

prose consist in the nature of its subjects, its mode of treating them, and the more ornate character of its style, which again give rise to peculiarities in the structure of sentences and in the choice of words."

"The ground of difference observable between the poetry of other nations and that of the Hebrews, lies in the fact that the prosodies of the former prescribe certain strict and undeviating limits, within which the poet is compelled to move in the expression of his feelings; such as the length of the verses, the arrangement of the syllables composing them according to quantity, the place of the cæsura, &c., to which moderns have added the recurrence of like endings or rhymes. The sacred Hebrew muse, on the contrary, maintaining her primitive simplicity, lays down no arbitrary rules of versification with which to fetter the genius of the poet; she requires of her votary neither more nor less than that he should find himself in the state of excited or exalted feeling which is necessary to the production of all genuine poetry, and possess the power of delineating his emotions with truth and vigor."

Dr. Nordheimer then goes on "to examine into the causes which concur to produce all poetry," which he defines as "the outpouring of a mind raised by excitement above the ordinary tone of feeling." "Every faculty of the soul is then brought into unwonted exercise, and hence the language of poetry becomes animated, figurative and often abrupt; forming a lively representation of the activity of the internal emotions, which, like the ocean waves, are in a constant state of alternate elevation and depression, and give rise at each fresh impulse to a new expression of feeling."

Bishop Lowth, in his introduction to his translation of Isaiah, says that God, when He vouchsafed the knowledge of His purposes to His chosen prophets, endowed them also with the faculty of expression suited to so lofty a subject. At the same time it must not be forgotten that, even in the Bible, though the ideas are divine, the words are human; and no language can convey accurately what we are so familiar with in name—"The Word of the Lord."

A modern poet has spoken of "thoughts which lie too deep for tears," and there are also thoughts too deep for words; for tears can express what language fails to express. Indeed, all language is merely symbolic; all poetry but a feeble paraphrase of the inner, living language of the soul.

It is, indeed, the province, the high privilege, of the "many-minded poet" to "crowd his soul upon the strings" of his harp, till the deeps within him call to the deeps within others, and voice recognizes voice. But what poet has ever said all he wished to say? What poet has ever been able to pronounce "Well done!" on his own work? What poet has not felt the awful chasm between his aspiration and his attainment?

"Soul-trembling,  
With incommunicable things, he speaks  
At infinite distance. So a babe in smiles  
Repeats the unknown and unknowable  
Joys of a smiling mother."

It is to this incommunicability that may be attributed the allegorical and parabolic character of much of the poetry of the Bible. The teaching of our Lord, also, was essentially of this character.

I cannot venture to say more on this part of the subject—inspiration. Whether God gave the words as well as the ideas, or only gave the latter, allowing them to be clothed in human language according to the genius and power of the writer, matters not for my present purpose. I go on, therefore, to give briefly the distinguishing features of Hebrew poetry.

Any one who has carefully read the Psalms must have remarked a frequent repetition of the same idea—the secondary idea echoing, completing, magnifying or specifying the sentiment contained in the first. For instance, in the 93rd Psalm, 3rd verse:

"The floods have lifted up, O Lord,  
The floods have lifted up their voice,  
The floods lift up their waves."

And again in Psalm xl., 14, 15.:

"Let them be ashamed and confounded together  
who seek my soul to destroy it;  
Let them be driven backward and put to shame that  
wish me evil;  
Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that  
say unto me 'Aha.'"