

English deists. In extenuation of his free-thinking propensities, it is to be observed, that it could not be that in his age religious principles could be so well understood or so resolutely adjusted; the scheme of revealed religion was in some measure being wrought out, and there was an age impending in which there should be much freedom, nay, profligacy of thought. He was distinguished as a philosopher, a calm and philosophic upholder of natural religion and according to his faith gave all marks of sincerity. Thus connected with this deistical brother does the "Holy George Herbert" come before the students of his poems the admirers of his genius and the spectators of his times.

Herbert wrote a poem called the "Temple," in which he describes the various feelings of the Christian spirit. Under the figure of a temple he embodies these feelings. He traces with a poet spirit the various emotions which flit along the pious mind at the contemplation of the things of this divine religion. Feelings which escape the grasp of the Theologian are seized by the poet. They are the forms of things unknown and demand the magic wand of poetry to call them forth. With unaffected nature and pathos there are delineated in this Temple the feelings and uses of affliction, the joys of Christmas, the penitential emotions of Confession, the terrors and hopes of death, the vivid realities of Faith, the longings for Heaven, the mercies in Baptism, the Raptures of the Holy Communion, the Yearnings of Christian love, the mysteries of Providence, the loathsomeness of sin, the groans of the God-Man, the solemn stillness of Sunday, the hidden wonders of Calvary's cursed tree, the sacrifice and the sinner, time and eternity. In short, in the conception of the Poet, the Christian life is a Temple and he admits us to see its mysteries, to join in its glorious solemnities and to hear with a shiver of emotion its long long chants of spiritual praise. His advice at the Church Porch is as follows:

Hearken unto a Verser who may chance  
Rhyme thee to good and make a bait of pleasure,  
A verse may find him who a sermon flies  
And turn delight unto a sacrifice

This book of Herbert's then purports to be a volume of poetry. Our readers understand enough of poetry to know what it is and what has delighted them in the perusal of poetry. The poet is the man of feeling and passion. He looks at the things he describes through the heated medium of strong emotion. He sees relations at a glance which the philosopher discovers through long trains of reasoning. When he reasons he proses and while the reasoning fit lasts is no longer poet. In the Holy Scripture we read in prose a description of the Egyptians in the Red Sea: the same facts are conveyed in poetry in the song of Miriam. In the former we know the locality and circumstances better. Perhaps we realize the fact, its horrors and the power of God better through the latter, though the facts are irregularly told and all plan is dis-

claimed. The poet's thought flashes upon his mind at a glance and his words flow through his soul as metal through the heated furnace, pliable, burning and bright, ready to take any shape his imagination embodies. Poetry is the language of metaphor, simile and glowing figure. Its whole language is a parable. To the poet religion is a temple, reason a goddess, faith a sun, sin a monster, death a sleep, life a journey and all men travellers. The highest mood of the poet is a state bordering on phrenzy. The Sybil muttering in her cave is a true image of poetry. Robert Burns, marching backwards and forwards in a wood, stamping, gesticulating and speaking aloud, when composing the instructive tale of "Tam O'Shanter and his Mare" or the same wild being when sitting on his horse muttering with himself when composing "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled" is a true image of poetry. There is the talent left with the poet to grasp great forms. There is it may be not ratiocination left to apportion part with part and lay to all the line and plummet of positive truth, but, instead of this clerk-like accuracy, the mind with superhuman energy grasps the mighty outlines of things. The poet's glance resembles that of the man, who, to obtain a conception of a country ascends a lofty mountain and casts his eyes over hill, stream and lake and drops a sketch on the tablet of his soul of verdant beauty, majestic woods, silent shades, widening rivers and long long streaks of loneliness, stretching into the deep blue sky, compared with that of him who takes up a map drawn by rule and compass and on which he finds marked the latitude and longitude and his sense of propriety is shocked by names of places which are either uncouth or mock heroic. The Poet in short, is one who seizes the sensible, the emotional, the feeling forms of things.

The impassioned glance of poetry has been directed upon all human things. The rays of poetic genius have fallen on the most sacred places, and cast tints of loveliness on the most varied scenes in life. The human spirit begotten of the inspiration of the Almighty, the nursling of nature, the pupil of Providence, has measured itself for the boldest flights of poetic fancy. It has stooped and soared. It has revelled in the loveliness of domestic scenes and spread its wings of fluttering ambition to rise to the mysteries of Providence and the wild dreams of future happiness before the throne and in the presence of God which point to the lofty destinies. One said to us of a Gaelic scholar that his command of his native language consisted in his power of putting Gaelic upon anything. So the poet is one who can put poetry upon anything. Everything in human experience has its poetical side. The poetical spirit has not lain dormant. The Poet with the license which is inseparable from the exercise of his faculty has illustrated for us all subjects of inquiry and all objects of vision. First of all, nature has worked up his furor and he has rewarded her for her gifts to himself by consecrating his song to the description of

her beauties. He takes us through her temple and shows us her treasures. With weeping and with laughter we read his description of the brattling brook, the falling leaf, the naked rock, the mountain path and the sequestered glade. He presents us with the landscapes of nature framed in the concave of the blue sky. Again he descends to human life and he depicts the manners and peculiarities of men, the secrets of society and the mechanism of life. He will be found assuming the office of Preacher and discoursing on abuses, venal sins and setting forth to the light the points and corners of human life. At other times finding the real too narrow a sphere for his imagination, he conjures up temples of fancy and delights us with enchanted palaces and fitting forms of beauty and elegance. Thus the ideal in our nature is pleased.

So crude and coarse is life and so lofty are the aspirations of man, that the human spirit rouses itself and relieves the tedium of reality with the flowers of fancy and bowers of illusive blessedness. In short all things that move men powerfully and influence that descend like angels from the spirit world to stir up the pool of dull humanity and give virtue to its feeling, concentrate their force upon the minds of a few men who in turn wait for the heavenly breeze—and gathering into form the message, give it forth as inspired prophets of diviner things to their fellow men, who welcome it as their own by the intuition of their emotional nature. The poet is everything in himself. He combines offices in one which men share with their fellows. He is what he is, "cum privilegio." He paints, fancies and forms: he reasons, debates, harangues: draws God, angel and man, and throws the glare of his bold fancy upon every subject of thought.

"One hard," says the author of 'Festus,' "shows God as he deals with states and kings."

"Another, as with Heaven and earth and Hell" All points are central to the Infinite."

Poetry being thus the *ars divinator* it cannot be surprising that it should consecrate some of its numbers to such a divine thing as Christianity. This message of heaven was in a large degree conveyed by the medium of sacred poetry. The prophets, in their feeling and expression, were poets. The mantle of inspiration awakened in them the impassioned numbers of sacred song. David sung forth his piety and prayer in numbers. This, while serving important purposes, sprang from a natural cause. The men whom God chose to communicate his message felt deeply the glorious things they said. The victories of God's people, the triumphs of Israel, the heroism of their kings and the overthrow of human boast and pride, enkindled in the Hebrew genius such a flame of wonder and gratitude that poetic language became as necessary as prose juggling its sentences dull and flat along would have been unsuitable. Hence has it been well said:

"Poetry is itself a thing of God,  
He made his prophets poets and the more  
We feel of poetry do we become  
Like God in power, undermaker  
Song is of the supernatural