

nation would weaken the anti-slavery argument contained in these pages. Let the story burn in your hearts, American freemen, and kindle there the fire of truth. The time shall yet come, when we shall see her torches blazing on all our hills, and her God-lit barks floating even on the bosom of the Chesapeake. A system which to sustain itself among men feeds alike on the heart's blood of slave and freemen, trampling everywhere at the North and South alike on human right and human law, so surely as God is true, contains within itself the seeds of its own death.

### THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

(From *Literary Characteristics of the Holy Scriptures.*  
By J. M. McCulloch, D. D.)

It is customary to say, in explanation of the highly picturesque character of Scripture diction, that the authors were Asiatics, and wrote in an Oriental tongue. "The language of the Scriptures," says Hartwell Horne, "is highly figurative—for this reason, that the inhabitants of the East, naturally possessing warm and vivid imaginations, and living in a warm and fertile climate, surrounded by objects equally beautiful and agreeable, delight in a figurative style of expression." No idea can be wider of the truth. A metaphorical construction of language is not peculiar to the East, nor dependant on latitude. The Celtic of the cold North is as richly woven with picturesque idioms, as the Hebrew or the Arabic; nor are the mountaineers of Scotland and Wales less imaginative than the dwellers in the Asiatic savannahs. Figurative construction of language is a sign of antiquity, not of clime; and if the eastern tongues are metaphorical, it is not because they are spoken by a poetic race, but because they are, to a great extent, primitive languages with a vocabulary devoid of abstract terms. But in truth, the diction of the Scriptures is not conspicuously Oriental. Images and illusions do indeed occasionally occur, whose force and beauty can be fully appreciated only by the inhabitants of a torrid region. But this is the exception, not the rule. The predominant imagery is drawn from sources equally open to all readers,—from the familiar objects and aspects of creation, from the thrilling events of sacred history,—from the Jewish theocracy, priesthood, and ritual. And even where the allusions are purely local, they admit of being universally understood. By a beautiful coincidence, the land selected to be the cradle of a religion designed for all nations, supplied, in its scenery and productions, a storehouse of imagery intelligible to earth's extremities. "Ancient Palestine," it has been justly remarked, "united the phenomena of summer and winter—the pasturage of the North with the palms of the South; so that in a few hours an Israelite might pass from the soft luxuriance of a sunny vale to the rocks and snows of Antilibanus—from a garden like the bower of the first pair in Eden, to the savage sterility of the desert of Engedi." A country of this description necessarily furnished imagery appreciable by men in every zone,—by the Laplander under his wintry sky, and the negro at the burning line.

If it is an error to suppose the Scripture figures to be mere Orientalisms, it is a still greater error to regard them as mere embellishments of style. By other authors figures are often used simply as ornamental drapery—but seldom, if at all, by the sacred penmen. These unaffected writers resorted to a metaphorical diction only when it was necessary for the adequate expression of their sentiments. They knew nothing of the art of elaborating their language or re-touching its colours. Their single object was to convey their thoughts and feelings with perspicuity and force. And accordingly their boldest poetic flights are couched in the un-studied language of nature, not less than their homliest narratives. You may easily produce from most other works of genius, hundreds of passages which might be divested of their allegorical dress without at all weakening the thought. But the Bible presents few, if any similar passages. There the imagery is not only the fit and natural attire of the thought, but as necessary to the preservation of the thought, as the bark to the life of the tree. Even the briefest and tritest of the Scripture metaphors are finely adapted to the sentiment, and singularly expressive. How happily, for instance, is Divine truth symbolized by the emblem, "light!" In what way could severe trial be so well portrayed as by "fire"—or innocence, as by a "lamb"—or affection, as by a "dove?" The

single term "sleep," as a name for death, has the force of a whole sermon on the subject. That one word, "temple," which our Lord applies to himself when he says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rise it up," is worth a hundred treatises, as a means of illustrating the Divine residence in the humanity of Jesus.

The only adequate explanation of the highly figurative style of Scripture is to be found in the aptitude of allegory as a method of religious instruction. What led the sacred writers to employ so many figures was neither their Oriental education nor the metaphorical structure of the Hebrew tongue, but the nature of the truths they were commissioned to promulgate. A knowledge of high mysteries which are not directly comprehensible by our understandings, cannot be communicated except by the medium of *analogical* expressions. Not even the human mind and its operations can be described without resorting to language borrowed from sensible objects—how much less the unseen things of God. In truth, our notion of God and the unseen world are, in the present state of our faculties, nearly as imperfect and inadequate as a blind man's notions of light and colour. And as, in order to convey to a blind man a conception of what *seeing* is, recourse must be had, not to proper terms or precise definitions, but to analogies drawn from the other senses, so, to impart to us such a knowledge of Divine mysteries as is within the reach of our capacities, it is necessary to employ a language of emblems and hieroglyphs.

How it comes to pass, that images borrowed from *sensible* objects should be better adapted than any other mode of speech for expressing *invisible* things, is a question easier to propose than to answer. Possibly, there may be a *real* resemblance between the natural and the spiritual world—a resemblance instituted by the Creator for the express purpose of rendering the visible creation a spiritual parable, and thereby enabling it according to a quaint but expressive similitude, to be used as a fount of types for printing a Divine revelation withal. But, be the reason what it may, the fact of the peculiar aptitude of emblematical language to impart a knowledge of Divine mysteries is unquestionable. Nor ought it to go unmentioned, that the fitness of such language for expressing religious truth, is not greater than its fitness for transmitting it unimpaired from age to age. Record a doctrine in proper terms ever so definite, still the change of language necessary for conveying it from one people to another, nay, the change which time produces on the meaning of words in the same language, renders such a record more or less liable to misrepresentation. But no such risk awaits a doctrine which is wrapt up in an emblem transferred from the unchangeable objects and operations of the visible universe. This "statuary of truth" endures. A truth committed to the charge of words whose import is purely conventional, may be misapprehended or even explained away. But a truth interwoven with an apposite emblem, is like that image of himself, which Phidias stamped so deeply on the shield of Minerva, that it could not be effaced without causing irreparable damage to the statue.

It was not then without good and solid reasons, that the Scripture-writers adopted in so many instances a metaphorical in preference to a literal style of composition. Their subject required such a style. Their design as teachers of a religion for all men and all ages demanded it. And we may recognise in the perfect concinnity thus discernible between the *dress* and the *design* of their writings, another of those beautiful harmonies and wise adjustments which admit of satisfactory explanation, only on the theory that the sacred volume has the same Divine Author as the book of Nature.

In connexion with this design and aptitude of the Scripture figures to express and transmit religious truth, it may be proper to note a peculiarity which materially contributes to their perspicuity. This is the comparatively uniform and regular manner in which they are applied. Profuse as the sacred penmen are in the use of metaphors, they do not, like other authors, employ them in any order or in any mode which fancy may prompt. The same set of images, however diversified in form, is almost always used to denote the same subjects. Each subject has, as it were, its own class of images appropriated to it; and the whole images of Scripture, when collected, are found to constitute a *system*, no less than its types. Thus, to give a few examples; the work of creation is an emblem of the new creation in Christ. The sun which leads on the seasons and illuminates the material world, represents Christ, the "Sun of righteousness," who brings on the acceptable year of the Lord, and sheds the light of life and immortality on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Air symbolizes the