

Science Versus Faith In Memoriam A. H. H.

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The Victorian Age, named for the queen who reigned nearly the entire century, was characterized by incredible scientific progress. Charles Darwin, for example, came forth with his treatise *The Origin of Species*, which advanced his radical theories of evolution and survival and rocked the pillars of traditional Christian [faith](#) in humankind's superiority to the beasts of the earth. Darwin's theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest conflicted with the story of the Creation related in the Bible. Moreover, scientists now had proof that the Earth was much older than had ever been imagined before, making the history of humanity seem like a blink of the universe's eye. The Victorian population could no longer blindly accept that the world had been created in six days after geologists had proven that the world evolved into its current form over millions of years. In addition, a theory called "Higher Criticism" developed which read the Bible not as the infallible word of God, but as a historical text. In the face of these incredible and disturbing discoveries and theories, the faith of many Victorian Christians was profoundly shaken. The Victorian masses no longer had a bedrock of tradition and Biblical scripture to stand upon; it had been dashed to pieces by fossilized rocks and the skulls of apelike men. The poet laureate of the age, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the voice of the Victorian people, expresses his horror and bewilderment at the implications of these scientific discoveries in "In Memoriam A. H. H." In sections 54, 55, and 56 of this lengthy poem, Tennyson finds his belief in God

weakened and his faith foundering in the face of scientific fact.

In the face of [evolution](#), geology, and natural selection, ...

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...eration of evidence he cannot deny. He is wounded by God's apparent betrayal of humanity and desperate for an answer, but there is none forthcoming. It took years for the wounds inflicted by science on the faithful to heal. Some Victorians chose agnosticism as their new philosophy of God; if someone could prove to them His Existence, then they would believe. Others chose to become atheists. Atheism stated that there was no God, no afterlife, and no divine creator. While neither of these theologies was very popular during the Victorian period, they have continued to exist. The citizens like Tennyson who attempted to reconcile their old faith with their new knowledge had to find ways to blend the two together, to show that it was possible for God to work through Nature to achieve His ends. They had to gather together the dust of Earth, and with it shape a Heaven.

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