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## THE TRUE NATURE OF THE BEAUTIFUL, AND ITS RELATION TO CULTURE.

By William G. T. Shedd, D.D., Roosevelt Professor of Systematic Theology  
in Union Theological Seminary, New York.

 HE specific theme to which I would invite attention is : *The true theory and relative position of the beautiful, with reference more particularly to culture and to character.* In investigating this subject I think we shall find it one for the times, and the class of men addressed. If I am not mistaken we shall find, in a false theory of beauty, and, as a consequence, in the false position which it holds as a source and instrument of culture, the root of some of the radical defects, and false tendencies, of the educated class. For if this class need any one thing more than another, it is a rational, sober, and severe estimate of the *essential* nature of the beautiful, and especially of the relation which it sustains to the true and the good. In our age there is danger that culture will go the way that Grecian and Roman culture went, and from the same cause, an undue cultivation of the æsthetic nature, to the neglect of the intellectual and moral. There is always danger lest the most influential class in society, the literary and cultivated portion, form and shape themselves by beauty more than by truth, by art more than by philosophy and religion.

If we accept the Platonic classification, all things in the universe arrange themselves under these three terms ; the beautiful, the true, and the good. These three ideas cover and include all that can possibly come before the human mind as a worthy object of thought and action. On them, as a foundation, the human mind has built up its most permanent

and grandest structures, and with them, in some one or other of their manifold aspects, the human mind is constantly occupied. The idea of the good lies at the bottom of all religion, and of all inquiries connected with this chief concern of man. The idea of the true lies at the bottom of all science, and of the scientific tendency in individuals and nations. The idea of the beautiful underlies all those products and agencies of the human soul that address the imagination ; all art, and all literature in the stricter signification of the term, as the antithesis of science. This classification, the work of the most philosophic brain of antiquity, at once so simple and so comprehensive, may therefore well stand as the condensation and epitome of all thought, and the key to all the varieties in human culture and national character.

But what is the order in which these ideas stand ? Which is first, and which is last in importance ? Which is most necessary and absolute in its nature ? Which is the substance, and which is the accident ? The answer to these questions, the theory upon this point, according as it shall be, is either vital or fatal. It will determine the whole style and character of human culture, both individual and national. If beauty is placed first, in speculation and in life, and truth and goodness are regarded as subordinate, a corresponding style of education will follow. If the true and the good are recognised as the substance, and the beautiful as the property and shadow, another and entirely different style will result. Here, therefore,

the inquirer stands at the point of divergence between the two principal species of civilisation and culture, of which human history is made up ; that of luxury, enervation, decline, and fall, on the one hand, and that of severity, strength, growth, and grandeur on the other. At this point, also, he stands upon the line which divides the lower from the higher forms of literature ; the lower from the higher products of art itself ; the more shallow and erroneous from the more profound and correct systems of philosophy and religion. Here is the summit level and ridge whence the streams flow due east and due west, never to mingle in a common ocean. For if history teaches anything, it teaches that according as a nation and a national mind starts from the one or the other of these ideas, as a point of departure and as the guiding thought in its career, will be its style of development.

The true theory of beauty subordinates it to the true and the good. Any estimate of it that sets it above these two eternal and necessary ideas, is both incorrect and unphilosophical. The closer we think and the nearer we get to the essence of these three conceptions, the more clearly shall we perceive that while truth and goodness appear more and more absolute and necessary, beauty, *in comparison with them*, appears more and more relative and contingent. The human mind can never, in its own thinking, annihilate the true and the good—*i.e.*, it cannot conceive of their non-existence. It cannot abstract them from the Divine nature and from the created universe, and have anything substantial left. These *must* be.

If these fail

The pillared firmament is rottenness  
And earth's base built on stubble.

But not so with beauty. The mind can abstract it from the nature of God, and if truth and goodness still remain, there is still something august, something awe-inspiring, something sublime, left. The

mind can think it away from the universe of God, but if that universe is still filled with the manifestations of wisdom and excellence, it is still worthy of its architect. It is indeed true that beauty has a real and imminent existence, both in the being of God and in creation ; but the point we are urging is, that it is there as *subordinate* to these moral elements and these higher ideas. It is indeed true that from eternity to eternity beauty is a quality in the nature of the first perfect and the first fair, and from this fountain has welled up and poured over into the whole creation of God like sunset into the hemisphere, but it has been only as the accompaniment and adornment of higher and more august qualities. The beautiful is not, as some teach, either the true or the good ; neither is it more absolute and perfect than these. These are the substance, the eternal essence, and it, *in relation to them*, is the accident. The beautiful indeed inheres in the true and the good, and it for ever accompanies them, even as light, according to the fine saying of Plato, is the shadow of God ; but 'it is not therefore to be regarded as the highest of all ideas, or as the crowning element in the universe.

For where does beauty reside ? Where is its seat ? Always in the *form*, as distinguished from the substance. When the human soul swells with the feeling, it is impressed not by the truth and substantial reality of an object, but by something that in comparison with this is secondary and accidental. When, for example, the sense for beauty is completely filled and deluged by a sunset or a sunrise, the essential meaning of this scene is not necessarily in the soul. That which this scene is for science, its truth for the pure intellect, is most certainly not in the mind ; for the poetic vision and the scientific vision are contraries. And that which it is for religion may be, and too often is, alien to the soul ;

for this feeling for the beauty that is in the sunrise is by no means identical with the feeling for the goodness that is there. In every instance it is the form and not the substance, it is the beauty and not the truth, that addresses the æsthetic nature, while in every instance it is the substance and not the form, it is the true and not the beautiful, that addresses the intellectual and moral natures. And why should it not be so? If, as we have seen, the beautiful is a subordinate quality; if it is only the glittering garment of the universe; to what part of man's nature should it appeal, but to that luxury rather than necessity of the human soul, the æsthetic sense. And so it is. Over against that beauty which the Creator has poured with lavish, I had almost said indifferent hand, over His creation, He has set a portion of man's nature, whose function it is to drink it in, and as He never intended that this mere decoration of His works should engross the soul to the exclusion of the wisdom and goodness displayed in them, so He never intended that the sense for the beautiful should absorb and destroy the sense for the true and the good.

We shall see still more clearly the correctness of this theory of the beautiful, by considering for a moment the nature and influence of that department which is based upon this idea, viz: fine art. The aim and end of art is fine form, and nothing but fine form. I do not forget that in every work of art there is a truth at the bottom, and that the power of a painting or a statue is dependent upon the *meaning* everywhere present in it. Still this significant thought at the base, this intellectual expression in the product, is not that which *constitutes it a work of Art*. It is the beauty of this thought, the fine form of this idea, which is the end of art, and which renders its products different from those of science. For if art were merely and purely an expression of truth, how would it differ from science,

and why would not every subject that had meaning in it be a fit one for the artist? Art, it is true, has a significance, and it is high and ideal in proportion to the depth and fulness of the idea it embodies, yet it differs from science and religion by employing both the true and the good as *means* only. Its own sole *end* is beauty, to which it subordinates all else. It embodies truth and virtue only that it may exhibit the beauty in them, and addresses the intellect and heart only that it may reach the imagination. After all its connection with the substance, art is still formal. And this is no disparagement to it. It is no undervaluation to draw sharp lines about a department of human effort, and strip off what does not essentially belong to it. Fine art has its own proper and important vocation, and science and religion have theirs, and each is honoured by being strictly defined, and rigorously confined to its own aim, end, and limits.

Now such being the nature of fine art, considered as a department of human effort and an instrument to be employed in educating the human mind, what must be its influence if left to itself—if unbalanced and uncompleted by other departments? What style of culture will the idea of the beautiful originate in the individual and national mind, when severed from the ideas of the true and the good? The answer to this question is to be found in history. One of the great historical races, in the plan of Providence, received its training and development under the excessive and exorbitant influence of beauty, and for a moment I invite your attention to an examination of the results.

The Greek mind was eminently æsthetic, and the Greek nature was controlled by a too strong and intense tendency to the beautiful. If the human mind is truthful and solemn anywhere, it is so within the sphere of religion; but we may say of the

Greek, as was said of one of the most genial of modern errorists by one of the most profound of modern thinkers, that he was more in love with the beauty of religion than its truth. The Greek religion was the worship of beauty, and the whole life of the people, private and public, literary and political, was formed by this idea to an extent and thoroughness never witnessed before or since. But the Greek mind, with all the charm and influence it has exerted upon the modern mind, and will continue to exert to the last syllable of recorded time, had one great and radical defect. The true and the holy did not interest it sufficiently. These ideas did not mould it and form it from the centre. Hence the Greek nature was not a deep and solemn one. It never felt, unless we except the heroic period in its history—a period that is hardly historic—the influence of that which is higher than beauty, and which has an affinity with a more profound part of the human constitution than the æsthetic sense.

The truth is, that as the intellectual and moral nature of man is his highest endowment, so the true and the good, as the highest ideas, are its proper correspondent. When, therefore, as in the case of the Greek, a relatively inferior portion of the soul became superior, and a relatively inferior idea became ultimate and engrossing, it was not possible that the highest development of human nature should take place, or the highest style of culture should be originated. The influence which the Greek mind has exerted upon the modern world, great as it has been, and beneficial as it has been, has nevertheless not been of the absolutely highest order, unless we set the æsthetic above the intellectual and moral, art before science and religion, and the culture springing from the form above that springing from the substance.

Far be it from me to undervalue classical education. I have not the slightest sympathy with that Jacobinism in literature

which would throw aside the study of the ancient classics, and shut out the modern mind from the beauty, and symmetry, and cultivating influence, of Greek and Roman letters. Still it should be remembered that no single literature can do everything for the human intellect. On the contrary, each and every literature that is historic has one particular function to perform. In the education of the modern mind, classical literature has its own peculiar office to discharge, and this is, to infuse that beauty and symmetry which it possesses in so high degree into modern thought ; to furnish a fine form for the modern idea. For it must not for a moment be supposed that the modern mind is to go back to the ancient for the substance of literature. The Christian world cannot go back into the Pagan world in search for the true and the good, but it ever must go back there for the beautiful. For the sphere of cognition, and consequently of reflection and feeling, in which the ancient mind moved, was narrow and contracted, compared with the "infinite and sea-like arena" on which the modern careers. Not that minds may not be found in the ancient world of equal depth, grasp, and power, with any that have adorned modern literature, but the materials on which they were compelled to labour fell far short of that which is the subject of modern effort, in depth, richness, and compass. The range of thought and feeling, in which the ancient mind moved, in respect to the great subjects pertaining to man's origin and destiny, was "cabined, cribbed and confined," compared with that vast expanse in which it is the privilege of the modern to think and feel. The Christian revelation, while it imparted more determinateness and significance to those doctrines of natural religion upon which Plato and Aristotle had reflected with such truthfulness and profundity, at the same time lodged in the mind of the modern world an

amount of new truth, that widened infinitely the field of human vision, and the scope of human reflection. We have but to compare Homer, Æschylus, and Virgil, with Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, to see how immensely the range of the human mind was augmented by a Divine revelation. In these latter instances, it moves in a region large enough for it, and feels the influence of those "truths deep as the centre" with which it is connected by origin and destiny; while in the former instances, though the vague yearnings, and obscure anticipations, and unsatisfied longings, evidence the heaven-born nature of the human spirit, yet they serve only to reveal still more clearly the helplessness of its bondage, and the closeness of its confinement to this "bank and shoal of time." \*

But although the Christian religion so widened the sphere of human thought and feeling, and so deepened and spiritualised the processes of the human mind, and so enriched it in the material for literature, it indirectly diminished its artistic ability, and rendered it less able to embody its conceptions. This very opulence in the material, and this very elevation of the theme, embarrassed the mind. For in proportion to the richness and intrinsic excellence of the thought does the difficulty increase, of putting it into a form worthy of it. The problem of art, in every instance, is to attain an exact correspondence between the matter and the form; to embody the idea in just the right amount of material, so that

the idea shall not overflow and drown the form, nor the form overlay and crush the idea. Hence, among other qualities, the *cleanness*, the *niceness*, of a successful work of art. But this problem, it is plain, becomes more difficult in proportion as the idea, or guiding thought, is more profound or significant in its nature. For by reason of its depth and expanse it becomes vastly more comprehensive and pregnant, and less capable of being brought within the limitation of art, within the bounds of a form. The nearer the subject-matter approaches the infinite, the more vast and unlimited the idea in the mind, the greater the difficulty of exhibiting it in the finite shapings of art.

Now the ancient mind had these advantages. In the first place the material, the truth, upon which it laboured, was far more wieldy and compassable than that which is presented to the modern mind, and in the second place it was (especially in the instance of the Greek) a much more artistic mind, in and of itself. The result, consequently, was a far closer correspondence between the substance and the form, and hence a much more successful solution of the problem of fine art than has ever been attained by any other people.

The modern mind, therefore, the Christian world, while it cannot go back into the Pagan world for the substance of literature, for the true and the good, must ever go back there for the form, for the beautiful. And it was precisely because the European mind, in the fifteenth century, felt the need of this æsthetic element in culture, which it was conscious of not possessing, that it betook itself to classical literature. At that period, when the human mind was waking up from the dormancy of the middle ages, and was beginning to feel the fresh impulses of the Christian religion, it was filled, to overflowing, with ideas and principles, thoughts and feelings. Its powers and

\* Hence that undertone of melancholy in the more serious portions of classical literature (as the *Histories* of Tacitus, and the *Morals* of Plutarch), unrelieved by any notes of hope or triumph struck out by the knowledge, and the prospect, of the final consummation. The gloom of Dante is far different from the gloom of Æschylus; for while, like his, it springs from the consciousness of the life-long conflict between good and evil, it is illumined by the knowledge of the final issue. In the case of the Pagan the gloom is made thicker by the total ignorance of the great hereafter.

energies were being almost preternaturally roused by this influx of new truth, the natural tendency of which is to stir the human soul, preconformed as it is to its influence, to its inmost centre. But this season of mental fermentation was no time for serene contemplation and beautiful construction. The whole *materiel* for a new literature was originated, but originated in a mind agitated to its lowest depths by the energy and force that was pouring through it, and which for this very reason was not master of itself, or of the material with which it was labouring. *Form*—rounded, symmetrical, finished *Form*,—was needed for this matter, and hence the modern betook himself to the study of that literature pre-eminent above all others for its artistic perfection. The study of the serene and beautiful models in which Grecian thought embodied itself tamed the wildly-working mind of the Goth, and imparted to it that calm, artistic, *formative* power by which the intellectual chaos was to become cosmos.\*

But if the literature of the Greeks is predominantly æsthetic, and performs this æsthetic function in the system of modern education, the national character was still more so. The student of Grecian history, especially of the internal history of the Greeks, is struck with the disparity between

the national character and the national literature; between the products of the Greek mind, or rather of a few choice Greek minds, and the Greek himself. The more the student becomes acquainted with that extremely imaginative and extremely tasteful, but too lively and too volatile, race of men, the more does he wonder that so much depth and truth of sentiment should be found in the literature that sprang up among them; the more does he wonder that the native bent and tendency of the national mind did not overrule, and suppress, all these higher elements. It is only on the supposition that the great men of Greece were above their race, and breathed in a more solemn and meditative atmosphere than that sunny air in which the Athenian populace lived, that he can account for the remarkable difference between the profound, severe, and moral spirit of the Greek tragedy, and the fickle, gay, and altogether trifling temper of the Ionic race.

Whatever this excessive tendency to the beautiful may have wrought out for the Greeks, in some respects, it is certain that it contributed to the enervation and destruction of all strong character in the nation. That Ionic race, instead of following indulgently and extravagantly, as they did, their native bias, ought to have subjected it to the most severe education and restraint. Those two other ideas which dawned in such solemnity and power upon the intellect of their greatest philosopher, ought to have rained down influence upon them. Those more serious and awe-inspiring objects of reflection, the true and the good, ought to have dawned upon the popular mind in a clearer light, and with a more overcoming power. How different, so far as all the grand and heroic elements of national character are concerned, were the Greeks of that golden age of ancient art, the age of Pericles, from the Romans of the days of Numa! We grant that there is but little outward beauty in

\* It is indeed true, that in the higher forms of Greek literature there is a remarkable depth and seriousness of sentiment which seems to militate against the position taken. Here the beautiful is more in the back-ground, and the true mainly in the fore-ground. But it should be remembered that the real nature and tendency of the Greek appears far more in the lighter forms of the literature, and especially in that wilderness of works of art that covered all Greece, than in the deep-toned poetry of Homer and Æschylus, or the profound sentiment of Plato and Thucydides. This portion of Greek literature derived its tone and matter from that elder period, that heroic age, when the national mind was impressed, as the elder mind always has been, more by the essential than the formal, more by truth than by beauty.

that naked and austere period in Roman history, but there is to be found in that *character*, as it comes down to us in the legends of Livy and has been reconstructed in the pages of Niebuhr, the strongest, and soundest, and grandest, and sublimest, nationality in the Pagan world. And this was owing to the fact that the early Roman was intellectual and moral, rather than æsthetic. I am speaking, it will be remembered, of a Pagan character, and my remarks must be taken in a comparative sense. Bearing this in mind, we may say that the strength and grandeur of the national character of the first Romans, sprang from the fact that it was moulded and shaped mainly by the ideas of truth and virtue. The æsthetic nature was repressed, and, if you please, almost entirely suppressed, but the intellect and the moral sense were developed all the more. Hence those high qualities in their national character—courage, energy, firmness, probity, patriotism, reverence for the gods and the oath; qualities that were hardly more visible in the ancient than they are in the modern Greek.

And this brings us to the more distinct consideration of what we suppose to be the influence of fine art, when it becomes the leading department of effort, and the chief instrument and end of culture, for the individual or the nation. The effect of the beautiful upon the human soul, when unmixed, uncounteracted, and exorbitant, is enervation. And this, from the very nature of the element itself. We have seen that it cannot be placed upon an equality with the other two elements that enter into the constitution of the universe. It cannot be regarded as so substantial and so necessary in its nature as the true and the holy. It is only the property and decoration of that which is essential and absolute. It is only the form. It consequently does not address the highest faculties of the human soul, and if it did, could not waken or generate power

in them. When, therefore, it is made to do the work of the higher ideas; when it is compelled to go beyond its own proper sphere, the æsthetic nature, and to furnish aliment for the intellectual and moral nature; it is set at a work it can never do. The intellect and moral sense demand their own appropriate objects; they require their correlatives, the true and the good; they cry out for the substance, and cannot be satisfied with the form, however beautiful. When, therefore, beauty is selected as the great idea by which the individual or national mind is to be moulded, the result is of necessity mental enervation. The human intellect cannot, any more than the human heart, be content with mere form. Like the heart, it cries out, in its own way, for the living God; for truth and goodness, the most essential qualities in the Divine nature; for wisdom and virtue, the most essential elements in the moral universe He has made. And what is there in the very process of art itself, when it is isolated from the other and higher departments of human effort, that goes to render man more intellectual? The very vocation of art is to sensualise; using the term technically and in no bad sense. Its processes, so far as they are merely artistic, are not spiritualising, but the contrary. The vocation of art is to bring down an idea of the human mind, a purely intellectual, purely immaterial, entity, into the sphere of sense, and there materialise it into colours, and lines and outlines, and proportions, for the sense. The very calling of art, as a department of effort, is to render sensuous the spiritual. And the fact that it does this, in the case of all high art, in an ideal manner—that in the genuine product the idea shines out everywhere through the beautiful form—does not conflict with the position. If, therefore, in a general way, and for the purpose of characterising the departments, we may say that in science and religion the mental process is spiri-



tualising, we may affirm that in art the process is sensualising. If in the analysis and synthesis of the true and the good the mind passes through an increasingly intellectual process in the embodiment of the merely beautiful, it passes through an exactly opposite one. If philosophy and religion tend to render the mind more intellectual, fine art tends to render it more material and sensuous by fixing the eye on the form.

Now such an influence as this upon the human mind and character, if unbalanced and uncounteracted, is enervating. There may be, and generally has been, great outward refinement and a most luxurious elegance thrown over the culture that originates under such influences, but it is too generally at the expense of strength and virtue and heroism of character. However high the aims of the individual or the nation may have been in the outset, history shows too plainly that the nerve was soon relaxed and the mind slackened all away, at first, into a too luxurious, and finally, into a voluptuous culture. When the artist, by the very theory and metaphysical nature of his vocation, is compelled to keep his eye on beauty, on fine form, on the sensuously agreeable, he must be a strong and virtuous nature that is not mastered by his calling. If he can preserve an austere tone, if he can even keep himself up on the high ground of an abstract and ideal art, and not sink into a too ornate and licentious style, we may be certain that there was great moral stamina at bottom.

But, speculation aside, let us appeal to history again. What does the story of art in modern times teach in relation to the position that the unmixed, unbalanced, effect of the beautiful is mental enervation? The most wonderful age of art was that of Leo X. The long slumber of the æsthetic nature of man, during the barbarism and warfare of those five centuries between the

dismemberment of the Roman empire and the establishment of the principal nations and nationalities of modern Europe, was broken by an outburst of beauty and beautiful art, as sudden, rapid, and powerful, as the bloom and blossom of spring in the arctic zone. Such a multitude of artists and such an opulence of artistic talent will probably never be witnessed again in one age or nation. But did a grand, did even a respectable, national character spring into existence along with this bloom of art, this shower of beauty? We know that there were other influences at work, and among others a religious system whose very nature it is to carnalise and stifle all that is distinctively spiritual in the human soul; but no one can study the history of the period, without being convinced that this excessive and all-absorbing tendency of the general mind of Italy towards beauty and fine art contributed greatly to the general enervation of soul. Most certainly it did not work counter to it. Read the memoirs of a man like Benvenuto Cellini; an inferior man it is true, but an artist, and reflecting the general features of his time; and see how utterly unfit both the individual and national culture of that period was for any lofty, high-minded, truly historic achievement. The solemn truths of religion, and the lofty truths of philosophy, exerted little or no influence upon that group of Italian artists, so drunken with beauty. They possessed little of that intellectual severity which enters into every great character; little of that strung muscle and hard nerve which should support the intellect as well as the will. And therefore it is that we cannot find in the Italian history of those ages, any more than in the Italian character of the present day, any of that high emprise and grand achievement which crowds the history of the Teutonic races, less art-loving but more intellectual and moral. These] races and their descendants have sometimes been

charged with a destitution of the æsthetic sense, and the inferiority of their art, compared with that of Italy has been cited as proof of their inferiority as a race of men ; but it is enough to say in reply, that these Goths, educating themselves mainly by the ideas of the true and the good, have given origin to all the literatures, philosophies, and systems of government and religion that constitute the crowning glory of the modern world. The Italian intellect was enfeebled and exhausted by that unnatural birth of beauty upon beauty. Ever since the fourteenth century, it has been wandering about in that world of fine forms, like Spenser's knight in the bower of bliss, until all power of intellect is gone.

Every truly great and grand character, be it individual or national, is more or less a *severe* one ; a character which, comparatively, is more intellectual and moral than æsthetic.\* This position merits a moment's examination. And in the first place, look into political history and see what traits lie at the bottom of all the best periods in national development. Out of what type of mind and style of life has the venerable, the *heroic*, age always sprung ? Are men enervate or are they austere, are they æsthetic or are they intellectual and moral in culture, during that period when the national virtue is formed and the historic renown of the people is acquired ?

The heroic age of Greece, as it comes down to us in the Homeric poems, was a period of simplicity and strictness. The Greeks of that early time were intellectual men, moral men compared with the Greeks of the days of Alcibiades. Turn to the pages of Athenæus, and get a view of the indoor life

and every-day character of a still later period in Grecian history, and then turn to the corresponding picture of the heroic period contained in the *Odyssey*. Mark the difference in the impression made upon you by each representation, and know from your own feelings, that all that is strong, and heroic, and simple, and grand, in national character springs from a severe mind and a predominantly moral culture, and all that is feeble, and supine, and inefficient, and despicable, in national character, springs from a luxurious mind and a predominantly æsthetic culture.

And how stands the case with Rome ? Which is the venerable period in her history ? Is it to be sought for in the luxurious and (so far as Rome ever had it) the æsthetic civilisation of the empire, or in the intellectual and moral civilisation of the monarchy and republic ? All the strength and grandeur of the Roman character and of the Roman nationality lies back of the third Punic war. Nay, if Rome had been conquered by Carthage, and had gone out of political existence, its real glory, its proper historic renown, would have been greater than it is. If, in the idea called up by the word Rome, there were wanting, there could be eliminated, the physical corruption and the luxurious but merely outward refinement of the empire, and there were left only the stern virtue, the sublime endurance, and the moral grandeur, of the monarchy and republic, the idea would be more sublime in history and more impressive in contemplation. And whence originated that Sabine element, that tough core, that hard kernel, in the Roman character, that lay at the centre and kept Rome up, during her long agony of intestine and external conflict ? It had its origin among the mountains, amid the great features of nature, and it was purified by the privation and hardship of a severe life in the forests of Central Italy, on that spine of the Ausonian peninsula, until it became as

\* According to the etymology of the old grammarians, favoured by Doederlein, the severe is the *intensely true*. Doederlein i. 76, *præferendum censet vett. Gramm. sententiam qua severus cognationem habeat cum verus ; . . . ita ut æ, ex more Gr. æ priv., intensam vim contineat.*—*Facciolati's Lexicon in loc.*

sound, sweet, and hard as the chestnuts of the Appenines upon which it was fed. Intellectual and moral elements, and not an æsthetic element, were the hardy root of all the political power and prosperity of Rome.

There is no need, even if there were time, to cite instances corroborating the view presented, from modern political history. The Puritanism of Old England and of New England will readily suggest itself, to every one, as the one eminently austere national character, with which the power and glory of the English and Anglo-American races, and the highest hopes of the modern world, are vitally connected. It will be sufficient to say, that the more profound is our acquaintance with political history, the more clearly shall we see that all that is powerful, and permanent, and impressive, in the nationalities, and governments of the world, sprang directly or indirectly from a nature in which the æsthetic was subordinate to the intellectual and moral, and for which the true and the good were more supreme ideas than the beautiful.

Furthermore, the position taken holds true in the sphere of literature also. The great works in every instance are the productions of a severe strength; of "the Herculeses and not the Adonises of literature," to use a phrase of Bacon. When the æsthetic prevails over the intellectual and moral, the prime qualities, the depth, the originality, and the power, die out of letters, and the mediocrity that ensues is but poorly concealed by the elegance and polish thrown over it. Even when there is much genius and much originality, an excess of art, a too deep suffusion of beauty, a too fine flush of colour, is often the cause of a radical defect. Suppose that the poetry of Spenser had more of that passion in it which Milton mentions as the third of the three main qualities of poetry: suppose (without, however, wishing to deny the great excellence of the "Fairie Queen" in regard to intellectual

and moral elements) that the proportion of the æsthetic had been somewhat less, would it not have been more powerful and higher poetry? Suppose that the mind and the culture of Wieland and Goethe had been vastly more under the influence of truth, and vastly less under that of beauty; that the substance, instead of the form, had been the mould in which these men were moulded and fitted as intellectual workmen; might not the first have come nearer to our Spenser, and might not the latter have produced some works that would perhaps begin to justify his ardent but ignorant admirers in placing him in the same class with Shakespeare and Milton; a position to which, as it is, he has not the slightest claim.

As a crowning and conclusive proof of the correctness of the view presented, I will refer only to one mind, to John Milton, one of those two minds which tower high above all others in the sphere of modern literature. If there ever was a man in whom the æsthetic was in complete subjection to the intellectual and moral, without being in the least suppressed or mutilated by them, that man was Milton. If there ever was a human intellect so entirely master of itself, of such a severe type, that all its processes seem to have been the pure issue of discipline and law, it was the intellect of Milton. In contemplating the grandeur of the products of his mind, we are apt to lose sight of his mind itself, and of his intellectual character. If we rightly consider it, the discipline to which he subjected himself, and the austere style of intellect and of art in which it resulted, are as worthy of the reverence and admiration of the scholar as the *Paradise Lost*. We have unfortunately no minute and detailed account of his every-day life, but from all that we do know, and from all that we can infer from the lofty, colossal, culture and character in which he comes down to us, it is safe to say that Milton must have subjected his intellect to a restraint, and rigid

dealing with its luxurious tendencies, as strict as that to which Simon Stylites or St. Francis of Assisi subjected their bodies. We can trace the process, the defecating purifying process, that went on in his intellect, through his entire productions. The longer he lived and the more he composed, the severer became his taste, and the more *grandly* and *serenely* beautiful became his works. It is true that the theory of art, and of culture, opposed to that which we are recommending, may complain of the occasional absence of beauty, and may charge as a fault an undue nakedness and austerity of form. But one thing is certain and must be granted by the candid critic, that whenever the element of beauty *is* found in Milton, it is found in absolute purity. That intense refining process, that test of light and of fire, to which all his materials were subjected, left no residuum that was not perfectly pure. And therefore it is, that throughout universal literature, a more absolute beauty and a more delicate ærial grace, are not to be found than appear in the *Comus* and the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*.

But we are not anxious on this point of beauty, especially in connection with the name of Milton. Sublimity is a higher quality, and so are strength and grandeur; and if beauty does not come *in the train*, and *as the mere ornament*, of these, it is not worth while to seek it by itself and for its own sake. And much will be gained when education, and culture, and authorship shall dare to take this high stand which Milton took; shall dare to pass by beauty, in the start, and to aim at deeper elements and loftier qualities, in the train, and as the ornament of which, a real beauty and an absolute grace shall follow of themselves.

Returning then to the intellectual character of Milton, let me advise you to study that character until you see that the strict and philosophically severe theory of the beautiful and of art lies under the whole of it. Milton

had no affinities for excessive sensuous beauty. He was no voluptuary in any sense. So far as the sense was concerned he was abstemious as an ascetic, and so far as the soul was concerned he knew no such thing as luxury. He devoted himself to poetry, an art which, glorious as it is, yet has tendencies that need counteraction, which tempts to Arcadian and indulgent views of human life and human character, and which, as literary history shows, has too often been the medium through which dreamy and uncontrolled natures have communicated themselves to the world. But as a poet, he constructed with all the truth of science and all the purity of religion. The poetic art, as it appears in Milton, is spiritual and spiritualising.\*

If this element of severity is entirely wanting in a man; if he is entirely destitute of austerity; if his nature is wholly and merely æsthetic, constantly melting and dissolving in an atmosphere of beauty; whatever else may be attributed to him, strength and grandeur cannot be. We do not deny that there is a sort of interest in such natures, but we deny that it is of the highest sort. If a man is born with a beautiful soul, and it is his tendency (to use a Shaksperian phrase) "to wallow in the lily beds;" to revel in luxurious sensations, be they wakened by material or immaterial beauty; unless he subject his mind to the training of higher ideas, and of a higher department than that of fine art, his career will end in the total enervation of his being. This tendency ought in every instance to be disciplined. The individual in whom it exists ought to superinduce upon it a strictness and austerity that will check its luxuri-

\* We may say of Milton, in reference to the highly ideal character of his art, as Fuseli has said of the same feature in Michael Angelo, "he is the salt of art." He saves it from its inherent tendency to corruption by a larger infusion of intellectual and moral elements than exists in the average productions of the department.

ance, and bring it within the limits of a severer and therefore purer taste.

The least injurious and safest form which an undue æsthetic tendency can take on is a quick sense for the beautiful in nature. But even here, an unbalanced, uneducated tendency is enervating. That dreamy mood of young poets, that dissolving of the soul in "the light of setting suns," must be educated, and sobered by a stern discipline of the head and heart, or no poetry will be produced that will go down through all ages. It is not so much a deep tendency as a transient mood of the soul, and needs the infusion of intellectual and moral elements, in order that it may become "the vision and faculty divine." Turn to a great collection, like Chalmers' *British Poets*, and observe how large a portion of this mass of poetry is destitute of the power of producing a *permanent* impression upon the human imagination; how little out of this great bulk is selected to be read by the successive generations of English students; how small a portion of it, compared with the whole amount, is profoundly and genuinely poetic; and at the same time notice how very much of it was evidently composed under the influence which the beautiful in nature exerts upon an undisciplined and uneducated æsthetic sense, and you will have the strongest possible proof of the enervating, enfeebling influence of this quality when isolated from the intellectual and moral. The mind needed a deeper culture, and a discipline wrought out for it by higher ideas, that could *use* and *elaborate* these obscure feelings, these dim dreams, this blind sense, for the purposes of a higher and more genuine art. It is often said, we know, that science is the death of poetry; that the study of the Kantian philosophy injured the poetry of Schiller, and the study of all philosophies the poetry of Coleridge; that the charm, and the glow, and the flush, and the fulness, and the luxuriance, and the

gorgeousness, were all destroyed by the acid and blight of science. But we do not believe this. These poets might have written more; had their imagination not been passed through these severe processes of the intellect, they might have been more fluent; but that they would have written more that will have a *lasting* poetic interest remains to be seen. Their art is all the higher for the check and restraint imposed upon their poetic nature. And who will not say, to take a plain example, that if the young soul of Keats could have been corded with a stronger muscle, and overshadowed with a severer tone of feeling and sentiment; that if a more masculine culture could have been married with that genuinely feminine soul; a higher poetry and a still purer beauty would have been the offspring of this hymeneal union?\*

And this brings us to the more positive side of the subject. Thus far we have dealt in a negative way with what the beautiful is not, and of what it cannot do for the human soul and human culture. We now affirm that only on the theory which subordinates beauty to truth can the highest style of beauty itself be originated, and that only when the department of æsthetics is subordinate to those of philosophy and religion, does a genuinely beautiful culture, either individual or national, spring into existence. Without this check and subordination, the æsthetic quality will destroy itself by becoming excessive. The more staple elements that must enter into and substantiate it, will all evaporate; as if the warm organic flesh should all turn into the fine flush of the complexion; as if the air and the light and the foliage and the waters, all the *material*, all the *solidity*, of a beautiful landscape, should vanish away into mere crimson and vermillion. For, as we have already observed, true beauty in a

\* If the school of Tennyson needs any one thing it is an austerer manner.

work of art is conditioned upon the presence in it of some intelligible idea. There must be some truth and some expression, in order to the existence of the pure quality itself. Beauty cannot stand alone. There must be a meaning underneath of which it is the clothing. There must be an intellectual conception within the product, to which it can cling for support, and from which it derives all its growing, lasting, highest charm for a cultivated taste. Hence it is, that as we go up the scale, beauty actually becomes more ideal, more and more intellectual and moral. It undergoes a refining process, as it rises in grade, whereby the sensuous element, so predominant in the lower products of art, is volatilised. There is more appeal to the soul and less to the sense, as we go up from the more florid and showy schools of painting, *e. g.*, to the more ideal and spiritual. The same is true of the beautiful in nature. As we ascend from the inferior to the higher vegetation, we find not only a more delicate organisation but a more delicate beauty. The gaudy and coarse colouring gives place to more exquisite hues, in proportion as *mind*—in proportion as the *presiding intelligence* of the Creator—comes more palpably into view. In the words of Milton, all things are

more refined, more spirituous, and pure,  
As nearer to Him placed, or nearer tending,  
Till body up to spirit work.

So from the root  
Springs *lighter* the green stalk ; from thence the leaves  
More *aery* ; last the bright consummate flower  
*Spirits* odorous breathes ; flowers and their fruit,  
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed  
To *vital spirits* aspire, to *animal*,  
To *intellectual*.\*

And all things grow more highly beautiful as we keep pace with this upward step in nature, until we pass over into the distinctively spiritual sphere, and reach the crown and completion of all beauty ; the beauty of

character, or the "beauty of holiness." Observe that all along this limitless line we find a growing severity ; that is, an increase of the intellectual or moral element. Sensuous beauty is displaced, or rather absorbed and transfigured, by intellectual beauty ; the ideas of the true and the good more and more assert their supremacy, by employing the beautiful as the mere medium through which *they* become visible, even as light, after traversing the illimitable fields of ether without either colour or form, on coming into an atmosphere, into a medium, thickens into a solid blue vault.

A reference to the actual history of fine art will also verify the position here taken. As matter of fact, we find this spiritualising process, this advance of the substance and this retreat of the form, going on in every school of art that grew more purely and highly beautiful, and in the soul of every artist who went up the scale of artists. That school which did not grow more ideal, invariably grew more sensuous and less beautiful, and that artist who did not by study and discipline become more strict and pure in style, invariably sank down into the lower grade. All the works of art that go down through succeeding ages with an ever-growing beauty as well as an ever-towering sublimity, all the great models and master-pieces, owe their origin to a most exact taste and a most spiritual idea. The study of the great models in every department of art, be it painting, or sculpture, or poetry, will convince anyone that the imagination, the artist's faculty, when originating its greatest works, imposes restraints upon itself, in reality is rigorous with itself. If the artist allows his imagination to revel amid all the possible forms that will throng and press through this wonderfully luxuriant and productive power, if he suffers it to waste its energy in an idle play with its thick-coming fancies—if, in short, he does not preserve it a *rational* imagination, and

\* *Par. Lost*, v. 475.

regulate it by the deeper element and higher principle inherent in it, his productions will necessarily be in the lower style. It is for this reason that the artist betakes himself to study. He would break up this revelry of a lawless, uneducated imagination. He would set limits to a vague and aimless energy. He would wield a productive talent that lies lower down, that works more calmly and grandly—more according to reason and a profounder art. The educating process, in the case of the artist, is intended to repress a cloying luxuriance and to superinduce a beautiful austerity; to substitute an ideal for a material beauty. Hence we see that the artist, as he grows in power and high excellence, grows in strictness of theory and severity of taste. His products are marked by a graver beauty, and the presence of a purer ideal, as he goes up the scale of artists.

As an example, we may cite the instance of Michael Angelo. For grandeur, sublimity, and power of permanent impression, he confessedly stands at the head of his art, and although in regard to beauty Raphael may dispute the palm with him, and by some may be thought his superior, yet no one can deny that (as in the case of Milton) whenever this element does appear in "the mighty Tuscan," it is of the most absolute and perfect species.\* Yet all his productions are

\* Winckelmann, looking from his point of view, which was that of classic art merely, has expressed a disparaging opinion in regard to Angelo, so far as the beautiful is concerned, and seems to have laid the foundation for the superficial and too general opinion, that in respect to this quality he was by nature greatly inferior to Raphael. But the able editors of his works justly call attention to the fact, that Winckelmann is wrong in judging of modern art in this servile way, and allude to a scarce and but little known poem of Angelo's, in which a most delicate and feminine appreciation of beauty is apparent. "In this poem," say they, "the great Michael Angelo reveals himself in a manner that appears striking and wonderful to such as have known him only from his paintings and statues. Heartfelt admiration for

characterised by an austere manner. The form is always subservient, and perhaps sometimes somewhat sacrificed, to the idea. And, at any rate, the man himself, compared with the Italian artists generally, compared with Raphael especially, was a spiritual man both in culture and character. We confess that we look with a veneration bordering upon awe upon that grand nature, abstinent, abstract, and ideal, in an age that was totally sensuous in head and heart, and in a profession whose most seductive and dangerous tendency is to soften and enervate. By the force of a strong heroic character, as well as a hard and persevering study both of art and nature, he counteracted that tendency to a sensuous and a sensualising beauty, which we have noticed as the bane of art, and in that nerveless age, so destitute of lofty virtue and stern heroism, stands out like the Memnon's head on the dead level of the Nile, grand and lonely, yet with "elysian beauty and melancholy grace."

And, in this connection, I cannot refrain from calling attention to that greatest of American artists, who is at once a proof and illustration of the truth of the general theory advanced. No man will suspect Allston of beauty, love too deep to be disclosed to its object, a gentle touching sadness awakened by the sense of an existence that cannot satisfy an infinite affection, and a melancholy longing, growing out of this, for dissolution and freedom from the bonds of earth, for the ground-tone of this warmly-glowing poem, in which Angelo gives an expression of the feminine element in his great and mighty nature, that is all the more lovely from the fact that the masculine principle is the prevailing and predominant one in his works of art."—*Winckelmann's Werke von Meyer und Schultze*, iv. 43, and *Anmerk.* p. 262.

Consonant with this are the following remarks of Lanzi: "We may here observe that when Michael Angelo was so inclined, he could obtain distinction for those endowments in which others excelled. It is a vulgar error to suppose that he had no idea of grace and beauty; the Eve of the Sistine Chapel turns to thank her Maker, on her creation, with an attitude so fine and lovely that it would do honour to Raphael." *History of Painting* (Rowsee's Trans.), i. 176.

an under-estimate of the beautiful. In the whole catalogue of ancient and modern artists, there is not to be found a single one in whose mind this element existed in more unmixed and absolute purity,—beauty

chaste as the icicle

That's curdled by the frost from purest snow,  
And hangs on Dian's temple.

But this spirituality was the fruit not only of a pure nature, but of a high theory. He recognised and felt the supremacy of the true and the good over the beautiful. The reader of his lectures on art is struck with the religious carefulness with which he insists upon the superior claims of truth over those of mere art, and the earnestness with which he seeks to elevate and spiritualise the profession which he honoured and loved, by making it the organ and proclamation of truth and holiness. By this, we think, the fact can be explained that he produced so little, compared with the exhaustless fertility of the Italian artists. His ideal was so high, the beautiful was so *spiritually* beautiful for him, that colour and form failed to embody his conceptions. His uniform refusal to attempt the representation of Christ, a far too common attempt in Italian art, undoubtedly rested upon this fact. It was not because his intensely spiritual mind had a less adequate idea of the Divine-Man than that which floated before the Catholic imagination, but because there beamed upon his ethereal vision a FORM of such high and awful beauty as could not be put upon a material canvas. It was because he saw so much that he did so little.

But there is a still more practical and important side of this whole subject. The department of art sustains a relation to the growth and development of the human mind and human society. Like all other departments of human effort, it should therefore be subservient to the great moral end of human existence, and if there were no other alternative, it would be better that

the æsthetic nature, and the whole department of art, and the whole wide realm of the beautiful, should be annihilated, than that they should continue to exist at the expense of the intellectual and moral, of the true and the good. We are not at all driven to the alternative, if there be truth in the general theory that has been presented, but if we were, we acknowledge boldly that we would side with the Puritan iconoclast and dash into atoms the Apollo Belvidere itself. Rather than that the department of art should annihilate philosophy and religion; rather than that an enervate beauty should eat out manly strength and severe virtue from character; rather than that a sensualising process should be introduced into the very heart of society, though it were as beautiful as an opium dream; we would see the element struck out of existence, and man and the universe be left as bald and bare as granite. We honour, therefore, that trait in our ancestors (so often charged upon them as a radical defect in nature, and so often tacitly admitted as such even by some of their descendants) which made them afraid of fine art—afraid of music and painting, and sculpture and poetry. They dreaded the form, but had no dread of the substance, and therefore were the most philosophic of men. They dreaded the material, but had no dread of the ideal, and therefore were the most intellectual of men. They dreaded the sensuous, but had no dread of the spiritual, and therefore were the most religious of men. The Puritan nature owed but little, comparatively speaking, to æsthetic culture. It was not drawn upon and drawn out, as some natures have been, by literature and art, for in the plan of Providence its mission was active rather than contemplative; but we do not hesitate to say that the contents and genius were there, and that even on the side of the imagination, that nature, had it been unfolded in this direction, would have left a school



and a style of art, using the term in its widest acceptation, second to none. And as it is, we see its legitimate tendency and influence in the poetry of Milton. The Miltonic style of art is essentially the Puritan art, beautiful only as it is severe and grand, the beautiful superinduced upon the true and the holy.

In the opening of this paper I alluded to the fact that the style of civilisation and culture peculiar to the individual or the nation is determined by the theory, which is consciously or unconsciously assumed, of the nature and relative position of the beautiful, and at the close of it I would call attention to it again. My aim is not iconoclastic. My aim, in all that I have here written, has been, not to destroy or in the least to disparage the department of æsthetics, but to establish and recommend a high and strict and philosophic theory of it, for the purpose of putting it in its right place in the encyclopædia, and thus of promoting its own true growth, and what is of still more importance, the growth of the human mind. I desire in this article to suggest something that will contribute to high-toned culture, high-toned thinking, and high-toned character. And I know of no better way than to bring out distinctly before the reader a philosophic, precise, and lofty theory in regard to that whole department of art, so fascinating to the studious mind, and so liable to be employed to excess by it. The older we grow, and the riper scholars we become, the more exact will be our tastes and the more austere will be our literary sympathies. We shall come to see more and more clearly that neither music, nor painting, nor sculpture, nor architecture, nor poetry, can properly be made the main instrument of human development; that the human intellect and heart demand ultimately a "manlier diet;" that we must become powerful minds and powerful men mainly through the culture that comes from science

and religion. We shall never, indeed, lose our relish for the beautiful; on the contrary, we shall have a keener and a nicer sense for it, and for all that is based upon it, but we shall find a declining interest in its lower forms. Schools of poetry and of art that once pleased us will become insipid, and perhaps offensive, to our purer taste, our more purged eye, our more rational imagination. There will be fewer and fewer works in the æsthetic sphere that will throw a spell and work a charm, while the deep and central truths of philosophy and religion will draw, ever draw, our whole being to themselves, as the moon draws the sea.

And in this way we shall be fitted to do the proper work of educated men in the midst of society. I have alluded to the downward movement, the uniform decay, of the ancient civilisations. History teaches one plain and mournful lesson, that man cannot safely be left to his luxurious tendencies, be they of the sense or the soul. There must be austerity somewhere. There must be a strong head and a sound heart somewhere. And where ought we look for these but in the educated class? In whom, if not in these, ought we to find that theory of education, that style of culture, and that tone of intellect, which will right society when it is sinking down into luxury, or hold it where it is if it is already upright and austere? Educated men, amid the currents and in the general drift of society, ought to discharge the function of a warp and anchor. They, of all men, ought to be characterised by strength. And especially do our own age and country need this style of culture. Exposed as the national mind is to a luxurious civilisation; as imminently exposed as Nineveh or Rome ever were, the beautiful is by no means the main idea by which it should be educated and moulded. As in the Prometheus, none but the demigods' strength and force can chain the Titan. Our task, as men of culture, and as men

who are to determine the prevailing type of culture, is both in theory and practice to subject the form to the substance ; to bring the beautiful under the problem of the true and the good. Our task, as descendants of an austere ancestry, as partakers in a severe nationality, is to retain the strict, heroic, intellectual, and religious spirit of the Puritan and the pilgrim, in these forms of

an advancing civilisation. In order to this, in order that the sensuously and luxuriously beautiful may not be too much for us, strength and reserve are needed in the cultivated classes. They must be reticent, and, like the sculptor, chisel and re-chisel, until they cut off and cut down to a simple statuesque beauty, in art and in literature, in religion and in life.

## HINDOOISM CONTRASTED WITH CHRISTIANITY.

By the Rev. James Kennedy, M.A., formerly Missionary at Ranee Khet,  
Northern India.



WE propose to consider in this essay the main features of Hindooism, the religion most widely professed in India.

In previous essays of the volume\* we endeavoured to show the testimony which Christianity gives to its Divine origin by its own manifest excellence. The sun requires no testimony beside that which itself supplies by its light and heat. We endeavoured to show that in the same manner the character and life of our Lord Jesus Christ, as described in the gospels, are radiant with a moral grandeur, which needs only to be contemplated and appreciated to win and awe every heart. We pointed to the characteristics of the Bible as proving it to have been produced by a higher than human authorship. We referred to the many collateral proofs we have of its being the Word of God, but we dwelt on the evidence itself presents as that which is most accessible, which speaks most directly to the highest part of our nature, and which furnishes the best basis for an unwavering conviction of its heavenly origin.

We now enter on a train of argument to which we alluded in general terms, when we

\* *Christianity and the Religions of India.* Essay by James Kennedy, M.A.

said the Bible throughout is entirely free from the Naturalism, the Pantheism, and the Polytheism which form the main features of the religions man has framed for himself. If the religion of the Bible differ, not in superficial circumstances, but in essential principles, from all other religions, and if the difference be wholly in its favour, by its propounding, as no other religion does, views of God and man which do honour to the Most High, commend themselves to our conscience, stimulate us to the pursuit of all excellence, and are accordant with the facts of history, the question arises, How are they so different, and why is the difference so vastly in favour of the Bible? The framers of these religions have often had a great advantage over the writers of the Bible in mental culture and outward circumstances, and on the supposition that all religions have had a merely human origin, the difference ought to have been on the other side. If we in vain seek for an explanation of the phenomenon in the powers of the respective parties, we are shut up to the conclusion, that the religions prevalent in the world have had a merely human origin, while the religion of the Bible is Divine. If the difference were slight or