{122}\) *The Duke of Wellington,* 11. 36-38.
\(^{124}\) *The Ancient Sage,* 11. 262-83.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

For Tennyson success and happiness in life depended upon his power to build and sustain a belief in the divine goodness of a personal God. It would be untrue, however, to say that this faith was established without difficulty, for in the nineteenth century when faith and belief in God were crumbling, it was inevitable that Tennyson should be thrown into "the thorns of disbelief." His struggle to renew his belief in an All-loving Father proved a noble and beneficial endeavour. In his efforts to escape from the prison-house of materialism, he found that Love was stronger than death and that annihilation was inconceivable. Although Tennyson held a dark view of some of the elements of the nineteenth century civilization, his poetry pulsated with the forward movement of the world.

It was refreshing and restful to the Victorians, with their dreary picture of a ruined, scientific world, to rely upon Tennyson to guide and direct their way. His poetry restored to them their old ideas of God and the significance of the individual soul. In their search for rest and assurance, the Victorians found comfort in Tennyson's hopeful verse.
He spoke philosophically and emotionally from the side of feeling—when proof was of no avail, he depended upon an intuitive, subjective faith.

The cardinal principles of the poet's thought and faith are that Love and Life are eternal, that the individual personality of man endures forever, that God is All-loving, that in Him we possess our being, move, live, and that in Christ is found the "full revelation in the flesh" of what Tennyson called the "Eternal Thought of the Universe." His son says, "He consistently emphasized his own belief in what he called the Eternal Truths; in an Omnipotent, Omnipresent and All-loving God, Who has revealed Himself through the human attribute of the highest self-sacrificing love; in the freedom of human will; and in the immortality of the soul." Tennyson himself said, "Take away belief in the self-conscious personality of God, and you take away the backbone of the world."

1 Hallam Tennyson, Memoir, II, 312.
2 Ibid., p.312.
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