

it may lead the secularist to ignore and underestimate certain kinds of evidence—so hard is it to approach a subject free from prepossessions and to judge it on its merits, “without fear, favor, or prejudice.” While a desire to reject the dross and to avoid baseless conjecture is praiseworthy, it is not creditable to indulge in needless suspicion. When “secular students conclude that reverence is the signal infirmity of the human mind,” the temptation is strong not only “to deny and defy what is false” but to doubt and disbelieve what is true.

The course of the conservative is still the safer, when joined to a democratic receptiveness for all of value that the seasons bring.

“Hold thou the good : define well :
For fear divine Philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procureess to the Lords of Hell.”

Such was the position of Tennyson with reference to latter-day isms. He loved knowledge, but he prayed for increase of reverence, treasuring the wisdom of the past and welcoming free discussion of the problems bearing on the nature of man and his destiny.

“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.”

This was the prayer of the author of “In Memoriam” for the harmony of interests intellectual and spiritual, as in the earlier decades of the century before the days of unrest and change. Remembering Arthur Hallam’s period of doubt which he outgrew, the poet expresses the wish that “the great world” could grow like him “not alone in power and knowledge” but “in reverence and charity.”

The movements of speculative thought in the nineteenth century can be traced in Tennyson’s earlier and later poems. The inquisitive spirit of the age reflected in “In Memoriam” was succeeded in the next two decades by the bolder phase of philosophy known as agnosticism, developed in turn by Sir William Hamilton, Dean Mansel, Herbert Spencer, and Professor Huxley, all of them borrowing more or less from the negative side of Kant’s critical philosophy. The keynote of “In Memoriam” is found in a stanza of the prologue (written in 1849):

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

Afterward, in the “Idylls of the King” and other works, the laureate qualifies his position, showing the doubtful character of even the knowledge of things we see, the principles of physical science resting upon metaphysical assumptions. In “The Ancient Sage” (published in 1885), we have what may be called a full and satisfactory exposi-