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The holy sacrifice of prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving should be offered *daily* in every Christian family. Every family should have its priest, like the eldest son among the patriarchs,<sup>1</sup> to offer this sacrifice from the altar of the heart, the high altar to which God looks. Every clergyman should not only offer it, but urge his people to offer it, and the bishops surely would not do amiss to dwell on it in their charges.

Millions of our people are scattered abroad in distant lands as sheep without a shepherd. But this movable altar is ever present, and only requires the spirit of Elijah to repair and adorn it; to *kindle* the holy fire which burns up all sinful affections, and to build up a *holy nation of priests and kings* of our God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

T. LLOYD WILLIAMS.



#### ART. V.—THE RELIGIOUS POETRY OF TENNYSON.—

*Concluded.*

“**H**E was occasionally much troubled,” writes his son, “with the intellectual problem of the apparent profusion and waste of life, and by the vast amount of sin and suffering throughout the world, for these seemed to militate against the idea of the Omnipotent and All-loving Father.

“No doubt in such moments he might possibly have been heard to say what I myself have heard him say: ‘An Omnipotent Creator who could make such a painful world is to me *sometimes* as hard to believe in, as to believe in blind matter behind everything. . . . I can almost understand some of the gnostic heresies, which only after all put the difficulty one step further back :

O me, for why is all around us here  
As if some lesser god had made the world ;  
But had not force to shape it as he would,  
Till the High God behold it from beyond,  
And enter it, and make it beautiful.’

After one of these moods in the summer of 1892 he exclaimed, ‘Yet God *is* love, transcendent, all pervading! We do not get *this* faith from Nature or the world. If we look at Nature *alone*, full of perfection and imperfection, she tells us that God is disease, murder, and rapine. We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognises that there is not one fruitless pang, just as there is not one lost good.’ And he would sometimes put forward the old theory

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Blunt’s “Coincidences.”

that 'The world is part of an infinite plan, incomplete because it is a part. We cannot, therefore, read the riddle.' "

"My father," continues his biographer, "invariably believed that humility is the only true attitude of the human soul, and therefore spoke with the greatest reserve of what he called 'these unfathomable mysteries,' as befitting one who did not dogmatize, but who knew that the finite can by no means grasp the infinite; and yet who had a profound trust that when all is seen face to face, all will be seen as the best. 'Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power, which alone is great.' Who knows whether Revelation be not itself a veil to hide the glory of that Love which we could not look upon without marring the sight and our onward progress?"

"'Almost the finest summing up of religion,' he said, 'is to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.'

"This faith was to him the breath of life, and never, I feel, really failed him, or life itself would have failed."

With regard to Revelation, he always referred inquirers to "In Memoriam." His view of Christ would be expressed by the language of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds; Who (was) the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person." He liked the description of the Word in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, and said that whenever he addressed Christ in "In Memoriam" he addressed Him in that sense. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The main testimony to Christianity he found not in miracles, but in that eternal witness, the revelation of what might be called 'the mind of God,' in the Christian morality and its correlation with the divine in man. He had a measureless admiration for the Sermon on the Mount, and for the parables—'perfection, beyond compare,' he called them. I heard a talk on these between him and Browning, and Browning fully agreed with my father in his admiration. Moreover, my father expressed his conviction that 'Christianity with its divine morality, but without the central figure of Christ, *the Son of Man*, would become cold; and that it is fatal for religion to lose its warmth; that *the Son of Man* was the most tremendous title possible; that the *forms* of the Christian religion would alter, but that the spirit of Christ would still grow from more to more "in the roll of the ages."'" Thus he writes in the prologue to "In Memoriam":

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

Thine are these orbs of light and shade ;  
Thou madest Life in man and brute ;  
Thou madest Death ; and lo, Thy foot  
Is on the skull which Thou hast made.

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

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.

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

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.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell ;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight ;  
We mock Thee when we do not fear :  
But help Thy foolish ones to bear ;  
Help Thy vain worlds to bear Thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me ;  
What seem'd my worth since I began ;  
For merit lives from man to man,  
And not from man, O Lord, to Thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,  
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.  
I trust he lives in Thee, and there  
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,  
Confusions of a wasted youth ;  
Forgive them where they fail in truth,  
And in Thy wisdom make me wise.

The teaching of Christ, His Incarnation, and the effects of it,  
are sketched with masterly reverence and sympathy :

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,  
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,  
We yield all blessing to the Name  
Of Him that made them current coin ;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,  
 Where truth in closest words shall fail,  
 When truth embodied in a tale  
 Shall enter in at lowly doors.  
 And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
 With human hands the creed of creeds  
 In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
 More strong than all poetic thought ;  
 Which he may read that binds the sheaf,  
 Or builds the house, or digs the grave,  
 And those wild eyes that watch the wave  
 In roarings round the coral reef.

Here are the thoughts of immortality with which the arrival of Christmas Day in the midst of his grief for his friend inspires him :

Our voices took a higher range ;  
 Once more we sang, " They do not die,  
 Nor lose their mortal sympathy,  
 Nor change to us, although they change ;"  
 Rapt from the fickle and the frail  
 With gathered power, yet the same,  
 Pierces the keen seraphic flame [the renewed soul]  
 From orb to orb, from veil to veil.  
 Rise, happy morn ; rise, holy morn,  
 Draw forth the cheerful day from night :  
 O Father, touch the east, and light  
 The light that shone when Hope was born.

He treats the narratives of the Gospels with profound respect, and hangs his lessons on them. Here is what he says about Lazarus :

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,  
 And home to Mary's house return'd,  
 Was this demanded—if he yearn'd  
 To hear her weeping by his grave ?  
 " Where wert thou, brother, those four days ?"  
 There lives no record of reply,  
 Which telling what it is to die  
 Had surely added praise to praise.  
 From every house the neighbours met,  
 The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,  
 A solemn gladness even crown'd  
 The purple brows of Olivet.  
 Behold a man raised up by Christ !  
 The rest remaineth unreveal'd ;  
 He told it not ; or something seal'd  
 The lips of that Evangelist.

And here is the devotion of Mary of Bethany :

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,  
 Nor other thought her mind admits  
 But, he was dead, and there he sits,  
 And He that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede  
All other, when her ardent gaze  
Roves from the living brother's face,  
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,  
Borne down by gladness so complete,  
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet  
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,  
Whose loves in higher love endure ;  
What souls possess themselves so pure,  
Or is there blessedness like theirs ?

In the future life he had the profoundest belief. To him as, to Kant, God and the soul were the two pillars of life and conduct. "I need not enlarge," writes his son, "upon his faith in the immortality of the soul, as he has dwelt upon that so fully in his poems. 'I can hardly understand,' he said, 'how any great imaginative man, who has deeply lived, suffered, thought and wrought can doubt of the soul's continual progress in the after life?' His poem of 'Wages' he liked to be quoted on this subject :

#### WAGES.

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,  
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—  
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—  
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she :  
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

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

"He more than once said what he has expressed in 'Vastness': 'Hast Thou made all this for naught? Is all this trouble of life worth undergoing if we only end in our own corpse-coffins at last? If you allowed God, and God allows this strong instinct and universal yearning for another life, surely that is in a measure a presumption of its truth. We cannot give up the mighty hopes that make us men.'"

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

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

What then were God to such as I ?  
 'Twere hardly worth my while to choose  
 Of things all mortal, or to use  
 A little patience ere I die ;  
 'Twere best at once to sink to peace,  
 Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
 To drop head-foremost in the jaws  
 Of vacant darkness and to cease.

He believed strongly in recognition in heaven :

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 beside ;  
 And I shall know him when we meet :  
 And we shall sit at endless feast,  
 Enjoying each the other's good :  
 What vaster dream can hit the mood  
 Of Love on earth ? He seeks at least  
 Upon the last and sharpest height,  
 Before the spirits fade away,  
 Some landing-place, to clasp and say,  
 " Farewell ! We lose ourselves in light."

He taught also that there would be abundant employment  
 in heaven:

And, doubtless, unto thee is given  
 A life that bears immortal fruit  
 In those great offices that suit  
 The full-grown energies of heaven.

And again :

How fares it with the happy dead ?  
 For here the man is more and more ;  
 But he forgets the days before  
 God shut the doorways of his head.  
 The days have vanish'd, tone and tint,  
 And yet perhaps the hoarding sense  
 Gives out at times (he knows not whence)  
 A little flash, a mystic hint ;  
 And in the long harmonious years  
 (If Death so taste Lethean springs),  
 May some dim touch of earthly things  
 Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.  
 If such a dreamy touch should fall,  
 O turn thee round, resolve the doubt ;  
 My guardian angel will speak out  
 In that high place, and tell thee all.

He looked also, like St. Paul, to a day when God would have subdued all things to Himself :

Oh, 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 ;  
That nothing walks with aimless feet ;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete ;  
That not a worm is cloven in vain ;  
That not a moth with vain desire  
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,  
Or but subserves another's gain.  
Behold, we know not anything ;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.  
So runs my dream : but what am I ?  
An infant crying in the night :  
An infant crying for the light :  
And with no language but a cry.

He naturally felt sympathy with those who in these difficult days are full of perplexity :

You say, but with no touch of scorn,  
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes  
Are tender over drowning flies,  
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.  
I know not : one indeed I knew  
In many a subtle question versed,  
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,  
But ever strove to make it true :  
Perplex'd in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.  
He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them : thus he came at length  
To find a stronger faith his own ;  
And Power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone,  
But in the darkness and the cloud,  
As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
While Israel made their gods of gold,  
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

The expression " half the creeds " is ambiguous, and has led to mistakes. He does not mean the contents of the creeds—the creeds are in themselves very few, very short, and mostly



the same—he means more faith in honest doubt than in half the repetitions of the creeds. The word “creed” comes from *credo*, I believe; he means that a great many people repeat them without much real faith.

In the same way the idea of the better Christianity has been misinterpreted, “Ring in the Christ that is to be”; he does not mean a new Christ, but a better apprehension and understanding of His teaching.

About prayer, writes his son, he said, “The reason why men find it hard to regard prayer in the same light in which it was formerly regarded is that *we* seem to know more of the unchangeableness of law; but I believe that God reveals Himself in each individual soul. Prayer is, to take a mundane simile, like opening a sluice between the great ocean and our little channels when the great sea gathers itself together, and flows in at full tide.”

Prayer on our part is the highest aspiration of the soul—

A breath that fleets beyond this iron world  
And touches Him who made it.

And :

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

More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.

For what are men better than sheep or goats

If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer

Both for themselves and those who call them friends ?

For so the whole round world is every way

Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

Freewill, too, was one of his cardinal points. It was “the main miracle, apparently an act of self-limitation by the Infinite, and yet a revelation of Himself by Himself.” “Take away the sense of individual responsibility, and men sink into pessimism and madness.” He wrote at the end of the poem “Despair”: “In my boyhood I came across the Calvinistic creed, and assuredly, however unfathomable the mystery, if one cannot believe in the freedom of the human will as of the Divine, life is hardly worth having. The lines that he oftenest repeated about freewill were these :

This main miracle that thou art thou,  
With power on thine own act and on the world.

He was, in short, a great religious teacher as well as a supreme poet, strong in faith, deeply imbued with Christianity, reflecting at times the doubts and questionings of a scientific and introspecting age, but holding firm to the primary cardinal principles. His final religious feeling may be given in three

of his last poems, "Doubt and Prayer," "Faith," and "Crossing the Bar."

DOUBT AND PRAYER.

Tho' Sin too oft, when smitten by Thy rod,  
Rail at "Blind Fate" with many a vain "Alas!"  
From sin thro' sorrow into Thee we pass  
By that same path our true forefathers trod;  
And let not Reason fail me, nor the sod  
Draw from my death Thy living flower and grass,  
Before I learn that Love, which is, and was  
My Father, and my Brother, and my God!  
Steel me with patience! soften me with grief!  
Let blow the trumpet strongly while I pray,  
Till this embattled wall of unbelief  
My prison, not my fortress, fall away!  
Then, if Thou willest, let my day be brief,  
So Thou wilt strike Thy glory thro' the day.

FAITH.

I.

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

II.

Neither mourn if human creeds be lower than the heart's desire!  
Thro' the gates that bar the distance comes a gleam of what is higher.  
Wait till Death has flung them open, when the man will make the  
Maker  
Dark no more with human hatreds in the glare of deathless fire!

CROSSING THE BAR.

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me,  
And may there be no moaning at 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 crossed the bar.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.