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TENNYSON'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

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Alfred Tennyson is the most representative English poet of the nineteenth century. For this reason the religious beliefs held by him and expressed in his poetry are of peculiar interest to any student of religious thought. But let us endeavor to understand what his beliefs were before undertaking to measure the significance of his holding and teaching them.

We turn first to one of his earliest poems, *The Palace of Art*. Opening with the statement,

"I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell,"

he proceeds to describe this lordly pleasure-house of his soul as furnished with all the treasures of literature and art from all the ages. Then the soul in "Godlike isolation," separating herself from God and from men, whom she despises as "droves of swine," says at last:

"I take possession of man's mind and deed,
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all."

THE SAVING OF DOCTOR DRYASDUST

BY REV. R. A. LAPSLEY.

Sixteen years is a long time, and it has been that since the present writer, in the pages of the Presbyterian Quarterly gave to its readers "The Spoiling of Dr. Dryasdust." As it is possible that the memory of some of the readers of the Union Seminary Magazine may not reach back to that famous publication, it may be worth while to repeat some of the observations, biographical and otherwise, which were then made concerning our valued brother in the ministry, Ecclesiasticus Dryasdust. It was then said, and it is still true, that his theological erudition is prodigious, and his decision on a nice problem of exegesis is final, and he is thought to know more of the early history of the Church than did the Fathers themselves. The only trouble about our brother in those days was indicated by the comment of one who heard him preach—he was such a dry preacher! And it was attributed by the same friend to some defects in his theological training. He had been allowed to imbibe the idea that a theological essay or an exegetical disquisition was a sermon. He had never acquired such method of studying and expounding the Scriptures in "the original English," as would enable him to "read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and give the sense and cause them to understand the reading."

Without entering into the question, which might well be raised, as to whether our brother's defects were attributable to his theological instructors, and not rather his own fault. it is sufficient to say that sixteen years ago—

Dryasdust was his name,
And we will not deny,
With regard to the same
What that name might imply.

Sixteen years produces great changes, but none of them is more marvellous than the change which we are credibly informed has

recently come over Dr. Dryasdust. We have information which we have reason to believe is correct, that he is in many respects a new man, from what he was in those days when it was our painful duty to point out his defects and give some reasons therefor. We are told by a brother who knows him well, and who has lately spent several weeks in his pastoral charge, that there are now few more acceptable and useful ministers in the bounds of our General Assembly.

As to his method of preaching, our informant says that instead of being dry and unintelligible to the ordinary mind, as was too often the case formerly, he is now a model of simplicity and effectiveness. It is said that now, instead of giving to his people a learned and labored discussion of some theological problem, or a hair-splitting setting forth of exegetical niceties, he will frequently take some familiar passage like the 23d or 32d Psalm, or the first six verses of the 14th chapter of John, and expound and enforce it verse by verse. He will stand up before his people with a light, flexible Bible in his left hand, and read the verses, clause by clause or word by word, explaining their meaning, turning quickly to other passages of Scripture of like import which throw light upon the passage in hand, drawing forth in simple form the great truths of Scripture taught and making homely, every-day application of the inspired teaching. And even when he takes a single text and draws from it a proposition embodying his theme and preaches what might be called a doctrinal sermon, he brings that doctrine down to the level of the plainest intelligence, explains it by means of familiar illustrations, and shows how the great truths of Scripture there taught have a vital relation to all the affairs of ordinary human lives. Indeed, my friend says that it will be hard to find anywhere a more delightful, edifying preacher than Dr. Dryasdust has become.

There has been a similar transformation, too, in the church of which Dr. Dryasdust has so long been pastor. Referring to the Minutes of the General Assembly sixteen years ago, it will be seen that his congregation then numbered something like 300 members,

while it now has 557 on its roll. There were then only a few accessions to membership year by year on profession of faith—one year there were only two—and these few came mainly from the Sabbath-school. The growth of his church in those days came almost entirely from members added on certificate who moved into the town from the surrounding country. You will notice, however, that this last year there were thirty-two accessions to his church upon profession of faith, and only fifteen by certificate, forty-seven in all.

The contributions of his church sixteen years ago were as follows:

Foreign Missions	\$ 75 00
Assembly's Home Missions.....	30 00
Local Home Missions	150 00
Colored Evangelistic	5 00
Ministerial Relief	20 00
Education	75 00
Publication	5 00
Bible Cause.....	8 00
Presbyterial	40 00
Pastor's salary	1,500 00
Congregational	1,200 00
Miscellaneous	230 00

This last year his church gave:

Foreign Missions	\$1,100 00
Assembly's Home Missions	150 00
Local Home Missions	400 00
Colored Evangelistic	30 00
Ministerial Relief	200 00
Education	325 00
Publication	40 00
Bible Cause.....	15 00
Presbyterial	60 00
Pastor's salary	1,800 00
Congregational	350 00
Miscellaneous	120 00

It will be seen from a comparison of these two sets of figures that sixteen years ago his church spent \$2,930 for its own ex-

penses and gave \$408 to benevolent causes; while now it spends \$2,270 on itself and gives \$2,320 for the Lord's work, outside of its own congregation. No surer proof of a revived Christian life in any congregation and an earnest, inspiring ministry on the part of the preacher could be afforded than is thus seen.

My friend also gave me a most interesting account of how this change in our brother Dryasdust and his church has been brought about. It seems that while he was sojourning in the bounds of Dr. Dryasdust's congregation, he became quite intimate with the minister himself, and gathered from him now and then bits of information which when put together make a very remarkable history of the mental and spiritual transformation which Dr. Dryasdust has undergone.

First, Dr. Dryasdust let him into the secret of the transformation which had taken place in his pastoral work, and which has showed itself in the steady stream of accessions to the communion upon profession of faith, who came into the church largely as the result of his efforts as a pastor to lead individual souls to Christ.

He said, in substance, that some six or eight years ago there was a teacher in his Sunday School who had a class of young ladies that were a most frivolous, light-headed set of girls, given up entirely to the gay whirl of social pleasures. The teacher came to his pastor one day looking very badly, and the minister asked him what was the matter. The teacher answered: "I have had another hemorrhage from the lungs, and the doctor has told me that I have not long to live; but, Dr. Dryasdust, I am deeply concerned about those girls in my class. I have never led one of them to Christ, and I cannot bear to think of going out of this world and meeting my Master with my Sunday School class unsaved." The minister hesitated a little, and then said to the teacher: "Suppose you and I get a carriage and go around and see them and you tell them how you feel." To this the teacher readily consented, and the two started together.

They went to the house of one of the girls, asked to see her, and the teacher talked to her about her soul. Tears stood in her eyes before long. After he had explained the way of salvation

to her, he suggested that they pray together, and they knelt down, and first the minister and then the teacher prayed for the salvation of the scholar. They went from house to house calling upon each of his scholars in turn. He would go up stairs all trembling with weakness and sometimes between gasps would tell the young lady what he had come for. It was not long before each of them would break down and seek salvation.

This continued for several days, as far as the teacher's feeble state of health would permit, and at the end of ten days he sent for his pastor and greeted him with the joyful news that the last one of his class had given herself to Christ.

A few weeks later the young man lay dying, and had gathered his class around him for a last farewell, and the minister was present. Together they sang, as best they could for weeping, "Blest be the tie that binds," and the teacher uttered a few broken words of prayer, and then the minister prayed and gave thanks to God, because He had permitted His dying servant the blessedness of seeing the grace of God in the salvation of his scholars. Right then and there the preacher got a taste of the joy of personal work for the salvation of souls that has since become one of the ruling passions of his life.

He is still what he has always been, the same tactful, courteous, sympathetic pastor, but there now glows beneath all of his pastoral work the fire of an intense desire to lead the unsaved among his people to Christ, and to bring the saved into closer fellowship with their blessed Master. It is said that there is hardly an unconverted person in that whole community, and for many miles around the town of H—, to whom Dr. Dryasdust has not spoken on the subject of his soul's salvation.

Second, equally interesting was the account which my friend obtained of the way in which a great change took place in Dr. Dryasdust's method of sermon preparation and manner of preaching.

It seems that about the same time that this transformation took place in Dr. Dryasdust's methods of personal work, one of his members asked him to preach every other Sunday afternoon in a

school-house on Factory Row, in another part of the town from where the Presbyterian church is situated. The first Sunday afternoon on which he preached the weather was quite warm and the school-house was packed with people. The Doctor had selected one of his usually carefully finished written sermons, some sort of disquisition upon a subject away up out of the reach of the plain people whom he was to address. As he went on with his sermon he happened to glance over his spectacles at his congregation, and much to his chagrin saw that about half of them were asleep—the older ones at least—while some of the younger ones were whispering and giggling.

He finished his sermon as best he could, and on the way home told Mr. C., who had gotten him to conduct the service, that he could not preach there any more, as it seemed that his style of preaching was not suited to that class of people. This led to quite an animated argument; and finally Mr. C. said: "Doctor, suppose you try a little different way Sunday two weeks; suppose you read some short passage of Scripture and just explain it to them; tell them what it means and how it fits their spiritual needs." After considerable hesitation Dr. Dryasdust consented to try the service once more on the plan which he had suggested.

The next time he preached there was pretty much the same kind of audience, but instead of taking a text and delivering a sermonie oration, he read to them the 55th chapter of Isaiah, and began to talk about it in a simple, familiar way, somewhat as follows:

"Were you ever thirsty? I don't mean, did you ever want a drink of water, but were you ever so thirsty that it seemed as if you would give your life for even a taste of water. I had a friend once who was sick with fever in those days when the doctors thought it was not the right thing to allow fever patients much water to drink, and I will never forget how he cried out over and over again in his delirium, 'Water, water!' Did you ever want water in that way?"

In this simple, familiar way he began to talk about that wonderful gospel invitation, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye

to the waters." He found himself speaking with an ease and power that was quite unusual, and that afternoon nobody went to sleep, and even the children sat up and listened eagerly to what he said.

More than that. A few days afterwards he happened to meet on the street a middle-aged man who lived in the factory district, and who stopped him by saying: "Are you the preacher who talked up at our school-house last Sunday?" Dr. Dryasdust answered that he was. "Well, sir, I haven't been able to get your talk out of my mind, and I want you to tell me how I can become a Christian."

Other cases of special interest soon developed in that neighborhood, and much to his astonishment Dr. Dryasdust was asked to preach every night for several weeks, beginning first in the school-house, and when that became overcrowded, using a large hall in that neighborhood. As a result of that meeting a mission church was organized, and as a secondary result there came a marked change in the whole manner of preaching on the part of Dr. Dryasdust himself; for having been compelled to speak in that plain, expository style to the humble people for whose benefit the meeting had been held, some how or other he never could take the same interest in his old style of sermons again.

Third, while my friend was in Dr. Dryasdust's congregation, he saw with a great deal of pleasure the notable development of the work of the Sabbath-school, in which the pastor took a very prominent part. Most of the approved methods which are to be found in the most successful schools he saw carried out in the ordinary working of this school.

There was, to begin with, a large Adult Bible class in charge of the pastor, which was made to do double duty both as a place for the study of God's word on the part of the older members of the church, and as a training school from which the superintendent could recruit at any time his teaching force. At the other end of the school was a very successful Primary Department in an infant-class room of its own; and in between these two extremes was a well graded Junior and Intermediate Department using

the Supplemental Lessons, teaching the Shorter Catechism, besides the study of the International Lessons, with a carefully graded course of lesson helps. There was also a Cradle Roll, by which a number of families outside of the church had been interested, their little children as they grew older brought into the infant class, and the father and mother interested in the work of the church. There was also a Home Department which had done equally good service, both in bringing back into touch with the life of the school and the study of the Sabbath-school lessons, many of the older members of the church who could not attend the regular sessions of the school; and interesting in the study of God's word a number of outsiders, whose occupations prevented their attendance during Sabbath-school hours.

My friend asked Dr. Dryasdust how this unusual development in the work of his Sabbath School had taken place, especially as he had learned from one of the members that the school had been brought to its present high state of efficiency largely through the efforts of the pastor himself.

"Thereby hangs a tale," said Dr. Dryasdust. "Some years ago I knew as little about what might be called Modern Sunday-school methods as I know about the running of a steam engine. I was waked up to a sense of my deficiency and needs in a singular way. I had never been to a Sunday-school Convention; indeed, I had been accustomed to look upon such gatherings as altogether out of my line. I knew that in most meetings of the sort there were things which I could not altogether approve of—at least I thought there were—and I thought that most of the men prominent in such work were visionaries or fadists. What I had read of so-called modern methods in the Sabbath-school had led me to believe that they were simply a multiplication of machinery which brought about a show of activity without accomplishing any better results than our quiet, old-time ways of memorizing the Scriptures, teaching the Catechism and studying the regular lesson helps.

"But it so happened in the providence of God that, though I never had been to a Sunday-school Convention, the State Sunday-

school Convention came to me. It met in our town about six years ago, and I was forced as a matter of courtesy to attend, and, indeed, was put down on the programme to make several addresses, which I could not well decline. That Convention marks an era in my life. I do not recall any of its proceedings in detail, nor much of what was said in the various addresses and conferences, but I suddenly woke up to the fact that here was a great world of Christian activity to which I was almost a stranger. And particularly the question of my personal relation and duty to my own Sabbath-school faced me as it had never done before. When I took stock of myself as a Sabbath-school worker I found myself pitifully inadequate to meet the requirements of this important department of the Church's work, for whose success I as a pastor was largely responsible. It had been my privilege but a few years before to study in a representative Theological Seminary, where I covered the full course of Homiletics, Pastoral Theology, etc., yet the training of this representative institution did not train relative to the principles, problems, needs and growing demands of the foundation work of the Church, the Sabbath-school. At this crisis in my life I found myself ignorant and unequipped, and face to face with the awful alternative that my Sabbath-school must be improved, or suffer the loss—as the Church at large, for the most part, has suffered for years—of scores of youth.

“I talked with my Superintendent and leading teachers about the improvement of the School, but I found they naturally looked to me to lead them, and I could get little help or suggestion from that source.

“So I simply went to work at the foundation to study the best books on Sabbath-school Methods, such as ‘How to Conduct a Sunday-school,’ by Marion Lawrence; ‘Modern Methods in Sunday-school Work,’ by Mead; ‘Sunday-school Problems,’ by Amos Wells; ‘The Pastor and the Sunday-school,’ by Dr. W. E. Hatcher, etc., and to attend Conventions and Institutes. I have learned a good deal, and I found that my people were

willing to go with me as fast as I could lead them, and the results are as you see them."

Thus the reader has been permitted to see in its general outline the change in the ministry of our distinguished brother which has recently taken place, to which we have given the title prefixed to this article, "The Saving of Dr. Dryasdust." One other feature of this change might well be noticed, and that is, the more intelligent, practical interest which the pastor has taken in all the general benevolent work of the church.

This is indicated by the great change in the collections as seen in the table of offerings made to benevolent causes by Dr. Dryasdust's church now as compared with former years. This has been brought about not only through the quickened spiritual life of the church, which always shows itself in consecration and in enlarged liberality; but this quickening interest has been given intelligent direction from the pulpit. Formerly Dr. Dryasdust was content merely to announce the collections month by month with a perfunctory statement of the purpose for which the collection was asked. This he did in a routine way—*e. g.*, in January he announced Assembly's Home Missions; in February, Presbytery's Home Missions; in March, Sabbath-school Missions and Publication; in April, Ministerial Education; in May, Foreign Missions; in June, Synodical Home Missions; in July, Ministerial Relief, etc., etc. The announcement of these collections he prefaced with a few sentences, in which he made the same statements he had been making year after year, concerning the greatness of the need and the wide-open doors of opportunity and the importance of Christian liberality. The detailed information which would have given his people an intelligent interest in each one of these causes, furnished each minister through the printed matter sent out by the Secretaries slumbered in Dr. Dryasdust's waste basket, and never even trickled through him into the minds of his people.

Latterly all this has been changed. Along with the great awakening in his own ministerial work, our brother has been aroused to the great work going on outside the bounds of his

own congregation; and with his usual scholarly instinct he has sought to inform himself concerning the actual work represented by each one of the Assembly's collections, and has begun to give his people fresh, accurate information as to what is done with their money—what is doing on each of our Foreign Mission fields, and what possibilities for indefinite enlargement are to be seen in other lands. He has taken the same intelligent interest in the work of Home Missions, both the Assembly's Home Missions in such a territory of boundless opportunity as Oklahoma and the great Southwest, and the local Home Missions needs which lie around almost all of our Presbyteries, even in the older States. He not only does this in connection with the regular collections, but he has taken to illustrating his sermons with incidents borrowed from the *Missionary*, the *Home Missionary* and the facts of the work which is represented by each of our benevolent collections. Such an intelligent direction of his people's liberality is bearing large fruit, so that his church is steadily forging to the front as a great fountain from which streams of beneficence are flowing. As just indicated, and as must always be the case, this fountain, when traced to its ultimate source, springs from the pastor's sympathetic heart, and well informed brain.

This account of the wonderful transformation which has taken place in Dr. Dryasdust's ministry would not be complete without a further statement of a remarkable spiritual experience through which our brother has passed. This same friend, to whose intimate acquaintance with Dr. Dryasdust we owe the principal material from which all the foregoing has been taken, has told us that Dr. Dryasdust, in one of those favored seasons of intimate intercourse he enjoyed with him, gave him a history of this spiritual crisis in his life somewhat as follows: "It was at the close of the year 1901, I believe," said Dr. Dryasdust, "the last night in the old year, just a few months after I had begun that change in my method of preaching which I have previously explained to you; it happened to be a moonlight night, and I was sitting in my study, which overlooks the church and the church-yard. Back of the church-yard, as you know, is the

old burying-ground, in which, up to the last year or two before the cemetery was opened, all the deceased members of my congregation had been buried. I could see the monuments gleaming in the moonlight which marked the graves of a considerable number of people who had sat under my ministry, many of whom had died without giving any reasonable evidence of faith in Christ. Some of these had been regular and attentive hearers of mine for many years. With my heart strongly aroused by these new experiences of which I have spoken, which were bringing about a great change both in my pastoral work and in my manner of preaching the gospel, I could not but feel that I was verily guilty before God concerning many of those who had sat under my preaching and died unsaved. Not one of them but what had been a good friend of mine, yet they had died without becoming reconciled to my Master. I could not describe to you my unutterable anguish in feeling that this was partly my fault.

Then my mind ran over the whole course of my ministry up to this time. The Lord seemed to enter into judgment with me, as when he met with Jacob at the ford Jabbok; the Lord himself seemed to be questioning me concerning my coldly intellectual sermons, my formal prayers, my easy-going pastoral work. And back of these he made me see my low, selfish ambitions, my personal self-seeking aims in life, my lack of a supreme devotion to the work of Christ and the needs of perishing souls. Faithfully, yet tenderly, he dealt with me, until I broke down in deepest contrition and confession over these miserable failures in my past life. And then I was drawn out to pray for better things; my whole soul went out in strong crying and tears, in prayer for newness of life in a closer walk with God, and new self-dedication to the blessed Master, a new anointing with the power of the Holy Spirit." Just here Dr. Dryasdust took out of his desk a little book, which contained a private diary, and showed my friend the following extract:

January 1, 1902 1:30 A. M.

With the New Year now beginning, I would enter into a deeper self-dedication to him who bought me with his own blood. I humbly

confess the failures of my ministry in the past, by which I have the loss of immortal souls justly charged against me. I confess my pride, self-seeking, vain ambitions, my indolent ease-loving ministry. I plead the blood that was shed on Calvary to cleanse me from these and all my innumerable sins. I ask for new supplies of grace to enable me to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Here at the feet of Jesus I lay myself in a renewed, whole-hearted surrender to his service, in the work of the gospel ministry. To this end I supplicate the filling and sealing of his Holy Spirit. Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it. Amen.