

In memoriam by tennyson

Literature



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'In Memoriam' by Tennyson Alfred Lord Tennyson's, 'In Memoriam' has often been considered as one among the popular elegies of English literature that mourns over the death of his close friend, Arthur Henry Harlem, his classmate at Cambridge. The poem truly draws out the painful state of the poet caused with the death of his friend and the various political situations existed during the 19th century. Some critics are of the opinion that the poem exposes Tennyson's struggle with the Victorians' growing awareness of another sort of past, especially the vast expanse of geological time and evolutionary history. Various inventions and innovations in the 19th century distressed Tennyson like other writers of his time. The new discoveries in biology, astronomy, geology and the mushrooming of industries caused for anguish in Tennyson. E. E. Snyder in his article entitled 'Tennyson's Progressive Geology' confirms it when he aptly wrote thus, "In Tennyson's poem In Memoriam, geology provides one potential means to make sense of the experience of grief, by supposing a divine meaning inherent in the physical world that can be discovered through human knowledge." (Snyder 27). Another great influence on Tennyson was Darwin's 'Origin of Species' that vibrated the western world as a whole. The Theory of Evolution paved the way for religious inconsistencies during his time and one can see the same reflected in 'In Memoriam' and in some of his other poems.

Tennyson imagines Nature looking at "Man, her last work" and being bemused by his faith in a god. (Wilson). Many are of the view that in times of religious inconsistency, 'In Memoriam' has helped to 'answer' or 'clarify' majority of their doubts concerning religion. Therefore, while reading through the poem, one may feel as passing through varying stages of doubt, faith, and consolation. The attitude of Tennyson to the theme of the poem is quite

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clear when observing the way he changed the title from “ Fragments of an Elegy,” to that of “ The Way of the Soul.”

To conclude, one can infer that Tennyson, in his poem ‘ In Memoriam’ not only mourns over the death of his close friend Harlem, but also for the religious inconsistencies and certain other issues of the 19th century that disturbed the smooth flow of ordinary life.

Work cited

Snyder, E. E. “ Tennysons Progressive Geology.” Victorian Network. Vol. 2. 2010. Print.

Wilson, AN. Tennysons In Memoriam: a farewell to religious certainty. guardian. co. uk. 4 Jan. 2011. Web. 7 Oct. 2012.