

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

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ARTICLE I.

REPORT OF A CONFERENCE BY PRESBYTERY, ON THE SUBJECT OF "THE ORGANIZATION, INSTRUCTION AND DISCIPLINE OF THE COLOURED PEOPLE."*

At the last meeting of Presbytery the subject of the evangelization of the coloured people was discussed in conference, under the several heads of organization, instruction and discipline. The present report is the result of a motion, by which a committee was appointed to embody the views presented, and the various intelligence furnished during that conference.

The question of the segregation of the blacks from the whites in public worship, was not at that time considered, simply because the policy of Presbytery in that matter had already been settled and openly adopted. It has been the almost universal practice of our ministers for many years, to convene the coloured people into separate congregations and dispense to them instruction suited to their exigencies: and at the meeting of this Presbytery at Barnwell, in April, 1847, a formal sanction was afforded to this practice by the extension of its approval and patronage to a scheme contemplating the establishment of a separate congregation of the blacks of the 2d Presbyterian Church in Charleston.

The reasons for the collection of the coloured people

* This article is an abstract of a conference had in the Presbytery of Charleston, on the methods to be pursued for the religious instruction of our coloured population. It embraces no authorized deliverance of that ecclesiastical body on this subject, but gives the individual views of the speakers, some of whom have large experience in the matters discussed.

ARTICLE V.

• THE POETICAL ELEMENT OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a book of history, of laws, of moral and didactic precepts, of biographical narratives, of personal memoirs, and of epistles, some of which are addressed to churches, and some to individuals. A large portion of it is of pure poetry, and the poetical element runs through the whole, like a thread of gold. Now, we do not think that sufficient prominence has been given to this particular element, to this remarkable peculiarity, to this distinctive characteristic of Divine revelation; and we do think that it affords a separate and a very impressive argument for the Divine origin and authority of the Bible; that it is in entire accordance with what we might expect to find in a Divine revelation, from a consideration of the analogy of nature, the perfections of God, and the spiritual economy of man. We cannot help thinking also, that the consequences flowing from the practical recognition of this peculiar element of the Bible, are of the very highest importance, as infallibly indicating the method by which Divine truth may find readiest access to the minds of men in general, and be most effectually impressed upon them.

God has made two revelations of himself to man. The one in nature, the other in Scripture. The one partial, the other complete. In the one he has proclaimed his eternal power and Godhead. In the other he has manifested all his attributes in their highest forms. We might expect *a priori*, that the two revelations proceeding from the same being, and addressed to the same being, would have some things in common; that while each should be especially adapted to its proper object, they would bear the marks of a common origin. The external, visible universe, once a paradise, now too often a prison and a tomb, is still glorious to behold. It still hath objects and aspects of surpassing loveliness. Above or below, by day or by night, in the blaze of the nocturnal sky, lighted up with "living sapphires," and in the first, faint flush of the new-born day, in the level

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rays of the sun as it lingers on the verge of the horizon, in the ruddy glow of evening, when his descending disk has sunk below the mountains and the ocean, above all, in the rainbow, bright token of peace and good, we discern this loveliness. "Very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof; it circleteth the heavens, like a glorious girdle, and the hands of the Most High, have bended it." We discern it in the manifold beauties of the earth, looked upon in early spring, when the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; or amid the glowing and gorgeous splendors of summer when the pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys are covered over with corn; or in brown October, of all months perhaps, the sweetest, when the leaf sere and spotted, but still bright, hangs loosely from its stem; and in the yellow sunshine, there is a certain accordance with the fading leaf, and a gentle touch and tone of not unwelcome melancholy, in the aspect of the earth, soothing, it may be, and dear

***** "To an eye,
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."—

to a heart that has often brooded, not in bitterness, but in love and sadness, over his own mortal lot, the mysteries which beset the spirit here. And winter, too, hath a glory of its own, not merely when the cold, bright sun shines on the snow-clad earth, and glittering icicles hang like brilliants on every bough, but when mingled hail and snow come hurtling from the darkened sky.

Now, what we find in nature, we might expect to find in Scripture. If the glory of God is mirrored in the shining stream and in the bending skies, in the hues and harmonies of evening, in the purpling east at day-break; if these show forth the manifold wisdom, power, and love of the Creator of all things; if nature, which is the creature of God; if light, which is the garment of God, be so glorious; if this material universe, the outer court of Jehovah's temple, be so garnished with stars and garlanded with flowers, analogy would surely lead us to anticipate a kindred glory in the Word of God which is the holy of holies, the immediate dwelling-place

of his life-giving Spirit, the more exact and express image of his glory. If the day be his, the night also his, if he hath prepared the light and the sun, if the heavens be the work of his fingers,* if he hath ordained the moon and the stars,—the Bible a work of God, diviner still, as undefiled by the sin of apostate man, should be brighter than the starry heavens, purer than the crystal lymph, sweeter than the flowers of Spring.

An examination of the spiritual constitution of man would also, lead us to expect that a revelation addressed to him from God, should have the poetical element. A Divine revelation should recognise the nature of man in all its integrity and furnish its appropriate object and aliment for every faculty. It should be suited to all the exercises, to all the wants and to all the manifestations of the soul, if it would satisfy its cravings and heal its diseases. To the understanding it should offer absolute truth. To the conscience, a law of moral duty commensurate with the perfections of God. To the affections, an object of infinite loveliness and glory. For the taste, the æsthetical faculty of the soul, it should surely make an appropriate provision in objects of beauty addressed and adapted to itself. The main design of a revelation from God, would, of course, be not to gratify taste, but to instruct the understanding, to illuminate and control the conscience, to sanctify and attract the affections. But, instead of obstructing this primary purpose, a revelation which should not ignore, but embody the poetical element, universal and destructible as it is, in the heart of man, would greatly advance it. The Law given on Sinai is to this day not less revered because inevitably associated in every mind with the awful descent of Jehovah on the mount, with the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words, with the terrors of the multitude, with the ministry of angels, and with the majesty of God. As this outer and material universe is exquisitely adapted to the bodily constitution of man, as there is a natural fitness in the organization of the eye, the instru-

* Hence the heavens, as adorned with the moon and stars, are said to be the work "of God's fingers," that is, not only those which were powerfully made, but also *curiously wrought and adorned* by the Spirit of God.—Owen on the Spirit, vol. iii, p. 97, Carter's edition.

ment of vision, and in light, the medium of vision, in the ear, the organ of hearing, and in sound, the object of hearing, in all the members of the body, to their proper objects and functions, so there is a like and a not less wonderful correspondence, between the faculties of the soul and that supernatural revelation of his truth, his grace, and his glory, which God has addressed to it. There is no power or passion, no taste or sentiment, no instinct or aspiration of the soul of man, for which God has not made an adequate provision, to which he has not addressed an appropriate appeal. If, in the revelation, which he has given us, he has revealed truth to instruct the understanding and authority to control the conscience, he has exhibited beauty to delight the imagination and taste. Had this element of the revelation been wanting, the revelation had been incomplete and imperfect, it had been neither so worthy of God nor so suitable to us. The Bible is to be contemplated with reference to God, the being from whom it emanates, and man, the being to whom it is addressed. In its communications concerning God, it conveys conceptions, every way worthy of the Supreme Being, in themselves infinitely transcending the thoughts of man, and yet, when revealed in perfect accordance with the highest aspirations of the human spirit, and the clearest deductions of most enlarged and enlightened reason. The views of the Divine nature and government which it unfolds are, moreover, peculiar to itself. They are invariably found where the Bible is found, and nowhere else. When once clearly announced and apprehended, they are perceived to be, both sublime and true, suitable alike to the soul and to God; but they are such as fallen man, unaided, uninspired, alone could never have originated. They evidently come from afar. They descend from above. Like that spiritual and saving regeneration of which our Saviour spake, these truths are all transcendental, Divine, *αυωθεν*. Another marvellous peculiarity about these revelations, so far as they relate to God is, that the wiser and the better men become, the more exalted and precious do they appear. Just as the spiritual vision is purged and strengthened, the spiritual objects revealed to its contemplation, expand and brighten. Man

never can outgrow the revelations of God. These revelations never can become old, never can be out of date. As in themselves, they are endowed with immortal youth, so they are arrayed in a vesture of undecaying beauty. The word of God is invested with an authority, which is felt to be imperative and eternal. It speaks to the men of this generation in the same kingly tone with which it spake to the first man to whom it came. The sun shines not less brightly now than when its morning beam first enote the land and sea; so the rays of Divine truth have a fresh and perpetual glory. Schools of philosophy, "falsely so called," spring up, live through their appointed day and then disappear to be heard of no more. Systems of false religion overspread continents, endure, it may be, for centuries, and are then exposed and exploded never to be restored again. The world is continually outgrowing its false faiths, but the truths of Divine revelation, concerning God, never grow old, never pass away, never sink into contempt as man gets wiser; but dilate before his eyes, as he approaches nearer to them, like some majestic mountain that seemed but a small speck in the distance, but on a near approach "swells vast to heaven;" or, like the visible horizon, seemingly a narrow circle, but seek to touch it, to compass it, and you find it ever-spreading, ever-receding, inaccessible, incommensurable. This is true of the Bible in what it reveals concerning God.*

Now, it is just as marvellous, after its kind, considered as a revelation addressed to man. He, who made the human soul, made the Bible that is meant for it, and they are mutually adapted. They fit into each other as the key to the lock, as the empty reservoir to the water that is to fill it, as the ear to sound, as the eye to light. Had God been what he is, and man been different, then

* On the limitation of our knowledge, and on the nature of our knowledge concerning God, see Discussions on Philosophy, &c., by Sir W. Hamilton. On the Philosophy of the Unconditioned, in reference to Cousin's Infinito—Absolute. This article of Hamilton presents, perhaps, the most fundamental view of the subject to be found in the whole compass of literature—an article in which the last conclusions of the most learned philosophy appear to be in entire harmony with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.—John i: 18; v: 37; Job xi: 7-12; Ps. l: 7-16; cxxxiv: 1-12.

the revelations addressed to man had been different from what they are. Had man possessed some of the attributes which he has and wanted others, then the revelation which God has made to man, had recognised those attributes, and had lacked elements which it now possesses, but which in those altered circumstances, would have been superfluous. Had man possessed a moral and intellectual nature only, then would God have revealed all the moral truth which now exercises the understanding and appeals to the moral sense. But he would have revealed it in other forms, and he would have revealed it alone. The revelation would have been perfect, because it would have fully answered the conditions of the case, it would have been entirely worthy of the holiness and truth of God, and entirely adapted to the nature of man. But it would have been another sort of man from us. Such a revelation would suit our nature perfectly, so far as it was a revelation of moral truth, but it would not suit us altogether, because of the missing element of beauty, the object and the delight of taste.

Now, just suppose that this faculty is an essential part of the constitution of man, and that God is about to address to him a revelation which is to be worthy of God and commensurate with the wants, the faculties, and the susceptibilities of man. It is evident that the old provision will no longer answer, a new element must be added. There must be, not only truth for the understanding and authority for the conscience, but there must be something addressed and adapted to the æsthetical faculty—taste. Otherwise, the revelation were incomplete. It might speak of the perfections, the purposes and the operations of God just as it does now, but still there would be a most unexpected, inexplicable, appalling *hiatus*. This revelation is perfect, so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It has a missing element. It is, therefore, not in keeping with that other revelation of himself, which God has given us, in the creation. When we inspect what purports to be a revelation from God to man we have a right to look for, to ask for something to correspond with the stars of Heaven and the flowers of earth.

In contemplating so mutilated and defective a revela-

tion, we should feel the same embarrassment that we should experience if we were to leave out of view, some indispensable condition of the question in the attempt to solve an algebraic problem. Now, just let the poetical element be restored to the Scriptures, and you will see at a glance, how complete they become, how consistent with their author and design, how consonant with the soul of man, how correspondent with all the attributes and works of God!

Then the two revelations of nature and Scripture, receive and reflect mutual light. Then the music of nature's many and sweet voices, finds a responsive echo in inspired Scripture. Then the innumerable beauties of earth and sky, of flower and tree, of streamlet and hill, of gems and precious stones, are reflected from the faithful mirror of the later and fuller revelation. Then the melodious murmurs of the waterfall, and the soft green of the sward in spring-time, are recognised and reproduced in Scripture. Then our common earth is clothed with a radiance coming down out of Heaven. Then the beauties of nature are linked with the holiest sensibilities of the human soul, and consecrated by the inspired portraiture of the Divine Spirit. Then the voice of nature gathers significance and sacredness from the revelations of grace. Then the whole earth is in some sense, at once a teacher and a temple. Then the innocent lamb and the faithful shepherd may recall to mind him who was both the Lamb of God and the Shepherd of Israel. Then the seed which falls from the choice hand of the sower, may bring to memory the good word of our God, that springeth up and beareth fruit, some sixty fold, some thirty fold, and some an hundred. Then the soft falling showers and the gentle dews of evening may remind us of the grace of God that bringeth salvation. The glories of an earthly crown may suggest the hope of one that fadeth not away, and the golden fruits which grow beside the living streams of earth, may then be associated in imagination and desire, with the river of the water of life, and the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

We have seen what the analogy of nature might lead us to expect; we have seen what the spiritual constitu-

tion of man might lead us to desire in a revelation from God. Let us examine the Scriptures to ascertain whether or not they accord with the analogy of nature and answer to the desire of the heart. On examination, we find that no other book in the world can compare or compete with the Bible, either in the profusion, or in the perfection, of its poetry. And this will strike us all the more forcibly, when we reflect that the design of the Bible was not primarily, to please, but to instruct mankind, and that the larger part of it is not poetical in form—that it is a book of laws, of history, of prudential maxims and moral precepts. It is true, that we have poetry in all its departments, and in all its varieties. Almost all of the prophecies are poetical, not only in substance but in form, thus verifying the intimate relation between the poet and prophet, as conceived of by classic antiquity; the words *προφητείας* and *vates*, standing indifferently for either or both, in their respective languages. Even in those cases in which the discourse had been all along in plain prose, so soon as what is distinctively prophetic begins, the writer or speaker rises at once to the highest strains of the most majestic poetry; of which, we have a signal instance in the dying benedictions of the patriarch Jacob. One thing remarkable about the Bible is, that it should be so poetical, even in translation, and should really seem to suffer less from translation than most other poetry. In general, just as a work is delicate and exquisite in style, is the difficulty of transfusing its peculiar fragrance and flavor into another tongue; like those fruits which, to be tasted in all their sweetness, must be eaten in the soil on which they grow, or like the flowers which bloomed in Paradise, of which Eve says,

“That never will in other climate grow.”

We know how impossible it is to translate the subtle harmonies of Homer and Sophocles—the airy and exquisite fancies of Shakespeare, suspended, like dew-drops, on the gossamer threads of the most delicate diction—the words being to the thought, not what the sheath is to the sword, but fitting and flesh-coloured like a glove. We know how intransmissible into another

tongue are the grand harmonies of Milton, the thoughts moving on the words, like his own description of heaven's gates "on golden hinges turning." These writers we know, do suffer, must suffer from any attempt to translate them. The very pronunciation of the Hebrew words is now irrecoverably lost. No man pretends to know what it was with anything approaching certainty.* How much greater then, must have been the majesty and sweetness of David's lyrics—how much more impetuous and splendid the volume of "rapt Isaiah's fire?—when the Hebrew words were fitly uttered and their effect heightened by all the foreign aids of instrumental harmony.† The prevailing and distinctive characteristics of Hebrew poetry are majesty and tenderness. The subjects of Hebrew poetry are the noblest in themselves, and of most universal and enduring interest to the human family. There is, therefore, a general resemblance in all the inspired poets, but not on that account is there less diversity of genius and style, of imagery and association, than we discern among the poets of Greece, or of England. As in the primitive productions of the Creator's hand, the utmost diversity was united with the utmost excellence, as everything was beautiful with a beauty after its own kind, so in the poetical writers of the Bible. There are the tender elegies of Jeremiah, when he lamented the downfall of his country and the captivity of his people. There is the lofty and solemn plaint of David when he mourned, with generous grief, for Saul and Jonathan, and the passionate outcry of his mighty heart, swelling with anguish at the untimely end of his son Absalom, undutiful and ungodly, but, therefore, sorrowed for with an agony only the more bitter, the more piercing, the more desperate! Then we have the superhuman sublimities of Isaiah, peculiarly the prophet of the Holy One of Israel. Then we have the lovely and lone youth, whose voice was like some pleasant instrument,—harp-like in its tender sadness,—who was with the captives by the river of

* Calmet's Dictionary—Article, Poetry of the Hebrews.

† It is probable that the Hebrew loses less in being translated into the English, than into most other modern languages. See on this subject, some very striking observations in the Spectator, No. 405.

Chebar, whose visions were so mystical and so grand, so full of shadowy imagery and of solemn truth!

As no other book bears the same relation to the heart of man which the Bible does, so no other book bears the same relation to the outer universe. It over-canopies the material world like the sky, and pours its hallowed light over all the scenes and provinces and processes of nature. Every uninspired writer is partial, provincial. The sacred writers alone, are Catholic and all-embracing. It is said that the topography of Homer is so exact, that the Greek mariner may now steer his course along the shore, around the isles of the *Ægean*, by his immortal chart. The cliffs of Dover will endure as long in Shakespeare's verse, as on their native site; and

"The banks and braes and streams around
The castle of Montgomery,"

will evermore be welcome to the eye and dear to the heart of every patriot Scot. But these are all limited to a nation. The poetry of the Bible is the poetry of the world and of the race. It not only sets before us the holy and beautiful city, alike in her pride and in her desolation, when like the mystical Babylon she said in her heart, I sit a queen and shall see no sorrow, and when she sat solitary and had become as a widow, when "crowned with her tiara of proud towers," and when her Temple was profaned and prostrate, when the Roman eagles flapped their ill-omened wings over her, and the plough-share of ruin passed through her. It not only exhibits the fair daughters of Jerusalem when they gathered in mystic and holy dance around the ark of God returning in triumph to its resting place, but when they hung their harps on the willows beside the rivers of Babylon, unwilling to awake their chords of sweetness in a strange land and at a tyrant's bidding. It not only celebrates national deeds and confers a sacred immortality on national topics and places and persons, on Bethlehem, where the infant Redeemer was born, on Nazareth, where he passed his early youth, on Capernaum, on Chorazin, and on Bethsaida, where so many mighty works were done, on Bethany, the dwelling-place of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, on those

weeping women that followed him to Calvary where he died, and to the grove where they laid him; but it casts its broad and beautiful mantle over all lands. Under its canopy of brightness all nations are gathered and glorified. It tells of the primal creation of all things, of the first rising of Vesperus, "that led the starry hosts" of that period, in the fathomless, but unforgotten and glorious past, when the music of the spheres first broke in holy gladness on the listening ear of angels and of God.

This subject may be looked at from another point of view. Abstract the poetical element from Scripture and you eviscerate the whole. Such is the native constitution of the human mind that the efficacy of that moral truth, which is addressed to the understanding, and that moral authority which is exerted over the conscience, is greatly aided by the poetical element of the Bible. Lord Byron, who knew wherein his great strength lay, as well as Samson, says of himself, "description is my *forte*." The power of graphic and moving description is the test and the triumph of the true poet. Take away the poetical element from the Bible and you exchange a description of God, as sitting upon the circle of the heavens, riding upon the wings of the wind, weighing the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, for a definition of God, as omnipotent, omnipresent, &c. Now, of all books in the world, of the same compass, the Bible has fewest definitions and most descriptions, for it is not a book of exact science, and it is entirely adapted to human nature. Think what wild work you would make by ignoring or abolishing the poetical element of the Bible.* You convert the most picturesque and poetical book in existence into a record as dry and didactic as a merchant's ledger. You annihilate almost all, certainly by far the greater part, of the discourses of him who spake as man never spake. You destroy at once, almost every prophecy, whether of the Old Testament or the New, every fragment of the book of Psalms, the most varied and beautiful, the most precious and perfect book

* We are glad to see the view of the importance of this element of Scripture taken above, sustained by the high authority of the late Dr. Chalmers.—See his correspondence by Dr. Hanna, letter 269, p. 319.

of prayer in all the world. You leave, it may be, a chapter and a half of the book of Job, the most majestic poem in any land or tongue. You cast away as a worthless thing the greater part of the Apocalypse of St. John described by Milton as "the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a seven-fold chorus of hal-lalujahs and harping symphonies." You extinguish the earliest light of the morning stars, and silence the sweetest music of the sons of God. Better, far better, that some demon-vandal should rob the material heavens of their glory, pluck each "bright, particular star," from its place in the firmament, and with the breath of his mouth slay every blade of grass, and every opening flower; dry up the diamond dew-drop, and annihilate at once every object that garnishes the heavens and glorifies the earth.

Of the many corollaries flowing from the proposition which we have been seeking to establish, our space will allow us to point out only two or three of the highest practical importance. It is plain, in the first place, that the literary beauties of the Bible should commend it to the study of all who aspire to purity and elegance of taste. Dr. Johnson advises those who wish to form a good English style, to give their days and nights to the study of Addison. With how much more propriety, may we urge those who wish to acquaint themselves with the highest forms of thought and speech "under heaven, among men," to give their days and nights to the study of the Bible. This, our book, has done more to sow the seeds of moral goodness in the hearts of men, to invigorate, to expand, to purge and to exalt the purely intellectual faculty, than all other books of all other literatures put together. That which prevents many men of cultivated taste from entering on the diligent and delighted study of the Bible, is its awful holiness and the personal consciousness of sin. The atmosphere of Scripture is to them like the air of the highest mountains, pure, sublime, but rare and difficult to breathe in. Rightly interpreted, it is an involuntary tribute which such men never pay to the peculiar holiness of this book

when they shun it. The Bible itself, tells us, the time is coming when holiness to the Lord shall be written on the bells of the horses. This signet of the king of glory is visibly impressed upon every page of Scripture, and is at once, a sign and seal of its divinity. When a sympathy with the holiness of God, has been created in the soul, then what before constituted a barrier to the perusal of Scripture is converted into a specific and superlative attraction. Holiness, the attribute of God, which casts a lustre on every other, which consecrates every other which is spoken of in Scripture as the beauty of God, is the all-pervading and reigning element of the Bible. It diffuses a calm and equable glory over all the parts of inspired Scripture, and other books "do then show likest" the Book of God, as they embody and exhibit his supernal attribute. As a man improves in purity of heart, not only will the Scriptures be to him more glorious and more dear, but his appreciation even of external nature, will become more exalted and more intense. He will see more in the world and in man. The earth and sky, the mountains and the meadows, the growing corn, the broad rock, the bright waters, "the shells on the sea-shore and the wild flowers, the murmur of the unreposing brooks,"—all lovely sights and sounds, —the common face of man, "the star-light smile of children," will then put on for him a new and more excellent glory. The two worlds of nature and Scripture now divorced and divergent, will then be brought near, and each will have a conservation and a charm unknown before; because in every object that he sees in each, he can now recognise the memorial and the pledge of his heavenly Father's love. And now, when he ascends those mountain-tops, where erst it was so hard to breathe, he finds himself in an atmosphere to which he is "native and endued;" which is now to him, no longer rare and difficult, but congenial and delightful, and he says with the exulting spirit in *Comus*,

Now I fly
To those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky;
There I suck the liquid air.

Then turning to men grovelling in the valley far below, we hear him say invitingly to them

Mortals that would follow me,
Love virtue; she alone is free,
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

As men grow better, much of the poetry which is now admired and studied will be deservedly despised and neglected, and that only will be honoured which partakes of the prevailing character of the poetry of the Bible, which unites the highest poetical and the highest moral excellence.

It is plain, in the second place, that the imagination has a legitimate office to perform, and that fiction is a lawful form of composition. What at once suggests and supplies a defence of the office and use of the imagination in literature, is, that the only book which God has given to man directly from himself, employs and appeals to it—that those parts of that book which are most devotional are most imaginative—that the minds of the prophets are most poetical when most raised and agitated with pious sensibility—that they hardly ever touch upon the person, glory, or kingdom of the Messiah, without instinctively and spontaneously breaking forth into song—that the parables of our Saviour himself, which were his most characteristic form of teaching,* which convey truth, most sacred, most precious, most practical, are imaginative in structure, and fictitious in form; in one word, that from the opening chapters of Genesis, in which we have an account of the first creation of Heaven and earth, to the closing chapters of the Apocalypse, in which we have an account of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; the practical and imaginative element appears everywhere and reigns supreme.

* For some very original and important observations on our Lord's peculiar method of imparting instruction, the reader is referred to a most masterly disquisition on the internal evidences in the University Lectures, by Dr. R. J. Breckenridge, a discourse which will be regarded by every candid judge, as a permanent and very valuable contribution to an exceedingly important and difficult branch of Theological science.

If fiction has been employed to seduce and corrupt, to insinuate fatal poison with the more deadly effect, because not professedly a moral teacher; if the writings of many of the most popular novelists, in various languages, have been stained with sensuality, what shall we say of the professed teachers of moral wisdom? Have they borne themselves so meekly, so purely, so unblameably in their high office, as to make the charge of abuse and perversion, peculiarly applicable to those writers who mainly exercise and appeal to the imagination? What shall we say of the grave philosophers of Germany and France, of Fichte, of Schelling, of Kant, and of Hegel, of Cousin and Comte, of the metaphysics of Shaftesbury, of Hobbes, and of Hume, of Hume's History of England, and Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire? When we think soberly of what men have done in the gravest and highest departments of human thought, to mislead, to betray, to enslave, to corrupt and imbrute their fellow-men, in history, in political science, in physical speculations, in intellectual and moral philosophy, and most of all and worse than all, in Theology, and there see them single out fiction for proscription and shame, we feel inclined in all sadness of spirit, to say to them as Falstaff said to Prince Hal, "Banish Bardolph, banish Peto, banish Paine, but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore, more valiant, being as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish plump Jack and banish all the world."

We have seen that the Bible uses fiction largely as the vehicle of truth. The habit of condemning fiction as fiction, of condemning it by wholesale and in the gross, of condemning it without discrimination, without exception and without mercy, which prevails so largely in religious circles, we cannot but regard as alike irrational and unscriptural. These extreme views have to a lamentable extent, been identified with true piety. The repudiation of them has been and still is, looked upon as indicating a latitudinarian tendency. The truth is, that the man who defends and sanctions fiction as an allowable form of literary composition is, even now, re-

garded by many, as indifferent to the highest interests of morals and religion. We boldly retort the charge. We carry the war into Africa. We affirm that the impiety in the matter is with those who condemn as essentially evil, or of essentially evil tendency, a form of composition, which was not only used in Scripture, but abounds in Scripture, which was not only used by Christ, but was characteristic of Christ. The greatest and largest truths are most fitly conveyed in the form of fiction, which bears the same relation to a specific, historical statement, however exact, which algebra bears to arithmetic. The one is particular and limited, the other is general and comprehensive. The highest and noblest truth will always exhibit itself in the forms of poetry and fiction.*

We are not apologizing for a polluted, fictitious literature. We loathe it. "Tis the object of our implacable disgust." We earnestly warn the young especially, not to read any work in any form of composition and under any pretext whatever, which is likely to sully the purity or to sap the strength of their moral principles. We only protest against proscribing any legitimate and delightful form of literary composition. We would only distinguish between the use and abuse of a thing. All that we mean to contend for is, that there is nothing inherently, essentially, invariably evil in fictitious composition. We condemn bad fictions and approve good.

"The very head and front of our offending
Hath this extent, no more."

We condemn bad fictions, not because they are fictions, but because they are bad; not even because they are bad fictions, but because they are bad things; not because of their form, but because of their spirit. The capital error of those with whom we are dealing is, that they condemn the form when they should condemn the spirit of fiction. A pure mind, in whatever form it may appear, whatever garment it may wear, will still be pure, and the spirit will glorify the form, as the shining forth of our Saviour's divinity on Tabor tranfigured his

* There is more profound and universal truth in Hamlet, than in any equal portion of any professed historian.

human body. A depraved mind, on the contrary, whatever the form of its manifestation, whether in philosophy or fiction, in history or poetry, will show its depravity. Solomon tells us that it is of the very essence of folly, that it shall proclaim itself, that it is the badge and the business of a fool to say to every one that he is a fool. And a greater than Solomon has said, how can ye being evil, speak good things, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh? A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things. These words exhaust the philosophy of the subject, so far as the moral bearing of literary fiction is concerned. But the use of the imagination is not merely capable of vindication as legitimate. It has, as we have already hinted, a positive and an exceedingly important function to perform for the instruction and delight of mankind. Thierry,* a French historian at once popular and profound, remarks, that the domestic life and usages of England, at the period just succeeding the Norman Conquest, are not only more vividly, but more faithfully portrayed in *Ivanhoe*, than in any authentic history. The inner and spiritual life of England is more perfectly reflected in Shakspeare's historical plays than in the elaborate works of Hume and Lingard; than it is anywhere indeed, unless we except the Gothic and chivalrous chronicles of Sir John Froissart, which are scarcely more authentic and less fanciful than Shakspeare's plays, although he professes to relate what, for the most part, was subjected to his own faithful eyes, or was confided to him at first hand, by eye or ear-witnesses. Niebuhr, who has turned so many long accredited historical facts into airy nothings,

"Like fairy gifts fading away,"

assuredly does not give so beautiful and life-like, nor probably so true a picture of early Rome as Livy, whose authority he has done so much to discredit. There is a large part of history, perhaps the most instructive, unquestionably the most charming, for a knowledge of

* *Historical Works. Essay 8th, on the Conquest of England, by the Normans, apropos of the Novel of Ivanhoe.*

which, we must be entirely indebted to imaginative writers. We learn, incomparably, more of the ordinary and real life of Athens from the ribald plays of Aristophanes and from the tragic dramatists, than from Herodotus and Thucydides. To be either useful or entertaining, history must not disdain to employ and address the imagination. The third chapter of Macaulay's recent and splendid history of England, is confessedly, drawn from various sources—scattered notices of the times contained in such works as the *Spectator*, the most popular plays and ballads and the like. It is, accordingly, the most instructive and delightful chapter of the most popular historical work of our day.

It is evident, in the third place, that imaginative sensibility is peculiarly important to the interpreter of the Bible, to the minister of the Gospel. We have seen that of all books, the Bible is most thoroughly pervaded by the poetical element; that it abounds more than any other in the most daring, animated, and sublime figures of poetry. No one, therefore, whatever his piety and learning, can bring out its full meaning without the imaginative sensibility which will enable him to recognise, to appreciate, to enjoy, and to unfold this great element of God's revelation to mankind. We have seen the most exquisite creations of fancy illumined by the Eternal Spirit, rudely crushed in the hands of "strong-minded" expositors, like fairy frost-work under the hammer of Thor, or a delicate flower beneath the unconscious heels of an iron-shod war-horse. On account of the predominance of the poetical element, much of the Scripture must remain a dead letter, a sealed book, to a large class of interpreters. They do not bring to the exposition of the book, the requisite taste and imagination. They may be men of eminent logical ability and thorough doctrinal and philological knowledge, but these cannot do the proper work of the imagination. They are indispensable in their place, but they were never designed for this particular service. It is the knight of the sleeping Leopard with his coat of linked mail, with plated gauntlet, and a steel breast-plate—his weighty charge burdened with accoutrements scarcely less massive and unwieldy, on the hot sands of Syria, where better a light-armed

and half-naked Saladin on his nimble Arab'ian steed. It is the Feast of Roses, to which the battle-axe is brought as a carving-knife, and the massy shield used as a trencher.

This delicacy of taste, this dramatic faculty of entering into the circumstances and characters of the scene, and so rendering them "in form and moving, express and admirable,"—this telescopic glance that brings near the distant past,—this divine energy that breathes into the dead of a thousand years the life of to-day, may seem even a dangerous gift, at enmity with sober, safe, sterling, common sense. But they are, in fact, intimately allied. The danger of rejecting or perverting important doctrinal truth, through an excess or abuse of poetical sensibility is, other things being equal, not greater surely, than the opposite peril of making non-sense, or, what is worse, heresy, of Divine truth, by mistaking figures of speech for literal propositions. The greatest errors in the history of Theology have, directly, sprung from confounding poetic figures with literal verities. Of this disastrous confusion, the idolatrous dogma of transubstantiation is a memorable instance.

In Scripture there are a multitude of passages, perfectly plain to him that understandeth and perfectly dark to all others; and their transparency or obscurity, depends altogether, on the proper interpretation of figurative language. Of all the Old Testament, that part is most figurative which, in type or symbol, in prophetic song or saying, shadows forth the promised branch of Jesse's stem. Of all the New Testament, the most figurative are the recorded discourses of our blessed Lord. The prophecies of Isaiah, Zachariah, and other holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, touching the person, the kingdom, the government and glory of the Messiah, and the relations which he should sustain toward his church, especially as they are bodied forth in the song of Solomon, are all in the highest style of poetic imagery. The parables of Christ are figurative throughout, and can be adequately interpreted by no man, whatever his logic and learning, who is void of poetic and imaginative sensibility. This may help to explain the fact, that preaching, even by good

men of respectable parts and education, so little attracts the public. It will not do to reply that the public feel little interest in the truths presented. This is a very common and convenient answer indeed, and it may seem almost profane to expose it. But how are we to explain the prodigious popularity of men who confessedly preach the whole counsel of God, but who have been favoured by nature with poetical fancy, and are not ashamed or afraid to use it.

Speaking of the ordinary ministrations of the English clergy, Sidney Smith says that "an adventurous preacher is afraid of violating the ancient tranquillity of the pulpit, and the audience are apt to consider the man who fatigues them less than usual, as a trifle or charlatan." It is, notwithstanding, a fact remarkable and undeniable, that in all ages, the men who have preached the glorious truths of Divine revelation in a style most in keeping with the imaginative and figurative structure of the Bible itself, have had most immediate popularity and most permanent usefulness. It may suffice to mention three men "in three different ages born," of entirely different genius, and surrounded by utterly unlike circumstances, alike only in the highly poetical cast of their minds, and in the vast power which they wielded during life, and are likely to wield through all generations.

The first is Chrysostom, the Golden Mouth, the glory and the idol, first of Antioch, afterwards of Constantinople. It is of him that Gibbon, no partial critic, thus writes: "The monuments of that eloquence which was admired near twenty years at Antioch and Constantinople, have been carefully preserved, and the possession of near one thousand sermons of homilies, has authorized the critics of succeeding times to appreciate the genuine merit of Chrysostom. They unanimously attribute to the Christian orator, the free command of an elegant and copious language, the judgment to conceal the advantages which he derived from the knowledge of rhetoric and philosophy, an inexhaustible fund of metaphors and similitudes of ideas and images to vary and illustrate the most familiar topics, the happy art of engaging the passions in the service of virtue, and of ex-

posing the folly as well the turpitude of vice, with the truth and spirit of a dramatic representation.* In point of learning, Chrysostom could not compete with Origen or Jerome; in point of piety, he was, in all probability, not a whit superior to many of the less celebrated Church Fathers. What then makes him, by the common confession of all critics of all generations, the peerless Christian orator? What, but his strong imaginative sensibility?

Our second instance is Jeremy Taylor, who has been fitly called the English Chrysostom, whose dirge-like melodies float upon the ear, with a music akin to that of the night-wind as it sweeps in solemn murmurs through some vast Cathedral aisle. In Taylor's Sermons, there is more of the highest poetry, both of thought and diction, than in many a lofty and lauded epic. Bishop Taylor, who has been likewise called the Shakspeare of Theology, is peculiarly the favorite of poets, of men like Talfourd and Coleridge. He is associated with Milton in the thoughts of men, and in the literature of his country. Why is this? Because, as Coleridge justly says, no human being ever possessed more sensibility for objects of beauty and tenderness.

Our third instance is that of Dr. Chalmers, whose imperial imagination, informed by science, and animated by the purest piety, soared aloft among the sublimest of the starry heavens and stooped to "the huts where poor men lie," and who, added to the well-earned reputation of the most popular preacher which Scotland has ever produced, all the high trophies of diversified and brilliant scholarship, of lofty science, of far-sighted and far-reaching statesmanship, of large-hearted philanthropy, and of humble piety in his family, and among his friends. His was a heart that in the midst of the world's applauses

"The lowliest duties on itself did lay."

Now, we confess, that with all his brilliant endowments

*The curious reader may be amused at the singular coincidence of this learned criticism of Gibbon on Chrysostom, with that of the Worshipful Walter Shandy on Yorick's Sermon, "I like the sermon well, replied my father, 'tis dramatic, and there is something in that way of writing, when skilfully managed, which catches the attention."

of imagination and sensibility, he could not have been the preacher that he was, without his profound scientific training, his logical power, his rare common sense, his genial humility, above all, his heartfelt piety. But what we contend for is, that he might have been just as scientific, as logical, as benevolent and pious as he was, and yet he would not have been the orator that he was, without his strong imaginative sensibility.

Nor in the presentation of our argument, should it be forgotten that the most popular and useful religious book in the English language, probably the most popular and useful book ever written by man, in any language,—the *Pilgrim's Progress*,—a book equally welcome to the philosopher, the poet, the theologian, the Christian and the child, is nothing but one continued figure from the beginning to the end. This book is more made on the Bible model, it is more deeply tinged with its peculiar poetic spirit, and tinted with its heavenly hues; its figures are more purely Scriptural than any other volume of any uninspired man. It is enough to add, that of all religious books, it is most easily understood and most indelibly impressed, most poetical in its spirit, and yet, most practical in the character of its teachings. Of all uninspired books, the *Pilgrim's Progress* is most like the Bible in style, in structure, in spirit and in sentiment. It is the genuine product of the Word of God in conscious contact with the simple, but profound and poetic soul of John Bunyan. It is a faithful record of his religious life, under the action of the truth and spirit of the Bible.

THE AUTHORITY OF ECCLESIASTICAL RULERS.

1. "The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America," contains a passage which we have long admired, for the clearness with which it asserts the great principle on which every ecclesiastical question must be determined:

"That all church power, whether exercised by the