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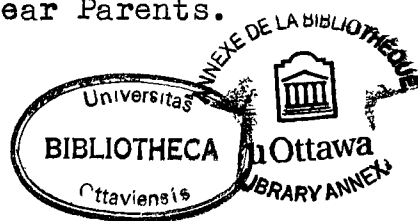
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THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THREE VICTORIAN POETS:
TENNYSON, BROWNING, AND ARNOLD
AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH LITERATURE.

Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dedicated to the Memory of
My dear Parents.



Sister Aimee, M.A.
of the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis
Medicine Hat, Alberta.

May 1, 1942.

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THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THREE VICTORIAN POETS:

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Chapter 1.

INTRODUCTION

Before we can study the religious beliefs of Tennyson, Browning and Arnold and their influence on English Literature, we must know something of the religious movements that developed before and during the Victorian Age. Evidently the causes of these movements lay far back in the past, and some study of them is necessary to the understanding of a period pregnant with spiritual doubt and religious turmoil.

The modern age, divided into two parts, by the French Revolution, is characterized by hostility to all revealed truth. The first part, the eighteenth century, is the age of the Enlightenment and is marked by war against the faith of revelation and its custodian, the Church. The second part, the nineteenth century, is the age of the most radical belief.

The Enlightenment is a rationalistic period which considered the Christian Faith as ignorance and obscurantism. Its spiritual effects had been baneful, because its teachings had been essentially antithetical to the supernatural, to revelation.

Natural religion, natural law, natural state, force of human reason unhampered by external bonds are its ideals; a free conscience is supreme. If there is a God, He will obviously not interfere in the course of nature, which follows the laws once determined for it; nature can be measured and counted and leaves no room for miracles. They were simply nonsense, to be explained usually by the unreliability of witnesses. That there might be supernatural disturbance of the order of the universe was a preposterous notion; it did not happen, it had never happened, and any report of it was unworthy of belief. The strongest and most unbalanced, in fact the most naive exaggeration of reason and knowledge is the characteristic feature of this philosophy which culminates in the "religion of reason", in the French Revolution. Philosophers turned away from the eternal and the absolute to the world of nature and human experience. They rejected their dependence on the supernatural, and vindicated their independence and supremacy in the temporal order.

When Kant initiated his epoch-making revolution, he did immense harm to men, for his theory shook the foundations of thought and overturned the intellectual achievements of the ages. Neither was his influence confined to the field of philosophy. It made its way into theology and has become the basis of most of the religious thought now prevalent outside the Catholic Church. Kant's doctrine evidently lead to open skepticism, although he himself did not wish to be stigmatized as a skeptic in any sense, quite unaware was he of the baneful errors that pervade his system

of thought. However, skepticism is inevitable to any one who pursues to their logical conclusions the fundamental teachings of Kant.

The Enlightenment led also to a revolt against the freedom of the will. Man was no longer to be permitted to believe that he determined his own actions and controlled his own destiny. Science, it was claimed, could prove that there is no God; that man has no spiritual soul, or if he has, that it is annihilated at death; that we are not free to control our actions; that the whole universe is the result of mere chance and that it has reached its present stage through the interplay of blind materialistic forces, and that consequently any kind of theistic n-belief would obviously be impossible. Man was then, according to these new tenets, a bundle of raw instincts which were determined by heredity and environment. Therefore, he was not responsible for his conduct.

The Tubingen theologian, Karl Adam, describes in no uncertain terms the product of the Enlightenment: The modern spirit he says, has been torn loose from the deepest and strongest supports of its life, from its foundation in the absolute--The sense of being a creative organ of God has lost its great meaning, its vital strength and purpose-- Instead of the man who is rooted in the absolute, hidden in God, strong and rich, we have the man who rests upon himself, the autonomous man who has made himself the measure of all things. This autonomous man began to emerge in the Renaissance Age. The renaissance claimed to have

freed from the restraints of ascetism and so called "dogmatism", a man bold, self-reliant; a man marked with individualism, who was self-sufficient and could do without God.

As a natural consequence of this universal emancipation the bible ceased to have any authoritative interpretation, and private judgment was considered to be the only authority in religion. Every man was to read the Bible and interpret it for himself. What was left of its authority was largely destroyed by the work of the higher critics who cut out every thing that they did not agree with and reconstructed the text so as to eliminate so far as possible the miraculous and the supernatural. As a result the heirs of the Reformation largely lost faith in the Bible.

Now before proceeding with a closer study of the nineteenth century, we must consider for a moment a movement which gradually developed alongside other trends of thought and continued as an undercurrent throughout the Victorian Age: i.e. Romanticism.

In the non-Catholic world especially. there was, then, great energy and hope inspired by materialism but unfortunately not for the things of God. Religion had been disintegrating since long before the upheaval of the sixteenth century. The issues were not so clearly defined as they are at present, but if we would believe the testimony of many historians, "the Catholic Church, that is real Christianity was, for the most part, an antiquated and slowly dying institution". It is most

important to bear this statement in mind as an explanation of the fact that more men did not turn towards the Catholic Church in their struggle for light and spiritual freedom.

But the spirit of God was moving among the people. The Enlightenment and the Revolution had done violence to the elementary craving of man for religion and tradition. A reaction was consequently inevitable. The vast spiritual and physical misery brought on by revolution and war also tended toward reaction. Religion was again looked upon as something indispensable as the most exalted of things.

Many souls had grown weary of a chaotic world and were turning back to the pre-revolutionary times over which religion had held sway- Rationalism had called up a rival in the New Romanticism. The Middle Ages, especially the classic age of the Church, found a new appreciation. Writers sought inspiration in the past, and there they found the glories of the nations bound up with religion and the Catholic Church.

This new mood towards religion was not confined to the spiritual life of individuals nor to literary endeavour, but an attempt was made to shape the age politically and socially on the pattern of the past. The result then was Romanticism which led to Restoration. Thus it was an antidote to a deadening materialism and to the radical doctrines of the French Revolution.

Although religion was sick even unto the Voltarian nineteenth century, the French Revolution had not succeeded in destroying it, and there had been a hunger for religion that

the "Philosophers" had failed to satisfy and people found that the Church they had pronounced either dead, or dying was not only still alive but she had become one of the great powers, with which leaders, among them Napoleon had to reckon-

This transformation was really a consequence of the Enlightenment itself. And it was not in the first instance specifically Catholic, but rather a "religious movement", religious in the widest sense of the word. A new atmosphere was created, the very antithesis of the dry, supercilious Enlightenment.

Many and varied forces took part in its origin: Methodism in England, the remains of pietism on the Rhine and in Wurttemberg, Kant's emphasis on the categories of the moral and religious lying beyond rational thinking, Rousseau's religion of feeling and of nature etc.

So far as the Catholic Church is concerned, in the midst of a barren rationalism her leaders had maintained genuine loyalty to the Church on the one hand; and on the other, they had participated energetically in the cultural and scientific movements of the time.

However, we must admit that the results of Romanticism are not outstanding either in the realm of art or in that of thought. Its most meritorious achievement in art as well as in poetry lay in the regaining of important values from the past. The rediscovery of Gothic after a lapse of more than 300 years was a truly noble accomplishment the influence of which is still felt to-day. Side by side with the finding of Gothic art the

treasure grove of a rich religious tradition was opened up by a collection of legends and songs and the translations of them. But, and this is the most important work of the Romantic Movement, it turned men's mind to the Catholic Ages, and prepared the way for the Oxford movement, the religious renaissance of the nineteenth century.

The Nineteenth Century was a century of Revolution, the progeny of a long period of disintegration covered by the Renaissance, Reformation and French Revolution. The spirit of the age was one of emancipation revealed in its various "isms" but especially in the so-called liberalism and individualism. The words of Francis Thompson in his essay *Moestitiae Encomium* will give us a fair idea of its misery: "Alas for the nineteenth century with so much pleasure and so little joy; so much learning and so little wisdom; so much effort and so little fruition; so many philosophers, and so little philosophy; so many seers and so little foresight; so many teachers and such an infinite vortex of doubt. The only divine thing left to us is Sadness."

Religious individualism, begotten also of the Reformation, dominated the century. The basic principle of this individualism is that each human being is, to all intents and purposes, sufficient unto himself. There is no higher law above man than his own self. Man is his own lawgiver in every thing; he makes his own god and religion to suit himself. Since individualism eliminated from religion the Church, the guardian of truth, and taught that every man could interpret the Scriptures in his own way, then it follows

that his own religious experience is his final court of appeal, and that he can worship at any shrine. He makes and unmakes ethical or moral laws of life and conduct as he happens to see fit...Religion came then to stand in the same relation to world affairs as God did to Newton's astronomy. As Newton brought the universe under law, Newtonians assumed that God was no longer necessary to account for the order and harmony of the spheres, as if the discovery of a law did away with the necessity of a law giver.

Hegel's Philosophy permeated the thoughts of men and was the most powerful single factor that contributed to make the idea of evolution the dominating influence in philosophy and science in the nineteenth century. "The rational alone is real" says Hegel- agnosticism, more detrimental to Christians conceptions than the Agnosticism of Huxley and Spencer.

Comte created the new religion of humanitarianism, with its given dogma; "Love as the principle, order as the foundation, progress as the purpose". His position is founded on the so-called three laws. He denies the existence of a personal God and takes humanity, the "great being", as the object of its veneration and cult.

Utilitarians held various tenets but all agreed on the one principle- that pleasure and pain is the standard which discriminates right from wrong, so that they look upon the moral value of actions as entirely dependent upon their utility.

It is in England that Modern Philosophy as a whole first

takes up criticism of revelation; with the rejection of Revelation all religions are reduced to a natural content and to a natural evolution.

The fundamental philosophical principle is separation of faith and reason based on the nominalistic teaching of the double standard of truth. As in humanism, where the stoic notion of the "Common" and the "natural" are also fundamental, the result was a superficial moralizing religiosity, stoical in character with tendency toward doubt. The notion "God" remained, but since it was based entirely on reason it greatly weakened, and in fact it falsified, the Christian concept of God; for the idea of God in revelation essentially implies mystery. A religion without mystery is no religion. The attempt to grasp the entire content of religion by human reason led inevitably to the destruction of all religion.

The extensive trade journeys of the English brought them into contact with many religions and creeds, made their existence side by side seem natural and common, and thereby weakened the sense of objective truth. The freedom of the press, granted there in 1694 had proved a powerful impulse toward relativity which considers every opinion valid. Both these factors affected the religious situation.

The achievements of the natural sciences, too which appeared to have abolished mystery, gave the impression that everything can be measured and plumbed. The attitude that the superior power of science had rendered faith obsolete soon became

the prevailing mood; a distinct triumph of lack of thinking, for surely the great minds, Leibnitz, Newton and Pascal were men of very positive faith.

Still prevalent in England was the deistical controversy traceable to the philosophy of Hobbes and Locke, an outcome of the political and religious conditions of the times and country. A spirit of criticism aimed at the nature and content of traditional beliefs, and the substitution for them of a rationalistic naturalism had frequently occurred in British thought. The deists then, were free thinkers who agreed to cast off the yoke of authoritative religious teachings. While many of them were frankly materialistic, others were satisfied to criticize ecclesiastical authority in teaching the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures or the fact of an external revelation of supernatural truth by God to man. In a word deism was opposed to the traditional teaching of revealed religion. God, according to the deists, is apart from the creation he has brought into existence, and unconcerned as to the details of its working. Having created the world, He allowed it to run its own course without interference on His part.

The work of the deists proceeded slowly from somewhat veiled attacks to the spread of the critical and empirical spirit exemplified in the philosophy of Locke until it reached its climax in the attempt to wreck revealed religion in any form or shape. All deists disagreed on many points but in one accord they raised their voices against ecclesiastical authority. They

even asserted that revealed religion is an imposture, an invention of the priests to subdue and mislead the ignorant.

John Toland, a prominent deist claimed that there is nothing in the Gospels contrary to reason nor above it, and no Christian doctrine can properly be called a mystery. Both he and Collins criticized the moral and ethical part of religious teaching, such as the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, and attitude evidently hostile to the Church. In general, all deists rejected the miraculous element in scriptures and ecclesiastical tradition, besides denying the doctrine of the Trinity and the mediatorial power of Christ.

No better definition of Liberalism could be given than that of Newman in his "Apologia Pro Vita Sua". This is what the celebrated author says:

"Now by Liberalism, I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore, is our place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind, and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of Revelation. Liberalism then is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of

propositions which rest for their reception on the external authority of the Divine Word".

Another great movement of the century is the so-called "Scientific Movement". The Nineteenth Century witnessed a marvelous development of the natural sciences with a gradual popularization of science. One of the by-products of this popularization is the impression made on many that science is reasonable, while religion is unreasonable. The former can be proved they claim, but not the latter. Religion and science have thus become antagonized in their minds and such people are impelled to be irreligious.

The scientist's victories over nature were so dazzling that in the end they dazzled him. They led him to apply the methods which had worked so well in their own fields to fields where they are not applicable; and they led him to think of himself as an expert in all departments of knowledge.

The prime method of physical science, accurate measurement, was over confidently applied to fields in which the mind and will of man are the main elements. Whole "new sciences" were erected on this basis; the scientific methods were applied to Scripture and formed, what is called the Higher Criticism; when applied to the religious beliefs of mankind, especially of savages, they produced Comparative Religion. In both of these fields, scientific methods had a legitimate place; but their exaggeration led to folly.

Even in their own fields the scientists were led into

grave errors especially in the too ready acceptance of hypothesis as though they were proven. If the scientist is a trained observer he is not necessarily a trained thinker. Moreover, he is not more exempt than other men from defects either of intelligence or character.

Now for the second trouble the scientist began to dogmatize on Religion apparently without being aware that he had left his own field of investigation. Ferrero's judgment stands: "The men of the nineteenth century thought they knew all. They knew nothing". Its exponents, such as the great Huxley in one field, Renan in another, were men of remarkable stature. They had not only high powers of expression but also a very deep knowledge of their subjects. Unfortunately they did not seem to know that the great verities of religion do not depend on the conclusions of empirical science; they are neither proved nor disproved by them.- Little did those scientists realize that the science of to-day is not the science of to-morrow and that the next generation may blithely scrap the whole theory of evolution and that this would in no way affect our religious faith. What Professor Lynn Thorndike writes in his "History of Magic" is ever true: "One can well imagine that a future age may regard much of the learning even of our time as almost as futile, superstitious, fantastic in method, and irrelevant to the ends sought as were primitive man's method of producing rain, Egyptian amulets to cure disease, or medieval blood-letting according to the phases of the moon".

However, it need hardly be said that the scientific

assault upon religion was a cause of misery to many. Some like, the poet Clough, lost their faith and could hardly endure the loss. Thousands of minds, as Hutton states, were anxious for faith, and yet were able to secure at the most nothing more than a tremulous hope. And Chesterton in "The Wells and the Shallows" continues: "In the days when Huxley and Spencer and the Victorian Agnostics were trumpeting as a final truth the famous hypothesis of Darwin, it seemed to thousands of simple people almost impossible that faith has survived". Were they unaware of the fact that we do not look to the natural sciences to prove the existence of God, the immortality of the soul? The evolutionary process, if the truth of the hypothesis be admitted, would not in any way disprove the necessity of a Creator. The Creator could work quite as well through secondary causes as by immediate creation of separate species. Has not Darwin himself written in "The Descent of Man": "This grand sequence of events the mind refuses to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts from such a conclusion". - and the great Pasteur: "The deeper I go into the mysteries of nature, the more simple becomes my faith. Already it is as the faith of the Breton peasant, and I have every reason to believe that if I am able to penetrate yet deeper, it will become as the faith of the Breton peasant's wife.

Another movement of the nineteenth century which we cannot ignore in our present study is the Oxford Movement. Surveying it as a whole, we perceive that it was part of the general Christian uprising against the principles which the French

Revolution had brought forth. Already, a reaction had set in against the hard deistic rationalism of the previous century. Newman himself in his "Apologia pro Vita Sua" accounts for the movement, by calling it "a reaction from the dry and superficial character of the religious training and the literature of the last generation, or century, and as a result of the need which was felt both in the hearts and in the intellects of a nation for a deeper philosophy, and as the evidence and as the partial fulfillment of that need to which even the chief authors of the then generation had borne witness".

The Movement was launched by a sermon of Keble's in 1833, by a series of ninety "Tracts for the Times" of which Newman wrote twenty-nine, and by Newman's sermons at St. Mary's. These sermons which Arnold called "religious music" together with Newman's clear and compelling style in his "Tracts" and the magic force of his personality, won sympathy for the cause and deeply affected religious and social ideas in England. The Movement, centering in Oxford, had for its immediate aim to save the Church of England to stimulate in it a renewal of fervor, to spiritualize it when it had become a sort of philanthropic society with no higher ideals than respectability and comfortable living. Newman, Froude, John Keble, Edward Pusey and many others felt intense dissatisfaction with the emotional coldness and the dependence on rationalism of the English Church, and sought to make it more spiritual and at the same time more socially powerful. The movement made war on the old servitude to the State and looked

to the people for support. Against free thought, speculative and anarchic, it pleaded for Christianity as a sacred fact, a revelation from on high and a present supernatural power. Its special task was to restore the idea of the Church, the dignity of the Sacraments, above all, of the Holy Eucharist.

Together with the publication of the Tracts, there were Newman's four o'clock sermons at St. Mary's, pure lucid, free from dogma and permeated with a spirit of divine things.

The leaders of the Movement urged more and more the essential oneness of the English and Romish Churches. Little by little the English ingrained suspicion of Romanish^{everything} was aroused, grew in volume, and finally broke out in a storm of wrath with the appearance of Tract No. 90. In this Tract, Newman tried to show that even in the Thirty-nine Articles drawn up against Romanism, there is much of the pure Catholic doctrine. Over this statement the bishops became angry; the clergy condemned his position. After much agitation, Newman was persuaded to stop the Tracts altogether.

But as the years passed on, Newman came to feel more and more that his ideal of religion could never be satisfied in the Church of England. "He saw that the revival of religion in England was not primarily a matter of historical re-creation and renewed contact with the past at all. It was first and foremost a matter of re-establishing contact with the authentic source of the supernatural in the present. He became convinced that the English Church has no real connection with the supernatural society Christ had founded to perpetuate His doctrines and to

to give to men of all ages the divine life to which he had elevated humanity". (Alexander- The Catholic Literary Revival P.29).

His next step, then, one which stirred both friends and foes, was to retract all he had ever said against the Roman Catholic Church. In 1843, he resigned the Vicarage of St. Mary's and retired to Littlemore. After many doubts and misgivings, he took in 1845 the climactic step of his life; in that year he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. It was, he tells us in his "Apologia Pro Vita Sua" like coming into port after stormy seas. There he was soon to be followed by thousands of earnest and sincere souls who suddenly perceived the "kindly light" that would illuminate their path out of the "encircling gloom" and lead them to a haven of rest and peace.

CHAPTER II.

ON TENNYSON

A perusal of Tennyson's poetry shows that not only he believed in God and in a divine order in the universe, but that these beliefs are fundamental to his whole system of thought.

There is law and order; because to his mind, the universe is not governed by blind force, but it is in the hands of an almighty Power. Without faith in that eternal order he calls the world:

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

In the closing lines of "In Memoriam" he confesses a God who is the source of the world's order and the guarantee that it will reach its appointed end:

"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"

When Minerva Pallas, the wise, addresses Paris, it is in these words:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign Power
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncalled for) but to live by law
 Acting the law we live by without fear;

ON TENNYSON

And because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence".

This view of life and faith in divine order and law
is more than a native disposition:

"It is iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom,
To shape and use.

In 1842, Tennyson published "The Princess", which
sets forth divine order in the relation of the sexes. "Locksley
Hall" applied the same principle to social life; "The Ode on the
Death of the Duke of Wellington" applied it to national affairs,
and "In Memoriam", to the great questions of death and immortality.

"The Princess" deals with the position of woman in
society and especially with the holiness of the marriage relation.
It is a protest against the doctrine that, "Marriage is but an
old tradition..." (The Promise of May). It is a half-humorous,
half-satirical re-assertion of the true relation of man and
woman, and of the divine law which their Creator would have
them observe. Those who, like Shelley and Byron mocked at
marriage in the name of personal freedom, and were taught that
love means nothing but sex attraction would find in the "Princess"
a more Christian theory, i.e. that marriage is one of the highest
forms of spiritual companionship possible to human beings, Two
passages from this medley show what the ideal mother and wife
should be:

ON TENNYSON

"My Mother pitying made a thousand prayers;

My mother was as mild as any saint,

Half-canonized by all that looked on her

So gracious was her tact and tenderness".

And this other passage showing the part the woman
plays by man:

"Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know

The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink

Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free;

For she that out of Lethe scales with man

The shining steps of Nature, shares with man

His night, his days, moves with him to one goal

Stays all the fair young planet, in her hands

If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,

How shall men grow?

.....

.....let her make herself her own

To give or keep, to live and learn and be

All that not harms distinctive womanhood,

For woman is not undeveloped man,

But diverse:

Then once more, there follows a beautiful portrait
of a mother:

No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt

In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,

Interpreter between the Gods and men,

ON TENNYSON

Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
 On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
 Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
 Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
 And girdled her with music, Happy he
 With such a Mother! faith in woman kind
 Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
 Come easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
 He shall not bind his soul with clay".

And the picture is complete after we have read "Isabel" one of
 Tennyson's early poems describing his own mother; "Eyes fed
 with the flames of Chastity, sweet lips, where reigned perpetually
 the golden virtue of Charity; stately flower of female fortitude
 of perfect wifhood and pure lowlihead, upon her heart the laws
 of marriage charactered in gold and a burning love giving light
 to read those laws; a courage to endure and to obey, a "hate of
 gossip", all these crowned "Isabel",

"The queen of marriage, a most perfect wife".

In the poetry of pure affection, Tennyson is a master
 in opposition to then current teachings of Goethe that passion
 is its own justification and that it may override all obstacles
 of law or conscience. No one better than our poet has described
 the bride who leans on her lover's arms while far across the
 hills they go into that world which is new to them,

"And o'er the hills and far away
 Beyond their utmost purple rim,

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Beyond the night, across the day,

Through all the world she followed him"

And King Arthur expresses the true end of marriage when he says:

"Were I joined with her

Then might we live together as one life

And reigning with one will in everything

Have power on this dead world to make it live".

In a true Christian spirit, Tennyson advocates the two great purposes in entering upon the married state: the procreation and education of children, and the mutual assistance of husband and wife, thereby bringing down inestimable blessings upon society and civilization. This conception of family life was quite different from the notion of marriage entertained by many in those days, and advocated by Byron and Shelley, that man and woman should marry for their own selfish pleasure, with the result that when pleasure turns temporarily into bitterness they are justified in separating. Thus they claim to have ceased loving each other, but it is doubtful if they have ever known the meaning of real love; for if love means anything beyond sex attraction, it must mean community of life and interests based on mutual respect, fidelity and sacrifice.

According to Tennyson then, the true place of the woman is in the home, and her first duty is motherhood,

As one reads "Dedication" he comes to realize fully what Tennyson thinks a woman's influence should be on man,

"Dear, near and true,- no truer Time himself

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Can prove you, the he make you even more
 Dearer and nearer".

Under the strengthening guidance of his wife, he hopes
 to attain the "wise indifference of the wise" to scorn and praise
 and finally to reach the longest night,

"Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the fruit
 Which in our winter woodland looks a flower".

In "The Idylls of the King" Tennyson aims to show how
 man has broken the divine order to his own undoing. The story
 of Lancelot and Guinevere is that of the faithlessness of a
 dearly-loved wife, of secret sin wasting all the powers of the
 soul in one who should have been pure and holy. It is the tragedy
 of sin in marriage bringing to naught all the noblest possibilities
 of achievement without. One evil example corrupts the court until
 only a few of Arthur's followers are left unsullied. Here it
 would seem indeed, that the divine order in the world has been
 wrecked since disaster and defeat have overtaken the truth, and
 evil seems to have triumphed. However, the pathos of the "Idylls"
 is not that of pessimism. This disorder that man has created
 shall be made to minister to good, so that the latter will finally
 triumph. Read the lines of "In Memoriam", Tennyson's creed:

"O yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

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

"Lancelot and Elaine" again sets forth the dignity or guilt of woman, in the different effect produced on man by purity or merely physical beauty. Lancelot has a feeling of reverence and Kindliness towards Elaine when he sees that she is a pure maiden, and he is awed away by her great, but pure beauty. His love is kindled by the less pure fascination of Guinevere. Her physical beauty arouses desire and passion for her and tempts him to be unfaithful to the king. Upon seeing Guinevere, he also commits greater unfaithfulness, and is led to greater falsehoods and untruths. Upon seeing Elaine on her funeral bier, he is moved to higher impulses, and truer and better sentiments. Elaine's belief in Lancelot's purity keeps her faithful to him until death, while Lancelot's realization of Guinevere's immortal, physical passion for him makes him doubt her faithfulness to him. The purity and fidelity of the one commands his respect and arouses his higher nature, while the beauty of the other arouses his passion only and gives rise to doubts and unbelief.

Although Tennyson writes so beautifully of the sanctifying influence of a good wife and Mother, and of the holy relations of married life, there is one aspect of the divine order and law in the world which he condemns severely, that is what we call Christian asceticism and religious mysticism.

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First of all, we find in the three poems, St. Simeon Stylites, Sir Galahad, St. Agnes' Eve and finally The Holy Grail, Tennyson's judgment upon religious mysticism.

"St. Simeon Stylites" is really a satire upon the monastic spirit and ideal of life. The figure of the saint on his pillar alternately coveting and cursing the world, sighing for the shade of comfortable roofs, warm clothes, and wholesome food, and then dilating with pride at his own heroic renunciation as he cried:

"I wake; the chill stars sparkle, I am wet

With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost"
is purposely made a monument to what many of Tennyson's contemporaries would call with himself: the repellent attitude of monastic life. The author has deliberately made the humility of the man loathsome, and his self-abasement farcical when the secret hope of his life is that

"A time may come, yea even now,

When you may worship me without reproach

And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones

When I am gathered to the glorious saints."

Tennyson was far from the truth in his misunderstanding of Christian asceticism which teaches that neither body nor soul is intrinsically evil; but they both need that restraining divine influence which will keep them from rebelling against the will of God. For the body inordinately craves material goods

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and comforts, and the soul, so intimately united to the body is grievously tempted to employ its free will to gratify this craving. Catholic asceticism differs from other forms of asceticism in that it looks upon the discipline of the body or the mind as a means towards a higher end, and not as an end in itself.

This portraiture of asceticism, appearing as it did at a time when the public mind was being roused into frenzy, over the revival of mediaevalism in the Church of England was a powerful factor in creating a loathsome dislike for the same. Tennyson marks in St. Simeon his utter abhorrence of the monastic ideal of life. Self-renunciation he can preach, but renunciation which despises and forsakes the glad activities of daily life he will not regard as other than a form of ecclesiastical madness.

Nor is his sense of the imperfection of religious mysticism less strong in such poems as "St. Agnes' Eve" and "Sir Galahad. Just as St. Simeon expresses all that is most degrading in monasticism, these two beautiful poems express all that is loveliest and most tender in its forms of life. In "St. Simeon", Tennyson represents the medieval religious spirit as intense self-consciousness, sinking into utter degradation; in "St. Agnes' Eve" it is the renunciation of self rising into rapture and beatific vision. It is the pure and yearning spirit of a true-woman saint which sighs for the heavenly Bridegroom, and cries, as the trance of ecstasy deepens into the vision of death:

"He lifts me to the golden doors;

The flashes come and go;

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All heaven bursts her starry floors,
 And strows her lights below,
 And deepens on and up! the gates
 Roll back, and far within
 For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
 To make me pure of sin,
 The Sabbaths of Eternity.
 One Sabbath deep and wide-
 A light upon the shining sea-
 The Bridegroom with his bride!

The picture of Sir Galahad, going forth in his pure
 youth upon his lifelong quest of the Holy Grail is not less
 touching in its aspect of saintly consecration. He too moves in
 his vision of holy things:

A gently sound, an awful light!
 Three angels bear the Holy Grail:
 With folded feet, in stoles of white
 On sleeping wings they sail.
 Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
 My spirit beats her mortal bars,
 As down dark tides the glory slides,
 And starlike mingles with the stars.

.....

The clouds are broken in the sky
 And through the mountain-walls
 A rolling organ-harmony

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Swells up and shakes and falls,
 Then move the trees, the copses nod,
 Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
 "O just and faithful knight of God!
 Ride on! the prize is near".

No less inspiring is the saintly maid, Percivale's sister who gave herself to fast and alms and prayer and was rewarded by a sight of the Holy Grail.

But Tennyson cannot hide his abhorrence of mysticism, Galahad is a noble figure, that of the religious knight of chivalry, but not the less does the author show his religious mysticism to be his weakness.

In fact the disintegration of the Round Table proceeds in "The Holy Grail". Here the undermining force is religious fervor. In their desire of unearthly holiness, the knights left the kingdom shift for itself while they rode away to seek the Grail. King Arthur disapproves of the quest since his followers have not the spiritual character to succeed. Moreover he has lost their help and he knows they will search in vain. And it is even as he predicts; Galahad, the pure, sought and attained; Percival and Bors caught glimpses of the splendor; Lancelot failed because of his sinful love of Guinevere; Gawain and others only wasted their efforts. Meanwhile Camelot crumbled into ruins, and the kingdom of God on earth suffered from the absence of those who should have maintained it.

This is, then, the reply of Tennyson to religious

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mysticism. To him, it is a wandering fire, dying down at last in darkness and confusion; a pious cheat; a beautiful delusion; for the purest spirit, it is only something seen afar off. Its effect he describes, as producing in men that "fatal other worldliness"- a sort of sublimated selfishness, and on that ground Tennyson condemns it and dismisses it as wholly ineffectual to meet the real needs of the human soul. And it is almost with a touch of scorn that he adds that the mystic may be crowned in other worlds, but it is clear that he has neither won nor merited a coronation here.

The same reverence for the divine order appears in Tennyson's treatment of man's social relations. In "Locksley Hall" which has been explained by some as a record of the poet's own disappointment in love, we have a fervid denunciation of the ambitions and the conventions which prevent pure natural affection from having its way:

"Cursed be the social wants that sin against-the strength
of youth!

Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!
Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead of
the fool!"

Although no one could have more respect than Tennyson for custom and law, birth, and blood when they represent justice and nobility, still he scathes the man who sells his daughter to a mercenary marriage. Such poems as "Locksley Hall" Maud, and Lady Clara Vere de Vere illustrate his interest in a poor youth

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who loves above his station and fortune. It is organized society which he respects, but he cares little for the individual as such. Although he was interested in contemporary social and political questions, he has little sympathy with current reforms at home or abroad, especially those which were promoted by over-zealous factions and which involved haste. In his youth, the poet could write:

"Men my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new

That which they have done but earnest of the things that they do"

But he looked at his brothers from afar; besides having little sympathy for current reforms, he took no part in the Italian struggle to secure national unity; nor did he have anything to say when the Civil War was fought in America over the question of slavery. His nationalism was also very restricted, practically excluding any international sympathy. These mistakes were certainly misinterpretations of the principle of order.

Tennyson regards war as a necessary purifier. In "Maud" he complains that we have made a curse of the blessings of peace, each one reaching for what is not his own, while lust of gain has ruled our hearts. What is the use of peace, he exclaims,

"When the poor are hoveled and hustled together, each sex
like swine,

When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie"

.....

"And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life".

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People must lie down armed, he continues, the sick are cheated of a few last gaps, a Mammonite mother kills her child for a burial fee. Better war by land and sea than all those horrors!

We are sorry to witness in Tennyson's poetry touches of the agnosticism that was so fashionable in educational circles at the end of the nineteenth century. In fact it was then, not only an established thing, but almost an established church with a uniformity of unbelief.

Agnosticism, as a term in modern philosophy, is used to describe those theories of the limitations of human knowledge which deny the constitutional ability of the mind to know reality, and conclude with the recognition of an intrinsically unknowable. The existence of "absolute reality" is usually affirmed while at the same time its knowableness is denied.

As has already been stated in Chapter I Hume and Kant were the first to awaken in the minds of would-be theists serious doubts on the possibility of proving the existence of God. In the systems of these philosophers a scientific proof of the existence of a supernatural being is impossible. Thus Kant and his followers maintain that, although it is man's duty to believe in the existence of God, yet we are unable to show convincingly that the denial of that existence contains an objective truth. In the name of "pure reason", Kant denies the inferential validity of all scientific proofs of the existence of God, while in the name of "practical reason", he postulates God's existence as an implicate of the moral law. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and Agnostics

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in general hold a somewhat similar view. They do not absolutely deny the existence of God, but claim that the existence cannot be validly demonstrated. While admitting the rational necessity of postulating the Absolute or Unconditioned behind the relative and conditioned objects of our knowledge they declare that Absolute to be altogether unknowable, to be in fact the Unknowable, about which without being guilty of contradiction we can predicate nothing at all, except perhaps that it exists. Following in the footsteps of these philosophers nearly all Protestant theologians teach that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated and that certainly as to this truth is only furnished us by inner experience, feeling intuition. We accept the existence of God, they say, not because we know it with certainty through positive demonstration, but because we are compelled to do so by a certain blind instinct of the intellect or of the will, or of the heart-because the existence of God is in some way or other a necessity of our human nature.

Kant, Hamilton, Mansel and Spencer made these tenets an integral part of their philosophic systems. Sir William Hamilton contributed the philosophical principle on which modern Agnosticism rests in his doctrine that "all knowledge is relative". But he understood the principle of relativity to mean that we know only "the relations of things", only the Relative, never the Absolute.

It is not surprising that Tennyson who was neither a theologian nor a philosopher should also have been led into error when the scientific and religious elements of the country stood at "daggers drawn" and mankind was quivering under the impression

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made upon it by Spencer's "First Principles", Mansel's "Limits of Religious Thought" and Huxley's daring exposition of Agnosticism.

Tennyson had not trustworthy support on which to base his Christian sympathies and feeling. He cannot but feel; yet he will not know. The introduction to "In Memoriam" reads thus:

"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".

In the same poem, another stanza reiterates the statement:

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

Tennyson then, denies that matters of religion are objects of knowledge. The subjective religious sense; the need of God for the individual soul, as also for social justice; the consciousness of God's existence- Tennyson may have had all that; and yet difficulties surrounded his beliefs, which he could not remove by reasoning. Unfortunately he had never known the Church of Christ, a God's guide, the quieter of reasoning, the light guiding man to truth and peace. Indeed our poet is a product of that Reformation-splintering of faith into opinions, of that English and Anglican inconsequence of a hankering after knowable truth, and a rule of faith. Tennyson is here a reflection of his country and of his age, its scientific discoveries, its

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religiosity, its inability to find reality and certainty and yet its dissatisfaction with never arriving at the knowledge of truth.

This position of agnosticism is maintained throughout Tennyson's poetry, and is set forth perhaps most fully and adequately in the following lines from "The Ancient Sage":

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

The poet adopts the vicious principle that knowledge is only of sensuous phenomena and their relations; supersensible things must be apprehended by faith, and faith to him is not knowledge at all.

Tennyson, we must bear in mind, had behind him backing his way a gradition which puffed him with pride in national notions, which made his submission to Christianity impossible

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which confounded reason and reasoning. The set of notions he had were indeed bound up with Christianity. And yet, thinking over his creedless Christianity, one is reminded of Luther's definition of faith: "confidence that we have returned into favor with God, that in view of the merits of the Savior we have obtained pardon for our sins"- so here too faith is feeling; Tennyson, perhaps because he was afraid of Materialism, would not say that he knew He leaves knowledge to science, and believes, so he says, when we cannot prove:

"We trust that somehow good

Will be the final goal of all".

but the poet follows these words with others prescinding from knowledge:

"Behold, we know not anything

I can but trust that good shall fall

At last- far off"

St. Thomas tells us that "faith is an act of the understanding adhering to divine truth by command of the will, which is moved by the grace of God." The Vatican Council, in Tennyson's own day defined that "by an act of Faith a man offers to God his free obedience consenting to and co-operating with grace, which he might resist if he would".

This is not the sense either in which "faith" is used in "In Memoriam". Faith that implies submission does not exclude rationality and knowledge. "In Memoriam", we are told, made many sceptics. There is no reason why it should not, if nothing is to

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be otherwise known. For here, the poet's faith is the Poet's feelings.

The Poet's wrong conception of faith as sundered from knowledge lead him to divest God to a large extent of cognizable attributes and to clothe him with a mist of words in which all definiteness is lost. It seems chilling to hear the prayer at the end of "De Profundis".

"Hallowed by Thy name--Halleluiah!

Infinite Ideality!

Immeasurable Reality!

Hallowed by Thy name -Halleluiah!

The ideas of God, immortality etc. are not for Tennyson the result of reasoning upon the phenomena of external nature. This may seem strange to anyone who has even reflected upon the fact that it is of the very nature of the intellect to penetrate to the causes and principles of things, to perceive the ultimate end to which all things tend and for which they are ordained. Did not Tennyson perceive order and purposive finality in the world? Did not nature in its wonderful order and harmony, and admirable adaptation of means to end reveal to him God as the author and ultimate source of this purposive finality? Whoever considers this orderly arrangement will spontaneously feel impelled to admit that a work of such wonderful construction and of such gigantic proportions cannot possibly be the result of mere chance, nor the production of blind forces inherent in matter.

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However, we have Tennyson's own testimony to the contrary. He appears to have held throughout his life that if we did not bring with us ideas of God to the examination of nature, but simply used our reason upon it without taking into account the evidence derived from our own nature, we should not believe either in God or in immortality. How different are Tennyson's conclusions from those of the great scientist Faraday who states: When I contemplate the unnumerable united forces working in nature; when I reflect how quietly and silently they maintain their mutual equilibrium so that the most antagonistic elements, in themselves strong enough to destroy completely the whole economy of nature, subsist peaceably side by side, and are made subservient to the needs of the animate creation; when I consider all this I am more than ever convinced of the Almighty Ruler's wisdom, goodness, and greatness which our language is powerless to express".

And what does Tennyson say on the same subject? We read in the Memoirs (I-44) that as an undergraduate he voted "No" on the question raised in the Apostles' Society: Is it an intelligible First Cause deducible from the phenomena of the universe? He would say on looking through the microscope, "Strange that these wonders should draw some men to God and repel others. No more reason in one than in the other. And so the poet in "In Memoriam" declares: again that he can but "feel".

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

.....

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If e'er when faith had fall'n 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 melt
 The freezing reason's colder part
 And like a man in wrath the heart
 Stood up and answer'd I have felt".

Again Tennyson used to say: "I believe in God not from what I see in nature but from what I see in man".

Is there not an evident contradiction in the statement made at the beginning of this chapter that Tennyson believed in a divine order in the world, and the statements we have just been making? No, we have already seen that what Tennyson believed, he believed it through intuition, and not through the revelations of nature. Mr. Harold Nicolson is probably right when he says that our poet was not a thinker, and that when he tried to think he mistook his vocation. However, he was very much interested in evolution, for as we know, the popular discussion of evolution began years before the publication of Darwin's "The Origin of the Species" (1859). In his preoccupation with evolution Tennyson gave a new turn to the literary treatment of Nature. To the writers of the eighteenth century, Nature had been "Reason" and Utopia; to Wordsworth, Nature possessed a soul, a conscious existence, and ability to feel joy and love; to Tennyson she is

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already the Nature of the evolutionists, and, especially in his more mature age, when he referred to her, it was as she is portrayed in scientific text books, as a system of mechanical forces acting and reacting within a fixed system.

His earlier poems testify that the beauty of the external face of nature had appealed strongly to him. He had often sought in her and her phenomena subjects for his poetic canvas. An artist could easily paint pictures corresponding to those of "The Palace of Art". He had often turned to Nature to observe flowers and trees, and the sensuous charms that delighted his eye or ear. But when Hallam died, the terror and the beauty of the world now puzzled him. It seemed as if Nature had no heart, or else, a cruel one. This aspect of Nature, it is claimed, chilled, almost petrified his heart. Its stony indifference, its shattering storms and earthquakes almost shattered his faith.

The shock of Hallam's death caused him to revise his faith and to examine anew the arguments which had been advanced as proofs of the existence of a personal God. He felt insecure upon a land that seemed to quake under his feet. Tennyson certainly proved that he was not a deep thinker when he failed to recognize the validity of those proofs which have strengthened the faith of many. Did he ever read in the Bible this passage wherein the natural demonstration of God's existence is declared by the Scriptures to be conclusive: "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also

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and divinity, so that they (the heathens) are inexcusable because, that, when they knew, they have not glorified Him as God" (Rom. I.20.21).

Precisely what prompted Tennyson to believe? It was not faith, and the wonders of the universe could not persuade him to believe. Then what was the source of his religious ideas? "Such ideas, he says, we get from ourselves, from what is highest within us" (Memoir I.314). And what is highest in us? Here, he finds it difficult to give a clear and definite answer. We are told that he believed in the authority of the spiritual impulses and primitive hopes of the human soul". He declares that we must interpret the world in terms of those primary laws of human life by which men are distinguished from the brute creation. Now, we are asked, how far is it justifiable to answer the riddle of the world by the "truth deep-seated" in our mystic frame. Do we abrogate reason by a final acceptance through an act of faith of those moral and spiritual laws which are interwoven with our own personal life? Are these inward laws real? Are these voices of the soul rightly heard by us? And Tennyson asks in "The Two Voices":

"Who forged that other influence
That heat of inward evidence
By which (man) doubts against the sense?

God to the Ancient Sage is:

"That which knows
And, is not known, but felt through what we feel,
Within ourselves, is highest

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Finally in "The Two Voices", the poet appeals to mysterious intimations:

"Heaven opens inwards, chasms yawn,
Vast images in glimmering down,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn,
.....

"Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams-

These feelings, we answer, are not merely what we generally call emotions, but intuitions. Intuition is a psychological term which designates the process of immediate apprehension or perception of an actual being, fact or relation between two terms, and its results. Intuitionism attempts to make intuitions the central and fundamental element of our power of acquiring knowledge. Ontologists like Rosmini and others, influenced by some of the philosophical views and opinions explained above, maintain that our ideas of the Infinite are possible only through an antecedent intuition of God within us. This immediate consciousness, they claim, is rather dim at first, we do not see God in His essence face to face, but we know Him in His relation to creatures by the same act of cognition as we become conscious of being in general, and therefore the truth of His existence, is as much a datum of philosophy as is the abstract idea of being.

The intuitionist's belief is well expressed by the

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Protestant Sabatier: "God is not a phenomenon which can be observed outside of the ego, a truth to be demonstrated by logical reasoning. He who does not feel Him in his heart will never find Him outside- We never become aware of our piety without at the same time feeling a religious emotion and perceiving in this very emotion, more or less obscurely, the object and the cause of religion, namely God". The old arguments used to prove the existence of God, say the Modernists, have now lost all their value, it is by the religious feeling, by the intuition of the heart that we apprehend God.

We agree that intuition is important as a "process and element of knowledge, as it is intuition which furnishes us with the first experimental data as well as with the primary concepts and the fundamental judgments or principles which are the primitive elements and the foundation of every scientific and philosophical speculation. This importance, however, has been greatly exaggerated by some modern philosophers to an extent which tends to destroy both supernatural religion and the validity of human reason".

It is unquestionably true that Tennyson believes that man is an emanation from God although as we shall prove later he is not for that reason a pantheist. Although emanationism is often referred to as a form of pantheism, the two are really distinct. While the latter is primarily a system of reality, identifying all things as modes or appearances of the one substance, emanationism is concerned chiefly with the mode of

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derivation. Nor does it necessarily affirm the substantial identity of all things, it may assert the distinct though dependent substantiality of emanated realities. Many amanationists reject pantheism altogether, and this seems to have been the case with Tennyson.

In "De Profundis" written at the birth of his son, the poet writes:

"Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
 Where all that was to be, in all that was,

 Thou comest, darling boy,

 Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep.
 From the great deep, before our world begins,
 Whereon the Spirit of God moves as he will-
 From the true world within the world we see,
 Whereof our world is but the bounding shore-
 Out of the deep, Spirit, out of the deep,
 With this ninth moon, that sends the hidden sun
 Down yon dark sea, thou Comest, darling boy.

 For in the world which is not ours They say
 "Let us make man" and that which should be man,
 From that one light no man can look upon,
 Drew to this shore lit by the suns and moons
 And all the shadows.

And the legend of good King Arthur is very striking.
 Bleys, Merlin's Master tells how on a dismal night he beheld

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upon the dreary deeps a ship it seemed, in heaven. The great sea
 fell wave after wave till at last a huge one which gathered half
 the deep rose slowly and then plunged roaring. And down the wave
 and in the flame was borne a naked babe, Arthur. (The Coming of
 Arthur) and in "The Passing of Arthur" Sir Bedivere saw the barge
 that bore the King.

"Down the long water opening on the deep
 Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
 From less to less and vanish into light.

This great deep from which King Arthur comes and to which he goes,
 -is it not the same deep as that of "De Profundis"---the deep of
 divine existence?

The thought of this emanation of the soul from God is
 found in Tennyson's early poems as well as in his latest. To him,
 it made for the dignity of the human nature and was the foundation
 of the divine order in the universe. "In Memoriam" testifies to
 the same belief:

"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 love".

The Ancient Sage, after telling his follower that tears
 and laughter are vain, continues:

"And all that breathe are one
 Slight ripple on the boundless deep",

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But the old philosopher recognizes both the emanation from God and the difference from God:

"But that one ripple on the boundless deep
 Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
 Forever changing form, but ever more
 One with the boundless motion of the deep"

And lest we should protest that the wave is but the form and manifestation of the sea, and can have no separate existence, Tennyson writes in "De Profundis"

"O dear Spirit....

.....
Shatter'd phantom of that infinite One,
 Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
 Out of His whole World-self and all in all-

and still depart
 From death to death thro' life and life, and find
 Nearer and ever nearer Him, who wrought
 Not Matter, nor the finite- infinite,
 But this main-miracle, that Thou art thou,
 With power on thine own act and on the world.

"The Two Voices" suggests faint reminiscences of a previous life before the soul became united to the body:

"Yet how should I for certain hold,
 Because my memory is so cold,
 That I first was in human mould?

.....

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Much more if first I floated free,
 As naked essence, must I be
 Incompetent of memory:

.....

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".

The "Higher Pantheism" conveys the same message together with the implied assertion that the universe exists for the development of one's personality:

"Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
 Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why,
 For is He not all but that which has power to feel 'I am I'

Just as we can prove that Tennyson was an emanationist,
 so we can just as clearly prove that he was not a pantheist.

Taken in its strictest sense, Pantheism identifies God and the world. All real Pantheists agree in the fundamental doctrine that beneath the apparent diversity and multiplicity of things in the universe, there is one only being absolutely necessary, eternal and infinite, and this one only being is God. Everything is God, and God is everything, or rather God is the only real

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substance, the only real being. Here the various systems of Pantheism may be reduced to two principal theories:

1. The theory of Emanation held in ancient times by the Hindu Sages, later by the Gnostics and Neo-Platonists etc. According to this theory, we ourselves and the things around us are so many transient emanations from the one divine substance, that is, they are simply so many particles separated from the one divine substance. The divine substance contains the seeds of all things and matter of which things are formed; it produces all things from itself, and transforms itself into them.

2. The theory of Manifestations, the earliest traces of which are to be found in India in the Bedic philosophy. According to the theory of manifestations all things are simply manifestations of the one divine substance; that is, God the universal, indeterminate Being, by a process of self-determination constitutes the universe of beings distinct from one another. Hence, this theory views all existing things as modes or accidental modifications of the Divine Substance.

We have already demonstrated that Tennyson believes that the soul comes from the deep of divine existence; likewise, we have proven that he considers the soul in its union with the body as separate and distinct from the divinity.

One of his poems would seem to contradict this statement i.e. The Higher Pantheism which on closer examination proves to be no panthesim at all. The lines quoted above from the poem express the belief that the author considers the earth, the solid

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stars, the weight of body and limb as sign and symbol that the soul is separated from God. Addressing the soul, the writer continues:

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can
meet-

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

The poem expresses what Tennyson regards as a higher truth than pantheism; it declares that God lives in the world, but transcends it; that men have their being in Him, but that the human spirit is consciously distinct from the Divine Spirit.

Here the author's own words convey to us the exact meaning attached to the poem, Hallam Tennyson writes of his father:

He said again to us with deep feeling in January, 1869: "Yes, it is true that there are moments when the flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, -God and the Spiritual the only real and true. Depend upon it, the Spiritual is the real; it belongs to one more than the hand and the foot. You may tell me that my hand and my foot are only imaginary symbols of my existence, I could believe you; but you never, never can convince me that the "I" is not an eternal Reality, and that the Spiritual is not the true and real part of me" (Memoir, II 90).

There are other proofs that Tennyson is not a pantheist. First by identifying God with the external world and thus supposing Him to consist of contradictory attributes, Pantheism leads to

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Atheism, for surely the pantheistic God is not God but simply a heap of contradictions. But Tennyson, as we have seen, is a firm believer in God. Again, by teaching that the multiplicity and diversity of things are by intrinsic necessity evolved from one and the same substance, Pantheism leads to Fatalism, utterly destroys all human and divine freedom, and in consequence obliterates every distinction between right and wrong, between moral good and moral evil; by making man the term of an evolution, in which the divine substance attains to consciousness of self, pantheism subverts the whole moral and social order. For it is quite plain that no moral or social order is even conceivable without a superior to whom men are subject and whom they are bound to obey. Now we have already shown abundantly that Tennyson differentiates between right and wrong and also that he is a firm believer in divine order in the world.

Furthermore, by making God an impersonal being which evolves itself by rigorous necessity, Pantheism eliminates religious worship, renders prayers of any sort useless. According to Pantheism there is just as little "rational service" in a religious life as there is in the behaviour of any physical agent.

There are dozens of illustrations in Tennyson's poetry of his deep-rooted belief in prayer. Probably the last words of King Arthur give us the poet's whole doctrine on the subject:

Pray for my soul, More things are wrought

by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let

thy voice

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Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them

friends?

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

In other words, Tennyson believes in intercourse and communion between man and his God such as occur between separate persons, and such as exclude all pantheistic confounding of one personality with another.

The "Supposed Confessions" is a prayer to God, for mercy, reminding Him that he died for the sinner. It contains a happy reminiscence of a praying mother:

"Would that my gloomed fancy were
As thine, my mother, when with brows
Propt on thy knees, my hand upheld
In thine, I listen'd to thy vows
For me outpoured in holiest prayer-

The writer even suggests that his mother, although dead, may still be praying for him:

.....What if.
Thou pleadest still.....
.....
To reconcile me with thy God.

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So does "Isabel" contain the poet's expression of belief in prayer, so do a large number of the poems.

The commands and the reproaches of conscience are a witness against pantheism. If men are, as Pantheism claims, simply modes of the divine substance, they are themselves divine beings, nay, the very perfection of divinity. They consequently are infinitely perfect and can do no wrong. Then whatever is, is right; pleasure and duty are one. But we find Tennyson asserting the claims of conscience in several occasions:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control"

these three, he states, lead life to sovereign power, But he adds, power should not be our aim, but to live the law.

"And because right is right, to follow right,

Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence"

In "The Palace of Art" the soul after having curled on herself her serpent pride, cries for mercy, feeling the agony of remorse,

I am on fire within

There comes no murmur of reply

What is it that will take away my sin,

And save me lest I die?

Then when the four years were over, she begged to have a little cottage built in the vale that she might mourn and pray to purge her guilt away. Here then we have the doctrine of penance and atonement for sin, a doctrine which need not be, if God, being one with us, is the author of our sin.

The sinner of "The Vision of Sin", even after a life of

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debauch, still has a "little grain of conscience" which makes him
sour. Is there not also a reference to his same doctrine in
"Vastness" where

"Pain, that has crawl'd from the corpse of pleasure, a worm which
writhes all day, and at night

Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper, and stings him back
to the curse of the light"

Arthur's knights bind themselves to "reverence their conscience as their king". And to Lancelot in his sin the Holy Grail has, "A stormy glare, a heat

As from a seventimes-heated furnace.....

so that blasted and burned and blinded as he was with such fierceness he, the brave and fearless, swooned away.

Mention has already been made that Tennyson at times seems to hint that the soul had separate personality before it entered this life. The question is interesting and worth looking into. It is hard to believe that he meant to imply this. He certainly never states that the soul existed as such before its birth into the present life. The quotation already given from "The Two Voices" would indicate the intimation that we remember what took place before our birth, forgotten dreams:

"Of something felt, like something here;

Of something done I know not where;

Such as no language may declare," - The Ancient Sage states: "To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft

On me, when, boy, there came what then I call'd

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In my boy phrase "The Passion of the Past
 The first gray streak of earliest summer dawn,
 The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom
 And if the late and early were but one-

 Desolate sweetness- far and far away-

"Tears", "Idle Tears" was written at Tintern Abbey when all the woods were yellowing with autumn seen through the ruined windows. "It is what I have always felt, even from a boy, and what as a boy I called the passion of the past. And so it is always with me now; It is the distance that charms me in the landscape, the picture of the past and not the immediate present in which I move." These words of Tennyson were spoken in the presence of Knowles.

(Nineteenth Century, Jan. 1893) The song is found in "The Princess" and is sung by one of the maidens and of the three men disguised as women. It expresses the maiden's longing for the Past. At times one fancies he hears the echoes of some antenatal dream.

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depths of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
 In looking on the happy autumn fields,
 And thinking of the days that are no more.

 Dear as remembered kisses after death,
 And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
 On lips that are for others; deep as love,

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Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;

O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

These so called reminiscences of a state of pre-existence remind us of Wordsworth's "Intimations" and his theory that they prove that the soul exists from all Eternity, and that the memories of former happy days cannot be destroyed. These intimations are survivals of experiences of the soul when, according to Tennyson, it was still part of God. Apparently he continued to the end of his life to assert this view. For one of his latest songs reads thus:

"What sight so lured him thro' the fields he knew
As where earth's green stole into heaven's own hue.

Far--far--away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?
The mellow lin-lone of evening bells

Far--far--away.

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain or joy,
Thro' those three words would haunt him when a boy,

Far--far--away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death

Far--far--away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of Birth,
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth.

Far--far--away?

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What charm in words, a charm no words could give?

O dying words, can Music make you live

Far--far--away?

Probably the strongest of Tennyson's feelings is the desire and hope of a life beyond the grave. To this passion for immortality he gives full play and it wakes some of the strongest and sweetest tones of his music. From "The Deserted House" to "Crossing the Bar" his poetry is an evidence of his conviction that death cannot end all. (In our study of "In Memoriam" we shall see how he attempts to prove the necessity of immortality). At the same time he prescinds from defining the life beyond death. The idea that thereupon the soul passes at once to a final state of happiness or woe is on the whole foreign to the Poet's mind. In stanza 47 of "In Memoriam" he also rejects the belief that in the next life the soul will be merged into the general soul.

That each who seems a separate whole,

Should move his rounds, and fusing all

The skirts of self again, should fall

Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet,

Eternal form shall still divide

The eternal soul from all besides;

And I shall know him when we meet;

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And we shall sit at endless feast,

Enjoying each the other's good.

What vaster dream can hit the mood

Of love on earth?

The same idea is repudiated in "The Ring". The idea that at death the soul falls into a long sleep from which it will awake unchanged, is entertained as a possibility, although it is evidently not habitual with the poet:

"If Sleep and Death be truly one

And every spirit folded bloom

Through all its entervital gloom

In some long trance should slumber on:

.....

"So then, were nothing, lost to man."

The poet habitually imagines the soul as entering on a second individual life immediately after death. The soul's second life, if it lived well on earth; is regarded as free from many of the limitations and defects of the first. This second life is followed by death and subsequently by a third life and so on, the soul each time reaching a higher stage of being;

.....and still depart

From death to death thro' life and life, and find

Nearer and ever nearer Him, who wrought

Not Matter.....

The Union with God which this progress would terminate was not repugnant to the poet as was the immediate union after death.

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Tennyson did not attempt to enter upon the nature of the world beyond the grave; nor does he speculate upon what our dearly loved ones engage themselves upon in that vast abode of new life. He thinks, however, that they are near to us and they influence us for good not by any natural means but by suggesting to our minds spiritual desires. Recalling one memorable experience he declared of his departed friend:

"His living soul was flash'd on mine,"

Nor does he hesitate to say:

"Be near me when my light is low,

When the blood creeps and the nerves prick,

And tingle; and the heart is sick,

And all the wheels of being slow.

.....

Be near me when I fade away,

To paint the term of human strife,

And on the low dark verge of life

And twilight of eternal day.

Tennyson, as we have seen, recognized the world as under the dominion of law, and of its lawgiver. He also grasped the truth that man is endowed with a free will, and that the abuse or misuse of it leads to sin. In "The Promise of May" he combated both the materialist, that denies freedom, and the necessitarianism that excludes sin.

His ethical teachings on this subject spring from his ideas of progress and law. No one, not even Browning, has more

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clearly seen that man is intended to grow and that growth can come only through conflict in which the will finally obtains the mastery. But, he also realized with special keenness the two-fold possibilities that are later in the will. On the one hand there is the power by which it moves upward on the path marked out for it.- But there is also the danger, never absent from Tennyson's mind, of the downward movement of the will. In "The Promise of May" he describes sin as hereditary. But evil heredity has not extinguished human freedom. We have still a will that can act down upon our natures and can modify them. We are responsible for the evil we do, and we can alter our destiny:

"Follow Right.....

For man is man and master of his fate.

The two aspects of the abuse of freedom, the sin of sense and the sin of pride Tennyson has depicted with wonderful power, the former in "The Vision of Sin" and the latter in "The Palace of Art". He does not confine his studies of sin to these poems however, for "The Idylls of the King" is a long exposition of the sins of those whom King Arthur trusted and through whom came about the gradual decay of the whole Table Round. The song of Vivien in "Balin and Balan" shows us the lying and insidious aspect of temptation:

"The fire of Heaven is lord of all things good,

And starve not thou this fire within thy blood

But follow Vivien through the fiery flood!

The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell!

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"This fire of Heaven,
 This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,
 And beat the cross to earth, and break the King
 And all his Table."

Merlin succumbs to the wily entreaties of the tempter,
 reveals the charm- the revelation is immediately followed by the
 punishment; in one moment Merlin lay as dead in the hollow oak

..... "lost to life and use and name and fame."

In "The Vision of Sin" he describes the perversion of
 nature which follows the pursuits of carnal lusts and its bitter
 end. The man he describes has been lured into temptation. But
 the wages of sin is death. And this man is already- dead to all
 that is noble, pure and holy. The obsession of sex and intemperance
 has ruined him. He has surrendered to the allurements of passion
 and forfeited all the endearing qualities of true manhood. Inferior
 to the brutes that are controlled by their instincts, this "gray
 and gap-toothed man" has lost all mastery over his lower nature
 so that he is now wholly corrupted and vile. He jeers at all
 things sacred and divine, and has no faith left in anything. He
 mocks friendship and virtue, name and fame,

"Virtue! to the good and just-
 Is a clot of warmer dust,
 Mix'd with cunning sparks of hell,"

Tennyson moralizes on the portrait he paints.

"Then some one spoke: "Behold it was a crime
 Of sense avenged by sense that wore with time.

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Another said, "The crime of sense became
 The crime of malice, and is equal blame
 And one, he had not wholly quenched his power
 A little grain of conscience made him sour.

"Is there any hope?" cries the poet, for the man who has
 wasted his life in pleasure, and whose end is but sorrow and
 despair. Yes, Tennyson represents God as holding out the promise
 of something better:

.An answer pealed... ..

But in a tongue no man could understand;
 And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
 God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

The other poem "The Palace of Art" describes vividly
 the effect of pride on the soul. This time she turns away from
 both asceticism and carnal pleasure, retains spiritual purity
 but is steeped in pride--She will realize her utmost dreams of
 beauty, living alone, surrounded by all she could ever desire.

"Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
 In this great mansion, that is, built for me,
 So royal- rich and wide.

The world lies far below her; she watches men, "the
 darkening droves of swine," that range on the plains, claiming
 that:

"In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
 They graze and wallow, breed and sleep,
 And oft some brainless devil enters in,
 And drives them to the deep"

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She cares not in her elation what the religious sects discussed,
 She compared herself to God who can hold no creed. For three
 years she was satisfied and quite happy.

On the fourth she fell harassed with the pains of hell.
 God plagued her with despair in order to save her. She loathed her
 solitude, and was haunted by uncertain shapes, white-eyed phantoms
 that wept tears of blood. Exiled from God, she loathed life and
 death. Blackness enclosed her as a solid wall, until she uttered
 her cry of remorse and repentance:

"What is it that will take away my sin,

And save me lest I die?

And the only answer is: "mourn and pray."

Whenever Tennyson was questioned on faith or dogma, he
 would say always: "I have given my belief in "In Memoriam."
 Although we have referred frequently to this great elegy, it is
 fit that we should, in a study of this nature, look into it
 carefully. On reading "In Memoriam" one is reminded of Faber's
 words in "Bethlehem". Sorrow is the substance of men's natural
 life, his natural capability of the supernatural. The power of
 art is in the sorrowful. No poetry finds its way into a nation's
 mind, or can dwell there, unless it have a burden of sorrow in it.
 To glorify sorrow is one of the highest functions of song, of
 sculpture or of painting. Nothing has a lasting interest for man
 which is not in some way connected with sorrow. The history and
 character of this poem, probably the greatest of the nineteenth
 century sustains this view. It was conceived and born of the deepest

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sorrow, covering as it does the spiritual history, of that period of the author's life between the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam and his appointment to the laureateship. It is not so much a memorial to his friend as a spiritual autobiography of Tennyson himself and the sincere portrayal of a soul rising from the depth of despair to the vantage ground of spiritual calm and clarity.

In his "Life of Tennyson", the poet's son writes: "The death of Hallam left my father under a cloud, which for a long time blotted out all joy from his life and made him long for death. This numbness of soul was followed by doubts born of grief. What did it all mean? Where was his friend? Did not God care? Was death the end of all things? For a long time the answers to the question tarried. And the poet's grief goes through a series of stages from the poignant pain which the memory of his friend's death recalls, through regret, and the anxious communion of the soul with an indifferent nature, to a serene resignation. As he sat in the solitude of his bereavement Tennyson became the prophet of his age. "In Memoriam" is the effort of a loving soul to give an account to itself of the facts of sin, pain, death and to reconcile them with the belief in God and in immortality.

Keeping in mind previous considerations on the nature of Tennyson's faith, we now proceed to review "In Memoriam". The prologue, or invocation to Immortal Love, the strong Son of God was not written until 1849, and so may be considered as a summing up, as the conclusion of the whole matter.

Then follow an address to the yew tree, one to Sorrow

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wherein he raises the question whether he should submit all to her, fearing that the expression of his grief is sinful.

The soul of the poet seems to mount and fly until it reaches the "fair ship" and lingers to ask, Is this the end of all my care.

Beginning with section twenty-eight and terminating with thrity-seven are poems which turn from the past to the future which treat of the immortality of the soul and find hope confirmed by revelation. It is Christmas time and three poems are given to that season, and the deep sense of personal affections that tempers its joy; but joy it is, for the dead do not change to us nor lose their mortal sympathy.- If a voice from the grave should say there is no life in the future, yet would we keep love alive. But there must be an immortality, or love would be but a coarse appetite such as prompts the satyrs to drunkenness. Though in manhood we see truths but darkly, yet we bless the name of God who made them current coin.

When a soul desires to realize fully immortal life, the human heart is not satisfied with the mere conviction that immortality is a fact. The desire is strong to hold communion with the departed. How fares it with the dead? Does he "forget the days befoe God shut the doorways of his head? The poet alludes to the doctrine that our soul may merge at death into the one individual existence hereafter, but this, he thinks is faith vague and unsweet.

Evil and death are next considered, and the possible conflict of nature with faith.

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Section 59-89 teaches hope for the best and the acceptance of sorrow as a chastener. Another Christmas comes but not with the same feelings; once more faith in the future and in advancement after death takes hold upon him.

Now we perceive the dim shadowing of a perfect content that is to come. The poet sees the wisdom of his affliction and will embrace his present life of sorrow and disappointment, learning of spring, hope reawakens and this soon ripens into faith and confidence.

The last section is a triumphant burst of song. Faith, Hope and Love are conquerors, and the greatest of these is Love. Without it Hope could not be born and Faith is weak.

The last poem is the marriage lay for his sister. It is cheerful and even gay and leaves behind it a happy sense of the confident soul that is Tennyson's after his long struggle with doubt and the great problems of life.

From the one hundred and thirty-one poems which compose the famous elegy, we may see the gradual deepening of three great convictions: the soul's faith in God of righteous love; in the survival of the soul beyond the bounds of man's physical life, and in that inward sense of Duty which has found its supreme outward authority in Christ.

As the poet meditates, he finds his own sorrow and his own little love only a part of a great divine love which would meet that sorrow and turn it into joy. So from his own individual grief he is led to a consciousness of his oneness with all the race, and of his oneness with God Himself.

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Arising out of that supreme certainty of the love of God, there came the conviction of immortality, of the conscious and indefinitely prolonged life of the soul beyond, death. This to Tennyson was a matter of fixed belief and of an importance so great that life without this belief in it seemed to him to have neither sense nor value. In "Vastness" he asserts also similar passionate assertions, but they are suddenly broken off with the words:

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

Tennyson thinks that the emotions of the heart cannot be satisfied without a belief in immortality. But this deathless craving of the heart is to be trusted he finally concludes, the love which remains constant here is the earnest of an Eternal inheritance; the instinct of the soul has been fashioned by a faithful Creator:

"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."

Finally in "In Memoriam" Tennyson proclaims in no uncertain terms his belief in the divinity of Christ. On this subject he holds no doubt, nor on that of Christ's proclamation of God's mind and will to men. The poem opens with the declaration of this firm belief:

Strong Son of God, immortal Love!

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He has made the orbs of light and shade, life in man and brute,
as well as death.

Thou seemest human and divine,

The highest, holiest manhood, thou

Our wills are ours, we know not how

Our wills are ours to make them thine.

Wisdom deals with mortal powers and God became man,

.....and wrought

With human hands the creed of creeds

In loveliness of perfect deeds.

More strange than all poetic thought Christ raised Lazarus
from the dead: he receives the souls of the departed; he is an
object of prayer to-day. The poet prays that through Christ we
may be purified:

O living will that shalt endure

When all that seems shalt suffer shock,

Rise in the spiritual rock,

Flow through our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out the dust

A voice as unto him that hears,

A cry above the conquer'd years,

To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,

The truths that never can be proved,

Until we close with all we loved,

And all we flow from, soul in soul.

Chapter 111

ON BROWNING.

Browning grew up in a strongly religious atmosphere. His mother had been brought up in the Presbyterian Church, and joined the independent Congregation, persuading her husband to attach himself to the same community. The young Browning, therefore, was trained upon the lines of Nonconformity, and was remembered years afterwards, by at least one of his ministers for the earnest expression of his face during service, and the keen sincerity of his devotions.

In those days Byron was the ruling influence in Browning's taste; but one day, seeing a volume displayed upon a bookstall, with the label, "Mr. Shelley's Atheistical Poems-Very Scaree", he begged his mother to procure him Shelley's poems, which she indulgently did, with results far beyond her kind maternal reckoning. The young Browning plunged deeply into the Shelleyan fount, and was at once carried off his feet. A sudden flood of new ideas overwhelmed him; the orthodoxy of the meeting-house lost its attraction: he became restless and disturbed in his convictions. Some vague talk about the necessity of atheism must have distressed his parents' affection, and a sudden access of egoism alienated his friends. The young man was growing up, and, after the manner of young men, believed himself to be equipped to solve the mysteries of the universe.

Under the influence of Shelley, the young Browning set to work to the production of "Pauline , a Fragment of a Confession". He was captured by the inspiriting sense of revolt which makes Shelley's poetry so intoxicating to the young mind first emerging

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from conventionality. He was enraptured by the contact with a mind that to him seemed to soar above "the shadow of our night" into superhuman aspiration. Here, thought Browning, is a kinsman of the gods, knowing good and evil:

Sun-treader, I believe in God and Truth
 And Love; and as one just escaped from death
 Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
 He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee!

In later years, diving more deeply into a study of Shelley's character, he lived to feel a plentiful lack of sympathy with the poet who had inspired "Pauline".

The poem is a psychological self-analysis, perfectly characteristic of the time of life at which it was written-very young, full of excesses of mood, of real exaltation-the "Confession of a poet of twenty-one, intensely interested in the ever-new discovery of his own nature, its possibilities and its relations. But "Pauline" is a wonderful production for a boy of twenty, and it contains a definite germ of Browning's mature attitude to life. The aspiration of personality, the unfulfilled ambition of the human soul, the striving of the imperfect towards perfection-all these themes of his maturity are clearly foreshadowed in this first worthwhile production of the poet.

"I am made up of an intensest life,
 Of a most clear idea of consciousness
 Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
 From all affections, passions, feelings, powers:

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And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all;
 But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,
 Existing as the centre of all things
 Most potent to create and rule and call
 Upon all things to minister to it;
 And to a principle of restlessness
 Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel all-
 This is myself; and I should thus have been
 Though gifted lower than the meanest soul".

He makes the human soul, its aspirations, and failures the theme of his study. The soul, he teaches, knows itself to be too great, too strong for its surroundings; the world is not worthy of it, and it is impossible that its sphere of activity should be confined by its existence here; This world, therefore, is a preparation for some fuller, richer sphere of activity beyond; our life must be a probation for some freer, more ennobling life in the future. Life then must be devoted to the training of the soul in the school of self-realization. Failure there may be, and must be, for the ambition is illimitable and the field is limited, but the dignity of the aim deprives the future of bitterness. An understanding of this idea is absolutely necessary in the study of Browning's religious beliefs.

With this idea before us we may proceed to the examination of the various religious beliefs held by Browning, and of the circumstances in his own life which strengthened him in this strenuous spiritual conviction.

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The poet's first publication after his marriage to Elizabeth Barrett is that in which he most explicitly deals with questions of religion, or should we say theology. The double poem "Christmas Eve and Easter Day" published August 1. 1850, stands so much alone in the author's work that we wonder to what circumstance, internal or external, it was due. It was probably the birth of his son, and the death of his much-beloved mother in England when he could not go to her, that made Browning ponder in his heart the problems of life and death, the power of love, the ways of worship and the hope of resurrection-themes which make up "Christmas Eve and Easter Day". We can also conjecture that the prolonged communion with a mind so spiritual as that of his wife may have quickened his religious imagination, while directing it towards doctrinal or controversial issues which it had not previously embraced. However, the origins of the poem are to be found in Browning's deepest nature, the intensely religious spirit which he inherited from his mother. He was, as he described himself, "passionately religious", and except for the short period of his so-called atheism, he remained deeply spiritual throughout his life. In "Christmas Eve and Easter Day", then, Browning makes his comments upon the two extreme forms of faith which divide his countrymen, and upon the form of skepticism which was threatening both. As the representatives of faith, he chooses, on the one hand, ultra-Protestantism, "the dissidence of dissent", and, on the other, Roman Catholicism. In both he finds much to question and to reject, but in both he finds present

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the "one thing needful", love. This is where churches have the decisive advantage over the German Professor's lecture-room. The last speaks only to the intellect; they address the heart; and Browning is always disposed to give the heart a higher place than the head.

In reviewing the position of the Dissenters, Browning was on familiar grounds as Camberwell was the headquarters of non-conformity and he grew up in the midst of it.-

Christmas Eve opens with a humorous description of a little dissenting chapel and of the various types of self-satisfied humanity that take refuge within its walls as evening service is about to begin. Having been driven in by the rain, the narrator soon gets out again, exasperated by the stupid irreverence of the pastor. But once out, he changes his mind and gives credit to the preacher for having said a great deal that was true. But for his own part, the narrator declares that Nature is his church:

For me,

I have my own church equally:

And in this church my faith sprang first!

.....

In youth I looked to these very skies,

And probing their immensities,

I found God there, his visible power;

Yet he felt in his heart that his love was the nobler dower. God having made man, stands aside to make room for the newly-made to live, to develop his powers and to glorify his creator. The

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narrator's heart suddenly glows with the consciousness of the unseen Love which everywhere appeals to him in the visible power of the Creator. There is about him the sense of a heavenly presence. The Master, arrayed in a serpentining garment, appears in the path before him. The vesture encloses him in its folds and he is borne onwards until he finds himself at Rome and in front of St. Peter's Church.

In delineating the Catholic position in "Christmas Eve" Browning fell into the prejudice of his class and nation against Rome. He evidently knew little about a Catholicism which he merely skimmed and which his narrow religious prejudices prevented him from examining carefully. The poet had not at that time witnessed the Christmas service in Rome, although he had probably witnessed religious ceremonies in Florence. When Browning wrote "Christmas Eve", he wrote it for English readers, and he had his eyes on the Oxford Movement at home, rather than on Rome, and saw in the Roman Church the ultimate goal of the Tractarians.- Between 1833-1841, the Movement, led by Pusey, Keble and Newman was making courageous efforts to re-vivify the Church of England. Browning, immersed in his literary affairs, took little notice of the Movement, although he was probably well informed about it. Even the conversion of Newman in 1845 did not affect him much. Yet much as he disliked surrendering to authority, Browning could appreciate the beauty of the ritual and the goodness of the priests in the Catholic Church, and later in "The Ring and the Book" he was to deal more generously with the Catholics.

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Even now, amidst all his criticism, he pays tribute
to Rome:

Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured
Her teaching is not so obscured,
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies:

.....

But I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,

Then after censuring the Church for teaching "lies", he admits
that above the scope of error, he sees the love, the love of the
first Christian days!

The third aspect of Christian thought in 1850 which
Browning deals with in "Christmas Eve" is Rationalism represented
in the lecture-room by:

"The hawk-nosed, high-cheekboned Professor"
in the University of Gottingen:

"The sallow virgin-minded studious
Martyr to mild enthusiasm".....

The person and the doctrine are composite. The person is probably
the German critic of the Scriptures, David Friedrich Strauss,
and his book, "Das Leben Jesu", published in Germany in 1835;
but the doctrine suggests Comte's positivism. It was the purpose
of Strauss to clear the supernatural away in favor of a rational

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view of Jesus, but the effect of the German critic's work was to reduce Christ from a divine being to the greatest of men-but man.

Stupid as is the doctrine of the non-conformist preacher to Browning; gross as the yoke of Rome appears to him, yet either is preferable to the negations of the German professor. The two former may "poison the air for healthy breathing"

"But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom, and leaves you-vacuity.

Now the narrator at one bound regains the little Chapel. There his choice rests, for, nowhere else, he seems to conclude, is the message of Love so simply and so directly conveyed.

The poem reflects Browning more or less truly in the doctrine of divine Love, the belief in personal guidance and half-contemptuous admiration with which the speaker regards those who will mortify the flesh in obedience to a Christ-man. But the poem belies the evidence of his whole work when it represents moral truth as either innate to the human spirit or directly revealed to it.

The poet undertakes in "Easter Day" to build his conception of the belief of a modern Christian discussing his direct relations to Christ. "Easter Day" is probably Browning's fullest confession of faith. There are two speakers in "the poem", one a believer who finds it hard to be a good Christian and another, an easy believer. Here, we must recall that Browning was broken by the death of his Mother in March 1849, and recovered very slowly.

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The debate between the two believers takes place in Browning's mind between his old confident belief and the new and harder one.

The man of faith begins by exclaiming!

"How very hard it is to be

A Christian!....

.....

To realize it more or less,

With even the moderate success

Which commonly repays our strife

To carry out the aims of life.

The sceptic replies that;

"The whole, or chief

of difficulties is belief."

Prove to me only, that the least

Command of God is God's indeed,

And what injunction shall I need

To pay obedience?

He concedes that absolute knowledge would destroy its own end; it would do away with the acts of faith which are part of our daily life. But he thinks one may fairly desire a better touchstone for the purposes of God than human judgment or feeling. He would be content with a mere probability,

So long as there be just enough

To pin my faith to.....

.....

I'd hang there to the end.

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And thus I should not find it hard
To be a Christian".

Thus Browning is searching for tenable grounds upon which one might be a Christian. He turns to Nature only to be disappointed, for Nature offers no final evidence for the plan upon which life is directed. Then he turns to Art-but Art tells mainly of man's aspirations and limitations-Then he considers the Intellect, but it is earth-bound and depending on the senses, and he rejects it. Then the speaker comes to the conclusion that the only worthy evidence for faith is Love.-Divine Love such as God showed when He sent His only Son to live and die among men.

For the first time Browning has here reasoned out his characteristic religious ideas, the ideas which inform all his religious poems: "Saul", "Karshish", etc. etc. The problem, as it always seemed to Browning, was to prove that God's Love was equal to his other attributes. This led him naturally to the revelation of Christ.

Superficially viewed, "Easter Day" seems to teach a doctrine of asceticism, for the soul in the vision is condemned because it has refused to renounce the pleasures of the world. But this is not the meaning. Mrs. Browning writing to Mrs. Jameson on May 4, 1850 before the publication of the double poem says: "I have complained of the asceticism in the second part; but he said it was one side of the question. Don't think that he has taken to the cilix-indeed he has not, but it is in his way to see things as passionately as others feel them." (Life of Browning -Mrs. Orr).

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Browning was no ascetic. To him the world means "intensely and means good". Certainly no one has sung more fervidly than he the delight of life; to it he imputes merit. The pleasures of the world, if wisely used, are instruments to the mind, as food is an instrument to the body; both are legitimate and may be equally necessary. In fact, Rabbi Ben Ezra exclaims:

"Let us not always say
Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!
As the bird wings and sings
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now
"Than flesh helps soul!

The poet was capable of asceticism when directed to higher ends, but not as an end in itself. In "Easter Day", the condemnation of the erring soul is pronounced not because the world has been enjoyed; but because the enjoyment has stood as an obstacle in the way of higher achievements. The soul in its yearnings for created beauties has forgotten the love of its Maker. Neither truth, nor beauty, still less pleasure, is the central point of Browning's religious system, but Love.

Five years after the publication of "Christmas Eve and Easter Day", there appeared the two octavo volumes of "Man and Women" on November 17, 1855. The results of Browning's religious thinking may be seen in the deeper tones of some of the poems as "An Epistle-Karshish", "Saul," "Cleon", and Bishop Blougram's Apology".

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In "Christmas Eve and Easter Day" the poet had made his confession of faith and had shown that though the intelligence and strength of God were abundantly illustrated in the world, the love of God for mankind was only properly exhibited by the coming of Christ. In "Marshish", Browning is attempting to show the world the tremendous importance of His coming. In "Easter Day", he had concluded that doubt was a condition of spiritual health; this is the informing idea of "An Epistle", for Lazarus has experienced the hereafter and is no longer subject to doubt. These two ideas are the cardinal tenets of Browning's religious and moral thinking.

The author shows us through the mind of a distinguished Arab physician a picture of Lazarus after his three days' conscious life in the eternal and perfect world while necessarily clinging to this poor earthly life, he is always conscious of the fuller, glorious, spiritual life. This fact explains his seemingly fantastic impulses and actions. Knowing the law of the spiritual, he is constantly impelled to act against, and not in conformity with, the law of the earthly life; but the impulse to do so is constantly foiled by the remembrance that "here it cannot be". Having seen the world beyond, he cares not for this universe and its honors and glories; all is the same to him. "There is Oneness, thinks the poet; and God the One, is Love. The philosopher is struck to the heart, the very word spoken by Lazarus seemed to have touched him, as on parched land, the shower; and he yearns, and yet is ashamed, in philosophic pride, to state the Christian thought of the weak confounding the strong". (Thought-W.F.P. Stockley)

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Karshish, a typical representative of the scientific spirit, a character most prejudiced against a belief in the supernatural, is best calculated to exhibit Browning's cherished belief:-that the heart of man yearns passionately for a God of love!

This man so cured regards the curer, then,
 As-God forgive me! who but God Himself,
 Creator and sustainer of the world,
 That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
 -Sayeth that such a one was born and lived,
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
 And yet was...what I said nor choose repeat.

However, the character of Karshish as a reasoner and a man of science obliges him to thrust his story aside. But, though he affects to despise it as "a trivial matter" not to be compared with the "blue-flowering borage", yet it recurs again and again in spite of him. What most deeply impresses him is the conception of the love of God. The innate longing of man for God's love draws him back as it were unwillingly. Granting the truth of Lazarus' story, the urge to believe is so strong that Karshish is almost prepared to bear the scoffs and jeers of his skeptical friends and accept the new faith. His heart fills with a thrilling joy at the vision of an Incarnate God suffering for man, and thereby manifesting His love for him:

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?

So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too-

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So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here'.
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
 Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!
 The madman saith He said so; it is strange.

In "Bishop Blougram's Apology" composed about 1850, Browning allows us once more to sound his heart on the question of religious tenets. The poem is, as the reference to Strauss shows, a by-product of the author's work on "Christmas Eve and Easter Day", concerning the nature of modern Christian faith. It is a defence of religious conformity in those cases where the doctrines to which we conform are supposed to exceed our powers of belief, but are not throughout exposed to them. The poem treats of a Roman Catholic bishop who has secured a living in ease and comfort by this kind of compromise. A certain Gigadibs, a free-thinker has accused the bishop of being a fool or a knave because he has identified himself with "Romish Superstitions". Gigadibs does not believe in dogmas and says so. The Bishop does not believe in them, but he does not say so. Listen to Browning's ideas of the Catholic Church, uttered through Blougram.

"There's one great form of Christian faith
 I happened to be born in- which to teach
 Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
 As best and readiest means of living by,

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The same on examination being proved,
 The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
 And absolute form of faith in the whole world-
 Accordingly, most potent of all forms
 For working on the world.

.....

Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread;
 Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's
 Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
 And make my life an ease and joy and pride.
 It does so-which for me's a great point gained,
 Who have a soul and body that exact
 A comfortable care in many ways.

.....

Then having described the honors he receives from
 the laity because of his position he concludes:

"Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
 And thus that it should be I have procured-

.....

My business is not to remake myself,
 But make the absolute best of what God made.

.....

But I, the man of sense and learning too,
 The able to think yet act, the this, the that's
 I, to believe at this late time of day!
 Is that the idea Browning has of the Church and of its

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Bishops?-But Blougram is allowed to speak for himself without the least interference from the creator:

"Pure faith indeed-you know not what you ask!

Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,

Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much

The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.

.....

With me, faith means perpetual unbelief

Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot

Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.

Then Browning again, through Blougram makes fun of the Middle Ages, and their ardent faith. The latter would revive, he says, if you could blot out science.

No, a man begins to be something when the fight begins within himself; then the soul wakes and grows; and if the battle continues, it will grow till the life to come.

"Men have outgrown the shame of being fools".

No more dogmas for them! No more blind faith!

.....

"I act for, talk for, live for this world now,

As this world prizes action, life and talk,

.....

I'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this world,

I take and like its way of life.

Browning concludes:

"For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke,

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The other portion.....

He felt his foe was foolish to dispute."

He chose to represent some accidental thoughts as fixtures in the mind:

"He said true things, but called them by wrong names".

And so, our Catholic Bishop cannot believe the doctrines of the Church, he is too clever for that. He utterly crushes Gigadibs by a very clever lecture, in which he proves that belief or unbelief are equally foolish, that right and wrong are interchangeable, that black may be white, and white black, that commonsense and a knowledge of the world represent the highest wisdom.

What result did Browning want to achieve with this picture of such a powerful mind arguing with irresistible logic and merciless cleverness, in an absolutely unworthy cause; the defence of unbelief? The poem is the result of his cogitations over "Christmas Eve and Easter Day" in which he had declared his preference for non-conformity in spite of all its weaknesses.

The reading of Browning's life convinces one that he never made any attempt to study the Catholic Church although he lived in a Catholic country. He was simply prejudiced and remained so through pure ignorance. In Italy his friends were for the most part English protestants; M.Fuller, Charles Lever, Isa Blagden, and consequently he never came under Catholic influence. The fact that he seems so critical of every thing Catholic may be due, as he said himself-to his surroundings. He took his

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illustrations from Italian life; had he lived in England, he might have attacked the English Church instead.

That Blougram was meant to represent, Cardinal Wiseman, is a fact, and as proof we have Browning's own testimony. On being asked about it, he replied:-Yes, Bishop Blougram was certainly intended for the English Cardinal but he was not treated ungenerously.

Once published the poem had a strange adventure. Cardinal Wiseman himself reviewed it in the "Rambler" a Catholic journal of those days. The review ran in part:

"Bishop Blougram's Apology though utterly mistaken in the very groundwork of religion, though starting from the most unworthy notions of the work of a Catholic bishop, and defending a self-indulgence which every honest man must feel to be disgraceful, is yet in its way triumphant".

The Cardinal after praising the poem, for its fertility of illustration and felicity of argument, concludes:

"Though much of the matter is extremely offensive to Catholics, yet beneath the surface there is an undercurrent of thought that is by no means inconsistent with our religion; and if Mr. Browning is a man of will and action, and not a mere dreamer or talker, we should never feel surprise

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at his conversion."

Who was right, Cardinal Wiseman or Hugh Walker who states in "The Literature of the Victorian Age": "But the poet must have smiled sardonically when Wiseman expressed the opinion that possibly the author of the collection of poems among which his own portrait appeared might be converted to the Catholic faith"-Probably the Cardinal showed the sounder judgment. That Browning did not join the Church is no argument against it. Had he come in contact with some of our good Catholic priests, he would probably have been persuaded of the Truth. We must remember that the only friend-priest he ever had was Father Prout, an ex-Jesuit whose true name was F.S.Mahony and whom Mrs. Browning described as "Kind-hearted and clever, but skeptical and even cynical".

"Saul," a poem unsurpassed for lyrical splendor and beauty, serves as a means of measuring the development of Browning's religious ideas. In fact when Edmond Gosse asked Browning to name four poems of moderate length that would fairly represent him, he named "Saul, or Abt. Vogler" for the lyric.

"Saul" owes its matter and substance to "Christmas Eve and Easter Day". The writing of the last-named poem pressed the author to solve the religious questions which troubled him, and gave him his clue to "Saul". The argument of the poem passes from the mere reckoning up of the good things of the earth in the first nine sections to the philosophical vindication of the prophecy of Christianity which informs the last ten sections of the completed work.

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The speaker is David and the poem is a prophecy of the Messiah. The two great points of "Karshish", the humanity in Godhead and the union of infinite love with infinite powers are in "Saul" likewise. But there is a difference: what in "Karshish" is hardly a hope becomes in Saul a confident prophecy. Though the time is pre-Christian the fulness of conviction makes the poem essentially a Christian poem.

"Saul" is based on the Biblical narrative in 1 Samuel 16: 14-23 where we read of the deepening gloom that fell upon the mind of Saul as a result of his self-appointed isolation from God. He was overtaken at times by spells of sadness when no interest could appeal to him. His servants sent for David, the young shepherd-singer of Israel, hoping that by the power of his song, the evil spirit that troubled their lord might be exorcised.

For three days the king had been shut away in the darkness of his tent,

"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servant, of prayer

nor of praise

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their

strife

And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks

back upon life"

David having knelt to the God of his fathers for a fervent prayer enters the tent of his King, and speaks these words: "Here is David thy servant!"-Then he tunes his harp and plays all the pastorals he knows; then he passes on to the song

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of the reapers, to the warrior's march, with the only result that Saul sends forth a groan.

Then David changes his tunes, and sings of the joys of human life, of labour and success, of the king in whom are centered all the gifts of nature. But the eyes of Saul still gaze vacantly before him.

In a fresh burst of inspiration the young man challenges the king to follow him beyond the grave. He now sings of that which abides when the body decays, of the immortality and influence which follow those who do noble deeds.—Here we have one of the great religious truths firmly held by Browning, the immortality of the soul. Even after death, Saul shall not seem to die, for the record of his deeds shall be transmitted graven on the rocks to all posterity, and unborn generations shall have their part in his being. Here, having reached the height of merely human blessings, standing where Positivism, with its immortality of renown is forced to stop, Browning is dissatisfied longing for something further:

"Could I help thee my father

.....

I would give thee new life altogether, as good

ages hence,

At this moment—had love but the warrants

love's heart to dispense!"

Here Browning testifies to the insufficiency of the Positivist idea of immortality to satisfy man's longing, and the

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effort to explore further. In the Poet's later poems the exploration is carried on by means of close reasoning; in Saul, by an inspired burst of prophecy in which David having witnessed God's perfection in all His works declares his belief in the perfection of His love, which shall give to Saul the gift far beyond the earthly abundance that he already has; the gift of eternal life.

To restore this life to God, to send forth this king healed and redeemed, how willingly would David lay down his own life as sacrifice! It was in the splendid passion of unselfish desire that the truth came upon David. Here, within me, he reasons, is love. To-day pity has almost broken my heart in vain desire to help my king.

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the
parts shift?

Here the creature surpass the Creator--the end what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?"

Would I do all I can for this man and dare think that
God who can do everything for him will forsake him? Would it
ever have entered my mind to bestow on Saul his body, soul and
the earth to insphere him? Does it not enter my mind to redeem
and restore him, snatch him from ruin and failure, bid him awake--

"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to
find himself set

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Clear and safe in new light and new life---"

David feels his impuissance, but will not despair,

'Tis not what man does which exalts him, but

What man would do!

See the King-I would help him but cannot-

the wishes fall through

Could I wrestle to save him from sorrow, grow

poor to enrich,

To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would-

knowing which,

I know that my service is perfect".

But how much more would Divine Love hasten forward to secure his salvation! For Infinite Love is allied with Infinite Wisdom so that things impossible to man are possible to God. Thus David swept forward moved by divine inspiration. "O speak through me now" prayed the seer trembling on the verge of a great revelation.

"Would I suffer for him that I love? so wouldst

thou-so wilt thou.

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,

uttermost crown."

.....

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved

Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being

Beloved!"

Love now explores the mystery to be revealed. He, the

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Creator, who did most, shall bear most, that is he will stand
weakest under the burden of the cross as our Redeemer.

"Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for!

my flesh that I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and find it. O Saul

it shall be

A face like my face that receives thee; a man

like to me.

Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a

Hand like this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!

See the Christ stand!

The Incarnation proved by God's love is Browning's own conviction- The manifestation of God's love by the Incarnation is to him the climax of religion, the triumph of Christianity. The thrilling joy at the vision of an Incarnate God suffering for man, and thereby manifesting His Love, is the climax of the magnificent ascent from earth to heaven from human to divine, which is the subject of "Saul".

From "Saul" we now turn to "Rabbi Ben Ezra", one of the most famous and most popular of Browning's works, chiefly because it embodies all that is deepest in the poet's philosophy of religion. Nowhere else, except in the Poem of "The Ring and the Book" can we be so sure that we have Browning's own thought, just the best that he can conceive unaltered and unmodified by dramatic conditions.

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The speaker is the Jew, Rabbi Ben Ezra, an old man, the type of all that is best and wisest in his race. What induced Browning to ascribe his own thoughts to him is probably the fact that the Rabbi taught the doctrine of immortality. For we see the conception of immortality entering into every part of Browning's experience of life, dignifying things that would otherwise seem trivial, making perfect the manifold imperfections of this world.

We note how strongly the opening stanza expresses the peculiar quality of robust hope and cheerfulness which is Browning's contribution to the spirit of English literature.

"Grow old along with me
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made.
 Our times are in his hand
 Who saith: "A whole I planned:
 Youth shows but half, Trust God; see all,
 Nor be afraid.

Thus the poem opens with a glorification of old age. The soul is eternal, but it completes the first stage of its experience in the earthly life, and the climax of this earthly life is at its close. Therefore old age is that of fruition.

The bird and the beast are troubled by no doubts, no "obstinate questionings". Their material comfort is to them the end of life. But such is not the case with man; he should welcome each rebuff, each sting, for this life is only a preparation for the next. How good then it is to live and learn.- It is

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good that at some period of his existence man should praise God
thus:

"Praise be thine!

I see the whole design,

I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too,

Perfect I call thy plan.

Thanks that I was a man!

Maker, remake, complete-I trust

what thou shalt do"

Now Browning condemns what is really a Puritan tradition,
that we should be contemptuous of the human body as an evil thing.

Let us not always say,

Spite of this flesh to-day

I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!

As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry, "All good things

Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now

than flesh helps soul."

We know from several of his poems that Browning probably
thought he was censuring a Catholic doctrine, but here again, he
was prejudiced. For the Church has always condemned as heretical
this Puritan tradition, because based on an erroneous conception
of the material element in human nature. In fact the Catholic
religion bestows greater honors on the human body than any other
religion. It teaches that the body is the creation of God quite
as much as the soul and is therefore worthy of care and respect.

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The body is inextricably bound up with the whole structure of faith and practice in the Church, and if the teaching that the body is essentially evil were once admitted, the whole structure would collapse.

But Browning continues;

.....All that is, at all,

Lasts ever past recall;

Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure,

What entered into thee.

That was, is and shall be.

Time's wheel runs back or stops;

Potter clay endure.

Our doubts and fears, joys and desires, perplexities and agonizings after truth, pressing upon us as the wheel revolves, serve as machinery meant to turn forth the clay, the human soul, in the form fit for the Potter's service. For God is the Potter, and we, fixed to the wheel of life are the clay which he shapes to his own uses. The earlier grooves are made by the pressure of the Potter's tool upon our youthful lives. The skull-things proceed from the sterner pressure of the tool in our later years. But neither the Cupids at the base nor the skull-things at the rim of the pitcher are the end for which it was made. Its end is to be used as a drinking vessel at which the Master may slake his thirst.

"But I need, now as then,

Thee, God, who moldest men;

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And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
 Did I-to the wheel of life
 With shapes and colors rife,
 Bound dizzily-mistake my end,....

That is to procure the greater glory of God.

So, take and use Thy work;
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain O' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
 My time be in Thy hand!
 Perfect the cup as planned!

What a confident and triumphant cry comes from the heart of Browning; it has the magnificent faith of some of the Psalms. The whole poem is summed up in the doctrine of a universe divinely governed. The greatest flaw of the work is that Browning has not made sufficient allowance here for the free action of the human will in this development of the human soul.

"A Death in the Desert" also published in "Dramatis Personae" in 1864, further clarifies Browning's position as a believer. The attack upon the personality of the beloved disciple, St. John, and upon the authenticity of his gospel was the spark which set Browning to writing the poem.

Browning had read Renan's "La Vie de Jesus" published in June 1863. He found it, he declared in a letter to Miss Blagden "less honest than I was led to expect; if he thinks he can prove what he says, he has fewer doubts on the subject than I, but mine are none of his." He adds that both in Renan's and Strauss'

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books, the want of candour is remarkable.

Renan, attacking the authenticity of the fourth gospel had stated among other things,...."For my part, I dare not be certain that the fourth gospel was written entirely by the pen of an ex-fisherman of Galilee...A circumstance moreover, which fully proves that the discourses reported are not historic, but compositions intended to cover with the authority of Jesus, certain doctrines dear to the compiler, is their perfect harmony with the intellectual state of Asia Minor, at the time they were written. Asia Minor was then the theatre of a singular movement of syncretic philosophy; all the germs of gnosticism were already in existence". (La Vie de Jesus-Renan)

Strauss states in defending Dr. Baur's attack upon the fourth gospel; "In his opinion this gospel was a religious fiction freely drawn, and he recognized its fundamental idea to be the attempt to contrast the Jewish unbelief as the opposing principle of light and life, as it appeared in Jesus, and to bring out into full relief the combat between the two principles, as an historical process, advancing forward from step to step". (A New Life of Jesus-Strauss).

Browning dismissed the tradition which stated that John, the son of Zebedee, was killed by the Jews about the year 70. He chose the older tradition that was begun by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, who stated in the year 196 that John, the writer of the Gospel, lived until the time of Trajan in extreme old age, and that he "who lay on the bosom of the Lord" rests at Ephesus.

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"A Death in the Desert" then has been written in the defense of John and his writing, and like several other poems to counteract the influence of the nineteenth century rationalists who were criticizing the Scriptures.

Our interest in the poem lies in the fact that it reveals a great number of Browning's most characteristic religious ideas. Moreover, it adds one thing of importance, which is generally absent from his other poems, the element of at least some definite Christian doctrine. As a rule, Browning shuns this. But here St. John dying solitary in a cave where he has been carried to escape persecution argues out his faith on the ground of what he has seen and known. The poet's purpose is evidently not to carry us back to the time of the Apostles, but to give expression to his own thoughts in the arguments which were likely to convince his generation. Browning has given to St. John a foreknowledge of that age of philosophic doubt in which its very foundations would be shaken; and has made him the exponent of his own belief that doubt is ordained for the maturer mind, as the test of faith and its preserver.

In the first part of the poem, John reviews his life and the teachings of Christ. He had been bidden by Christ to go and teach and he did. Later in Patmos isle. he was bidden to write and he did. Then he preached love repeating to all who would hear "I saw, I heard, I knew" whilst AntiChrist was already in the world. Then there arose the generation of young men who thought he was mistaken. But he loved them and struggled

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to convince them of the truth:

Though the whole earth should be in wickedness
 He had the truth, might leave the rest to God."
 The new generation doubts and inquires:
 "Was John at all, and did he say he saw?"

.....

And how shall I assure them?-He being old sees better
 into spiritual things,

"Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
 We whom God loves?

-aye. that Life and Death

Of which I wrote. It was-to me, it is

Is not God now i' the world his power first made?

Is not his love at issue still with sin,

Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?

Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around?

We hear again the echoes of Browning's favorite theory that
 life with all it holds is just our opportunity of learning love-,and
 his other theory that doubt is almost necessary to the growth of the
 soul.

"So duly, daily, needs provision be
 For keeping the soul's prowess possible
 Building new barriers as the old decay,
 Saving us from evasion of life's proof.
 Putting the question even, 'Does God love
 And will ye hold that truth against the world".

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Next John answers the doubts of the next generation who will exclaim:

"Here is a tale of things done ages since;

What truth was ever told the second day?

Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought."

Your doctrine is of Divine love; and we who believe in love, because we ourselves possess it, may read it into a record in which it has no place.

"Must Christ then die?

Has he been? Did not we ourselves make him?"

How do you prove that Christ came? And even if we grant that there is truth in your teaching, why are we left to hit or miss the truth?

To which John, uttering Browning's thoughts, replies:

"I say that man was made to grow, not stop;

That help, he needed once, and needs no more,

Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn"

Man receives, step by step, such spiritual assistance as he needs and in proportion to his strength-. The fruit of the Bible is now plain and miracles need not prove it anymore.

"I cried once, 'That ye may believe in Christ,

Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!

But now, to anyone who clamors for a miracle.

"I say, that miracle was duly wrought

When, save for it, no faith was possible

.....

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So faith grew, making void more miracles,
Because too much; they would compel, not help".

Again man questioned: since love is everywhere and since we ourselves make the love, and Christ was not! That man's soul dies because, owning his own love that proves Christ, he at the same time rejects Christ through very need of him.

The skeptic now argues:

But this was all the while
A trick; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
Thy story of the places, names and dates.
Where, when, and how the ultimate truth had rise

.....

Why must I hit of this and miss of that"

And Browning answers:

"Man is not God, but hath God's end to serve".

He is made for progress. He could not progress if his doubtings were at once changed to certainties, and all he struggles for at once found. He must reach for truth and grasp at error often before he attains the truth.

There is evidently here a great danger lurking in Browning's philosophy when he includes the perception of truth among those qualities of man which advance by means of failure. To ascribe inevitable failure to man's quest of truth may be taken just as well to mean the non-existence of the object, as the weakness of the human qualities. However, Browning believes in an ultimate reality, in a truth underlying all these failures,

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although perhaps it cannot be reached by man. He must try to attain to it. In this life he thinks, there may be no such thing as absolute truth, although all our efforts bring us closer to it. But he is convinced that we must be content to learn by failures.

"...Man knows partly but conceives beside,
 Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
 And in this striving, this converting air
 Into solid he may grasp and use,
 Find progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
 Not God's, and not the beasts'-God is, they are,
 Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
 Such progress could no more attend his soul,
 Were all its struggles after found at first
 And guesses changed to knowledge absolute.

.....

through space he moves from rest to rest"
 Man constantly learns because he lives.
 God's gift was that man should conceive of truth,
 And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake
till he reach fact indeed.

This false doctrine of Browning that we can reach truth only through falsehood we greatly deplore as it leads to grave errors. The only two truths apparently are God and the soul "and between each, falsehood". Does this mean that the method by which God works upon the soul is falsehood?

However faulty Browning's spiritual outlook may be,

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it remains true that his persistent optimism lay in his recognition of Christ as God and Saviour. If the life that pulsates through all nature is the life of Christ, and if the hand that conducts the march of history is the hand that was nailed to the cross, then we may dismiss our fears, and advance to the study of life's problems with cheerful heart, believing with Pippa that,

"God's in his heaven,

All's right with the world."

A quotation from "Death in the Desert" asserts the real source of the poet's optimism as he faces the trials and anxieties of life:

"I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ

Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee

All questions in the world and out of it,

And hath so far advanced thee to be wise:-

A mere mention must be made of the "Epilogue to Dramatis Personae" written by Browning after he had read Renan's "La Vie de Jesus". This poem has to do with Victorian rationalism which led men to doubt things which men's normal imagination does not necessarily doubt. In the "Epilogue" David is made to speak for the ritualistic point of view, honoring the House of the Lord as the residing-place of God. Renan represents nineteenth century skepticism and the longing of the heart for the old belief which, according to him, scientific reason and increase in historical knowledge had dispelled. In grief he sees the Face of Christ vanish into darkness.

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"We shall not look up, know ourselves are seen,
Speak, and be sure that we again are heard".

The third speaker is Browning himself, who answers the ritualistic Churchman by declaring that we need no Churches, because the world itself is a temple:

"Why, where's the need of Temple, when the walls
O'the world are that? What use of swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests cries, and trumpet calls?

In answering the higher critic Browning appeals again to the need of Christ in our lives and in our hearts and concludes that we need not look beyond the range of our own being for the lost Christ.

We are told by Mrs. Orr, the poet's biographer, that Browning once spoke to her with relation to his own religious opinions and concluded by reading to her the "Epilogue to Dramatis Personae". She continues:

It will be remembered that the beautiful and pathetic second part of the poem is a cry of spiritual bereavement, the cry of those victims of nineteenth century skepticism for whom incarnate Love has disappeared from the universe carrying with it the belief in God. The third part attests the continual existence of God in Christ, as mystically present to the individual soul:

"That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my Universe that feels and knows".

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"That face", said Browning as he closed the book, "that face is the face of Christ: That is how I feel him".

From the lengthy poem "The Ring and the Book" we pick out a few extracts, for the poem is really an enunciation of Browning's theology. However, this theology is that of "Christmas Eve and Easter Day", "Saul", "Karshish" etc. and we need not repeat what has already been considered. It has become the common belief that the Pope in Book X is Browning speaking. The poem is, according to some critics, the finest and most complete presentation of his theory of truth. In fact it marks the culmination of his elaborate method, his search for truth by the examination and rejection of falsehood, his dissection of the universal to the manifestation in the individual.

For the lesson he draws is:

"That our human speech is nought,

Our human testimony false, our fame

And human estimation words and winds,"

The poem is a declaration of the reality of truth, "There is so much to be said on both sides" that it is difficult to find the truth. Some claim there is truth on Guido's side, some on Pompilia's. Half of Rome sides with one, half with the other. The conclusion might seem to be that there is truth, but that it is almost impossible to find it. We have already remarked how Browning represents the attainment of truth as not totally impossible, but only attainable through the false, or at least temporary uncertainty.

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It was quite common in the nineteenth century, as it also is in our days, for a class of men to accept Christianity along with doubt, or even a denial of the facts of the Bible. Browning is no exception. But we must bear in mind that he has a very strong hold on several of the essential truths of Christianity. The cause of his courage in meditating upon objections to Christianity may be found in the words he puts in the mouth of the Pope who, after having discussed contemporary Christianity, asks the question: "Is the thing we see salvation?"-Browning immediately answers for himself:

"Put no such dreadful question to myself
Within whose circle of experience burns,
The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Goodness-God".

Again he treats of the Incarnation for it is a doctrine that is very dear to him. In "The Ring and the Book" we read these lines:

"Everywhere
I see in the world the intellect of man,"
And further on:
"Is there strength there?-enough: intelligence?
Ample: but goodness in a like degree?
Not to the human eye in the present state.
An isosceles deficient in the base.
What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
But just the instance which this tale supplies
Of love without a limit, So is strength,

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So is intelligence: let love be so,
 Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
 Then is the tale true and God shows complete".
 The Pope uses this truth to explain the mystery of sin

and sorrow:

"Beyond the tale, I reach into the dark
 Feel what I cannot see, and still faith stands:
 I can believe this dread machinery
 Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else.
 Devised-all pain, at most expenditure
 Of pain by who devised pain-to evolve,
 By new machinery in counterpart,
 The moral qualities of man-how else?--
 To make him love in turn and be beloved,
 Creative and self-sacrificing too,
 And thus eventually God-like

:so my heart be struck,

What care I?-by God's gloved hand or the bare?

Now Browning says that he is not much perplexed over anything dubious in the transmitting of the "tale". This life is certainly a preparation, a training. Here below, we march over the obstacles that we have overcome.

"Guess now what shall be known hereafter. Deal
 Thus with the present problem; as we see,
 A faultless creature is destroyed, and sin

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Has had its way i' the world where God should rule".

Browning wished to see in all things, even the worst only various forms of good, for God's love will master all evil, and in God all men be made anew. In *Ferishtah's Fancies*", he describes the result of his observations as follows:

"All the same
Of absolute and irretrievable black-black's
soul of black,
Beyond white's power to disintensify-
Of that I saw no sample; such may wreck
My life and ruin my philosophy
To-morrow, doubtless".

For Browning, all is, or will be well-in man's judgment; and all well for man, God's work,

"Life is probation and the earth no goal
But starting point of man"

(The Ring and the Book X)

He depicted the criminals in *"The Ring and the Book"*, only to show:

"In the absolute drench of dark
Some stray beauty-beam, to the despair of hell,"
So even the wicked Guido, who declared that as he tried to murder Pompilia here, so he would murder her in the next world if he could, is made to give at least one sign of incipient morality in his desperate cry for mercy:

"Pompilia, will you let them murder me?"

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In "Abt.Vogler", we read:

"There shall never be one lost good! what was
 Shall live as before;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying
 sound;
 What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much
 good more;
 On the earth, the broken arcs; in the heaven a
 perfect round".

In Browning, the only man condemned of God, is the man loving the beautiful world, but never yearning beyond, to God's love. Therefore,

 "thou art shut
 Out of the heaven of spirit: glut
 Thy sense upon the world"

It is not the sinner against moral law or against Heaven's cannons that the poet condemns. It is the weakling, the placid, the contented. With Browning, the act is the thing, the strenuous act. Even if it is a sin, Browning approves it, provided it implies strength and courage, and hope for better things. It shows an ideal, a belief and power in self-development. In "The Statue and the Bust", the Duke and the bride put off for years the sin they had resolved on:

"I hear you reproaching, 'But delay was best
 For their end was a crime'-Oh, a crime will do
 As well, I reply, to serve for a test,
 As a virtue. (The Statue and the Bust)

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Lafcadio Hearn in his "Appreciations of Poetry" says:

"He (Browning) tells us that only wishing under certain circumstances may be incomparably worse than doing, because the doing brings about its punishment in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and the punishment becomes a moral teaching, forcing the sufferer to think about the moral aspect of what he has done. That is why Browning says: "A sin will do for a test". But only to wish to do, and not do, leaves a person in the state of inexperience. There is an old proverb which is quite true, any man can become rich who is willing to pay the price, but the price of acts and thoughts is fixed by the Eternal Powers, and you must not try to cheat them."- But it is difficult to agree with Hearn's interpretation of the famous line "A Sin will do for a test"

In "Porphyria's Lover", Browning writes of the girl:

"She

Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me forever".

Then, the lover strangles her and the poet puts his approving seal upon the deed, because he thinks it shows courage and energy.

"And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!"

What further evidence do we need to show that the poet approves

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the sin?

Even some times, Browning goes so far as to say of those who dreamed of sin, but yet weakly recoiled from committing it.

"Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of His
The soldier-saints, who row on row,
Burn upward each to his point of bliss" (The Statue etc.)

Browning thought it necessary to refer evil somehow to God, so that evil becomes the necessary means of good. Then virtue is defined as mere valor in the struggle of life. Better seek evil with one's whole mind, implies the poet, than be indifferent in goodness. Indifference and spiritual lassitude become then the worst of sins. What Browning contends is that passion is the rich blossoming of the soul, and the failure to obey its commands a sacrilege. The moral objections to this doctrine are well known to Browning, but he chooses not to emphasize them. But in attributing the origin of evil to God, the poet has come dangerously near to consecrating every abnormal impulse of human nature. Might becomes right. In "The Ring and the Book", the Pope is a warrior-priest, and Pompilia reaches the height of virtue by becoming energetic.

Our moral nature revolts against this view of sin as explained by Browning. It is again an error of his theory of truth. However, "The Ring and the Book" marks the high tide of his poetic insight, before his faith had taken an agnostic

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philosophy for its deceitful ally. There he says:

"Truth nowhere lies, yet everywhere, in these;
Not absolutely in a portion, yet evolvable
From the whole, evolved at last
Painfully, held tenaciously, by me

.....

Yet my poor part had for its source the Son;
Hither I sent the great looks that compel
Light from its fount: all that I do and am
Comes from the truth, or seen or else surmised,
Remembered or divined, as mere man may".

Browning has hope for the bad as well for the good-not hope for them in their badness, but hope that the badness may yet be purged out of them. Even of Guido, the typical villain, as he enters eternity, the Pope says:

"Else I avert my face, nor follow him
Into that sad, obscure, sequestered state
Where God unmakes, but to remake, the soul
He else made first in vain: which must not be.

Browning is a monist, and holds that there is but one substance or principle of being. All things are potentially spirit, or in other words, the universe is a universe of spirits. Nature itself is instinct with life, and all things show a divine idea or plan. But he does not hesitate to include man, as well as nature, in this monistic view of the universe. Man too is connected with God. Humanity is naturally rooted and grounded

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in him. In "The Ring and the Book", the Pope soliloquizes:

"O thou, as represented to me here
 In such conception as my soul allows
 Under thy measureless, my atom-width!
 Man's mind, what is it but a convex glass
 Wherein are gathered all the scattered points
 Picked out of the immensity of sky
 To reunite there be our heaven for earth
 Our known Unknown, our God revealed to man!"
 It was God's plan to make man in his image:
 "To create man and then leave him
 Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
 But able to glorify him too,
 As a mere machine could never do
 That prayed or praised, all unaware
 Of its fitness for aught but praise or prayer
 Made perfect as a thing of course.

God, whose pleasure brought
 Men into being, stands away,
 As it were, a hand-breadth off, to give
 Room for the newly made to live
 And look at him from a place apart
 And use his gifts of brain and heart".
 Life's business being just the terrible choice.

(The Ring and the Book X)

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"The Ring and the Book" marks the culmination of Browning's search for truth by the examination and rejection of falsehood. After "The Ring and the Book" he added but little either to his contribution to human thought, or to the treasure-house of English poetry.

The next work of the poet we shall look into is "La Saisiaz", a very noble elegy, but the thought of which is rather inconclusive. It contains his arguments for the immortality of the soul and deals again with the mystery of evil in the world. "La Saisiaz" and "The Two Poets of Croisic" were published together in one volume as the second poem really completes the first.

"La Saisiaz" was written a few days after the death of the author's friend, Miss Anne Egerton Smith. The shock of her death set him to reasoning upon the hope of immortality. "It is his first attempt to reconstruct this hope by a rational process based entirely on the fundamental facts of his own knowledge and consciousness-God and the human soul..... It is conclusive both in form and matter as to his heterodox attitude towards Christianity. He was no less, in his way, a Christian when he wrote "La Saisiaz" than when he published "Death in a Desert" etc.-or at any period subsequent to that in which he accepted without questioning what he had learned at his mother's knee. He had repeatedly written or declared in the words of Charles Lamb: 'If Christ entered the room I should fall on my knees': and again, in those of Napoleon

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'I am an understander of men, and He was no man". He has even added: 'If he had been, he would have been an impostor. But the arguments, in great part negative, set forth in "La Saisiaz" for the immortality of the soul, leave no place for the idea,...of a Christian revelation of the subject. Christ remained for Mr. Browning a mystery and a message of Divine love, but no messenger of Divine intention towards mankind.

The dialogue between Fancy and Reason is not only an admission of uncertainty as to the future of the Soul: it is a plea for it; and as such it gathers up into its few words of direct statement, threads of reasoning which have been traceable throughout Mr. Browning's work. In this plea for uncertainty lies also a full and frank acknowledgment of the value of the earthly life; and as interpreted by his general views, that value asserts itself, not only in the means of probation which life affords, but in its existing conditions of happiness. No one, he declares, possessing the certainty of a future state would patiently and fully live out the present; and since the future can be only the ripened fruit of the present, its promise would be neutralized, as well as actual experience dwarfed, by a definite revelation. Nor, conversely, need the want of a certified future depress the present spiritual or moral life. It is in the nature of the Soul that it would suffer from the promise. The existence of God is a justification for hope. And since the certainty would be injurious to the Soul, hence destructive to itself, the doubt-in other words, the hope-becomes a sufficient approach to,

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a working substitute for it. It is pathetic to see how, in spite of the convictions thus rooted in Mr. Browning's mind, the expressed craving for more knowledge, for more light, will now and then escape him".

In his argument Browning develops for the first time at length, the idea characteristic of his later thinking, that our human knowledge is of no use to us whatever in solving "the riddle of our doom". In short, he claims that we cannot prove anything about God by our human intellects, and must resort to the intuitive knowledge of our hearts.

"Ferishtah's Fancies" give the poet an opportunity once again to speak his mind upon several moral and religious questions. "Ferishtah" is a summary of his matured speculations, in fact one of the most significant examples of the poet's irresistible tendency to the expression of religious ideas. In the slight poems, we find Browning enunciating again his religious beliefs.

1. God works no unnecessary miracles (The Eagle)
2. Let us give thanks for actual blessings, though
much that we desire may fail us. (The Melon-Seller)
3. Faith and love go together. (Shah Abbas)
4. Since mere men cannot know the purpose of God,
it is well for us to express in prayer our human
emotions of pity, sympathy, and fear, and leave
the decision trustingly to God. (The Family)
5. The purpose of suffering is purification (Mihrab Shah)

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6. Sin inflicts its own punishment and there is no necessity for eternal punishment.(A Camel Driver)
7. Asceticism fails of its own end.(Two Camels)
8. All service ranks the same with God.(Cherries)
9. Man owes his accounting directly to God. Man's morality is a question between himself and God only(Plot-Culture)
10. Love must go before knowledge (A Pillar at Sebzevah)
11. There is in life no evil that is irrevocably evil
(A Bean-Stripe)

The "Parleyings" are the last works of Browning that we should search for an evidence of his spiritual beliefs, as they were intended to provide a comprehensive view of the poet's ideas. Here he speaks without disguise, in his own voice. He is, as always, especially concerned with the problem of evil in the world if we are to assume that God is all-wise, all-potent, and all good. He concludes again that the evil is only illusory, put by God in the world to offer men an opportunity to develop his moral nature. Browning casts doubt upon the efficacy of the intellect, and prefers, like Tennyson, to trust the instincts of the heart. However, there is really nothing further to learn from the "Parleyings"; constant repetition of the same doctrine gives to them a suggestion of commonplace.

Chapter IV.

ON ARNOLD

A considerable part of Matthew Arnold's writings is concerned with education and politics, or with phases of theological thought and religious tendency, which were valuable in contemporary discussion, and to men and women of the third quarter of a century, and which are interesting even to us.

Arnold was a critic of civilization and aimed at illumination by means of idea; his aim being to "propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." However, the first impression that his entire work makes is one of limitation: so strict is this limitation, that it seems the element in which he had his being. On a close survey, the fewness of his ideas is most surprising, whether he deals with politics or with religion. The fact, nevertheless is somewhat cloaked by the lucidity of his thought, its logical vigor, and the manner of its presentation. He takes a text or an idea that he has made his own, and from that he starts out only to return to it over and over again.

Arnold was not one of those Critics who are interested in life itself but the ideas he had he made the readers respect.

The one thing about life which he most insists on is its isolation, and this may be due to his uncertain religious principles. From a poet so deeply impressed with this aspect of existence, and unable to find its remedy, no joyful or hopeful word can be expected, and none is found. Unlike Tennyson and Browning, he has no consolation to offer his generation of skeptics and rationalists.

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The second thing about life which he dwells on is its futility though he bids one strive and work and points to the examples of the strong whom he has known, yet, one feels that his voice rings more true when he writes of Obermann than in any other of the elegiac poems. In such verse as the "Summer Night" again the genuineness of the mood is indubitable. In the "Sick King of Bokhara", the one dramatic expression of his genius, futility, is the very centre of the action. The fact that so much of his poetry seems to take its motive from the subsidence of Christian faith has set him among the skeptic or agnostic poets, and the main movement which he thought he had expressed was doubtless that in which agnosticism was a leading element. The unbelief of the third quarter of the century was certainly a controlling influence over him.

The primary fact in Arnold's religious experience was his consciousness of his own soul, although on this point he is not too explicit. What he makes clear is his conviction that the life of the senses is not the centre of our being; nor the emotions nor the intellect. Deeper than all these, unsatisfied with all these, the spiritual self sits apart, hungering and thirsting for its own happiness in the perfect, the absolute, the divine. The reasoning man becomes aware of this innermost power when the pain of its unappeasable desire throbs into the consciousness, as it intermittently does, through the anodynes of mortal love and toil. Thence the melancholy which has its sovereign shrine in "The very temple of delight". Arnold describes its visitations, as well

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as his own doubts in "The Buried Life",

Light flows our war of mocking words; and yet

Behold, with tears our eyes are yet,

I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.

Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,

We know, we know that we can smile!

But there's a something in this breast,

To which thy light words bring no rest.

And the gay smiles no anodyne;

Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,

And turn those limpid eyes on mine,

And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul.

.....

I knew the mass of men concealed

Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed

They would by other men be met

With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;

I knew they lived and moved

Tricked in / disguises, alien to the rest

Of men, and alien to themselves-and yet

The same heart beats in every human breast!

.....

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,

But often, in the din of strife,

There arises an unspeakable desire,

After the knowledge of our buried life-

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.....A longing to inquire
 Into the mystery of the heart which beats
 So wild, so deep in us-to know
 Whence our lives come and where they go"-

Now on examining Arnold's writings individually for a precise exposition of his religious position, we note a little poem entitled "Utrumque Paratus" which gives his doubtful explanation of the origin of the world. One is that the world may have lain at first in the silent mind of One all-pure, and then proceeded by slow degrees from the still deeps through ages or hours. The other theory is that perhaps the unfathered mass has known no birth in divine seats, and that the Earth, rocking her body to and fro forms what she forms, alone.

In "Empedocles on Etna", Arnold wrote a philosophical drama of despair which went a long way with the expression of the bleakness of religious disillusion. Though the Greek philosopher flourished about 500 B.C. and though Arnold protested against the identification of his personal ideas with those of his dramatic protagonist, the poem is evidently saturated with his own thought. The poem enabled Arnold to express, on the lips of Empedocles, the problems which confronted him in his own time, to tell how he felt toward them, to relieve his heart by expressing the profound discouragement that filled his soul, and to suggest what means of escape one might have recourse to. Allegiance to reason, which Empedocles had taken for the noblest human faculty, has poorly rewarded him. In his arid philosophical mind the image of the

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world and of himself is repellent. Having stripped himself of emotions he is now agonized by the desire for a return of his lost power of magnanimous feeling:

Oh that I could glow like this mountain!

Oh that my heart bounded with the swell of the sea!

Oh that my soul were full of light as the stars!

Oh that it brooded over the world like the air!

But no, this heart will glow no more; thou art

A living man no more, Empedocles!

Nothing but a devouring flame of thought,~

But a naked, eternally restless mind!

One only thought slightly comforts him; he has not been the "slave of sense". He has served the mind. Faithful to the new spirit of modern scientific investigation, he has followed truth wherever it led him. The following lines expressing austerity, the bitterness, and the pride of the uncompromising intellect, might have been spoken by Darwin or Huxley.

Yea, I take myself to witness

That I have loved no darkness,

Sophisticated no truth,

Nursed no delusion,

Allowed no fear.

Empedocles flung himself into the crater of Etna: had Arnold been a Greek he probably would have ended his life in the same way. Take away God and all faith, then suicide is almost too facile a business.

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In the poem Arnold says: "The world is what it is for all our dust and sin;" and he feels that we are inclined to live in an imaginary world of our own making, and that we ourselves are masters of our own happiness or misery. Arnold maintained that our separate lives are integral parts of the one common life, and that in harming others we harm ourselves. Had he accepted the divinity of Christ as a dogma of faith, his conviction that "in trying to harm others we harm ourselves", would have amounted, practically to a profession of faith in the Mystical Body, a doctrine formulated by Christ Himself in His discourse to the Apostles after the last Supper when he said: "I am the vine, you are the branches".

"Self-Deception" consists in this that we think we have great powers, but the Great Power who gave them to us imposes on us a rigid law, and the law baffled us,

"Long, long since, undowered yet, our spirit
 Roamed, ere birth, the treasures of God"
 Our being wished for every gift it saw, but,
 "Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing
 Staved us back, and gave our choice the law"

And when the Power sent us here below he left us only the shreds of the gift, and these waste us with their hopeless straining. And we wander on earth groping and ruling. Yet there is a power which rules us, and there is a chance in that, but only the vaguest of chances. It is quite interesting here to contrast Arnold's pessimistic doubt with Browning's optimistic

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faith. The latter, looking out upon humanity, saw far and clear the certain end which the inabilities of life suggested and to which they led. Arnold saw only a very dim chance for man.

By what strange process of self-deception do we ascribe to ourselves an end to gain and powers to achieve it? asks the poet wistfully:

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear,
Ah! and he, who placed our master-feeling
Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

The faltering question of the concluding lines of this poem only just escape sinking under a persuasion of its utter futility:

Ah! some power exists there, which is ours?
Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

The spiritual story of a soul in those troubled years is concentrated in the "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of *Obermann*". This poem places Arnold as he was in 1852. Fifteen years later his position was not the same; and he records the change in another poem in 1867, addressed to the same person; "*Obermann Once More*". The similar titles make it plain that he wanted to reveal the change which had taken place in him during that period.

In the first poem addressed to *Obermann*, he exclaims:
".....through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain-bee

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There sobs I know not what ground-tone

O human agony".

.....
Is it for this, because the sound

Is fraught too deep with pain,

That, Obermann! the world around

So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,

For the world loves new ways;

To tell too deep ones is not well-

It knows not what he says.

He feels desperate over the hopeless tangle of the age,
and would live in solitude, but the world calls him back. Fate
drives him:

We, in some unknown Power's employ,

Move on a rigorous line;

Can neither, when we will, enjoy,

Nor, when we will, resign".

"Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" is his farewell
to his early implicit faith. It contains a beautiful description
of the Grande Chartreuse, the abode of the Carthusian monks,
where silence reigns, while the religious kneel and pray:

The cells!-the suffering Son of Man

Upon the wall-the knee worn floor".

At the sight of so much faith and charity, a cry of
agony rises from Arnold's heart:

And what am I, that I am here?

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For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
 And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,
 Showed me the high, white star of Truth.
 There bade me gaze, and there aspire,
 Even now their whispers pierce the gloom
 What dost thou in this living tomb?

.....

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
 The other powerless to be born,
 With nowhere yet to rest my head,
 Like these, on earth I wait forlorn,
 Their faith, my tears, the world deride
 I come to shed them at their side".

He begs to be fenced around until he can possess his soul again. The world cries that the faith of these monks is but a dream, an outworn theme. If really the faith is a passed mode, at least, could not the restlessness and the pain of doubt be obliterated from his mind? But, if ease and comfort cannot be granted, at least he could be left to die at the monastery with these,

"Last of the people who believe".

The poet does not conceal the fact that he cannot share the faith of the anchorites,

"I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
 To curse and to deny your truth;

.....

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Not as their friend or child I speak",
 but as a Greek might stand before the same fallen Runic stone-
 His feeling is that of pity and mournful awe.

Now he refers, it is thought, to Newman's two years of
 quiet study, (1843-45), before he was received into the Catholic
 Church.

"The kings of modern thought are dumb,
 They wait to see the future come,
 But they struggle no more, and
 ...we stand mute and watch the waves"

"Dover Beach" indicates a phase of Arnold's spiritual
 development, a relapse into depression. He hears the "grating
 roar of pebbles which the wave sucks back" with the ebb, and the
 return of the waves that bring

"The eternal note of sadness in"

Then it seems to him that he is listening to the sound
 of the ebbing of the great sea of religion.

"The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled;
 But now I only hear
 Its melancholy long withdrawing roar,
 Retreating, to the breath
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
 And naked shingles of the world."

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Once men believed in God and in a future life; once Christianity covered the whole world like the water of a sea: But to-day, in the age of new philosophy, in this age of scientific doubt, there is nothing left in the world but love-no rest, no happiness, no God to pray to. We are like people alone in darkness, in the middle of a great plain, where armies are fighting without light.

Although Arnold had lost his faith he heartily detested unethical materialism; and he would probably have preferred that Darwin had never been born that that should have been the result of his discoveries. This idea is clearly expressed in "Pis-Aller". If a man cannot find the kingdom of God within himself, then the next best thing is that he should find it without, rather than not at all.

Perhaps Arnold's chief statement of his philosophy of religion is in the fine poem "Obermann Once More". This is a higher strain than the first Obermann poem, but the redemption is not yet attained. The high emotion of a heart worn by sorrow fills these verses to the brim.

The poem presents a review of the world's spiritual history, and describes the weariness and satiety of the pagan world. This pagan world he thus portrays: sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare, knowing no pause in its action, puissant and alive.

"But, ah, its heart, its heart was a stone,

And so it could not thrive!"

Secret loathing fell on that sated world, while deep weariness and lust transformed it into a hell. Meanwhile the

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East beheld with awe this pagan world whilst gradually the life-giving Christianity poured upon it

"Poor world, she cried, so deep accurst,
That runn'st from pole to pole
To seek a draft to slake thy thirst-
Go, seek it in thy soul!

The West heard the call; she left everything behind,
her books, her courts, her palaces, and changed into a child-
and smiled! A wave of love sprang from Christ's open grave and
spread over the world to redeem and save it.

Oh! exclaims the poet, had I lived then, nothing
had been too hard for me

"When I could hourly scan
Upon the cross, with head sunk low,
That nailed, thorn-crowned Man!
Could see the Mother with her Child
Whose tender winning arts
Have to his little arms beguiled
So many wounded hearts!"

Although Arnold touches most closely upon the life of
Christ and the religion He founded, he says very little about Him,
but much about "our belief" and the feeling it inspired. The life
of Christ is forgotten or passed over, not because he does not
believe in it, but because to him the importance of religion lies,
not in its external reality, but in its sensible effect upon the
soul. Now we find the fact and our belief in the fact inextricably

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confused:

"And centuries came and ran their course,
And unspent all that time
Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,
And still was at its prime

Aye, ages long endured his span
Of life-'tis true received-
That gracious Child, that thorn-crowned Man!
He lived while we believed.

While we believed, on earth he went
And open stood his grave,
Men called from chamber, church and tent:
And Christ was by to save.

It seems, according to Arnold, that man employs his highest faculty to cast shadows in front of him to worship them afterwards. Again, the fervour of prayer is justified, not by the fact that there is a Supreme Being who listens to our prayers, but by our belief that there is such a one. The poet would fain galvanize himself into this belief but cannot for,

"Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
In the lorn Syrian town;
And on his grave, with shining eyes
The Syrian stars look down".

It is not surprising that Arnold pays so little attention

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to the person of Christ, for he can not believe that that person is divine. But what is amazing is to find that he could long for faith in Christ and convince himself that Christianity was this imagined belief in what the "brooding East" had evolved from her own thought. This is due to the poet's self absorption, his chief characteristic. The truth of religion does not seem to matter to him, so long as he can feel the religious emotion. When that has passed, he must create new emotions which will also pass and die. And he thinks, moreover, that such self-absorption is the teaching of Christ.

He continues-In vain men look at that "death-place dumb", and wait for words to come. And we hear the rationalistic teaching:

"Undeeped of fancy, henceforth man
Must labor!-must resign
His all too human creeds, and scan
Simply the way divine"

But the tide of Christianity ebbed away slowly; it wore to nothing

"Its frame yet stood without a breach
When blood and warmth were fled;
And still it spoke its wonted speech-
But every word was dead.

He next describes the direful effects of French rationalism:

"Down came the storm! O'er France it passed
In sheets of scathing fire:

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The old world fell in ruins; an intellectual outburst as strong
as the power of the elements of nature arose, but the results were
no better.

"Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
Your social order too!

Where tarries he, the Power who said:

See, I make all things new?

And still the multitudes suffer and agonize, and who
can assuage their pains with doctrines men only half believe?
Some new hope must be given to man or he will die in pain.

"But now the old is out of date,

The new is not yet born,

And who can be alone elate,

While the world lies forlorn?

There dawns belief in a new religion: it shall be
"one common thought and joy lifting up mankind"

It is belief but not hope. What shall be in the future
is not for the poet to share, for he is one of the past. The
hope of a glorious future for the world gives him no joy because
he feels so strongly the beauty and the charm of the past. He
is haunted by the remembrance of what was, and can hardly stand
to see the old world cast off the old emotions and faith. Yet
in "Bacchanalia" he pictures the new age-

Thundering and bursting

In torrents, in waves-

Caroling and shouting

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Over tombs, amid graves-
 See! on the cumbered plain
 Clearing a stage,
 Scattering the past about,
 Comes the new age.

Undoubtedly Arnold mourns over the skepticism of his age; but not because it hides from him the vision of God, but because it unfits the soul for action, or indeed contemplation. In "The Scholar Gypsy" he pictures again the paralysis of faith as he might call it, but there is not a word about the revelation of faith.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
 Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
 Who never deeply felt nor clearly willed,
 Whose insight never has borne fruit in deed.
 Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
 For whom each year we see
 Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
 Who hesitate and falter life away,
 And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day;
 Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

These lines express well how Arnold felt towards the loss of faith; he seems to lay most stress on this that we "never deeply felt".-Later, he begs the gypsy to fly our paths, our feverish contact, for he might become infected, distracted and unblest; soon his cheer would die, his hopes lessen; his youth would fade, grow old and die "like ours".

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The following quotation from Chesterton gives us a fair idea of Arnold's spiritual bearings:

"His attitude to that great religious Enigma round which all these great men were grouped as in a ring, was individual and decidedly curious. He seems to have believed that a "Historic Church", that is, some established organization with ceremonies and sacred books etc...could be perpetually preserved as a sort of vessel to contain the spiritual ideas of the age, whatever those ideas might happen to be. He clearly seems to have contemplated a melting away of the doctrines of the Church and even of the meaning of the words; but he thought a certain need in man would always be best satisfied by public worship and especially by the great religious literatures of the past. He would embalm the body that it might often be revisited by the soul-or souls. Something of the sort has been suggested by Dr. Coit and others of the ethical societies in our own time. But while Arnold would loosen the theological bonds of the Church, he would not loosen the official bonds of the State. You must not disestablish the Church; you must not even leave the Church: you must stop inside it and think what you choose. Enemies might say that he was simply trying to establish and endow Agnosticism. It is fairer and truer to say that unconsciously he was trying to restore Paganism: for this State Ritualism without theology, and without much belief, actually was the practice of the ancient world. Arnold may have thought that he was building an altar to the Unknown God; but he was really building it to Divus Caesar."

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It is small wonder that Chesterton has stigmatized Arnold's mode of thought as "more piercingly blasphemous than the shrieks of Schopenhauer".

Arnold often speaks of God, but it is important to us that we should realize what sort of concept he has of the Deity. He uses the word frequently, but he may use it in a signification which is not by any means Christian, nor perhaps even religious.

In "Our Masses and the Bible" he writes: "God was to Israel, neither an assumption, nor a metaphysical idea; he was a power that can be verified as much as the power of fire to burn or of bread to nourish: "the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness".-Surely that is an assumption and a purely metaphysical idea, altogether incompatible with Arnold's idea of religion, "morality touched with emotion". In thus making "the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness" the direct object of our acts of religion, we surely exclude all possibility of emotion from it!

Again, for science, he says, "God is simply the stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being". He admits that this definition is inadequate, and certainly a less proper phrase than "Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat". But then, he continues it is a scientific definition, which the other is not. He claims that the following is also a scientific definition of God because "it is admittedly certain and verifiable":- a Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe-

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He insists: When St. Paul says, that our business is to serve the spirit of God....he means that we should obey a tendency, which is not ourselves but which appears in our consciousness, by which things fulfil the real law of their being.

He explains that in the expression. "It is a good thing, to give thanks unto the Eternal....to sing praises unto our God", God or Eternal is really nothing more than a deeply moved way of saying conduct or righteousness. "Trust in God" simply means trust in the law of conduct, while "delight in the Eternal" is happiness we all feel to spring from conduct.

Sometimes "God" means, not the poet's idea of a Supreme Being, but the idea of goodness and justice personified. In one place we have a plain statement of sympathy with a Christian definition, but we must not suppose this sympathy to mean that the poet accepts the definition in the original meaning. He sympathises with it only because it symbolises for him a truth independent of any religion. The statement to which we refer is in a sonnet entitled "The Divinity".

"Yes, write it in the rock", Saint Bernard said,

Tis God himself becomes apparent, and

.....

For God of his attributes is made"

.....

God's wisdom and God's goodness-Ay but fools

Mis-define these till God knows them no more

Wisdom and goodness, they are God!-

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True it is, that God is wisdom and goodness, since He is perfection itself, but to call relative wisdom and relative goodness, "God" is certainly an error.

Evidently, the poet substitutes a nineteenth-century abstraction for the God of the Scriptures. It is not likely that so impalpable an object could draw out of itself a soul like his own. And herein we may find the cause of his self-concentration. We do not mean to say that Arnold's religion is uniformly self-centered, for there are many passages that speak of a "way divine", of an "unseen Power whose eye forever doth accompany mankind", of "Friend of man". But habitual reference to a Power is not characteristic of his poetry. And even when he does refer to it, it is doubtful whether his pantheistic tendencies do not make him regard the Power as the sum total of the individual souls of mankind:

We

Myriads who live, who have lived
What are we all, but a mood,
A single mood, of the life
Of the spirit in whom we exist,
Who alone is all things in one? (Heine's Grave)

Whether this is pantheism or not, there are several passages in the poet's works which seem to express the loss of personality in death, and the re-absorption of soul into the one Spirit; yet, the contrary is suggested at times, as in "Rugby Chapel".

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The Protestants, having taken the Bible as their only rule of faith, made no distinction between inspiration and revelation itself. In the seventeenth century, there developed the belief that every human soul was taught by the Holy Ghost independently of every human rule, and secondly, the belief in the right of private judgment, in reading and studying the Bible.

In spite of various theories which conflicted with one another, the Bible was still held as the criterion of religious belief. To rob it of this prerogative was the work which the eighteenth century set itself to accomplish. The traditional views, however, were not abandoned without resistance, a movement back to the old theopneustia, including verbal inspiration, ⁽¹⁾ set in nearly everywhere in the first half of the nineteenth century. This reaction was called the "Reveil". Its labours at first evoked interest and sympathy, but were destined to fail before the efforts of a counter-reaction, led in England, by S.T. Coleridge, F.D. Maurice and Matthew Arnold. According to them, the ancient dogma of the theopneustia is not to be reformed, but given up altogether. The deplorable result was the conclusion that the Bible errs, not only in profane matters, but in those appertaining more or less to religion, since the prophets and Christ, Himself, according to them, did not possess absolute infallibility.

Arnold lived at a time when the old foundations of the Christian faith were no longer accepted without inquiry, at least among a certain group of people. They were dug down to, exposed to the dry light of science, and to a searching investigation.

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The criticism of German scholars had seemed to throw the gravest doubt on the history of the Gospels; scientific discoveries and historical criticism had invaded the Old Testament; and both had begun to shatter the belief in the inspiration of the Bible.

The stormy waves had reached Oxford when Arnold was a student. At the same time, there were voices in the air, the voices of the Tractarian Movement, but Arnold remained unaffected by them. He succumbed, on the contrary, to the scientific agnosticism of the "higher criticism of his time and lost his faith in orthodox Christianity. He retained, however, its ethics as his religion, which, in the defect of dogma, resolved itself into a system of "morality touched with religion".

As for his "higher criticism in general, it is best summed up by a contemporary reviewer of "Literature and Dogma" in the Dublin Review:

"He (Arnold) denies the Bible's inspiration..... and yet goes systematically to find the true religion in its pages. He reminds us very much of a distinguished Irish gentleman who was asked by a friend of his some time during the night what o'clock it was. "Bedad", he replied, "I don't know: but wait a minute, I'll light a match and go look at the sundial". Mr. Arnold lighted his candle-he went (let us say) to the sundial; but he had previously-naughty giant-snuffed the sun from the heavens.

Arnold was profoundly convinced of the value of the

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Bible, because of its moral teaching and literary beauty, and because it was a powerful factor, making for stability and dignity in the life of the nation. He felt that professional defenders of the Bible were conducting their defence in a manner that was bound to ensure their defeat. Free thought must be accepted, he claimed, "The free thinking of one generation is the common sense of the next". "Miracles do not happen". he says, and further claims that "all Biblical miracles will disappear with the progress of science. "The attribution of personality to God is mere poetry and metaphor. The Bible is to be regarded consequently, as literature, but not dogma!

On the question of miracles especially, he is very aggressive. He treats the subject at great length in "Literature and Dogma". The substitution of some other proof of Christianity than miracles is to be desired, he states, by those who most think Christianity of importance. Christ proved his Sonship by miracles. But many people no longer believe that miracles happen! Christians realize now that they arise out of, either ignorance or mistake. The human mind, as its experience widens, is passing away from its belief in miraculous interventions, for it sees how they arise.

He continues on the same topic: Roman Catholics fancy that Bible-miracles and the miracles of their Church form a class by themselves: Protestants fancy that Bible-miracles alone, form a class by themselves. Notions such as these as our knowledge widens cannot be saved from being seen to be mere extravagances.

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One of two things must be made out in order to place either the Bible miracles alone, or the Bible-miracles of the Catholic Church with them, in a class by themselves. Either, they must be shown to have arisen in a time eminently unfavourable to such a process, to amplification and to the production of legend: or they must be shown to be recorded in documents of an eminently historical mode of birth and publication. But it is manifest that the Bible-miracles fulfil neither of these conditions.

Then he proceeds to say that there is nothing one would more desire than to make the Bible independent of miracles. One of the very best helps to prepare the way for valuing the Bible and believing in Jesus Christ, is to convince oneself of the liability to mistakes in the Bible-writers. The fatal thing is that its owner stabs it to the heart the minute he uses any palliation or explaining away, however small, of the literal words of the Bible, and some they always use-So to profit by the New Testament is to make it clear that its reporters, both could err and did err. And now he attempts to show that the writers were liable to make mistakes not only in fact, but also in argument. This recognition will more and more gain strength, and spread wider and wider, he claims. The fallibility of that demonstration from miracles which made the followers of Jesus and the people believe in Him, will be more and more recognized.

The objections to miracles do and will more and more make their own force felt; and the sanction of Christianity, will have to be found elsewhere.

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What does Arnold think of Catholicism? Read his definition:
That form of Christianity which is fullest of human accretions and superstitions, because it is the oldest, the largest, and the most popular....Its dogma and its confident assertions of its dogma are no more a real source of strength and permanence to the Catholic Church than its Ultramontaniam.

The following are excerpts about the Catholic Church taken from "Literature and Dogma":-The idea of the infallible Catholic Church itself is an idea the most fatal of all possible ideas to the concrete, so called infallible, Church of Rome, such as we now see it. The infallible Church Catholic is really, the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming of things to come.-It is with the Pope himself as with the Church Catholic. That amiable old pessimist in St. Peter's chair, whose allocutions we read and call them important and vain-the Pope himself is, in his idea, the very Time-Spirit taking flesh, the incarnate "Zeit-Geist":-The Bible is not a talisman, to be taken and used literally; neither is any existing Church a talisman, whatever pretensions of the sort it may make, for giving the right interpretation of the Bible-Miracles, the main stay of popular religion, are beginning to dissolve, but what are we to expect during the process? Probably... vehement efforts at reaction, a recrudescence of superstition: the passionate resolve to keep hold on what is slipping away from them by giving up more and more the use of reason in religion, and by resting more and more on authority. The Church of Rome is the great upholder of authority as against reason in religion: and it

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will be strange if in the coming time of transition the Church of Rome does not gain.

The real superiority of the Church, he claims, is in the charm of the imagination, its poetry,-Among his religious opinions, it is interesting to note, in passing, his imperfect sympathy with Nonconformity, and his feeling for the poetry of Catholic worship. The sweetness and light of Catholicism-shines forth abundantly in his account of the beauty of holiness, as illustrated by St. Francis, Lacordaire, and Eugenie de Guerin. Catholic devotional literature especially attracted him: he never wearied of thumbing "The Imitation of Christ" as many a jotting in his notebooks and many a passage in his letters attest, and in his essays he has recognized the beauty and practicality of the a Kempis view of life.

With a consistency seldom found in Arnold's writings, he proceeded from the denial of the inspiration of Holy Scripture to the denial of a directive norm of morality other than expediency:

"What is law in one place is not law in another, what is law here today is not law even here to-morrow; and as for conscience, what is binding on one man's conscience is not binding on another". (Function of Criticism.....)

"If it is the sound doctrine that all rights are created by law and are based on expediency, and are alterable as the public advantage may require, certainly that orthodox doctrine is mine." (Equality)

In his denial of the inspiration of Holy Scripture

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and of a God-given norm of morality, Arnold's personal history was but the repeated history of the Renaissance in its rejection of the Christian ideal and its blind pursuit of pagan culture. The result was to be a hybrid of intellect and spirit that failed to imitate either its Athenian model or the Christian ideal which it had divorced.

Arnold went so far as to prophesy that poetry would supplant religion. He writes:

"The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry.... our race...will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed that is not shaken, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve, not an accredited dogma that is not to be shown to be questionable." (Literature and Dogma).

In 1874, he wrote to his sister:

"There is a levity which is altogether evil; but to treat miracles and the common anthropomorphic ideas of God as what one may lose and yet keep one's hope, courage, and joy, as what are not really matters of life and death in the keeping of them, this is desirable and necessary, if one holds, as I do, that the common anthropomorphic ideas of God and the reliance on miracles must and will inevitably pass away. This I say not to pain you but to make my position clear to you" (Men and Letters.-H.Paul).

But Arnold manifests his materialistic norm of judgment especially when he estimates character rather than things. In "Marcus Aurelius" we read:

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"Marcus Aurelius was the ruler of the grandest of empires; and he was one of the best of men. Besides him, history presents one or two sovereigns eminent for their goodness, such as Saint Louis or Alfred. But Marcus Aurelius has, for us moderns, this great superiority in interest over Saint Louis or Alfred, that he lived and acted in a state of society modern by its essential characteristics, in an epoch akin to our own, in a brilliant centre of civilization. Trajan talks of "our enlightened age" just as glibly as the Times talks of it. Marcus Aurelius thus becomes for us a man like ourselves, a man in all things tempted as we are. Saint Louis inhabits an atmosphere of mediaeval Catholicism, which the man of the nineteenth century may admire, indeed, may even passionately wish to inhabit, but which, strive as he will, he cannot really inhabit. Alfred belongs to a state of society (I say it with all deference to the Saturday Review critic who keeps such jealous watch over the honour of our Saxon ancestors) half barbarous. Neither Alfred nor Louis can be morally and intellectually as near to us as Marcus Aurelius."

Of Goethe in "A French Critic on Goethe" he writes:-
Goethe is the greatest poet of modern times....because, having a very considerable gift for poetry he was at the same time, in

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width, depth, and richness of his criticism of life. by far our greatest modern man. Yet Arnold tells us himself in "Testimonium Animae" that "Wilhelm Meister" is founded on the German poet's own life story. If it is so, surely no one would want to say that Goethe is the greatest modern man. For it becomes amazingly evident to one who has read "Wilhelm Meister" that it presents few other elements of romance than illicit love. Of the strolling actors and actresses, the greatest number is addicted to loose living and moral corruption, and such immoral principles as the following: to have only one paramour constitutes a young woman "a good girl".

Of George Sand, the Voltairean child who had made up a religion of her own out of a compound of mythology and fairy stories; of the admirer of Spinoza and Leibnitz; of the enemy of the clergy if not of religion: of this child of passion Arnold writes in "George Sand":-

"There will remain to mankind an admiring and ever widening report of that great and ingenuous soul, simple, affectionate, without vanity, without pedantry, human, equitable, patient, kind".

in view of her ill-famed life, Arnold's praise sounds cruelly ironical, but it was sincere, and he closed the essay on George Sand with the quotation. "Expectat resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi".

Shelley is "in poetry no less than in life-a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the wind his luminous wings in

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vain"-"As a man Byron could not manage himself, could not guide his ways aright, but was all astray". Yet, in the same essay we read: "How profoundly felt his vital influence, the influence of his splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength". This last judgment is shocking when compared with the facts of his life, but it is rather unintelligible in the light of Arnold's admission that Byron was "all astray".

All these quotations illustrate Arnold's inconsistency, a defect which shows prominent in nearly everything he wrote: "It made of him a human anomaly, a pagan living in a Christian age and a critic with warm enthusiasm for the achievement of Ancient Greece that wrought for the glory of human intellect, but only coldness and indifference for the achievement of Christianity that wrought for the glory of God and for the subjection of man's intellect and will to His.

Chapter V

The Effects of the Religious Beliefs of Tennyson, Browning and Arnold on English Literature.

One can trace the effects of the religious beliefs and teachings of Tennyson, Browning and Arnold on English Literature by describing their influence on the life of their fellowmen. And what is life, if not thought, and hope, and love and suffering, and desire, and ambition. Life is warfare with alternating spasms of fear, and bursts of courage, of despair and of triumph. Life is hunger and thirst for truth. It is a craving for what seems unattainable. Now, all these things, human hopes and fears, sufferings and cravings are the real subject of literature. Its purpose is to reveal man to himself, and even to reveal God to man.

Great prophets who can read both the mind of God and the heart of man are not very numerous in any age. However, even in the nineteenth century, we have a few minor prophets. If they do not enjoy unbroken communication with the Truth, they have at least moments when hearing the heavenly whisper and being in touch with God, they influence our souls. They tell us about God and about man, about what we are, and what is the cause of the unspeakable groanings of our hearts.

It is thought sometimes that religion hampers and even cripples the energy and output of human genius. But such is not the case. Religion is to the poet a life-giving and strengthening force, a tree bearing forth perennial fruit for the healing of

the nations: it is nourishment, light and air, for the human soul, and therefore it is ever an inspirer of good literature.

The lamentable fruits of the loss or rejection of religion in the nineteenth century resulted as always in the gloom, bitterness, recklessness, immorality, despair of so many spirits capable of incomparably better things. Such writers wasted away in barren revolt against truth, in the futility and mire of mere human passion. For without religion, they lacked the most potent stimulus, guide, and support in noble creative work, the most inspiring revelation of truth and beauty. What blindness can be so calamitous to the poet as the darkness that is blind to God's fatherhood and providence, blind to the love manifested in Christ's redemption!

If certain religious poets, like Tennyson, Browning and even Arnold did not always bring out truthfully the part played by religion and the Church, they at least stifled sensualism and diffused some life and light. It is true their literature was Protestantized, but they at least represented some of the truths that lie deepest and bloom fairest in the human mind. Far removed indeed were they from the Middle Ages when religion, as the highest thing, encircled both poetry and reality, and every heart in unquestioning allegiance humbled itself before her.

As Newman says in "The Idea of a University", "Man's work will savor of man: in his element and power, excellent and admirable, but prone to disorder and excess, to error and to sin. Such, too, will be his literature; it will have the beauty and the

fierceness and the rankness, of the natural man, and, with all its richness and greatness, it will necessarily offend the senses of those who, in the Apostle's words, are really exercised to the discerning of good and evil".

There is one more important statement of the famous Cardinal that should be repeated here as it bears directly on our topic. How dominant in English Literature the Protestant Tradition has been for the last three hundred and fifty years we gather from his opinion that the very English language became, during that period Protestantized. This is evidently not an exaggeration. There can be no doubt as to the strength of the Protestant Tradition in English literature. If one reads the works of literary writers of the nineteenth century, he will never even suspect the immense influence exerted upon English thought by the Catholic Church during that period or the preceding period. The one business of that tradition is to protest loudly or quietly against the Catholic Church. But we can hardly expect non-Catholic writers like Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, to bring out truthfully the part played by religion and the Catholic Church. Ever since the Reformation with its pillage of colleges and monasteries, destruction of Church books and manuscripts, a general killing of the aesthetic sense began which culminated in the hideousness of the Victorian era.

Such poets as the three we are interested in stand in strange contrast to Byron and Shelley and others who will always remain sad examples of the ruin caused by lack of religion-by an education wholly un-Catholic. They wrecked their own lives

and helped wreck those of others while Coleridge and Dequincey vie with them, having ruined their careers, by the use of opium.

Compared to them certainly Tennyson, Browning and Arnold can be called outstanding religious poets especially when we remember that they lived in an age when anti-religious literature and history were undermining the very foundations of faith.

As far as Tennyson's writings are concerned, they show that the author would have religious sincerity respected, and all creeds pull together. He felt that the power of an "organized religion" was needed by mankind, wishing the Church of England to embrace all the sects. That he took a very great interest in the religious problems does not seem evident in his poetry. From "In Memoriam" onwards religion is a prominent subject in his works; before that it was subordinate.

To all who are alive to moral influence, it is an indubitable fact that Tennyson's influence has been widespread in the regions of life and thought. L.Hearn writes of him in "Appreciations of Poetry": "Probably his influence will be felt for hundreds of years to come. In spite of the predictions of Matthew Arnold and others, that influence is growing. And it is an influence not only artistic and philosophical, but also educational and moral in the highest degree. The whole English world from Great Britain to India, from Canada in the North down to South Africa and Australia in the other hemisphere, studies Tennyson, and will long continue to study him".

The greatest mistake of the nineteenth century was to

believe that the intellectual basis of Christian doctrine about God and man and their mutual relations could be abolished without in any way impairing morals. While dogmas were considered impossible, ethics were still judged indispensable. Practically all advanced Victorian minds proceeded on the assumption that the religious beliefs of a nation could be obliterated without affecting its moral standards. The literature of the time was moulded vastly on that principle. But whatever has come, or is coming out of "Victorian " materialism, some things are as clear as they were to the calmer faith-full saints of all ages, and so also to Tennyson:- there is no rest for the spirit of man in dreary, hopeless irreligion; and wherever the wings of Christianity are clipped, public and private morals are degraded, and man becomes voluptuous and hard-hearted. And against such an end of man, "In Memoriam" is at least a strong protest. Tennyson lived in his age and wrote from it, in revolt against what he thought to be its main stream, stretching his lame hands of faith.

In an age of great ethical uncertainty, the acknowledged leader of English literature consistently upheld a lofty ideal of purity, which is such a gain to the national life that it can hardly be overestimated. It is not an easy task to combine a poet's temperament, sensitive, as Tennyson's poems show, to all human passions and emotions, with the self-control and just insight into moral and religious forces, which in Tennyson made him such a great teacher of purity. The moral influence of Tennyson, especially in the realm of pure womanhood, has been

felt for a century and has proved an actual benefit, to the full value of which we are for the most part ingratefully blind. In the keen conflict between flesh and the higher spiritual faculty, Tennyson leaves no doubt which side he is taking. In several places in the poems the thought takes the form of a certain fear lest even in old age the struggle between the two principles should continue and the soul be worsted. This is the painful subject of "Lucretius": it gives moral force to "Merlin and Vivian". It inspires the thankfulness with which the issue of the conflict is proclaimed in one of the latest poems, "By an Evolutionist"

If my body come from brutes, though some-
 what 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 drug me
 from the throne,
 Hold the scepter, Human Soul, and rule
 thy province of the brute.

I have climbed 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.

Literature is not ethics, yet it expresses the morality of the nation whose life it interprets. And thus Tennyson has left stamped on the literature of the English-speaking world the impress of his admiration for purity. He has been one of the great forces of our time, making for purity against sensuality, With unmistakable force, that is neither diverted nor aided by subtle reasonings, he has proclaimed in a clear and resonant voice the necessity of the victory of the soul over the flesh, if religious progress is to be accomplished and the will set free. Thus Tennyson was able to purify thought and to stir the religious feelings of the ordinary man and writer. He lived as a complete, consistent, spiritual force. He looked out upon the world about him, up to God, and down into his own soul, read there the hidden meanings, and proclaimed them to the world. He had a high purpose and uttered great truths, and taught noble lessons. He shows a loftiness of soul, a nobility of purpose, a grasp of mind, that have been surpassed in literature only by Milton.

Martineau thought that Tennyson's poetry created, or at least immeasurably intensified the susceptibility of religious reverence among thousands of readers, previously irresponsive to anything divine, while it exerted a "dissolving influence upon the over-definite dogmatic creeds." By exposing the history of his own soul, he told the story of an age which he

thus brought into self-knowledge. In a skeptical and material age, Tennyson, keenly alive both to its doubts and to its scientific achievements, has persistently formed his generation to dwell on the spiritual. And his influence has undoubtedly guided the nation and prevented a total wreck of faith.

Closely allied to Tennyson's love of, and admiration for, purity is his insistence on self-control which recurs again and again in his poems. In a world where, according to Belloc, man was presumed to have been liberated from religious authority; where democracy was presumed to have given him political liberty, evolution made his progress not only possible, but certain-in a world where everyone is his own master, Tennyson advocates law and order as strict rules of conduct, disorder as the antithesis of rational existence. Disorder he saw disturbing the life around him and he loathed it and taught men to loathe it, and to hold fast to those elements in life that make for stability. It is difficult to realize what the literature of England would have been and what its results without the moderating influence of Tennyson's teachings in an age of revolutions and public agitations of all kinds. His own respect for law inspires others to feel as he does towards lawlessness and license. Some critic, censuring what he calls Tennyson's compromise, says that although it is good to cry out for more reverence, it is better still to strive for greater progress, and quotes Browning's assertions: "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" We know how far this excessive desire for progress and license has led certain

nations in their hope of unlimited prosperity, "their onward, upward march to the tune of evolution, on to the Golden Age of material well-being and earthly happiness". (Belloc) Freedom in those days, as in ours, soon degenerated into a form of selfishness, frowned upon all forms of restraint and sacrifice as injurious to the individual libido, thus ending in the glorification of the ego.

In such circumstances, Tennyson expresses a constant and controlling sense of law and order. He is in the opposite camp from the poets of revolt. Harmony is essential to his conception of duty. His patriotism is sober, steadfast, thoughtful, law-abiding. His love always moves within the bonds of order, purity, and reverence. His conception of power is never akin to blind force, but carries within itself the higher elements of intelligence and voluntary restraint. There is no doubt, then, that his point of view in these matters, his respect for law because the lawgiver is God, proved a great corrective to the modern anarchic tendencies both in life and in literature. For if literature has at times restored peace, it has also made war; if it has raised men to the shining feet of God, it has also led them to hell. Bearing this in mind, we realize more fully the religious message of Tennyson to his and future generations. No doubt he regarded himself as an interpreter, as a revealer of truth. He believed that he had a message to deliver to the world, and he devoted his life and his powers to the delivery of this message. In the words of Legouis and Cazamian, he knew that even his own religious beliefs were menaced and he became their defenders. He has therefore a

philosophy-that of an age when faith is the prize of victory, and remains open to obsessing doubts.

Standing, as it were, upon a watch tower in an age charged with perplexities and questionings, seeing with open eyes the anxieties and the despair of his generation, he proclaimed deliverance by faith-or at least by hope. Amid the many challenging cries of the last century, there was heard from time to time the voice of one who sounded a call challenging men to believe in God and to trust in Him. In "In Memoriam" Tennyson presented courageous face to the new theories and discoveries, and proclaimed a universal law founded on love sprung from God, that ultimately will show perfect order where now is conflict. Hope in the spiritual world is his theme. He sings of doubt and man's perplexity and the reactions of science which, it was thought, would soon supplant the belief in God and the supernatural: of hope that the eternal law would set conflicting views aright, of immortality, and undying love finding fruition in the immensity of God's love.

Tennyson made it clear to many doubtful and troubled minds that, in spite of the triumphs of naturalism, it was still possible, and even necessary, to hold fast to faith in human freedom, in God, and in personal immortality.

Tennyson was very much interested in science, and his acceptance of it was quite sincere. It was this fact especially that lent weight to his message particularly to his own generation. His concessions to science, and his concise statement of the purely scientific position interested and attracted the scientist, while

his presentment of the doubter's case captivated the religious waverer, and the theologian welcomed the triumph of faith embodied in his works. Ever docile to the teachings of science, Tennyson gives us God and immortality, at least those fundamentally important religious truths without which man cannot live a spiritual life. While the vastness of scientific discoveries stunned certain minds, it served to stimulate others to reach greater heights of spiritual truth. While some writers never emerged from the shadow of doubt, we can at least say that the greatest literature of the age echoes the principles of faith and hope taught by Tennyson and Browning. Some writers, like Matthew Arnold, never emerged from the doubts thus raised. Lines like these from Swinburne present a gloomy picture of "the sleep eternal", with which materialism endeavored to solace the weary:

"We thank with brief thanksgiving
 Whatever gods may be
 That no life lives forever
 That dead men rise up never;
 That even the weariest river
 Winds somewhere safe to sea.

"Then star nor sun shall waken
 Nor any change of light;
 Nor sound of waters shaken
 Nor any sound or sight;
 Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,

Nor days nor things diurnal;
 Only the sleep eternal
 In an eternal night."

Here one must pause to consider the question of evolution, or else fail to realize how very important are the attitudes of Tennyson and Browning in the turmoil caused by this doctrine in the nineteenth century. Readers of "In Memoriam" know how earnestly Tennyson has attempted to reconcile the science which he had studied so deeply with the religion which many believed to be undermined by it. Readers of "Locksley Hall; Sixty Years After" realize how passionately he protested against the merely material interpretation of the universe. Of all the poems of Tennyson, "In Memoriam" is saturated with astronomy. The teaching of geology has gone home to the writer. He has glimmerings of evolution even before its birth, for the popular discussion of evolution had begun years before the publication of "The Origin of the Species". And Dr. A. Bradley writes: "Tennyson is the only one of our great poets to whose habitual way of seeing, imagining, or thinking, it makes any real difference that Laplace, or for that matter, Copernicus, ever lived."

The Frenchman, Laplace published in 1799 a Treatise on Celestial Mechanics. Newton, who was a devoutly religious man, held that God made the solar system in a moment of time. Laplace put forward the nebular hypothesis. At the same time geologists were at work classifying the substances composing the earth's surface and vividly presented to the British public by Lyell's

Principles of Geology in 1830. Lamarck working in Paris suggested in 1815 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.

Such was, roughly speaking, the state of evolutionary theory. "The Revelation of Chaos", Lyell's Book, altered the whole tone of Darwin's mind; but the theory of natural selection, which is 'Darwinism' in the proper sense of the word, occurred to him after reading Malthus's Essay on Population. Malthus had taught that living creatures multiply in a geometrical progression, whereas the means of life increase much more slowly. In 1859 Darwin published "The Origin of the Species", and in 1871, he extended the scope of his argument by publishing "The Descent of Man". Laplace had no need for the 'hypothesis' of God. For a large number of people it was a simple, though an entirely illogical step to say that if natural science had no need for God, then God was non-existent. As Darwin's theory was ignorantly assumed by some, to have also dispensed with any need of God, that idea was temporarily at least obliterated from the minds of men as well as from their hearts. There arose, then, that long Victorian conflict called the conflict between science and religion, although it might be better to call it the conflict between some scientists and some religionists. There were scientists who became intoxicated by the discoveries of science, and asserted that nothing existed but matter and force, while some religious people neglected the plain common-sense rule that it is well to understand

your opponent's case, and the facts upon which it rests, before entering into argument with him.

We must mention one result of the publication of Darwin's "The Origin of the Species" and of the unfortunate manner in which it was met by those who would have been well advised to have exercised more caution and discretion in their attitude towards it. This serious result was the loss of faith in revelation on the part of a large number of perfectly honest and even reluctant persons. Those of the mid-Victorian era had no doubts in their minds that religion and all it entails had come to judgment, and been dismissed with costs. There are excellent people who really believe that if the Sacred Scriptures in his own tongue were placed in the hands of a heathen who can read, he must ipso facto become a Christian. In quite the same way the tendency of the mid-Victorian age was to suppose that a careful perusal of Darwin's works was enough to shatter the faith of the stoutest.

It is perhaps not wonderful that with the great burst of scientific knowledge which marked the second half of the century, there should arise the idea that science could and would prove the key to all mysteries. The cocksure attitude of the Victorian is that which believed that any rational man who looked into these things could have but one opinion about them. That was that we neither could, nor need endeavor, to know anything about God, our souls, a future life, or other such vain speculations of theologians and philosophers.

Could there be any necessary conflict between science

and theology, or between reason and faith?-Reason is pre-eminently the instrument through which scientists arrive at truth, while both reason and faith are the instruments employed by theologians. Science in the sense in which it has been used from the sixteenth century, has been defined as "a well-criticised body of descriptive knowledge based on observation and experiment". Theology-that is, dogmatic theology, not natural theology-may be defined as "the science which from principles derived from revelation and with the aid of reason treats of God and creatures as they are related to God".

Faith and reason are simply two ways of knowing. We may know the universe and its contents simply through our senses and intellectual processes; while beyond the veil of sense and natural reason there are hidden mysteries which we could not know at all unless God revealed them, and then only if he vouchsafed to us the gift of faith. This is the realm of the supernatural. St. Paul insisted on the fact that our faith is based not on the wisdom of men but on the wisdom of God. He says, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom is hidden, which God ordained before the world unto glory; which none of the princes of this world knew.. But to us God hath revealed them, by his spirit. For the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God".

Contradictions or conflicts may easily be believed to exist between faith and reason when either the dogmas of the faith are not sufficiently understood or expounded according to the mind of the Church, or mere conjectural opinions are accepted as final

pronouncements of the reason. The conflicts that have arisen are due to one of two things: Either scientists have invaded the field of religion by making experimental observation the sole norm of religious truth; or theologians have trespassed on the territory of scientists by unduly deducing scientific conclusions from theological principles.

How deep and bitter was this conflict we realize on reading Huxley, the outstanding figure on the side of the evolutionists, and "Darwin's bulldog". As a contributor to scientific research, he was not in the first rank of the scientists, but he was a writer that the public liked. He made no secret of his dislike of the clergy, nor of his "untiring opposition to that ecclesiastical spirit, that clericalism which in England, as everywhere else, and to whatever denomination it may belong, is the deadly enemy of science". He rejoiced that evolution "in addition to its truth has the great merit of being in a position of irreconcilable antagonism to that vigorous enemy of the highest life of mankind-the Catholic Church."

"Life is the pulse of literature-literature marks the movements of the tendencies of life. It progresses as the individual progresses; it progresses as the nation progresses-Life cannot escape from its Creator, and literature, pulsating with life, acknowledges His power. Leopardi, Carducci, Swinburne...curse the flaming sword that will not allow Pan to come back to earth. Leopardi asks for death; Carducci and Swinburne yearn for the time before the Galilean had conquered. They express tendencies of life,

not merely themselves, God, who is the centre of life, is the centre of the written expression of life, which is literature"(M.F.Egan). And while souls are harassed and perplexed by doubts and anxieties about religion, Tennyson gives the world his masterpiece "In Memoriam". As he had on the one hand always welcomed scientific advance, he had also respected doubt. What he had always deplored was the encroachment of materialism into spiritual affairs, and the animosities engendered by differences of opinion. He was a believer in progress, and no pessimist. He saw the difficulties the discouragements that press men on every side. They pressed hard on him also, but they did not overcome him because he trusted that ultimately the good must prevail. The reason why men draw courage from Tennyson in their religious perplexities is that while he saw clearly the doubts, the perplexities, the religious drift of his age, he himself passed triumphant through the agonizing search for light, with triumphant faith, at least faith as he understood it. He knew what it is

To finger idly some old Gordian knot
Unskilled to sunder and too weak to cleave,
And much toil attain to half-believe.

We are told that the hold which "In Memoriam" has taken upon the minds of men must be attributed greatly to its prophetic qualities. It is an interpretation of the deepest religious yearnings and philosophic problems of his time, or even ours, at least in the non-Catholic world.

The poet forces his way through despondency, doubt and

despair and finally emerges into resignation with trust in the Unseen Power that is guiding all creation to some far-off divine event. He is impelled by his own passionate grief to dwell upon the contrast between irremediable human suffering and the calm aspect of inanimate nature, between the short and sorrowful days of man and the long procession of ages. From the thought of being environed by forces that are blind and relentless, he finds his ultimate escape in the conviction that God and nature cannot be at strife, that friends will meet and know each other again hereafter, and that somehow good will be the final goal of all.

Henry Sidgwick whose clear and intrepid spirit never faltered before intellectual doubts describes in a letter the impression made on him and others of his time by "In Memoriam".

"The most important influence of 'In Memoriam' on my thought,....opened in a region, if I may so say, deeper down than the difference between Theism and Christianity: it lay in the unparalleled combination of intensity of feeling with comprehensiveness of view and balance of judgment, shown in presenting the deepest needs and perplexities of humanity. And this influence, I find, has increased rather than diminished as years have gone on, and as the great issues between Agnostic Science and Faith have become continually more prominent. In the sixties I should say that these deeper issues were somewhat obscured by the discussions on Christian

dogma, and Inspiration of Scripture, etc... During these years we were absorbed in struggling for freedom of thought in the trammels of a historical religion; and perhaps what we sympathized with most in 'In Memoriam' at this time, apart from the personal feeling, was the defence of 'honest doubt' the reconciliation of knowledge and faith in the introductory poem and the hopeful trumpet-ring of the lines on the New Year... Well, the years pass, the struggle with what Carlyle used to call 'Hebrew old clothes' is over. Freedom is won, and what does Freedom bring us to? It brings us face to face with atheistic science; the faith in God and Immortality, which we had been struggling to clear from superstition, suddenly seems to be in the air; and in seeking for a firm basis for this faith we find ourselves in the midst of the 'fight with death' which 'In Memoriam' so powerfully presents."

The whole letter found in the "Mémoir" is a fair indication of the effect produced by "In Memoriam" upon men of sincere minds who resolutely confronted the facts of human existence, yet were not satisfied to consider the problem as insoluble. Some endeavoured to show that the conclusions of science could be reconciled with the orthodox traditions; others, like Newman, declared rightly that there was no conflict at all;

but Tennyson saw that a serious conflict was inevitable. It seemed to him that the scientific men might place in jeopardy the very dogmas of Christianity, the belief in a future life, in the soul's conscious immortality. The poet transfigured these obstinate questionings into the vision of

"an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep"

He asks: Shall man ,

"Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who baffled for the true, the just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?"

After long strivings with his doubts and fears, he resolves that we cannot be "wholly brain, magnetic mockeries"-

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

In this manner, Tennyson, although he believed in evolution, made his stand against the encroachments of Science upon the spiritual domain. And this while Darwin was writing:

"Believing, as I do, that man in the distant
future will be a far more perfect creature
than he now is, it is an intolerable thought
that he, and all other sentient beings are
doomed to complete annihilation after such

long-continued slow progress."

Instead of causing them to lose their faith in God, evolution impressed on both Tennyson and Browning the necessity of a hand that never wearies, or guides wrong in the labyrinthine mazes of eternity. By "tight-lacing creeds" Tennyson would not be bound, but he firmly believed and taught his fellowmen to believe firmly in some indissoluble tie between the Creator and his creature.

In his final standpoint Tennyson is a contrast to Browning. His is the attitude of faith, because it is also that of doubt; he does not see how good can be the goal of ill, but he trusts. Even Browning is not always faithful to knowledge, but his is the attitude of philosophy; he faces the difficulty and reasons it out.

"Is evil a result less necessary than good".

he asks, and he brings both good and evil into reasoned connexion with the scheme of the universe.

It is not an easy task to estimate the influence of Tennyson on the literature of his country, because it is always difficult to appraise the original value of teaching which has long been absorbed into the common stock of thought and belief. And Tennyson's words cannot come to us with the fresh power that they came to his contemporaries. Again, it is an arduous task because Tennyson was not perhaps as great a teacher as Browning and Wordsworth, although he wanted to help his fellowmen and lead them on to truth. He tells us himself: I do

not cry against the age as hopelessly bad, but try to point out where it is bad in order that each individual may do his best to redeem it: as the evils I denounce are individual... to be cured by each man looking to his own heart, I denounced evil in all its shapes especially those considered venial by the world and society.

As many argue, Tennyson's greatest work "In Memoriam" offers no solutions to the problems of the day. But, it was enough for many minds to have their vague anxieties put into words; they read the poem and were vaguely comforted. What has made it a source of real strength and consolation is the conviction that, in spite of his keen sense of the difficulties encompassing souls, still he, the poet himself can retain his faith. That such a mind, passing through such an experience, could still trust is consolation enough to many who share his sorrows and his doubts. The poet means to teach hope and trust. In fact, we know that he emphasizes the impossibility of proving truth. At the close of his life his one prayer is that doubt may perish.

"Steel me with patience! soften me with grief!
while I pray,
 Till this embattled wall of unbelief,
 My prison, not my fortress, fall away".

It is to be regretted that Tennyson did not confirm his teachings by his faith in Jesus Christ and in His Resurrection from the dead. Perhaps he thought that the appeal

would be more effective if he dealt only with the conclusions drawn from the laws of human nature, and left the objective facts of Christian faith to be proclaimed by others. He was himself very certain of the living Presence of Christ in the world and in his own life. In fact, having approached Christ as a man, he came to worship Him as a God, and to live intimately with Him. We are told that Tennyson, walking one day in his garden with a visitor and talking intimately of his relationship to Christ, pointed to a flower and said: "What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to me".

What wonders would not our poet have accomplished in shaping the thoughts of men, had he probed deeper the ultimate problems of man's mortality! Yet some claim that this reserve, arising from his self-mastery rather than from any indifference may in the end prove his greatest strength and still keep him at the head of the Victorian generation of poets. We must allow the criticism that he never pursued his greater themes to the point where the real difficulties commenced, that he settled himself into the easy compromises and acquiescences of a naturally conservative spirit. Perhaps we have expected too much of Tennyson he is neither a logician nor an argumentative disputant. True it is that he propounds a middle way between the materialistic science of his day and dogmatic Christianity. True also it is that his solution was an undogmatic religion that was at bottom intuitional, as we saw previously. Historic Christianity scarcely weighs with him at all. It is claimed also that the religion given to the

poet involved so many dogmatic requirements that Tennyson could not give to it an honest expression of belief. The subjective religious sense; the need of God for the individual soul, as also for social justice, this consciousness even of God's existence, as of our own, he had all that-yet the difficulties surrounding the dogmas there implied were ever recurring to him, as, in some sort, doubts. As stated before, the poet had never seen the Catholic Church as God's surety, the guide, the quietener of reasoning, the enlightener of the spirit of man by wisdom teaching with authority; the strengthener in continuity of thinking and knowledge. What higher knowledge would he not have disseminated for his peace and that of others had his religious mind received the sustaining help awaiting the Catholic act of faith uttered in humility and childlike simplicity.

In spite of all his errors of belief, we may say that on the whole Tennyson has tended to permeate English literature with a profoundly religious spirit. His view of the world is illuminated through and through by his faith in the Divine Presence, and goodness, and beauty. He cannot conceive of a purely physical universe. Even his poems of doubt and conflict are the resurgent protests of the heart against the cold negations which destroy personal trust in the unseen God, in whom we live and move and have our being. His faith in the life to come has tended to elevate and purify men's conception of life, and to give a deeper meaning to duty and to love.

"His influence upon the thought and feeling of the age

has been far-reaching and potent. He has stood among the doubts and confusions of these latter days, as a witness for the things that are visible and eternal-the things which men may forget if they will, but without which their hearts wither.

His verse has brought new cheer and courage to the youth of to-day who would fain defend their spiritual heritage against the invasions of materialism".

(Henry Van Dyke.)

In the great silent reaction of our age from the desperate solitude of a consistent skepticism, Tennyson's voice is a clear-toned bell, calling the unwilling exiles of unbelief home again. Such was the mission of the poet who after a life of sorrow and spiritual struggling, could write with dearest hope and sublimest trust!

Sunset and evening star,

And one clear call for me.

And may there be no moaning of the bar,

When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep

Too full for sound and foam,

When that which drew from out the boundless deep

Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,

And after that the dark,

And may there be no sadness of farewell,

When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of time and place

The flood may bear me far,

I hope to see my Pilot face to face

When I have crost the bar.

Probably the first poem that one would mention in attempting to describe the effects of Browning's religious beliefs upon English Literature is "Pauline". For the real matter of Pauline is Browning's struggle with his religious skepticism between the years 1826 and 1832, and his victory over the forces of doubt, and the winning to faith, hope and love. Before 1826, he accepted the Non-Conformist principles of his devout mother. But in 1826 he came to challenge that faith. He then chanced upon Voltaire and soon lost belief in the genuineness of the Scriptures. At the same time, he discovered Shelley. The result was "Pauline", of which not a copy was sold. A review of the poem by John Stuart Mill altered the direction of Browning's poetical aspirations. The author read the criticism and realized that he had exposed his callow soul to the curious gaze of strangers. The thought of "Pauline" became repugnant to him and he resolved that henceforward, his poetry would be objective and dramatic, the utterances of created characters, not of himself. Hereafter, he was the bard who "chronicled" the souls of others, preferably historical persons. And English literature benefited from this resolution in the development of the dramatic monologue which Browning used with great power and effectiveness. Most of his poems are the analyses of character either in the form of dialogue or monologue by the characters themselves. He allowed then, his intellect and his imagination to work as vigorously as if he were speaking his own sentiments. His field was now the individual soul, or character never exactly alike in any two men,

and he sought to express the hidden motives and principles which govern individual action. He is like a miner delving underground, sending up masses of mingled earth and ore which the reader must sift for himself.

Of all the poets in our literature, no other is so completely, so consciously, so magnificently a teacher of men, Browning feels his mission of faith and courage in a world of doubt and timidity. He gives us a splendid example of courage and perseverance for he faced for thirty years the indifference of a world that should have appreciated him sooner. The spirit of his whole life is well expressed in his "Paracelsus"

"I see my way as birds their trackless way,
I shall arrive-what time, what circuit first,
I ask not; but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive;
He guides me and the bird. In his good time.

If we study Browning deeply, we find that he is the most stimulating poet in our language. His influence upon his readers is positive and tremendous. His strength, his joy of life, his robust faith, and his invincible optimism have become a lasting influence in our English literature. And perhaps the best thing we can say of him is that his thought is slowly but surely taking possession of all well-educated men and women. It is really his power of revealing the soul from within that causes him to fascinate those who study him long enough.

While the creation of characters became the special function of Browning he was not able always to carry it out dispassionately. He too was an individual possessed of religious beliefs, and moral approvals. Through these he views the characters he constructs. Nobody can be impressive without a creed, a gospel with which he confronts the world. His religious ideas have already been discussed in Chapter III as well as the various religious possessions which he has left to influence our literature. However, a summary of his creed is not out of place here, and we quote from Palmer's "Formative Type in English Poetry":

"To each man there is intrusted a unique character, unlike all others, but incomplete, and with higher and lower possibilities. Which of these possibilities shall prevail is determined by the man's own action at crisis-moments, which in themselves are often small. Sin, for Browning, is therefore, for the most part, injury to one's self rather than to society; and conventional sins are little regarded. The world is for each of us a place of moral training and discipline, and has meaning only as material out of which a person may be formed. A world so constituted implies a God, whose existence cannot be independently proved but is involved in the whole framework of things. His presence is testified to by the Bible and by the consciousness of all men at their highest manifestation of personality. Were God without love, we should be his superiors. Browning does not then

conceive God as manifested in law, that is, in scientific fashion; but as the life-principle of love, in an individualistic way. Matter is but a lower form of spirit, and what look like circumstances are, in reality, only a reflex of the person. God lovingly imparts to us the germs of his own life. Consequently there is an immortality of activity open to each of us, whether in ever fresh existence or in a single continuous existence. But recognition will always be possible. Anything but optimism is stupid and cowardly".

We may say that on the whole Browning's religious philosophy is an optimistic pantheism, inculcating effort as the very first and highest duty of life. Browning's influence is fatal when he teaches the doctrine that wishing to do wrong may be incomparably worse than doing the wrong as in the case of the lovers, in "The Statue and the Bust". Browning condemns both because, wishing to commit a sin, they were afraid to commit it, and therefore their sin of omission was greater than would have been the sin of adultery. Browning claims that if they had given in to the temptation there would have been some hope for them for, he continues, there is always hope for the persons who are not afraid. What a pernicious doctrine to infiltrate into our literature! One wishes that he had wrongly interpreted Browning! But it seems that all critics have come to the same conclusion concerning the interpretation of the line:

"A sin will do to serve for a test!"

Equally Condemnable is Browning's theory of truth which

has already been examined in Chapter lll.

More worthy is his theory of love and of his regard for the human body. For he seems always to penetrate through the outward form of the human being to look upon the body as the expression of the soul within, rather than as possessing beauty, and therefore valued in itself. This is compatible with the strong feeling he has for physical beauty; the feeling springs from his belief that soul is

"Transparent through the flesh, by parts which prove a whole

By hints which make the soul discernible by soul".

and again,

"bodies show me minds,

And through the outward sign the inward grace allures"

Thus the body has the greatest importance as the "dress of the soul, as the means by which the soul is recognized by another soul, as the material which the soul shapes and transforms in its upward progress:

"But the soul is not the body, and the breath is not the flute,

Both together make the music; either marred and all is mute".

For Browning then, the body is not only the empty show that a false philosophy would make it, but when informed, by the soul has a meaning for all eternity. And though in "Rabbi Ben Ezra", the one side is stated most forcibly and truly:-

"To man, propose this test-

The body at its best,

How far can that project thy soul in its lone way?"-

I' the coming course, the new path I must tread-
 My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that!

.....

By love Browning means not merely the passion of a moment, but a life of love: and his belief in the continuity of our life to all eternity gives therefore to love the highest meaning. This is probably the noblest of Browning's genius, this power of exalting man and man's deeds, by giving him his true dignity as an immortal being, whom God's love has placed here to grow and to prepare himself for a wider, more perfect hereafter. English literature is richer because of this nobler, truer, conception of mankind; this firm belief in a great destiny.

On this question of the relation of body and soul, Browning has sometimes been accused unjustly of being coarse and vulgar because of his "Fifine at the Fair". However, when one understands the circumstances of the poem, he changes his mind. Buchanan had accused Rossetti of sensuality, and one of the crucial poems in the attack was Rossetti's "Jenny", a monologue by a "young and thoughtful man of the world" concerning Jenny, a harlot of London. The young man after being subjected to a strong temptation, leaves Jenny, innocent of heart. Browning disliked the poem, and found his ideas beginning to crystallize in "Fifine". He chose a situation closely similar to Rossetti's but gave it a very different conclusion. It was Browning's belief, then, that Rossetti had not read human nature aright, which caused him to write "Fifine". This explanation clears Browning of the charge

of sensuality laid against him.

Another poem should be particularly mentioned here which had results very different from those probably intended by Browning, i.e., "Bishop Blougram's Apology". Much as Browning disparages the Catholic Church, still the poem has made many converts to the faith. Mrs. Henry Parry Eden, a convert herself, writes:

"The two pieces of imaginative writing which did most to assist me were Browning's "Bishop Blougram's Apology" and Pater's "Marius and Epicurean". Blougram's ingenious proposition that faith is at least as good a working hypothesis as unfaith, is as useful to an agnostic as it is useless to a Catholic. As for "Marius" it led me through all my own dilemmas of paganism to the verge of Christianity. I have often noticed that a writer who just stops short, as Pater did, of becoming a Catholic, is the best possible reading for non-Catholics. They travel with him as far as he goes, and Divine Grace completes the itinerary". (Thought -1926)

And Eric Gill in his "Autobiography" telling of his conversion to the Church states:

"I think I was very considerably helped in this by reading Browning's poem about Bishop Blougram. This was first put before me years before when I was in the architect's office, as a pretty conclusive proof of the mendacity and general rottenness of the Church. Tom Bridson gave it to me to read, and George Carter was an

ardent defender of the inconspicuous Gigadibs. For several years I accepted that interpretation and I dare say it is the one Browning intended-but I'm not all sure. Eventually I began to think that whatever his creator might have meant, the figure of Blougram was much more than that of an unscrupulous and sceptical prelate, fat and sleek and contented and cynical. He began to seem to me to represent something mighty big and broad and all-embracing. I began to like the old boy and the more I liked him, the wiser he seemed and so much the more mean and ineffectual and emasculate did poor Gigadibs become. What was put before me as an anti-Catholic tract, became a quite powerful influence on the other side. People are not converted by books-nor can books hinder conversion (Good Lord! It's not such a rotten show as all that-it doesn't really matter whether any one can read or write), but if any mere book did do anything to make me a Catholic, it is "Bishop Blougram's Apology".

Mention should be made here of Browning's realtions to Strauss and Renan. Strauss's "Das Leben Jesu" was published in Germany in 1835. Browning apparently read it first in the translation of George Eliot in 1846. The tenor of Strauss's book attacking the Gospels as "Gospel myths" and referring to the "myth of Christ" did not shock him. Towards the end of the book, Strauss anticipates what was probably the feeling of Browning concerning it:

"The results of the inquiry which we have now brought to a close, have apparently annihilated the greatest and most valuable part of that which the Christian has been wont to believe concerning his Savior Jesus, have uprooted all the animating motives which he has gathered from his faith, and withered all his consolations. The boundless store of truth and life which for eighteen centuries has been the aliment of humanity, seems irretrievably dissipated; the most sublime levelled with the dust, God divested of his grace, man of his dignity, and the tie between heaven and earth broken".

The attack upon the personality of St. John and upon his Gospel which had been going on for a number of years set Browning to write "A Death in the Desert". Because Renan had published "La Vie de Jesus" in 1863, people thought that Browning was answering him when he published "Dramatis Personae" in June 1864. "A Death in the Desert" was written, at least, in part before Browning had read Renan in November 1863, or Strauss's "New Life of Jesus", published in January 1864. We know what he thought of it and its lack of honesty.

Unfortunately Browning could not meet Strauss and Renan upon their ground of scholarship, but he determined to defend the personality of the beloved disciple and the authenticity of the Gospel through his own weapon, art.

Browning appealed from the rationalistic criticism of the Scriptures to their human truth, and to our human need for

Christianity.

A number of critics at the time noticed that Browning was attempting to reply to Strauss and Renan in this poem. Perhaps C.H. Herford has given the best judgment of the poem.

"A Death in the Desert", though a poem of great beauty, must be set, in intrinsic value, below these two ("Rabbi Ben Ezra" and "Abt Vogler"). To attack Strauss through the mouth of the dying apostle was a smart pamphleteering device; but it gave his otherwise noble verse a disagreeable twang of theological disputation, and did no manner of harm to Strauss, who had to be met on other ground and with other weapons,-the weapons of history and comparative religion-in which Browning's skill was only that of a brilliant amateur."

In trying to defend the Gospel of St. John of which he was particularly fond, Browning used rather weak arguments. For instance, he believed and tried to prove that God did not grant, nor mankind need, miracles in these late ages. He says miracles were necessary for the establishment of Christianity, but not for its continuation-in spite of the fact that in every heathen country of the world exactly the same need for miracles is found now as was found at the beginning.

In spite of all its deficiencies, the poem remains as a witness of Browning's sincerity of faith, and as a commentary upon a topic of tremendous popular interest in that day. In "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day", Browning had made his confession of faith and had shown that though the intelligence and the

strength of God were abundantly illustrated in the world, the love of mankind was only properly exhibited by the coming of Christ. "A Death in the Desert" is an imaginative attempt to show to men the significance of that most important event in history.

Beautiful, if not theological, is Browning's theory of the immortality of the soul, combined with the truth of the Incarnation, as developed in "Saul". The next world's reward and repose will be bestowed by the final revelation of God's Love in the atonement, the "weakness in strength", the Human Hand throwing "open the gates of new life to thee". The certainty of immortality thus founded upon our certainty of God's love is also declared by Browning in "Christmas Eve". In fact, the conception of immortality enters into every part of Browning's experience of life, lending dignity to that which would otherwise seem trivial and commonplace. The grandest expression of this is in "Abt Vogler" who is led to this subject by the quick vanishing of the "palace of Music" he had created:

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!

What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;

What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard.

Enough that he heard it once; we shall hear it by and by.

It is this conviction of a future life, the firm belief
that no work begun shall ever pause for death that raises
Browning's interest in man to a dignity which would be impossible
if human life were bounded by this world.

As this study of Browning's religious influence nears
completion we might quote from two noted writers, Chesterton and
Somervell who represent two different schools of thought. The
former says:

"The two or three great and true things he really had to say
he generally managed to say quite simply. Thus, he really
did want to say that God had indeed made man and woman one
flesh; that the sex relation was religious in this real sense
that even in our sin and despair we take it for granted and
expect a sort of virtue in it. The feeling of the bad
husband about the good wife, for instance, are about as subtle
and entangled as any matter on this earth; and Browning really
had something to say about them. But he said it in some of
the most unmistakable words in all literature, as lucid as a
flash of lightning: Pompilia, will you let them murder me?

or again, he did really want to say that death and such moral terrors were best taken in a military spirit; he could not have said it more simply than: "I was ever a fighter: one fight more, the best and the last". He did really want to say that human life was unworkable unless immortality were implied in it every other moment; he could not have said it more simply: leave "now" to dogs and apes: Man has "forever". The obscurities were not merely superficial, but often covered quite superficial ideas...For the rest, his real religion was of the most manly, even the most boyish sort....He offers the cosmoses an adventure rather than a scheme. He did not explain evil, far less explain it away: he enjoyed defying it. He was a troubadour even in theology and in metaphysics, like the jongleurs de Dieu of St. Francis. He may be said to have serenaded heaven with a guitar.

Somervell states in "English Thought in the Eighteenth Century":

Robert Browning was a singularly detached figure...He certainly held that the proper study of mankind was man, but his concern was with the mystery of the individual soul and his method of approach psychological....As a student of the individual soul he was strongly drawn to the fundamental problems of religion, and it was as a religious 'teacher' that he influenced the thought of his age. Bishop Westcott, one of the most eminent of Victorian bishops, declared that his three principal teachers had been St. Paul, Origen, and

Browning-Browning attached himself to no Church, and had no 'faith' as Wilberforce or Newman or F.D.Maurice would have understood that term. He was his own Bishop Blougram, whom we have already quoted. But whereas Blougram was only a man in mitre, his creator was a great poet, and he strengthened in many readers the faith that he did not himself possess... He held, perhaps, that though religion as presented by the orthodox was faulty and incredible, yet the alternative of no religion was much further from a true philosophy. The primary dogmas of Christianity-a Personal God and His love for Man, and the immortality of the soul -were no doubt a human attempt to express the Infinite, and as such presented an easy target to human criticism: but they were the nearest man could get to the truth, and in affirming them, even if one did not explicitly believe them, one was nearer to the truth than in denying them, and Browning's characteristic technique as a writer of 'dramatic' monologues enabled him to give expression to the religious sentiments of his fictitious characters without expressly associating himself with the sentiments expressed.

Browning's position was in fact not far removed from Arnold's position as expressed in "Literature and Dogma". Both felt intensely the necessity of religion, and both felt also the impossibility of most of what passed under the name of religion. Arnold wrote an essay in direct advocacy of undogmatic religion. It is eloquent, ingenious, and, in places,

very funny, like all Arnold's essays; and it annoyed almost all its readers. Browning chose a better way. He wrote a succession of admirable philosophic character studies in verse "Karshish", "Cleon", "Saul" "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day". Character studies do not claim to prove anything, and for that reason they are the more convincing."

Browning's thought of faith, of hope, of love, is an answering to Byronism on Evil:

"Would I fain, with my impotent yearning
Do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him
Who yet alone can?"

The poet's optimism, even if it might seem to us too bold and cheery, has a noble basis in confidence born of love. Let us leave it there; and hear without taking offence at "The Mermaid"

Have you found your life distasteful?

My life did and does smack sweet.

Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?

Mine I saved and hold complete.

Do your joys with age diminish?

When mine fail me, I'll complain.

Must in death your daylight finish?

My sun sets to rise again.

.....

I find earth not gray but rosy,

Heaven not grim but fair of hue,

Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.

Do I stand and stare? All's blue.

Now we conclude by saying that if Browning can not always be a guide, he may be an inspiration, every step of the way; sometimes, at least he is a guide, always a philosopher, and hardly ever a useless friend.

Arnold writing to his mother on June 5, 1869, made an extraordinary high claim in behalf of his own poems.

"They represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind in the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs."

This "main movement" we are well acquainted with. In all phases of human activity, it was the forward pressure of reason, flushed still with the excitement of the French Revolution temporarily checked and thwarted in some quarters, but steadily besieging and, to some extent, undermining the position held by tradition, especially in religious matters. But whether, Arnold's works have had their day, it is difficult to say. "His vague Christianity, the moral pantheism to which all his philosophical reflection tends, seems to have left in his inner self an emptiness, a scar which is revealed only in his poetry. The loss of all positive belief came as a momentous experience to him as to many of

his generation, and hopelessly destroyed all his joy in life...this pessimism is destined slowly to spread and colour the last years of the century. Arnold is one of the forerunners of what will prove to be a contagious movement in the province of letters as well as in that of feeling". (Legouis and Cazamian)

And a "contagious movement" it was which spread throughout the generation. Such ideas as he had imbibed he also tried to permeate literature with. In an article written by Arnold on "Obermann" October 9, 1869, we find a number of the false principles which, partly through his ill-advised zeal, have found their way into English literature. The ideas enunciated by Senancour are really his own. He describes Obermann as "A Frenchman, coming immediately after the eighteenth century and the French Revolution, too-clear-headed and austere for any such sentimental Catholic reaction as that with which Chateaubriand cheated himself, and yet from the very profoundness and meditateness of his nature, religious, Senancour felt to the uttermost the bare and bleak spiritual atmosphere into which he was born".

And Obermann speaking of man being born with a passion for order and harmony, and a belief in them, concludes, "inasmuch as man had this feeling of order planted in him, inasmuch as it was in his nature, the right course would have been to try and make every individual man sensible of it and obedient to it." and Arnold continues "But what has been done? Since the beginning of the world, instead of having recourse to this innate feeling, the guides of mankind have uniformly sought to control human conduct by means of

supernatural hopes, supernatural terrors, thus misleading man's intelligence and debasing his soul...What are called the virtues, 'are laws of nature as necessary to man as the laws of his bodily senses'. Instead of teaching men to feel this, instead of developing in them that sentiment of order and that consciousness of the divine which are the native possession of our race, Paganism and Christianity alike have tampered with man's mind and heart, and wrought confusion in them,"

And Obermann again: 'But you have fabricated, patched experimented, altered; renewed I know not what incoherent multitude of trivial ceremonies and dogmas, more fitted to scandalize the weak than to edify them. This dubious mixture you have joined to a morality sometimes false, often exceedingly noble, and almost always austere; the one single point in which you have shown sagacity. You pass some hundreds of years in arranging all this by inspiration; and your slowly built work, industriously repaired, but with a radical fault in plan, is so made as to last hardly longer than the time during which you have been accomplishing it. And Arnold applauds the statement with: "There is a passage to be meditated by the New Oecumenical Council!"

Certainly none of Arnold's other activities excited so much opposition among his contemporaries as did his writing on theology, religion, and the church. His end is to disengage ethics from religion, and to free current religion from what he considers, its narrow dogmatic basis, its gloom and its vulgarity.

Arnold's most important point in theological controversy

was, we repeat, the emphasis he laid upon a literary interpretation of the Bible as opposed to a scientific interpretation. But his incursion into Biblical criticism was calamitous because of his manifest incompetence for the task: when he assumes this role he is perforce ridiculous. "Although the line of his thought does not exactly coincide with the central direction of the Rationalist movement, and despite the reserves he arrays against the modern ambitions of science, he really continues the efforts of the so-called "liberal theology". In place of dogma and of the definite inspiration of the Scriptures, he substitutes a kind of general philosophy which, according to him, brings them into accord with all the creative process of human conscience. The thought of Renan, that of Strauss, and of Feuerbach are in the background of his doctrine. The conception of God divests itself, as it were of personality, and tends towards an ethical pantheism. God is perceived as a current of volition and desire, which, within us and without, is directed towards the moral ends of the universe." (Legouis and Cazamian)

On this subject of theological writings even Protestant critics oppose Arnold.

Mr. Herbert Paul quotes Gladstone as saying: "He combined a sincere devotion to the Christian religion with a faculty for presenting it in such a form as to be recognizable neither by friend or foe".

Mr. R.H. Hutton remarks in his "Contemporary Thought and Thinkers": "Mr. Matthew Arnold returns to his curiously hopeless

task of convincing people that the Bible can be read, understood, enjoyed, and turned to the most fruitful moral account, without according any credence to the supernatural experience and belief of its writers".

In the Posthumous Essays of John Churton Collins, published so recently as 1912, one finds a disposition to dismiss Arnold's "theology" with an epigram: "Perhaps the best criticism of it would be what Doctor Cuffe said of Bacon's *Novum Organum*, that a 'foolish man could not, and a wise man would not, have written it!'"

Professor Saintsbury, whose works fill all the world, has striven to convey the impression that in handling the Church and the Bible Arnold was attempting to decide a case beyond his jurisdiction, and that his decisions are of little interest or consequence. And, since Arnold's books were designed to carry persuasion to the hearts of such men as Gladstone, Hutton, Collins and Saintsbury, one is constrained to admit that they did not invariably perform their errand even among people of his own faith. However, they claim that to many who were reluctantly drifting from their religious moorings, Arnold showed a practical anchorage for the spirit, and that such refuge as he provided has lost little of its security by the lapse of time. Furthermore, they say that one cannot know Arnold unless he knows well "Paul and Protestantism", "Literature and Dogma", and "God and the Bible."

To us it is quite evident that Arnold's scholarship was not such as to warrant his entering the lists as an authority.

to us also, the utter incompetency of his "Literature and Dogma", and of its defensive supplement, "God and the Bible", becomes apparent when that diverting medley of pseudo-scholarship, chop logic, and refined vituperation is compared with a work of real philosophic inquiry, like Paul Elmer More's "The Religion of Plato". And the extent to which "St. Paul and Protestantism" fails to grasp the spirit of the real St. Paul is shown by a comparison with Abbot Vonier's "The Christian Mind".

For Arnold, Nature became a refuge from the burden of this unintelligible world, from the hopelessness of life from which the light of Christianity had gone out. From the untroubled calm, the impersonality of natural things, he hoped to wrest the secret of the endurance that would dull his too quick sense of dereliction. And because the Greeks had evolved a Stoic-Epicurean creed, which accorded with the scientific trend of the time, he sought in their cult of blitheness the sanctions of his religion of conduct.

But this attempt to revive Greek naturalism in a Christian age was to prove a failure as the comfortless tone of his poems asserts. The ministry of nature proved no surer anodyne to his generation than it has proved to his partisans and followers. For the isolation of irreligious human life, Nature has nothing to offer but an answering solitariness:

The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,

But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams

Alone the sun rises, and alone

Spring the great streams.

Nor are human affections proof against the hazards of a pitiless universe. The *cri du coeur* of "Dover Beach" is plangent with the despair of the power of love to stem the mysteries of existence:

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another, for the world that seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Arnold's principle of philosophic doubt found its logical conclusion in James Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night". Indeed his poetic agnosticism is only a breathing through silver compared with the blowing through bronze of Thomson's iron music. While Arnold does not end in the blankness of the negation, neither does he attain the affirmation of Meredith's evolutionistic acceptance of earth. Still less does he compass the sentiment of Browning's progressivism as expressed in the lines:

What are our failures here but a triumph's evidence
 For the fullness of the days?

Rather, like Tennyson, he melodizes doubt, though, unlike him, he cannot trust the larger hope. He remains fixed in an impasse between the claims of a finite classicism and a troubling romanticism.

The work of Arnold in the field of religion has helped to divorce dogma at once from ecclesiastical tradition and from philosophy and to leave it helpless before rationalist criticism. The reformers had rejected alike the supernatural authority of the Church and the natural rights of human intelligence and had fallen back on the testimony of personal experience and the infallible authority of Scripture. Their successors in the nineteenth century attempted to set up an abstract ideal of primitive Christianity against the historic reality of the Catholic Church. In the moral teaching of the Gospel and in the personality of "the historical Jesus" they believed that they had at last found a firm basis for a faith that should be purely ethical without any contamination of metaphysics or theological speculation. This is what Harnack means when he says that the work of the Reformation is only completed when faith cancels dogma, and that the Reformation is the end of dogma as the Gospel was the end of the Law. The divorce of dogma from intelligence that was inaugurated by the Reformers consummates itself in the dissolution of dogma itself in the interest of that moral pragmatism which is the essence of modern Protestantism.

Arnold, even if his essays did not have all the success he wished them to have, was instrumental in bringing about this new attitude of mind of Liberal Protestantism which selects those elements in the Gospel which appeal to the modern mind, and disregards or rejects the uncompromising super-naturalism on which the ethical teaching of Jesus rests. In the words of Dean Inge

"They stripped the figure of Jesus of all the attributes with which the devotion of centuries had invested it and have left us with a mild specimen of the Mahdi type, an apocalyptic dreamer whose message consisted essentially of predictions about the approaching catastrophic 'end of the age', predictions which of course came to nothing".

With the refusal to admit the objective and autonomous character of religion and of spiritual reality, and the affirmation that there is no free spiritual principle in the universe apart from the will of man, it became necessary not only to eliminate every supernatural element in the Gospel, but also to deny the essential originality and spontaneity of Christianity. and to explain it away as a composite development derived from elements that were already in existence.

This prejudice has had an incalculable influence on the modern mind, since it could invoke the prestige of "science", that is to say, the dogmatic conception of scientific materialism. The Protestants were moreover, convinced that a vital breach had intervened between the Gospel of Jesus and the Faith of the Church. Arnold shared all these false ideas and disseminated them far and wide.

Gradually, by the rejection of the inspiration of the Scriptures and that of miracles a via media was offered between traditional Christianity and a pure rationalism that appeals both to the Christian who has lost his faith in the dogmatic teaching of the Church and to the rationalist who has preserved a sense of religious values.

As to Arnold's denial of the Biblical inspiration, we may say that it also has left its trace in English literature, From the belief in the Bible as the inspired work of God, and as the only source of religious knowledge, we witness an almost complete rejection of it as an inspired book by people outside the Catholic Church. This baneful influence, however, has been somewhat nullified by the reaction of the same Church, which refuses to march with the times and to accept the judgments of rationalistic critics and declared in the Vatican Council:

These entire books of the Old and New Testaments, with all their parts as they are enumerated in the decree of the Council of Trent, and as they are contained in the Old Latin Vulgate edition, are to be received as sacred and canonical. But the Church holds these books as sacred and canonical, not because they were composed by mere human industry and were afterwards approved by her authority, nor merely because they contain revelation without error, but because, having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and, as such, they have been delivered to the Church herself.

If anyone, therefore, shall not receive, as sacred and canonical these entire books of Scripture, with all their parts, as the Council of Trent enumerated them, or shall deny that they are divinely inspired, let him be anathema.

Arnold, as we already discussed, thought that a religion of which the authority is derived from miracles can not go into the future prosperously. He deemed it, therefore, a genuine service to religion to show that the value of Christianity is not in the least dependent upon the miraculous-and that, in fact, miracles do not happen. Here also his teaching proved efficient with the many. Our literature proves that there is not one form of Christianity at the present day that even desires to compete with Catholic Christendom in this matter. In fact it is the reproach against the Church in the mouths of many writers that she has committed herself irreparably to a belief in the constitution of the world and to possible interferences with that constitution, which renders her altogether discredited in the light of the twentieth century. Until recently writers simply said, like Arnold and so many others that the incidents, called miracles, simply did not happen. Within the last fifty years, there is a general agreement with Arnold also that the incidents did happen. It is claimed that fifty years ago, no scientist believed that those things happened; but that to-day no average scientist dreams of doubting them. What is wrong with the Church now it is further claimed, is her explanation of the incidents.-The whole affair, in fact, is a matter of psychology: there is nothing supernatural in it.

Arnold has left to our literature his notion of the respect of duty under all circumstances, of self-improvement, of

culture, not with a view of worldly advancement, not as an end in itself.

Our duty in life is to aim at perfecting our nature on all its sides securing for ourselves "spontaneity of consciousness", so that above all things we should avoid becoming fixed and immovable in any of our notions or habits. About these we must let "a stream of fresh thought play freely" that we may not form fixed habits. A religion of culture has at least a tendency to become self-centered, and this has become part of our modern way of life. And we do find this attribute of self-absorption in Arnold's poetry. Possessed with a feeling of the sadness, the vagueness and incompleteness of our lives, he concludes that the only thing we can do now is to endure; and endurance is only possible by self-dependence. With this conviction the whole problem of life becomes to the poet not any external truth, not any life of love, but the effort to "possess his soul":

"Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
Upon our life a reeling effluence send;
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die,
And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

This is the remedy Arnold proposes for all we suffer, and he makes use of it himself. This theory enters every part of his emotional or intellectual being, colouring his view of human love, philanthropy, of the world's progress, and especially of religion.

Arnold has enunciated for the students of English literature a principle of great importance especially in our present day. That is his admitting "how needful it is for those who are to discuss any matter together, to have a common understanding as to the sense of the terms they employ". This, if put into practice, would clarify the meaning of many terms which our modern writers use indiscriminately such as: religion, morality, nature, Christianity, the Christian Church, However, with Arnold this seems to be a matter of theory only.

It is evident that Arnold considered himself capable to discuss all subjects competently even Revelation. This led him to conclude in one instance: "The personages of the Christian heaven and their conversations are no more matter of fact than those of Olympus. Yet though by the use of his unaided reason, he cleared heaven of all the personages of Divine Revelation, he saw nothing wrong in peopling it with the creatures of human imagination. In the introduction to "Literature and Dogma", he thus describes the story of justification:

In imagining a sort of infinitely magnified and improved Lord Shaftesbury, with a race of vile offenders to deal with, whom his natural goodness would incline him to let off, only his sense of justice will not allow it; then a younger Lord Shaftesbury, on the scale of his father and very dear to him, who might live in grandeur and splendour if he liked, but who prefers to leave his home, to go and live among the race of offenders,

and to be put to an ingnomious death, on condition that his merits shall be counted against their demerits, and that his father's goodness shall be restrained no longer from taking effect, but any offender shall be admitted to the benefit of it on simply pleading the satisfaction made by the son; and then, finally a third Lord Shaftesbury still on the same high scale, who keeps very much in the background, and works in a very occult manner, but very efficaciously, nevertheless, and who is busy in applying everywhere the benefits of the son's satisfaction, and the father's goodness; in an imagination, I say, such as this, there is nothing degrading, and this is precisely the Protestant story of Justification.

Though Arnold transmitted to his generation his-liberality to the breaking-point in matters of moral and dogmas, he at the same time transmitted also his absolutism in matters intellectual.

They(some people) tend to spread the baneful notion that there is no such thing as a high, correct standard in intellectual matters; that everyone may as well take his own way; they are at variance with the severe discipline necessary for all real culture; they confirm us in habits of wilfulness and eccentricity, which hurt our minds and damage our credit with serious people.

Such a statement we might call an "ex cathedra" pronouncement of "that amiable old pessimist in St. Peter's chair, whose allocutions we read and call impotent and vain"(Literature and Dogma)

This from Arnold who had said in the same Essay: "True culture implies not only knowledge, but right tact and justice of judgment... without the tact it is not true culture".

Because of Arnold's sad lack of a well-balanced judgment of life and of history, he has impregnated his works with the false view he had absorbed at Rugby and at Oxford, and from his father who was a bitter enemy of all that Newman fought for in the Oxford Movement. His historical ideas remained unaltered as the following extract shows:

"The Reformation-I do not mean the inferior peace given under that name by Henry VIII and a second-rate, but the real Reformation, the German Reformation-was a reaction of the moral and the spiritual sense against the carnal and pagan sense". (Social Life in Greece)

This shows Arnold's blind admiration for whatever was a product of German materialism. On one occasion he wrote: "In most matters of science but notably of theology and Biblical learning, one goes to Germany" (Literature and Dogma-preface): It is much to be deplored that Arnold did not go to Rome rather than to Tübingen, not only for science and learning, but for guidance in religious matters as well. Then how wonderful would have been his contributions to our literature one can only surmise. Then instead of viewing history in a false light, of denying an objective norm of morality, and finally, instead of rejecting Revelation and the Divinity of Christ; instead of destroying the doctrine of man's redemption and the very foundation of the moral order, he would

have fulfilled a high mission as critic, for had he turned to Rome, he would have had a right norm for judging "the best that is known and thought in the world" and a sure guide in propagating it.

Arnold, as he still lives in his criticisms, is another sad figure of the Victorian Age who could not rise above its hopeless rationalism. This is how he appears to at least one of our poets, Francis Thompson, who thus describes Arnold in "Ode for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria".:

"Then came, somewhat apart,
In a fastidious dream
Arnold, with a half-discontented calm,
Binding up wounds, but pouring in no balm".