

When I was a boy in the 1950s, my mother would recite around New Year's this poem from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's great elegy, *In Memoriam*, on the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam.

Her mother, my grandmother, a late Victorian, had much of the poetry of her time and the past memorized.

Those long, cold Saskatchewan winter nights, before radio and television, with a wood fire, a rather weak oil lamp and a dozen books of poetry.

Belonging myself to the no-memorization generation of school children, I was then impressed...and still am...by my mother having these words « by heart ».

It seems to me, more than for most years, 2020 is reflected in the words of this poem.

Or maybe that our hopes are in these words from the 1840s.

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### Section 106 of *In Memoriam*

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light;  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true

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Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that *here* we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out the slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;

Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out the old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free;  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

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Alfred, Lord Tennyson told his son that «  
the forms of the Christian religion would  
alter, but that the spirit of Christ would  
still grow from more to more ».

May it!

The old year is going, let him go...ring in  
the Christ that is to be....

Thanks be to God...and good wishes  
for this New Year 2021.

Lorne Ellaschuk