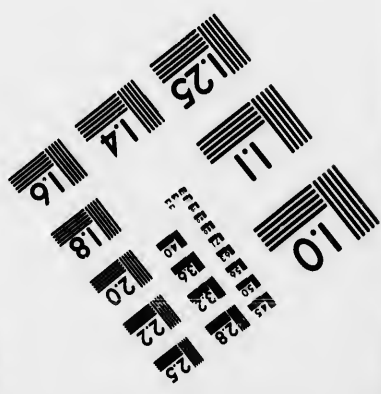
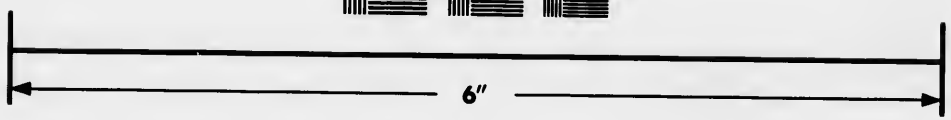
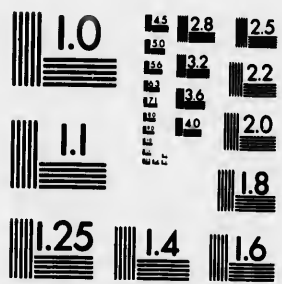


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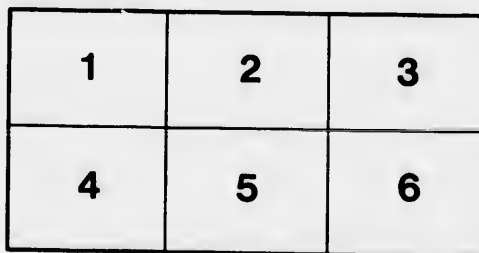
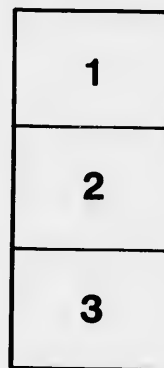
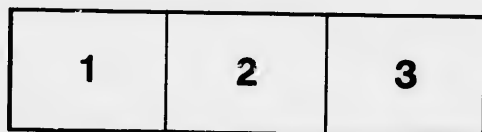
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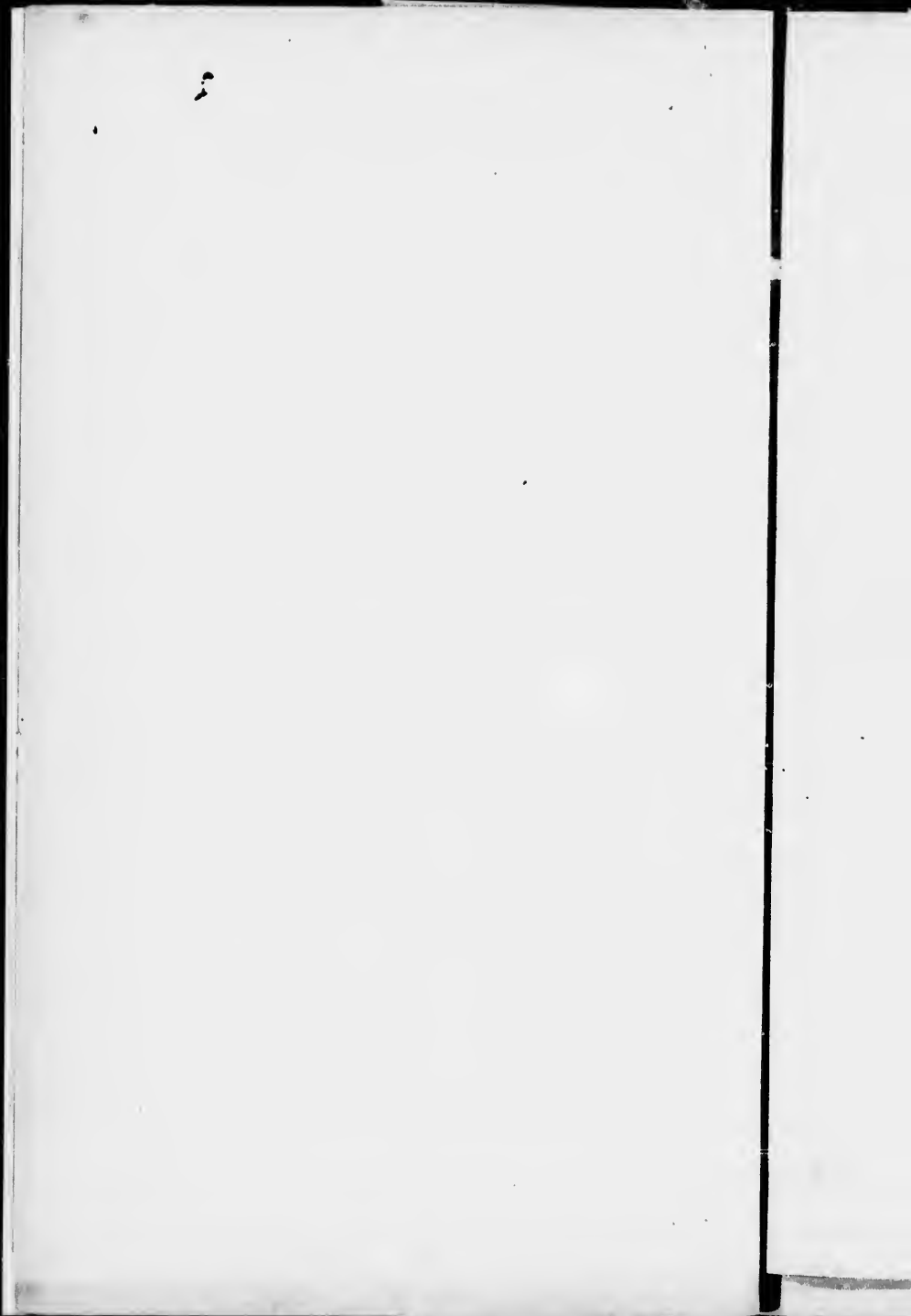
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THOUGHTS  
ON THE  
POETRY  
AND  
LITERATURE  
OF THE  
BIBLE:

BY THE REV. M. HARVEY,  
" /  
MINISTER OF THE FREE CHURCH,

*St. John's, Newfoundland.*

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*St. John's, N. F.*

**Thomas McConnan.**

1853.

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## P R E F A C E .

DURING last winter, the author of the following pages delivered, on week-day evenings, a course of eleven lectures on the Poetry and Literature of the Bible, to the congregation of which he is Minister. In the humble hope, that some of the views therein advanced might, if committed to print, prove more generally and permanently useful, especially to the young people of his charge, he has been induced to condense the substance of a few of these lectures within the limits of a short pamphlet.

In an age, such as this, when mind is so active, it cannot be a useless effort to commend the Bible to the intellect, and to endeavour to secure for it the respect of the taste and understanding. To do so may often win for it a way to the heart. We must respect before we can love. On this idea the following tract is founded; and is offered as something but imperfectly suggestive towards such a result.

St. John's, N. F.  
18th Nov., 1853.

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## CONTENTS.

Poetry of a Book.—Books rule the world.—The Bible most potent of Books.—Source of its power.—Combines Truth and Beauty.—Its Divinity and Humanity.—Why so much Poetry in the Bible.—Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry.—Inspiration and Office of the Prophet.—Distinction between the Poet and Prophet.—The Book of Psalms,—its influence and character.—Why so little Poetry in the New Testament.—Literary excellencies of the Bible.—Misconceptions regarding the Bible.—Not a weak or unreadable Book.—Causes of its neglect.—Intellectual and devotional reading of the Bible.

ERRATUM,

In the 2nd page, 7th line—for “teachers of the great”  
read “teachers of the past.”

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THE Bible is a book. Its name intimates that, while it is one of a numerous family, it takes precedence of all others,—it is a Regal Book.

In a world so full of wonders there is no wonder-worker to be compared with a book. The achievements of the electric-telegraph are justly considered the most marvellous among the modern triumphs of science. By means of it a person in London can, at this moment, converse with a friend in Paris or Brussels almost as easily as if he were in the next room. And were the whispering wire extended to Australia, a message from Sydney would reach London with the speed of the lightning's flash. This is most wonderful. But then suppose we should hear of a contrivance by which one man could speak to thousands, or even millions of men, at the *same moment*, though they be in a thousand different places—out on the broad heaving bosom of old ocean, in the depths of American or Australian forests, or by their quiet fire-sides and happy homes; and suppose too it should make his voice reverberate in the ears and hearts of men centuries after he had crumbled into dust, should we not pronounce the telegraph a mere childish contrivance compared with this? Such a discovery has been made. Here is a common place thing made from old rags and covered with ink; but it is a more potent wonder-worker than Aladdin's Lamp or wishing-cap of fairy tale. On its pages are stamped "the thoughts that breathe and words that burn" of its author; and on these thin leaves they are scattered over the world, enter palaces and cottages, and centuries after the hand that wrote them is crumbled into dust, the little book keeps the writer still lovingly conversing with his brothers on earth. Do I want to converse with good old John Bunyan—I have but to take up his "Pilgrim's Progress". "Call me up Samuel" said Saul to the enchantress of Endor: and lo! for once, there

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is power in her spell to bring back the dead. The shade of the old Hebrew prophet stands before the King in stern and awful majesty! Is there not something as wonderful almost accomplished now without enchantment by the magic of books. You walk into a well-filled library—there are the mighty dead ranged around—the poets, philosophers, historians—all the great thinkers and teachers of the great! It is a huge catacomb, where the great departed are embalmed and preserved. They are not unwilling to be disturbed in their majestic repose; but, at a word, will gather round you, reveal their secrets, impart all their knowledge and converse with you as old familiar friends. You can call up Herodotus the venerable “father of history”, and he will tell you how that strange old world looked, as seen through his eyes; and how humanity employed itself, when he walked the earth. There are his thoughts and words,—but where the hand that wrote them! And so too you can evoke the all-comprehending spirit of Shakespeare and glow over his magic creations; or soar with Milton on his wing of gloom or grandeur; or sympathize with the gentle Cowper. Here are earth’s real Kings and Heroes embalmed in their lofty mausoleums. A truly wonderful—nay, if we think of it deeply, an awful place is that where the great ones of the earth are lying in state!

Think again how powerful the sway exercised over the destinies of man by those apparently feeble things we name books. How they can gladden our fire-sides—wean us from the gnawing cares of life—charm us into smiles—teach us wisdom—preserve the discoveries of the human mind, and hand them down from generation to generation, so as to render the return of barbarism an impossibility! How they can shake kingdoms—overturn thrones—create revolutions—make despots tremble! The ideas of great minds, which books diffuse among the mass of mankind, in point of fact, move the whole and rule the world. Divine wisdom, which always displays itself in selecting the best means to accomplish the best ends, has employed this powerful agency to work out God’s gracious purposes to man. In the Bible, “the book of books,” we have the divine mind making itself visible, the thoughts of God taking form and embodiment in human language. This book therefore takes its place at the head of all literature, as being the incarnation of divine ideas;

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and has influenced the human mind more than all other merely human productions.

Now since God has chosen a book as the medium of intercourse with us, as the means of instructing and saving us, we might naturally expect to find that book adapted to accomplish its object, and therefore fitted, in every respect, to sway the soul of man most powerfully. And such is the fact. The Bible has proved itself to be the most potent of all books. Not more surely and irresistibly does the moon attract the waters of the mighty ocean, than the Bible has ruled the tide of human action. Its histories, biographies, stories—its poetry, proverbs, parables and gospels have won their way to the heart of humanity—kindled genius—coloured the thinkings of whole generations—employed the mightiest intellects in their illustration—taught men how to live and how to die. God does not usually accomplish his purposes by weak or worthless agents; and therefore we should not expect to find His Book deficient in power, majesty or beauty. Were the Bible a feeble or hollow production, it could not, without a continued miracle, have so captivated the attention, or gained a place in the hearts of all nations who have had access to its glowing pages. Let us endeavour, if possible, to discover the secret of its potent influence.

In order that the Bible might become what God meant it to be—a Regal Book—it was necessary not only that it should embody divine *truth*, but truth robed in *beauty*. The book that is to maintain a supremacy over the soul of man must speak to his heart as well as his understanding; must address his imagination and sense of the beautiful; must delight, in order to instruct. And therefore the Bible has been made the most beautiful of books. In this respect it corresponds to the beautiful creation God has spread around us. Why, in nature, are the grand and lovely made to embrace one another, the awful and the enrapturing to rejoice together wherever we turn? Why that beauty in the lightning's glare as it flashes from the dark cloud; or wherefore the rainbow's glorious painting as "based on ocean it spans the sky"? Why is the sunrise so enchanting, or his decline amid flame-curtains so grand? Why the ever-varying beauty of that cloud-drapery, or of the flowers that garland this rough



earth? Why is the song of the lark so melodious, or the smile of love so endearing? If man required only to be fed, then a rude, unadorned plain, where grain might grow and cattle graze, would have been enough. But "man does not live by bread alone" He has keen, deep sympathies, a noble spiritual nature, and an eye for the beautiful; and God has surrounded him with a universe glowing with beauty, in order to expand and gratify these endowments of soul, and lead man to worship the All-Lovely Being whose mind it shadows forth. Now so it is with the Bible; it combines the beautiful with the true, in order that it may speak to man's deepest sympathies, and win him to the path that makes known the way of life everlasting. In this way the Bible has been "made for man"—it is exactly adapted to his nature. We could easily conceive of the Bible having been differently constructed, without any charming history, or enchanting descriptions of old patriarchal manners,—without any story of Joseph, or drama of Job, or sublime psalm lifting the soul to the very gates of heaven. The Bible might have been made a dry treatise on divinity, telling us what we are to believe and do, in order to be saved. But suppose the Bible had been written thus, would men love it so much, or could it have swayed the human heart so powerfully? Would it ever have become the household-book, and bosom friend,—the object of our love as well as of our reverence?—No;—in order to be fitted for its great mission it must address every part of our nature; and therefore we have history, biography, psalm and proverb, gospel and epistle, poetry and prose, all combining to render the Bible the most wonderful and the noblest volume in the world. Here then, in revelation, we see traces of the same hand that formed the beautiful world around us. Both are constructed by the same divine architect.

Another thing was necessary to give the Bible a deep and abiding influence over the mind of man,—it must possess a *human interest*; for wanting this, no book can retain a permanent hold upon our attention. Let the record of our brother's joys and woes be naturally and truthfully written, and we cannot remain indifferent to them. Now it is most striking and instructive to mark how this greatest of all charms, a deep human interest, has been imparted to a book

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that is divine in its origin. The case stands thus—the Bible conveys to us the thoughts of God, but these have reached us through the medium of our brother-man. “Holy men of old” spoke the words, though they “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The thoughts therefore have come to us through a human channel, and were once thoughts bounding and billowing in the hearts of men like ourselves. The Bible, therefore, we might truly say, is at once *divine* and *human*. The breath of inspiration came from the throne of God—the Spirit of truth guided the writers into all truth; and yet the ideas, feelings, hopes and fears—experiences and aspirations which the book expresses, were first, in the strictest sense, their own thoughts and emotions, before they gave them such impressive utterance. Hence the human charm that is in the Bible. It is a poor, suffering, tempted brother—sometimes soaring heavenward on the wings of faith and love, and again with the black billows of despair rolling over him; it is one who has felt as we feel, and wept and suffered as ourselves, who, in its pages, tells us his own experiences and struggles, and points out to us the path by which he gained peace and rose triumphant to repose on the bosom of his God. It is David *himself*, who in that touching fifty-first psalm flings his broken spirit upon his God, sobbing from the depths of a repentant heart. The Bible is thus to us a great record of human feelings and endeavours—of woes through which the soul of man has passed in its struggles with guilt and sin—of its joys when reconciled and restored to the divine favour. And it is this very circumstance that so endears the book to our hearts, and has won its way to our affections. Its writers are our loving and sympathising brothers, with human hearts beating in their bosoms—with genuine smiles and tears chasing each other over their kind, genial faces; and they tell us honestly how they thought and acted in life’s battle, that they may cheer and guide us in our own toilsome and dangerous pilgrimage. They are truly “moved by the Holy Ghost”; and yet their words find a response in our own hearts, because they come from the hearts of those who wrote. Only genuine and true words ever do move deeply the soul of man. What a beautiful instance have we here of divine wisdom in selecting this mode of instructing and guiding us. The book is fitted to touch our hearts because

of its humanity—its close connexion with human feelings and interests; while at the same time we reverence it as divine in its origin, and thus authoritative in its revelations. We call its writers friends, brothers; we press our lips at once reverently and affectionately on their gift to us; we feel that we can live by it and die by it; we wet it with our warm tears; come to it in the lonely hour of sadness and place it under our pillow on the bed of death. We bless God for the treasure, and rightly name it “book of books.” So wisely and so wonderfully has God mingled the human and the divine in this universal book.

Is there not in this respect a striking point of resemblance between the book and him who is the great subject of it—the God-man, at once divine and human,—our brother according to the flesh, and therefore endeared to us and able to sympathise with us, because tried and tempted as we are? He became a perfect Saviour through suffering—by becoming one of our race, a true and perfect man. And so the Bible is fitted to our wants, by being at once human and divine. Suppose that it had been otherwise, and that, instead of humanizing his thoughts, God had written the whole Bible as the ten commandments were written, on tables of stone, with his own hand, and sent it down, without human intervention, directly from heaven; who does not see that in such a case, though it might be awe-inspiring, yet it could not come home to our hearts, win our affections, and become the household book, the staff of our declining years, the sweet comforter in the hour of loneliness and sorrow, the friend of youth and age that it now is? God, therefore, has adopted the form of revelation best suited to bring home the everlasting truths he wished to impart to our feelings, and to our hearts. The Bible is thus man’s book as well as God’s.

If these principles be correct they will furnish an answer to the question, why has God given us so much of the Bible in the form of poetry? It must strike every reflecting mind as remarkable, that so many books of the Bible are cast in the poetic mould. Without mentioning the poetic fragments which, like “orient pearls,” are scattered through the historic portions, we can point to the book of Job as being wholly a grand poem; the psalms we all reckon poetry; Solomon’s Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs—nearly the whole

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of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the minor prophets comes under the same designation; while the closing book of the New Testament is highly poetic in structure. How are we to account for this extensive employment of the poetic faculty?

Since, as we have seen, God has not spoken to us in thunder tones from Sinai, nor sent down a revelation written in the language of the third heavens, but "moved holy men" to convey his will, it follows that these inspired men must, in order to be intelligible, adopt the forms of utterance to which their fellow-men were accustomed. Still farther, we might naturally expect that God's prophets would use the most forcible, striking and impressive forms of human speech; those most likely to arouse the attention, captivate the feelings and move the heart. Now of all forms in which man can speak the thought that is heaving his own breast, none is so fitted to arrest the attention powerfully as that of poetry. How world-wide the influence of the true poet! How his sweet words re-echo for centuries through the huts and halls of millions of men, and move all hearts! He understood human nature well who said "give me the making of a nation's songs, and I care not who makes their laws." The most potent of all who bear sway over the human spirit is the genuine poet. If then the Bible was to be fitted for the great work of moving the world,—moulding men's minds and guiding their conduct, it must not neglect the use of that which struck the deepest cord in the human heart; it must sound the poet's lyre if the world is to follow after. Here again we see divine wisdom displaying itself in the selection of the best means to accomplish the end in view.

Still farther,—poetry is always the form in which strong feeling tends to embody itself. The deepest and tenderest feelings of our nature find utterance in song. Whether we are deeply moved with sorrow or joy, rage or terror; whether awestricken or passion-tost, the language of the excited imagination is highly figurative, and therefore poetic. Strong feeling must create poetry. And conceive, for a moment, what rapt emotions of awe and pity—of terror, wonder and adoration must have swept through the souls of the Hebrew prophets when the spirit of inspiration moved them, and visions of the eternal splendours broke in upon them, and they felt "the

burden of the Lord" laid upon them, and woe be unto them if they refused to bear it! No wonder that, in such circumstances, their words are sometimes as battles—deep, earnest as death itself! No wonder that they reject the cold forms of calm speech, and find vent for their billowy emotions in the sublimest flights of imagination! With deep burning thoughts in their hearts, and dealing with the great realities of man's destiny, we could not conceive of their language being the quiet and measured speech of every-day life. Hence the gifts of poetry and prophecy were so often combined in the same person. The poet's imagination alone could body forth, in meet form, the glowing thought kindled by the inspiration of the Eternal in the prophet's breast. The prophets of the Bible are on this account so frequently endowed with the poetic faculty. Great thoughts must have an impressive utterance. Cold prose would have been but a poor vehicle for the surging thoughts of a fiery-eyed seer charged with heaven's commission, and full of glowing earnestness.

As an instance illustrative of the difference in power between prose and poetry as a mode of utterance, and at the same time of the fact that deep emotion seeks expression in the poetic form, we might refer to David's Elegy over Saul and Jonathan. Even as related by the historian, the story itself is most affecting. The moody, dark-souled Saul, so rash, daring, and full of fiery life and energy; passionate yet capable of much generosity and kindness; subject to the evil spirit of rage and revenge by turns, but swayed too by music's witching power into woman's gentleness and tenderness—is a man, on the whole, not entirely unlovely, and, with all his faults and sins, draws our regard and pity towards him. And then the generous, loving Jonathan, so unselfish and devoted in his attachment, perishing tragically but gloriously with his guilty parent, awakens even a deeper interest. Even in plain prose the tale touches the most insensible heart. But hark! a deeper, higher note is struck; the poet with his eye of melting pity and tenderness looks upon the scene; the chords of the soul are swept by a master's hand; and the soft wail breaks from David's harp over the good and brave who had fallen in battle. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places;—how are the mighty

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fallen," &c. No elegy, of ancient or modern times, can be compared with this death-dirge, in soft and mournful beauty. It embalms the memory of Gilboa's slain for everlasting remembrance, and leaves an imperishable record of the poet's magic power.

A glance at one or two of the more striking peculiarities of Bible poetry may not be uninteresting. The most remarkable characteristic of this portion of revelation is its God-pervaded character. It is this that constitutes its very soul and essence, and makes it stand out, in glowing relief, from all other poetry, that it centres itself in God, revolves around Him, and is full of a sense of His presence. Hence the deeply religious tone of Old Testament poetry, and its unapproached sublimity. Its writers are men who see God in every thing. Nature and man, to their eye, form one great whole—a Cosmos, arranged and upheld by the Divine Architect—a realized thought of the Infinite Mind. The universe is but His "vesture"—the robe he has wrapped around Him—"the garment by which we see Him," and which by and by is to be folded up and laid aside, having "waxed old," while He is the same from everlasting to everlasting. That thunder-psalm, pealed from the dark cloud, is the voice of the Eternal "full of majesty,"—it is "the God of glory thundereth." The lightning's glare, shivering the cedars of Lebanon, is the flash of His angry eye. The storm is His going-forth "walking upon the wings of the wind." The flowers that deck the earth are orient pearls scattered by His hand. The produce of the rich harvest is His; for the earth is only "rich by His blessing." The ocean is but the mirror of His form. It is this deep sense of an Omnipresent God that lifts the poetry of the Old Testament into a sphere of its own, far above the poetry of Greece or Rome. It brings the soul of man into direct communion with the Father of Spirits; and aims, not at affording mere pleasure, but at quickening and elevating the soul. These poet-prophets, standing themselves in direct communion with the melodies of the upper sanctuary, bent all the powers of lofty imaginations and profound intellects to the grand end of making God known to man, and lifting up man to God. Hence their poetry is holy—a reflection of the awful face of Deity. The divine element pervades the whole.

Is not this the very element we so much want to mingle with our own life in this nineteenth century? We want to feel more deeply the sense of a present, personal God,—to behold Him in all things, and all events in Him. For alas! the sad disease of our age is that it “has forgotten God.” Life is no longer, as to these Hebrew men, a sacred thing; human destiny is not felt to be grand and awful; duty does not present itself sanctioned by the life eternal or the death eternal. What with our mammon-worship and sore scramble for riches as the one thing needful, we have got to fancy this awful universe of God, in which we find ourselves living immortals, to be only a work-shop, a great mart for buying and selling, or a huge stall where we may eat and sleep. Religion does not pervade our every-day life—does not go with us into the ordinary employment and render all sacred—does not mingle the heavenly with the earthly. Heaven seems getting farther off from us; and religion is too often resorted to merely as an opiate to quiet conscience, or as a means of escaping the eternal consequences of wrong-doing. How different with these “holy men of old” who walked in eternity’s light, “seeing Him who is invisible!” Life was to them sacred and solemn; and religion a life-element. If we ever rise to anything great or good, it must be by getting back what they possessed, though not in the same Hebrew form; and thus making religion a living spirit—not a dead tradition. Let us, by communion with their writings, seek to imbibe the glowing spirit of these men whose whole life was a walk with God.

Another striking characteristic of the Hebrew poetry is its universality, and consequent adaptation to the minds of all men, of whatever country or colour. It is singular to find that poetry, written two or three thousand years ago, in a small unimportant country, has been translated into all languages, read by all nations, and is readily understood and deeply appreciated and admired by all. The Icelander and the Hindoo,—the African and the Laplander,—the inhabitant of the Eastern and Western World—men of the first and of the nineteenth century, can all enter into the spirit of this poetry; and require no extensive course of training to enable them to understand its figures, allusions and vivid descriptions. How comes it that Old Testament song is thus

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universal ;—written as it were for the whole human family ? We can trace, at least, one secondary cause of this, in the influence of the climate and scenery of Judea upon the mind of the sacred poets. External nature exerts a very powerful influence upon the minds of all, but especially on the mind of the sensitive children of genius. A poet may be born in any land ; but his productions will be largely tinged by the scenery among which he lives, and the aspects of nature in the country of his birth. The whole cast of his thoughts will be modified by the gloom or gayety, the shadows or sunshine that meet his eye. What a wide diversity, for example, between the rugged grandeur of an Ossian, familiar with the stern features of nature in the icy north, and the rich glow of a Petrarch, born amid the flowers of the south ! Now Palestine, of all lands, is, in its climate, scenery and outward aspects, the fittest nurse for a universal poet. Just as God chose for Israel, through whom he meant to influence the world, a country the most central and best adapted for communication with east and west, so he fitted that land, in its riches and diversities of scenery, to form a race of poets whose words would be world-wide in their influence. Palestine is a sort of epitome of the whole world—a museum, as it were, of creation. The productions of almost all countries may be met with there, and specimens of all climates. Surrounded by burning parched deserts on the south and east, it breaks into all the rich loveliness of the tropics in the valley of Jordan. Here the rugged vine-clad hills kiss the clouds, enclosing in their bosom the loveliest vales, flower-decked and wood-covered ; and there the rich plain, with its browsing flocks, gladdens the eye. The dreariest and the loveliest scenes lie side by side—the richest and the most savagely barren ; till the slopes of Lebanon, in the north, with its eternal snow, crown the whole. And then those bright mornings in that “ clime of the sun,” and those gorgeous eastern nights, so brilliant with “ the poetry of heaven”—the lamps hung up in the streets of the city of God ! There at midnight was heard the lion’s roar ;—and there too the eagle soared ! Here was a “ meet nurse for a poetic child.” Here food enough for the imagination ! Storm and calm—shadow and sunshine—river and forest—snow-clad peak and thirsty desert, all here ; and thus from nature in all her



changing moods, the poet could draw, so that men of every clime and country could understand his glowing speech, as well as that of their own poets. And thus when God touched the heart of these great and good men with the fire from off his altar, he placed them in the beautiful land of Palestine, as on an exalted platform, from which they might address the populations of the world; and he spread out at their feet all the treasures of nature, that they might gather flowers from all, to weave a glorious garland for the brow of Jehovah. And nobly have they accomplished their task. Their picture-language, drawn from the whole of creation, has found the world for an audience; and is at once understood in arctic or antarctic, temperate or torrid zone. So wonderfully and so wisely has the Bible been "made for man."

Another feature of Old Testament poetry, and one which constitutes its greatest charm, is its intense *hopefulness*. It is bright with the rainbow tints of hope. With beaming eye and eager hand, it is ever pointing to a brighter and better future; and waving man onward to nobler heights than he has yet reached. In the midst of the deepest darkness there are ever the rosy tints of joy-bearing morning breaking in, and at "even-tide it is light." The woes and sufferings of the present are not eternal;—comfort thee then O weary one, weeping is but for a night. See already the morning breaks, the shadows flee; and soon "thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Such is the general strain of Hebrew song—hopeful, buoyant, cheering, and ever pointing to the future. Nor is it difficult to account for this. We have had bards of hope ancient and modern, but who could sing of it in such heart-thrilling strains as the Hebrew seer, whose vision God had strengthened to look across the gulf of time—to penetrate the gloom of centuries, and afar off to discern him who was "the desire of all nations"—"the hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof." These old bright-eyed bards had climbed the mountains of prophecy; and, long before their fellows, they had discovered the long-looked for Messiah, who was to restore man to God, break the prison-bars of sin, and bring back the bliss of Eden. No wonder they should break forth into rapturous strains, enough to make "the little hills

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rejoice on every side" and "all the trees of the forest clap their hands." No wonder their hearts should bound with rapture at the vision of Messiah's coming reign; no wonder there are such gleams of glory over all their pages! Did such vision of the future ever gladden human heart before! They behold "the mountain of the Lord's house exalted above the mountains"—earth lifted to high heaven—the spirit of love is every where—wars have ceased—righteousness is running as a river, and broad earth in Eden loveliness is basking in the smile of the Almighty Father. Who could withhold himself at visions like these! Nor was all this a mere dream of the imagination to these seers of old,—it was a certainty rooted more firmly than the everlasting hills, founded on the promise of God. Still more, their own loved land was to be the birth-scene of Messiah! In their own beautiful language he was to speak God's message—of their race he should be born. How every mother's heart must have beat high, for possibly the child she clasps so fondly to her bosom may be "Israel's hope"—"the child born—the son given." Thus Judea was the land of hope—the brightest that ever gladdened the poor sobbing breast of humanity. On this divine hope its noble hearted ones lived for long centuries, and calmly laid down their heads on the pillow of death. This was the source of Isaiah's lofty pæans of praise; and hence too the loudest notes that swelled from David's harp. Bright visions of "the morning star" floated before them, and made their hearts tuneful and their strains melodious. High and holy was the mission given to these gifted poet-prophets to sing of hope's brightest vision—to perform the overture in the grand Oratorio of Redemption.

In examining the poetry of the Bible, we are also struck with the deep *moral purpose* that pervades the whole. Beauty is subordinate to truth in its pages; and flashes out, only as it were incidentally—like ocean's music as it breaks on the pebbly beach, or flings itself far up the granite cliff. The *beautiful* is but a vehicle for the *moral* element. Here at once we discover the difference between the poet—the mere worshipper of beauty, and the prophet, who, being gifted with the poetic faculty, has added to it the far higher element, the perception of the *good*. Whatever the poet touches he clothes in robes of beauty; and he can extract this

element from the meanest and commonest things. He mainly addresses himself to the sense of the beautiful in the human mind. The prophet, on the other hand, looks mainly at the moral side of things, and speak in deep, earnest tones to the conscience, saying "this thou shalt do, this thou shalt not do." As "seer," his insight into high everlasting truth is profound. He has put aside the superficial drapery of things, and has seen that all things temporal rest upon and mingle with the eternal—that the material depends on the spiritual, and all on God. He comes forth, therefore, into the highways of the world and preaches of sin, duty, immortality, God. He appeals to the conscience; the poet to the imagination. He has the poet's glowing eye; but adds to it the prophet's earnest perception of duty, high as heaven, deep as hell; and would make his fellows love and practice the right, and shun and hate the wrong. An illustration may make this distinction clearer. "Consider," said the Great Teacher, "the lilies of the field, they toil not neither do they spin; and yet, I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." That was a deep, poetic glance into the divinely beautiful; beholding more of that element in the lily's delicate tints than in all the gorgeous magnificence of Solomon's court. How beautiful, after all, must be this rugged earth, with her huge ribs of rock, and cloud-capped mountains, and hoarsely-resounding seas, and blustering winds, to produce and nourish so fair a child as the little lily of the vale—to cherish it so tenderly on her rough breast! That is the poet's glance. But the divine man does not rest satisfied with awakening admiration for the beautiful;—this humble flower he connects with God and man, and from it discourses the loftiest of sermons. "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe you. O ye of little faith?" To the poetic is added the deeper moral element. Thus it is all through the poetry of the Bible. A deep religious purpose predominates throughout; and highest truth is wedded to glowing beauty.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to define in words that mysterious, divine influence named inspiration, which stirred the soul of the prophet. This much seems clear, and should be to us satisfactory—that it was no mere result of human

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genius, or exalted state of the natural faculties, but *special* and *miraculous* in its nature; and such as rendered those who received it incapable of error, while acting under its impulses. This much too we can discover, that when a man was once called to the prophetic office, he was not ever after in a state of inspiration, or infallible in his words and actions; but the divine influence stirred him—the “Spirit of the Lord” came upon him at intervals and for special purposes. At the same time this impulse did not destroy his own *individuality*—did not do away with the natural genius of the man; but rather acted in accordance with the peculiar bent of his mind. Hence we can distinguish the *man* in the *prophet*. The prophets are quite distinguishable one from the other, as to style, mode of thought and mental peculiarities, though all touched by the same divine impulse. The thought is divine but must robe itself in human language; and the genius of poetry stoops to do the task of the prophetic power.

Indeed the office, as well as the impulso of the prophet was entirely of an extraordinary nature. He stood forth a messenger direct from Jehovah, raised up for an express purpose—to awaken a slumbering nation—to appear as a witness for God and truth in some dark period—to recall to duty an erring people. While the priest conducted the ordinary services of religion, deadness, formality, hypocrisy would sometimes creep in; and then these great-souled men were sent to arouse and reform God’s church. They came divinely-commissioned; and “thus saith the Lord” was the preface to their utterances. Still, we find in them a proof that it is not by weak or worthless men that God accomplishes his purposes. These prophets we find were men of genius—men of great intellectual and moral force. They left a deep impress on their own age and after ages—drew generations after them—uttered words that have not yet become meaningless—that are sounding still in the churches and homes and hearts of men. Great-hearted, strong-souled, fearless men were these old prophets—“men of the lion heart and eagle eye”—the Great men of their nation and of all nations. They feared God, and that expelled all other fear. Kings tremble before them—wickedness in high places seeks to hide its head before the stern eye of God’s prophet. They do not hesitate to beard a whole infuriated nation, and

to rebuke their godlessness. The hypocrisy of priest and ruler they lay bare ; and preach repentance in the name of the Most High. The church and the world continually require men coming "in their spirit and power" to reform and revive.

Our brief limits do not permit farther reference to the characteristics of Hebrew poetry. Its connexion with the great events recorded in the history of the Jewish nation, such as the creation, the deluge, the emancipation from Egyptian bondage—all instinct with poetry, would form a very interesting study ; while its form, distinguished by the name of *paralellism*, is well worthy of investigation. Passing over these topics, we prefer directing attention, in a few brief remarks, to one portion of Old Testament poetry, that beyond all doubt has taken by far the deepest hold upon the human heart, and been most employed in the exercises of religion—namely the book of *Psalms*.

We might name the book of *Psalms*, the hymnology of the ancient church—the poetry of her devotion ; or that form in which her inspired ones expressed their own rapt feelings of awe, reverence, gladness and praise. Praise, no less than prayer, seems to be the natural language of man's heart. Whether the soul is throbbing with feelings of love and gratitude to the Creator—or gazing upon his glorious works with rapture ; or looking down with trembling awe into the depths of its own mysterious being—these deepest emotions of the heart gush out in song ; and taking music as a noble accompaniment, form a part, equally edifying and delightful as prayer, in the worship of God. Such is the origin of that form of sacred poetry we name *Psalm*. It is devotion robing itself in the beautiful drapery of poetry.

It would be difficult to over-estimate the influence those sacred hymns of the Hebrews must have exerted over the hearts and lives of the people, throughout their whole existence as a nation. More even than all their sacrifices, ceremonies and religious festivals, must these religious odes have kindled and kept alive the flame of devotion in millions of hearts. If it be true that the songs of a nation sway the heart of the whole more than any other agency, it is equally true that the hymnology of a church exerts a deeper influence than all else over the religious life of its members. Doctrinal

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disquisitions, creeds and confessions are powerless, compared with the devotional hymn. It is this that reaches the heart most directly; clings to the memory most closely; and colours the life most deeply. All sermons are weak in comparison. Give us the making of a church's hymns, and let who will frame her articles of belief.

The mighty sway exercised by the book of psalms, not among the Hebrews alone, but among our race, confirms this view. These psalms have become a part of ourselves—the heritage of the human family. Here is the language in which for three thousand years, in all countries and climes, the church has been pouring out her soul to God. What a holy interest thus gathers around these Hebrew Psalms! These are the strains in which the chosen people sang the divine praises and soared on devotion's wing towards heaven; in which they found utterance for their rapt adoration and a balm for their sorrow. The gorgeous temple of Solomon, in the days of its beauty, re-echoed to these lofty hymns of religion; and through Judea's hills and vales, from many a lowly vine-clad cottage, and many a lordly mansion, these sweet lyrics of devotion wafted, for centuries, the sigh of the heart towards heaven. That "holy and beautiful house where the fathers worshipped" is no more; but the Psalm, that once made its arches vocal with praise, has not died; it is sounding through the human heart and from the human lips still; it has floated down through centuries, and is as dear to the heart as ever. Here is something that cannot die—divine thoughts, burning words that speak to the universal heart of humanity. And therefore wherever a soul is struggling upwards to its God in trembling hope—throbbing with gratitude, burning with love, or burdened with praise—that soul finds all its aspirations, praises, sighs and longings recorded most truthfully and fervently in the Psalms—finds expressed here, in glowing language, the very thing it is struggling to utter. How little is preserved amid the wreck of three thousand years! How small a portion of any literature, so hoary with antiquity, is found to retain a hold upon the human mind! All becomes antiquated, meaningless to men of a new age, and is buried with the past. No parallel instance can be adduced to the case before us—the hymns of a small rude nation becoming thus immortal, and being

adopted into the language of praise and prayer in every nation which the Bible has reached. Jewish sacrifices, ceremonies and temple service have not spread to other lands; but their Psalms have been adopted into the loftier and wider christian worship, and are found to be the highest and most expressive form that devotion can reach. And, at this moment, the holy strains of Zion are sung by Greenlander and Esquimaux—the sable sons of Africa—the red men of America—the tribes of the South Sea Islands, and the dwellers on “India’s coral strand.” They have all thrilled under the sacred Hebrew Melodies; while for centuries, in cathedral and chapel—in hall and cottage, all through christianized Europe and America, these divine anthems have been pealing, and wafting the sigh and the prayer from millions of hearts! Cold must be the heart that could think of all this without emotion!

The Book of Psalms is by far the most deeply spiritual and entirely religious book in the Old Testament; and just as a man advances in spirituality of mind his love for it increases. In no other book is there such a manifestation of the religious life, in a practical, experimental form. Here it appears in all its various phases—in its tremblings and despair—in its smiles, raptures and victorious shouts. Here are described all possible struggles and experiences of man’s spirit in its intercourse with the Father of Spirits. Beautifully does Luther say—“the Psalter forms as it were a little book of saints, in which every man, in whatever situation he may be placed, shall find Psalms and sentiments which apply to his own case, and be the same to him as if they were for his own sake alone; so expressed as he could not express them himself, nor find, nor even wish them better than they are.” Calvin says “I have been accustomed to call this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not there represented as in a mirror.” Hooker says “the choice and flower of all things profitable in other books, the Psalms do both more briefly contain, and more movingly express, by reason of the poetical form in which they are written.” Chalmers describes it as “this rich and precious department of Scripture.” So universal has been the admiration of those melodies from Zion’s hill—so world-wide their power! They are for all

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men and all worshippers—not local or limited in their adaptation. They are the noblest form in which devotion has yet robed itself.

As a specimen, illustrative of these statements, we might refer to the eighth Psalm. It is such a reverential outburst of wonder and worship, as we might suppose the first man would pour forth, when night, for the first time, drew her curtains over the world, and the starry host came forth, led on by the silvery moon “walking in her brightness.” “Creation widens in man’s view”—the darkness discloses glories which the sun’s rays did but conceal. The Psalmist breaks forth—“O Lord! Our Lord! how excellent is thy name in all the earth; thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him.”—How poor and insignificant our little life, when contrasted with those shining orbs rolling on from everlasting to everlasting! How man dwindles into nothing when brought face to face with the world of awe and wonder over head—with those still star-regions and suns piled on suns! How wonderful that God should think of this insignificant atom of creation! Such is the Psalmist’s thought. It was the same thought, but carried out to doubt and disbelief, that has met such a triumphant rejoinder, in modern times, in the magnificent “Astronomical Sermons” of Chalmers. But a solution seems to rise in the Psalmist’s mind. Man is greater than all these; he can comprehend them all and enter into the designs of Him who made them; he has reason, that ray from the divine intelligence; he shall live when these worlds sink into ruin. “Thou hast made him a *little lower* than the angels—thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” Be not overwhelmed, then, O man! under a sense of thy insignificance! Greater than worlds, seas, or stars is that spirit of thine robed in clay! Thy redemption by God’s own Son is no incredible tale; and proclaims thy greatness more than all thy own achievements.

These brief glimpses of Old Testament poetry must suffice. The book of Job—“the grandest thing ever written with



pen" says one of our greatest literary critics, presents a noble subject of study to the christian and the scholar. Isaiah and the other prophets offer a most inviting field of investigation ; but we prefer occupying our brief remaining space with one or two thoughts on the poetry of the New Testament.

The two volumes of the Old and New Testaments present a very striking contrast, in a literary point of view. This, however, is nothing more than we might expect. The ages in which they were produced were strikingly different. A mighty change had passed over Judea and the Jews during the long interval that elapsed between the days of Isaiah and Paul. Nineveh and Babylon were entombed; the Assyrian empire had been swallowed up; the Persian monarchy had sunk in ruins; a new power had grown up and spread its huge arms from the seven-hilled city. Rome was supreme, and her iron hand had grasped Judea; her laws governed it, and her ideas and civilization were gradually leavening society. Grecian and Roman philosophy had, to some extent, influenced the Jewish mind. In these altered circumstances the New Testament had birth. Upon contrasting it with the old, we find that while the bulk of the latter is prophetic and poetic in structure, the latter is almost entirely historic and didactic. The coming of Messiah—the great event for which the old dispensation prepared the way—seems to have "struck the muses dumb." One might have expected, before hand, that the appearance on earth of the Great Deliverer would have awakened strains of triumphant rapture, such as never before thrilled the human heart; and that some Christian Isaiah would have sung as joyously of the "child born" as he whose time-worn eyes saw his day through the mist of centuries. But, strange to say, the harp of Judah is almost silent. The New Testament has no book of Psalms—nothing to compare with Job in richness of imagination; and only the closing book recalls the gorgeous visions of Isaiah. How are we to account for this; seeing that the same Jewish mind, and the same beautiful land gave birth to both volumes? We may not be able to answer such a question fully, but we may possibly conjecture something approaching towards the truth.

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One main element in poetry is *hope*. This beautiful attribute of humanity is the source of more poetry than any other feeling. "The future is man's immemorial hymn." The expectation, therefore, of any important event invariably awakens more poetic strains than its actual advent. Reality is unfavourable to the play of the imagination—the poet's main faculty. The Saviour, in expectation, would naturally awaken the imaginative powers of the mind more powerfully than his actual appearance. For keeping alive the expectation of a Saviour, there could be no more effective agency than that of poetry—appealing, as it does, so powerfully to the heart. Hence, it may be, the Spirit of inspiration adopted, so largely, this means of influencing the human mind, under the Old Dispensation; but we can easily see that the same conditions did not exist under the New.

In addition to this reason, consider the circumstances in which the writers of the New Testament were placed. They were God's ambassadors to tell sinful men of his grace and mercy in Christ; and their great business was, to preach salvation; to make known the wondrous history of their Lord's life and death, and to expound his doctrines. This they had to achieve in the midst of enemies, persecutions, and in the face of death. We can see that for men with death-like earnestness in their hearts, and in haste to deliver their message, there was no time to weave their story into song. Their part was rather to *act* a great poem than to *write* one. The most direct and forcible language—the unvarnished story—the unadorned truth were the weapons such men would naturally use, and which the world would expect to see them employ. And these are precisely what we find in their gospels and epistles. This consideration may go far to account for the want of poetry in the New Testament. Leisure, reflection and quietude are needed to produce the poem. Only one of the writers obtained this repose; and he is emphatically *the poet* of the New Testament; and fitly closes the volume with the glories of the Apocalypse. In fact, as has been truly said, "the New Testament is full of enacted poetry—not written or enunciated."\* The poetry is embodied, not in words, but in actions. The life and death of the God-man is the grandest poem, wrought out, not in

\* Edinburgh Witness.

language, or by the pen, but in deeds, and robed in human life. Great is the melodious singer; greater the heroic worker. He who does a great work is greater than he who only describes it; and his work is greater than the poem founded on it. So the divine life and work of Jesus—his victory over sin and death—his spotless humanity and perfect divinity—his great task finished and his people redeemed—form the most glorious of all enacted poems. We feel not the want of the poet's creations, while we have these higher realities to converse with.

Still the poetic element is not altogether wanting in the New Testament. The birth of Messiah awoke the slumbering harp of Judah, and drew forth, at least in three instances, hymns of praise worthy of the great occasion. The songs of Mary, Elizabeth and Zechariah—short but rapturous outbursts of praise—breathe the very soul of gratitude, and are not unworthy the best days of Hebrew song. The harp of Judah, silent for centuries, is once more struck to welcome the new-born King; and then, as though its task were done, its strings are snapped asunder in this final effort, and we hear it no more. Sweet are the parting notes from this dear harp whose strains had thrilled millions of hearts. Like the morning star, it "melts away into the light of heaven," leaving, not darkness, but a flood of increasing radiance.

These short anthems are the only specimens of pure poetry to be found in the gospels;—so sparingly does song mingle with the simple, earnest story of the evangelists. But then, may we not trace the poetic element throughout the gospels—mingling in them, like some bright golden thread, and adding beauty to truth? In the discourses and parables of the Saviour, we can often discern the poetic feeling of him who uttered them. Possessed as he was of "a true body and a *reasonable soul*," in virtue of his perfect humanity, we may well believe that the intellectual riches of that "soul" were of the highest order: and we have evidence in the poetic glow that constantly breaks forth in the midst of his moral discourses, robing truth in beauty, that one of the highest endowments of humanity was not wanting. We discern the same quality in the writings of the apostles; but on this we cannot dwell, farther than to remark, that in the Apocalypse

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we meet once more with the poet's words of fire, and the panoramic visions of the prophet; and a book, poetic in its spirit, fitly closes the volume of revelation.

Leaving the poetry of the Bible, let us glance at one or two of those literary excellencies which have aided in giving the book so powerful a hold upon the human mind. Had the Bible not been produced by men of great intellectual power; did it not possess literary merit of the highest order, it could not, without a miracle, have so long commanded the respect and attention of the world, and kept its place in the midst of the discoveries of science and the advances of philosophy. The mighty sway it has wielded, and continues to wield, is incontrovertible proof of its power as a book.

Consider the mode of its composition. It is the literature, not of one period, but of many ages; it contains the thoughts, not of a single mind that constructed the whole, but of many minds. The volume we name Bible contains sixty-six different books, or tracts, written by about thirty-six different authors, who lived scattered over a period of at least fifteen hundred years. So slowly and gradually, like creation's work, was the Bible built up! Then consider what different orders of mind worked at its construction—kings, generals, poets, prophets, courtiers, peasants, fishermen, a physician and an accomplished scholar! No other book has been so singularly constructed—by authors so widely separated in regard to time, or by persons of such various ability. And yet, strange to say, the book is a *whole*, possessed of strict unity,—has a beginning, middle and end, and is as free from contradictions and inconsistencies as though produced by a single mind. It is as remarkable for its unity as for its diversity. Nothing could be dispensed with. To take away a part would be to injure the whole. This is entirely without a parallel. Suppose we saw a building, such as St. Paul's Cathedral, rising up gradually year after year; an immense number of hands are employed about it; carpenters lay beam on beam, and masons stone on stone, blindly, without seeing the relation of their work to the whole, or understanding what is to be the grand result. At length the finishing stroke is given, and a gorgeous temple stands forth in all its magnificent proportions. But who could believe that there was no planning or presiding mind employed upon

it? Who could resist the conviction that these workmen were carrying out the design of one mind, and realizing the architect's plan. Its unity—the harmony of its parts—their mutual adaptation, with the immense diversity of operations, all proclaim the presiding mind. Shall we reason differently regarding this wonderful book, reared age after age, by so many different workmen, and standing entire and complete, a glorious temple? Can we resist the conviction that the Infinite Mind planned and presided over the whole; and that its writers were carrying out the design of the Great Architect?

And then besides, we can see one most important result accomplished by employing such a variety of workmen. A book addressed to all, and intended to influence all orders of mind, must be adapted to all. But what book can suit such a numerous and varied audience? No one man indeed, were he the most universal genius, could satisfy the tastes, or suit the mental and moral peculiarities of all men. But by employing so many different writers—"men of like passions with ourselves"—and giving full play to their own individuality, divine wisdom, has made the Bible the most wonderful of all books in its adaptation to the human family. The imaginative and the practical,—the logical and the intuitive—the poetical and prosaic—the pensive and the cheerful—the philosophic and the matter-of-fact—those fond of history and those who delight in close argument—men of every taste and temperament, can come and find their appropriate nutriment in the pages of this book, "made for man."

One other great charm in the Bible has often been dwelt on—its *simplicity*. Genuine simplicity is one of the rarest and most difficult attainments in an author; but there is no other quality that charms us more, or wins such universal regard. The books most read and loved are the simplest. Witness such universal favourites as the Pilgrim's Progress, Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield, or Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. Their great charm is their entire simplicity. The style is natural, free from affectation, and suits the story, so that we say here is nature—here is truth. Nor is it only simple books we love; but, as we advance in experience, we learn to prize above every thing simplicity of character. We may be caught for a time by glitter and show, if accompanied by

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boldness and self-confidence, but by and by we see through the man of cunning and tricks; we long for something real and natural—that is what it seems to be. So with a book; if we detect trickery, affectation, straining after effect, mere rhetoric that is all froth without substance—we turn away from such. To retain a permanent hold, a book must be simple and natural; the words such as the thought ought to prompt. Simplicity, however, does not mean stupidity or childishness; it consists in a conformity between the thought and the expression. A simple writer rises with his subject; if he writes history he will use the narrative style—if poetry or a work of imagination he will mount into figure. Now the Bible is pre-eminently a simple book. There is no glitter or tinsel—nothing introduced for the sake of effect—no swelling epithets to dazzle or astonish. Its histories and biographies are very models of simplicity; and in the loftiest flights of poetry there is simplicity of expression. It is grandeur of thought, not of words, that bears us on: and the beauty that flashes out is seemingly casual, all the more captivating because it is so.

If there be any truth in the preceding pages, it follows that the Bible is not, as so many believe, an antiquated, weak, or unreadable book—too dull to afford any intellectual pleasure—too stupid to engage the attention. Whether it be from early unpleasant associations with weary tasks, confinement, blows and angry words at school or at home, certain it is that multitudes regard the Bible as the most repulsive of books. Little do these individuals, whose minds are unhappily blinded by prejudice and misconception, imagine that they might find the Bible the most charming and the grandest of books, did they but study it in a right spirit. Little do they suspect, not only that here is the most important truth, but also the loftiest and sweetest poetry—the most thrilling eloquence—the most captivating lives of the great and good—and all that is most sublime, picturesque and pathetic in thought and expression, in the very highest perfection; that the Bible is not only the most important, but the most beautiful book in the world. It was well said by the witty and sarcastic Dr. South, of a gentleman who had declared that he would not let his son read the Bible lest it should spoil his style, that “he thus showed himself as great

a blockhead as a deist ; and to know no more of the excellence of language, than he relished the divinity of truth." A book pronounced by Shelly, on the ground of literary excellence alone, "the best book," and which Byron, for the same reason, constantly read, can be no despicable or dull production.

There can be little doubt that with all the Bible circulation that is going on so hopefully, there is a great practical neglect of the Bible ; and very often, even in christian households, it is found to be the *cleanest* book in the house. There is reason to fear that, even among our church-going people, the Bible does not receive that intelligent, earnest and habitual reading, which its intrinsic worth and divine origin demand. In very many cases, misconception and ignorance, regarding the nature of the book, have a great deal to do with such neglect. Unhappily, the Bible has been made so frequently a battle ground by contending sects ; and been regarded so generally as merely an arsenal for supplying offensive or defensive armour in the battles of the churches, that in the minds of multitudes it is associated only with bitter theological quarrels, or cloudy disputations ; and thus its beauty has been hidden and its value obscured. In this way it has come to pass, that vast numbers, instead of regarding the Bible in its true character, as a loving and lovely book—quickening and soul-stirring—addressing every part of man's nature—stimulating his intellect—cultivating his taste—and sanctifying the whole man,—have been led to turn from it as a disagreeable volume, out of which angry disputants might chop texts with each other. But we see at present the dawn of a better day. The dust raised around the book by contending parties is clearing off, and juster views are making way. Men are getting to see that here is our noblest heritage—embodying highest truth with serene beauty ;—an intellectual storehouse that can never be exhausted ; and a treasury of moral and religious truth that is enough for man's deepest wants. It is beginning to be seen, that the hope of the world centres on the Bible—on leavening the minds of men with its divine ideas. The conviction is making way, that it is no mere dry body of divinity, or object of superstitious veneration, but the loving friend of man ; the kind comforter in the hour of sorrow ; the friend of progress ;

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the safeguard in life's stern battle; the guide to "glory, honour and immortality;" man's book as well as God's.

We may and we should read the Bible *intellectually*—for mental improvement and gratification. If God has sprinkled its pages with so many beauties, it was not surely without design on his part; and it cannot be without loss on our part, if we remain insensible to these. They have been placed there for our advantage, and we should bring our mind into contact with them. It is lawful and profitable to take up the Bible, not only for devotional purposes, but as a means of quickening the imagination, gratifying the taste and informing the intellect. Its author evidently meant it for such purposes. We may come then, when a leisure hour arrives, and fill our minds with Isaiah's "rapt prophetic fire"—or converse with Job's philosophic grandeur in that oldest and best of poems—or listen to the cheerful voice of Peter—the nervous logic of Paul, or the homely, practical reasoning of James. Or again, with the aid of an intelligent commentator, of maps and chronology, we may explore its histories, follow its narratives, or dive into its geography. Thus we should have a noble intellectual exercise; and at the same time, obtain a clearer understanding of God's book, and deepen our love and respect for the sacred volume. Thus we should bind it to our hearts by new ties. And this would lead us, we might hope, to something far higher and better—to love the moral beauty and holiness of the Bible, and to have our souls quickening into divine life by its truths.

This intellectual reading of the Bible, however, should be regarded only as subservient to a higher aim. All will be in vain if it do not make us savingly acquainted with Jesus as the Saviour. It is not enough to admire its beauties; we must seek to have our souls sanctified and saved by means of its teachings. We must therefore read it on our knees—with prayer for the Spirit's guidance, and with a high spiritual purpose.

We conclude with the words of one\* whose intellect, taste and piety have done so much in commending the Bible to the cultivated intelligence of the age. "There is loveliness even in its letter; but there is life for our souls in its divine

\* Rev. Dr. J. Hamilton.



significance. That Book which God has made the monument of the great redemption, and where he has put his own perpetual Shekinah, do you choose it as the gymnasium where you may nourish a youth truly sublime; the castle where, in a world of impiety and an age of peril, you may find entrenchment for your faith and protection for your principles; the sanctuary at whose oracle you may find answers to your doubts, and light upon your path; the spirit's home, whither your affections shall every day return, and where your character shall progressively ennoble into a conformity with such a royal residence."

