

ARTICLE IV.

THE PROVINCE OF IMAGINATION IN SACRED ORATORY.¹

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THE specific nature and object of this Association seem to prescribe a theme having reference to oratory, and specially to the oratory of the pulpit. I propose to discuss, then, *the True Province of Imagination in Sacred Oratory*, whether, and how far, this faculty may be of use to the preacher.

As the word, however, is used of late with considerable latitude, it may be well first to define what I mean by imagination.

I understand, then, by this term, not the mere power which the mind possesses of forming images of absent material objects, which is, in reality, only memory in one of its forms, but rather the faculty of the ideal—the power of conceiving and representing under sensible forms the purely ideal. It is that which makes the difference between the copyist and the creator. It is that which lies at the foundation of all true art, whose legitimate office it is to carry us beyond the merely phenomenal, and place us in the presence of the real, the truly beautiful. It is that which in the well-known words of the poet:

“bodies forth

The form of things unknown.”

“To imagine, in this high and true sense of the word,” says Fleming, “is to realize the ideal, to make intelligible truths descend into the forms of sensible nature, to represent the invisible by the visible, the infinite by the finite. In this view of it, imagination may be regarded as the *differentia*

¹ An Address delivered before the Rhetorical Society of the Chicago Theological Seminary at its Anniversary in April 1865.

of man, — the distinctive mark which separates him, *a grege mutorum*. That the inferior animals have memory, and what has been called passive imagination, is proved by the fact that they dream — and that in this state the sensuous impressions made on them during their waking hours are reproduced. But they have no trace of that higher faculty and function which transcends the sphere of sense, and which out of elements supplied by things seen and temporal can create new objects, the contemplation of which lifts us to the infinite and the unseen, and gives us thoughts which wander through eternity.”¹

How far, now, is this faculty of the ideal admissible and of use in the pulpit? Such is the question before us — a question, I need not say, of practical importance to one entering the sacred ministry.

At the first glance one would say, the case is too plain to admit of hesitation. The faculties of the mind are all of use, and were intended by their Creator to be used; nor is there one among them which is not needed by the orator in the exercise of his art. The fact that among the instruments with which nature has furnished the mind we find this faculty, is in itself an argument in its favor; and unless reason can be shown to the contrary, it is fair to presume that it is legitimately at the service of the pulpit orator.

There are, however, those who would debar this faculty entirely from the pulpit as unworthy of the sacred office. It is the preacher’s business, they tell us, to deal with facts, and not with fancies; with realities, and not with fictions and figments of the brain. They would rule out the ideal, therefore, as wholly at variance with the real.

This however is, I need hardly say, entirely a false view of the nature of the ideal. The ideal and the real are not opposites — are not necessarily at variance. The two are, on the contrary, in their highest range, one and the same. The material, the sensible, the tangible, are not the only realities, are not the highest and chiefest truths. There are facts, the

¹ Vocabulary of Philosophy.

grandest and most important, that lie beyond the range of sense. The whole realm of the spiritual, the very realm with which the preacher has to do, is in its very nature invisible, intangible, ideal, but none the less real. The philosophy unfortunately becoming prevalent of late, which comprises only the phenomenal, and ignores a cause; which recognizes only fixed and inexorable laws, and knows nothing of a lawgiver; to which nothing is a reality but the sensible and material universe and its forces, — this surely is not the philosophy of the Christian religion. Christianity recognizes and has to do with something beyond and above the merely phenomenal and material — with the invisible and the spiritual. It deals with facts and realities; but its facts and realities are of this higher sort. To reject the ideal, then, as necessarily at variance with the real, is strangely to ignore the true nature, not of the ideal only, but of Christianity itself, and to shut out the latter from its highest and most legitimate sphere. The preacher has to do with realities; but so long as those realities pertain to the realm of the ideal and spiritual, and not to the realm of sense, the faculty of the ideal may well be of service to him in conceiving and presenting those realities. He has to do with facts; but it may well be that the clear apprehension and proper statement of those facts will call into requisition the faculty of ideal representation. It requires a certain degree of imagination to be able to state correctly the simplest historic fact, much more those great and peculiar facts which Christianity reveals.

It is objected to the use of the imagination in pulpit oratory, that it tends to an absurd and fanciful style, a redundancy of figures of speech, and the like serious defects. It is not, however, I suspect, to the imaginative faculty, but rather to the abuse, or even it may be to the entire absence and neglect, of that faculty, that these defects are really to be ascribed. A lively imagination, under the control and guidance of a correct taste, would be the surest preventive often of these very faults. It is not imagination, but the

want of imagination, that leads to the absurd mingling of metaphor that sometimes occurs in public speaking; as when, for example, a certain legislative orator, not long since, spoke of the wheels of government as blocked by *sharks*, which, like the locusts of Egypt, settled on every green thing. The imagination never perpetrates such blunders. That much abused faculty, had it existed to the extent of a grain of mustard-seed in that man, would forever have kept him from all such absurdity.

The orator is essentially an artist. His, the highest of all arts — the art of persuasion; and the highest of all oratory is that of the pulpit, as dealing with themes the most profound, and interests the most momentous. It were strange, surely, if this artist were denied the most potent instrument of his art, and of all art; if this orator were debarred the use of that which is, in all other cases, essential to the highest and most effective oratory. For in oratory, as in all art, it is mainly the ideal element that imparts the peculiar charm, nameless and indescribable, which distinguishes the productions of true genius.

Without discussing further the right of the pulpit orator to avail himself of this faculty, I proceed to mention certain specific advantages to be derived from its proper and legitimate use.

And first it is obvious that *the higher and bolder flights of oratory* are largely due to the faculty of the ideal. When in the full tide and tumult of excited feeling the orator, carried away by the impulse of the moment and the force of the argument, leaps at a bound over the limits of time and place, and summons the absent and the invisible, and even calls up the dead, to bear witness to his words, we have an illustration of the true power and province of imagination in oratory. An instance of this occurs in the Oration on the Crown, where Demosthenes suddenly appeals, in confirmation of what he is saying, to the illustrious dead who rushed into danger at Marathon, and those who stood side by side at Platea. Hardly less sublime than this apostrophe of the great Athe-

nian orator is the passage in which the apostle to the Gentiles, having named many persons illustrious for faith, by a bold and striking figure gathers these ancient heroes from the past as spectators of the present—a cloud of spiritual forms hovering over the race-course where the Christian runs for the prize of his high calling: “Seeing then that ye are encompassed with so great a *cloud of witnesses*.” Bolder and more sublime than either is the remarkable passage in which Isaiah describes the descent of the monarch of Babylon to the realms of Sheol. From their shadowy thrones the kings and nations of antiquity rise to receive the coming stranger: “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.”

I can hardly forbear to add, from the oratory of the present day, a further illustration of the use and power of the imagination in the bolder flights of eloquence. When over the ruins of Fort Sumter the old historic flag was raised again, the orator,¹ inspired by the sublimity of the occasion, and conscious that he was uttering the sentiments of the nation, after charging upon the ambitious political leaders of the South the whole guilt of this war, thus proceeds to arraign them for retribution: “A day will come when God will reveal justice, and arraign at his bar these mighty miscreants, and then every orphan that their bloody war has made, and every widow that sits sorrowing, and every maimed and wounded sufferer, and every burdened heart in all the wide regions of this land, will rise up and come before the Lord, to lay upon these chief culprits of modern history their awful witness, and from a thousand battle-fields shall rise up armies of airy witnesses, who with the memory of their awful sufferings shall confront these miscreants with shrieks of fierce accusation, and every pale and starved prisoner shall raise his skinny hand in judgment. Blood shall call out for vengeance, and tears shall flow for justice, and grief shall

¹ Henry Ward Beecher, in 1865.

silently beckon, the heart smitten shall wail for justice, good men and angels will cry out: How long, O Lord, how long wilt thou not avenge? And then these guiltiest and most remorseless traitors, these high and cultured men with might and wisdom used for the destruction of their country, these most accursed and detested of all criminals, that have drenched a continent in needless blood, and moved the foundations of their times with hideous crimes and cruelty, caught up in black clouds full of voices of vengeance and lurid with punishment, shall be whirled aloft and plunged downward forever and ever in an endless retribution, while God shall say: Thus shall it be with all who betray their country; and all in heaven and upon earth will say, Amen."

Thus to summon at the bar of divine justice the authors of this great crime, and there to confront them with all those whom their cruel ambition has made desolate, and with the dead from a thousand battle-fields, while it is one of the boldest flights of oratory, is also a striking instance of the power of the ideal.

2. The orator is dependent on the imagination for *the power of clear and vivid description of absent objects*. This power is of great service to the orator. It enables him by the skilful touch of the artist to make his hearers, to all intents, spectators of events however remote, and scenes however distant, as at the waving of some magician's wand they start into life before us, and stand out with the distinctness of reality before our eyes. This is in no small degree the secret of effective oratory, and the hiding of its power. The tame and common-place speaker tells us that the thing occurred thus and thus; that the murderer entered by a dark passage, ascended the stairs, entered the chamber, dispatched his victim, and made his escape, passing down such a street; all which may be very true, but scarcely more impressive than to be told that the diameter of the earth's orbit is so many thousand miles. The true orator, by a few skilful touches, brings the whole scene before us — the victim, the approach of danger, the entrance, the blow, the escape of the

assassin. Under the handling of a Webster we do not so much hear or read, as *see*, these things transpiring before our own eyes. It is the imagination which enables the orator thus to seize upon the details, and impart reality to the picture.

A fine illustration of this occurs in the sermon of Horace Bushnell on Unconscious Influence, in which he has occasion to depict the effects which would follow the withdrawal of light from the earth. "Many," he tells us, "will be ready to think that light is a very tame and feeble instrument, because it is noiseless. An earthquake, for example, is to them a much more vigorous and effective agency. Hear how it comes thundering through the solid foundations of nature. It racks a whole continent. The noblest works of man,—cities, monuments, and temples, are in a moment levelled to the ground, or swallowed down the opening gulfs of fire. Little do they think that the light of every morning, the soft and genial and silent light, is an agent many times more powerful. But let the light of the morning cease, and return no more; let the hour of morning come and bring with it no dawn; the outcries of a horror-stricken world fill the air, and make, as it were, the darkness audible; the beasts go wild and frantic at the loss of the sun; the vegetable growths turn pale and die, and chill creeps on, and frosty winds begin to howl across the freezing earth; colder and yet colder is the night; the vital blood at length of all creatures stops congealed; down goes the frost toward the earth's centre; the heart of the sea is frozen; nay, the earthquakes are themselves frozen in under their fiery caverns. The very globe itself, too, and all the fellow planets that have lost their sun, are become mere balls of ice, swinging silent in the darkness." A mind less imaginative would never have conceived the idea of depicting the effect of continued darkness, or if it had attempted anything of the kind, would have been content with the general statement, that the earth would become uncomfortable to the inhabitants, and everything would freeze.

3. The imagination is of service to the orator by contributing to *the clear and forcible statement of truth*. It imparts definiteness of conception, and sharpness of outline to his own mental views, and what he thus sharply and definitely apprehends he is able the more clearly and forcibly to present to his hearers. Truths and arguments thus presented stand out in bold relief, and with stereoscopic distinctness on the field of vision, not mere flat surfaces, but with length, breadth, and thickness of their own, each casting a shadow.

This effect is produced sometimes by the suggestion of the most apt word or forcible expression. Much depends often on the choice of a single word. In a sermon on the Concealment of Sin, South speaks of the great and flourishing condition of some of the *topping* sinners of the world, and of the *remorseless rage* of conscience. Alluding to the fact that justice is represented as blind, he tells us that "therefore it finds out the sinner not with its eyes, but with its hands—not by seeing, but by striking."

Sometimes the effect is produced by a bold and startling metaphor, giving vividness and intensity to the expression, as a sudden flash in a dark night brings out the most distant objects, and lights up the whole horizon. Thus the same preacher speaks of the sinner's conscience as "hitting him in the teeth"; of the devil "spreading his wing" over the sinner, so as to keep him quiet in sin, and prevent his taking the alarm; of the covetous man as "greedier than the sea, and barrener than the shore"; of the perjured shop-keeper "who sits retailing away heaven and salvation for pence and half-pence, and seldom vends any commodity but he sells his soul with it, like brown paper, into the bargain."¹ The terrible earnestness and force of these expressions startle us. The sentences of such a writer are, like Ezekiel's vision, self-moving, and full of eyes round about. We pick our way among them cautiously, as past the cages of wild beasts in a menagerie, that glare at us as we go by, and seem ready to spring from behind their iron bars. The effect of a lively imagina-

¹ Sermon on Covetousness.

tion in giving intensity and vividness to the conceptions and utterances of the preacher is well illustrated in the description which Dr. Bushnell gives of the human passions, in the discourse on *The Dignity of Human Nature shown from its Ruins*: "Here, within the soul's gloomy chamber, the loosened passions rage and chafe, impatient of their law; here huddle on the wild and desultory thoughts; here the imagination crowds in shapes of glory and disgust, tokens both, and mockeries of its own creative power, no longer in the keeping of reason; here sits remorse, scowling and biting her chain; here creep out the fears, a meagre and pale multitude; here drives on the will in his chariot of war; here lie trampled the great aspirations, groaning in immortal thirst; here the blasted affections, weeping out their life in silent injury; all that you see without in the wars, revenges, and crazed religions of the world is faithfully represented in the appalling disorders of your own spirit."

How vividly is a simple truth presented under the following clear, and well-sustained metaphor. "They [the revolutionary movements of society] mark revolutions of the wheel of progress. In the dim and distant past the strokes of that wheel are heard only at vast intervals. Like the leap of Hesiod's horses of the gods, while making one bound, awful ages have past away. So of the car of social progress: the wheel strokes at first fall on the ear, solemn and slow, over the vast and twilight profound. But quickening with time, they grow more and more rapid as they approach, till at length they become undistinguishable, and sweep by us with the continuous rush of the steam-car, hurrying, storm-like, to its goal."¹

One hundred years ago, along the aisles and arches of the venerable abbey where are gathered the ashes of England's most illustrious dead, and where from the walls look down the busts and statues of her statesmen, her warriors, her poets, a clear, sharp voice rang out, in tones which must have fallen with startling effect upon the courtly audience,

¹ Address of Dr. Post of St. Louis on National Regeneration.

the following sentences: "And therefore for a man to run headlong into the bottomless pit, while the eye of a seeing conscience assures him that it is bottomless and open, and all return from it desperate and impossible; while his ruin stares him in the face, and the sword of vengeance points directly at his heart, still to press on to the embraces of his sin, is a problem unresolvable upon any other ground, but that sin infatuates before it destroys. For Judas to receive and swallow the sop when his master gave it him seasoned with those terrible words, 'It had been good for that man if he had never been born,' surely this argued a furious appetite and a strong stomach, that could thus catch at a morsel with the fire and brimstone all flaming about it, and, as it were, digest death itself, and make a meal upon perdition."¹

It is not, however, solely by the intensity and energy which it imparts to his conceptions that imagination contributes to the effectiveness of the orator. Quite as much is due, perhaps, to the purity of style and elevation of sentiment which it tends to produce. There is no one quality more favorable to clearness and purity of style, to that crystalline transparency that sets a thought in a frame-work of light, and makes it stand forth in its beauty like a star in the clear azure, than the faculty of the ideal. It has been said of Plato that his words must have grown into their places, so spontaneous do they seem, and so fitting. A recent English reviewer pronounces Milton's speech of Belial, in the debate of the fallen angels in Pandemonium, the greatest classical triumph, the highest achievement of the pure style, in English literature.

Of Shelley the same critic remarks that the rhythm of some modulating air seems to move his words into their places without an effort of the poet, and almost without his knowledge; while in the language of Wordsworth, on the other hand, we detect something of the taint of labor and of duty. As to elevation of sentiment, we all know how much it is in the power of a just and apt illustration to dignify, while it adorns, the subject treated, and thus to elevate the

¹ Sermon by South, on the Practice of Religion enforced by Reason.

mind of the hearer. A happy instance of this occurs in the oration of Webster on the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, when by a simile at once apt and elegant he likens the character of Washington to the grand and solid shaft that stood before him: "his public principles as firm as the earth on which it stands; his personal motives as pure as the serene heaven in which its summit is lost." When speaking of the motives that led to the peopling of New England, the same orator says of the May Flower: "Like the dove from the ark, she had put forth only to find rest." "The stars which guided her were the unobscured constellations of civil and religious liberty. Her deck was the altar of the living God. Fervent prayers on bended knees mingled morning and evening with the voices of the ocean and the sighing of the wind in her shrouds." With what beauty and dignity do these simple images invest the theme.

When South tells us that the words of Jeremiah in the lamentations are like the noise of a breaking heart, and when he compares an ungrateful heart that is unmoved by acts of kindness, to a rock which, beaten continuously by the waves, still throws them back into the bosom of the sea that sent them, but is not at all moved by any of them, we know not whether the force or the beauty of the comparison is the more to be admired.

It may perhaps be thought that, while the imagination contributes somewhat to the vividness and force of the more ornate and rhetorical portions of discourse, the more solid, and especially the argumentative, portions derive their power from a different source. Yet, even in close and solid reasoning, the faculty of the ideal is not, I suspect, wholly without its use. An illustration, or an apt and striking metaphor, that shall embody and project an abstract truth or a general principle into concrete reality, is often the most effective form of argument, as every orator well knows. How forcibly is the essential incompatibility of liberty with slavery, and the folly of seeking to combine them in one and the same system of social order, set forth by one of our own most gifted minds

in the following metaphor: "We have thought to incorporate in our social and civil order, with eternal rights, human and divine, a vast wrong, most audaciously and flagrantly violative of both. We have thought to do this—to bind up the torch and magazine together; and that with the self-consciousness of the nineteenth century burning and kindling upon it. The explosion has filled land and seas with our ruin. And now, in the work of reconstruction, shall we take up the blazing timbers and attempt to rebuild them into the national structure? If so, we but labor in the very fire—we challenge fate. We build conflagration, explosion, ruin, into our architecture. Slavery—the sighs from her vast prison-house of past ages following her like a tempest—now stands before us, the confessed enemy of our national life, reaching hands for readmittance across the gulf of public ruin, and over the graves of half a generation. Shall we clasp those hands again, reeking with the blood of a million of our countrymen? A mighty army of melancholy heroic shadows forbid."¹

Nothing contributes more to force of reasoning, especially in the detection of fallacies and exposing of absurdities and sophisms, than that sharpness of the intellectual powers which we call wit, and which again closely borders on the ideal. An example of this we have in that solid reasoner, John Howe, driest of learned divines, who gives us in his "Living Temple" a specimen of satirical writing, hardly equalled for keenness and unrelenting sarcasm by anything in the English language. Scarcely more pitiless is Voltaire, or Carlyle, those terrible satirists. I refer to his discussion of the atomic theory of the soul, "which is said to be composed of very well-polished, the smoothest and the roundest, atoms; and which are of the neatest fashion, and every way, you must suppose, the best conditioned the whole country could afford." "And now because it is not to be thought that all atoms are rational, for then the stump of a tree or a bundle of straw might serve to make a soul of, for aught we know,

¹ Dr. Post on National Regeneration.

as good as the best," the question is raised by what properties an atom shall be entitled to this privilege of being rational. Having ascertained that it is only those which are extremely minute that can be admitted to this honor, he proceeds to lament the misfortune of those which prove to be too large: "Here sure, the fate is very hard of those that come nearest the size, but only by a very little too much corpulency happen to be excluded as unworthy to be counted among the rational atoms." The question is then raised, "whether if an atom were perfectly round, and so very rational, but by an unexpected misadventure it comes to have some little corner somewhere clapped on, it be hereby quite spoiled of its rationality? And whether, again, one that comes somewhat near that figure, only it hath some little protuberances upon it, might not by a little filing, or the friendly rubs of other atoms, become rational?"

Supposing now, a sufficient number of these little atoms brought together to constitute a soul, our merciless logician is exercised to know the *modus operandi* of their proceeding — how, being so light and so round, they continue to hold together and keep their places in solemn council; how, being so much alike, the mathematical atoms can be distinguished from the moral; how, since the particles are so constantly changing, it happens that any man should even continue of the same opinion with himself for a quarter of an hour together; and finally, how the mere motion of these atoms constitutes thought. "They can frisk about and fly to and fro, and interfere among themselves, and hit, and jostle, and tumble over one another, and that will contribute a great deal."¹ O merciless reasoner! Is it not enough to vanquish the enemy and put him to route, without pursuing him all around the horizon in such a ridiculous plight? And, as if that were not enough, must you deliberately bind the slain foe to your chariot, and drag it, as Achilles did the dead body of Hector, nine times around the walls?

4. I have spoken of the imagination as aiding the orator

¹ Living Temple, part i. chap. iii.

by imparting clearness and definiteness of conception, and thus contributing to the clear and forcible statement of truth. But further than this, it is needed, if I mistake not, in order to *the right apprehension of many of the highest and noblest themes*. Whatever appeals to the imagination can be rightly comprehended only by the imagination, as what addresses the reason and judgment can be appreciated only by those faculties. The Bible has much that is addressed to the plain common sense of man, and it requires common sense to understand these things. It has much that is addressed to the reasoning power, and some degree of the power of reasoning is requisite for the comprehension of that. It has much also that is addressed to the imagination, and these things a mind destitute of imagination, or in which that power is but feebly developed, can never rightly apprehend. There are some things in revelation, as there are some things in nature, and some in art, which reveal themselves in their true meaning and power only to the *ideal* faculty. It takes a poet or an artist to catch the true significance and feel the full power of some things. Niagara appeals to the sense of the sublime and the beautiful in the soul. A mind in which that sense is wanting, or but imperfectly possessed, cannot understand the scene. The statistician comes with his facts and figures, the logician with his syllogisms, the mathematician with his diagrams and logarithms, the mere man of science, with his chemical analysis, and his fossil remains; and what do all these know or comprehend of the wonderful scene? As little, very likely, as the donkeys that carry them. If their heads are full of their own figures and syllogisms and fossils, if they are *mere* statisticians, mathematicians, logicians, chemists, and not poets as well, there is to them very little meaning or power in the wonderful vision. It reveals nothing. They have seen only a waterfall, have heard only a noise. There are lofty and glowing passages in the sacred scriptures, the full power and majesty of which are never perceived by any mind that is not itself highly endowed with the power of the ideal. There are themes of sacred oratory,

which no man can properly touch whose soul is not itself elevated, and in a sense inspired, by this superior power.

There are some minds that Nature has formed as dry as summer dust — unpoetic, pragmatic ; to whom a cowslip on the river's brim, a yellow cowslip is, — and nothing more. Devout minds, they may be, and eminently so ; learned even, for learning dwelleth oftentimes in dry, and desert places ; but hard and stiff and angular and horny, and of cuticle thicker than the rhinoceros ; with little perception of the beautiful in nature or art, and lightly esteeming the little they do perceive. Such minds have their sphere. In the stern conflicts of opinion, in the controversies of the time, in the elaboration and defence of dogmas, in the laboratories and dusky mines, where heavy blows are to be struck, they are in place and at home. But in the wide realm of the imagination, the serene firmament of the ideal, they are wholly out of place and utterly lost. To such minds no small part, not of nature merely, but of revelation, must of necessity be essentially a sealed book. They lack that fine perception and quick sense of the beautiful which would fit them to be true interpreters, whether in the realm of nature or of the spiritual. We comprehend only that to which there is something respondent in our own nature ; and the greater the correspondence the fuller the sympathy and appreciation. It takes a Goethe to understand a Goethe ; it takes a Caesar to do justice to a Caesar ; Napoleon III is by position, and career, and character, better fitted to write the life of Caesar, than Guizot, or Thiers. To view a mountain rightly you must be yourself among the mountains, and not on the plain. One gets the true idea of Mont Blanc, not from the Vale of Chamouni, but on the summit of the Tete Noir, or the Col De Baume. To comprehend the full majesty of the Jungfrau you must take your station on the Great Scheideck.

It has been felt as a serious defect in many of our biblical interpreters that they lack the ideal element. Profoundly versed in the minutiae of verbal and grammatical science, they seem profoundly insensible of anything higher, and fail

to comprehend the majesty and beauty of the loftiest strains of David, and Isaiah, and John. They interpret the song of Miriam at the Red Sea, the psalm of Moses, or that grandest of all dramatic poems, the Apocalypse of John, with as little feeling, as little appreciation of the real beauty and majesty of the work, as if they were expounding the genealogical tables commencing with the names Adam, Seth, Enos. I would by no means be understood as depreciating the science of biblical criticism. Precision and science are necessary in the commentator; but so, also, is some degree of soul. Napoleon placed the leading mathematician of France at the head of an important bureau in his government, but was disappointed in the result. He found him, as he expressed it, always dealing with the infinitely little. It can hardly be denied that the tendency of modern biblical criticism is to minuteness of detail, often to the loss of the spirit and breadth and power of the argument or the passage as a whole. We must have precision and philological acumen; but we must have something more. We must have grammatical science, but let it keep its place. When Isaiah sits down at the grand organ, and its notes come rolling through the centuries, we care not to pause in the midst of some triumphant anthem, to discuss the propriety of a *dagesh-forte*; and when the great artist unrolls the mysterious canvas of the future, and describes the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, there is something of more importance to be considered, just then, than the accent of an *iota*, or the necessity of a *paulo-post* future.

For this reason we should prefer the comments of a Goethe, a Milton, a Burns, on some passages of scripture, to those of a DeWette, or a Meyer; Sir Walter Scott might hit the sense, we doubt not, in some cases, where his namesake misses it; Tennyson, and Bryant, and Whittier might tell us some things that Robinson, Ellicott, and Alford have failed to see. It was the rare charm of that accomplished biblical scholar, the late Bela B. Edwards, that his soul was in sympathy with the beauty and majesty of the inspired word. He sat at the

feet of the old prophets and singers of Israel, as the young artist at the feet of Michael Angelo. Nor was this the least excellence of the noble Stuart, that prince of biblical scholars. To peruse with him the pages of inspiration was like wandering with Church among the Andes, or with Ruskin among the stones of Venice.

What has been said of the biblical interpreter may with perhaps equal truth be affirmed of the theologian. Something of the ideal faculty is needed, something of the creative power, something of the quick sense of the fit, the harmonious, the symmetrical, in order to adjust the truth in its right proportions, and grasp in thought the completeness and grandeur of the Christian system. For lack of this there is something defective about many of our systems of theology. They are one-sided, disjointed, inharmonious; or they are narrow and incomplete. They fasten upon some one truth in some one of its many aspects, and make it stand for the whole; as if a fly, alighting on some one of the ten thousand pinnacles of the Milan cathedral, should say: This then is the celebrated temple — this marble statue on which I stand, though I do not see that there is anything so very wonderful about it; it looks to me very much like the figure of a man. Poor fly, so it does; but if you *could* only see the *temple itself!*

Of all theologians Calvin is perhaps the least imaginative. Dwelling on the shores of that most beautiful of lakes, beneath the shadows of the Jura, and in full view of the snowy summit of Mont Blanc, neither the grandeur nor the beauty of nature seems to have touched any corresponding chord in his bosom. We find in his pages no allusions to external nature, no illustrations borrowed from the magnificent scenes around him. With Luther it is quite otherwise. He has a poet's heart in his bosom, and, with a poet's sensitive nature and quick eye for the beautiful, responds at once to whatever is fitted to awaken aesthetic emotion. The system of the former stands like the rocky cliffs of Sinai in the desert, grand in outline, and stable in its eternal foundations, but

frowning and sterile. That of the latter, while not less lofty and profound, is clothed with verdure and vocal with songs.

The complete theologian would be one who should unite in himself many and various qualities. He must be many men in one — logician, metaphysician, psychologist, linguist, student of law, student of natural science, student of history, student of men and manners ; these he must be, and, not least of all, there must be in him something of that ideal power which inspires the poet and the artist, and which elevates the mind to its highest and purest quality of action. Augustine, with that beautiful simplicity which characterizes his Confessions, makes penitent admission of the fact that in his youthful days he found more delight in the Aeneid of Virgil, than in the multiplication table ; a sin, if it be one, in which, I doubt not, many of us have participated. “ ‘ One and one, two ’ ; ‘ two and two, four ’ ; this was to me a hateful sing-song ; ‘ the wooden horse lined with armed men, ’ and ‘ the burning of Troy, and Creusa’s shade and sad similitude, ’ were the choice spectacle of my vanity.” But had it been otherwise with the boy, we should have missed something that now charms us in the man ; something of that mingled strength and grace, those bold and fervid utterances, those life-like delineations which command the listening ear of centuries, and which are due in no small degree to the existence and activity of the ideal faculty in that remarkable mind. He was not the worse, but the better theologian in his maturer years, for that poetic sensibility which led him, when a boy, to weep over the sad story of the Carthaginian queen.

I have mentioned certain respects in which imagination may be of service to the preacher. If I mistake not, these considerations derive additional force from *the character of the present time*. Our religion, as was said at the outset, deals largely with the invisible and intangible. It looks not chiefly at the things that are seen and temporal ; its grand realities lie beyond the horizon of the present ; it walks by faith, not by sight. It belongs to the spiritual, and not to

the material and the sensible. But the tendency of the times is strongly to the opposite of this; men believe in what they see and handle, and little else; ours is an intensely practical age. We belong to the indicative mode and present tense of things; we are struggling for liberty and just law, fighting for national existence, digging for gold. The problem with us is to live; the actual present fills our thoughts, and the material world is all the world we know or have any evidence of. In theory and in practice, in philosophy and science, and in the actual conduct of life, we are fast drifting to materialism.

The great question to be settled, the great battle to be fought by the Christian church and ministry for the next half-century, is not whether this or that particular dogma of our ancient faith is defensible, this or that particular statement of Moses, or some other sacred writer is reliable, but have we a revelation, and have we a God? Is there anything beyond Nature, and her eternal irrevocable laws? It is not the scepticism of Colenso, or even of Renan, that is to give us the most serious trouble, but the scepticism, more insidious and more formidable, because more in harmony with the tendencies of the age, the scepticism of Comtè, and Spencer, and Lewes, and Mill, in philosophy, and of men among the very chiefest in natural science. The battle is between the natural and the supernatural, the material and the spiritual.

He who, in an age so practical and material, is to present to men for their acceptance and belief truths so spiritual, a religion of faith and not of sense, the religion of the future, and the supernatural, has need to arm himself not only with the weapons of reason and a sound philosophy, but also to call to his aid that power by which he shall be able to seize the invisible and the spiritual, and make them stand forth as realities to the awakened perceptions of his hearers. A bold and fervid imagination is needful for this. Platitudes and abstractions will not do. The powers of the world to come must take form and shape; the hand-writing of im-

pending doom must come out upon the wall, visible to the dullest eye.

Here lay in no small degree the secret of Payson's peculiar power as a preacher; the definiteness and reality which his vivid imagination imparted to whatever truth he would present, and the strong light in which it enabled him to place the realities of the invisible and spiritual world before his hearers. The most effective pulpit orators of the present day are, almost without exception, men largely gifted with this power.

But why refer to other examples, when the discourses of him who spoke as never man spake afford the richest illustration of our theme? How full of imagination those discourses; how rich and varied the imagery; his very words are pictures; he speaks to the eye of the hearer; he utters the most profound truths, but, clothed in the forms of sensible representation, they become, like himself, incarnate. He teaches not so much by argument as by metaphor and illustration. His sermons are parables; and a parable is a little poem. If called upon to specify the one distinctive feature of our Saviour's discourses, I should name this—the predominance of the ideal element. When he would inculcate the lesson of reliance on Divine Providence, he reminds us of the lilies which toil not, neither do they spin; and of the sparrows that alight not without our Heavenly Father's notice. When he would teach us of how little moment are the distinctions of earthly rank and condition, he shows us the rich man in his palace, and the beggar lying at the gate; then presently that beggar in Abraham's bosom, and that rich man calling in vain for a drop of water to cool his tongue. When he would teach us to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, he builds a house upon the sand, and the rains descend, the winds blow, and the floods beat upon that house, and it falls, and great is the fall of it. In his vivid presentation the future suffering of the ungodly takes shape and realization under the figure of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. To express the lesson of

unreserved consecration he does not say, my disciples must make my service paramount to all other considerations, but he that cometh after me, and *hateth* not father and mother and sister and brother, yea, and his own life also, cannot be my disciple. So vivid and intense become even the most abstract and universal truths when brought under the burning glass of his fervid imagination. It toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.

He who in this most pragmatic, unbelieving age, would seize the truths of the invisible and spiritual world, and make them stand forth as realities to the apprehension of men, has need in no small degree of this same faculty which characterizes so remarkably the discourses of the Great Teacher, and which imparts to them at once so much of beauty and of power.

What was said of the theologian is even more true of the preacher, who is the theologian in the pulpit; he has need to be many men in one. He has occasion for qualities and powers the most diverse; he must discard no one of the faculties which God and nature have given him; he needs them all. Least of all, perhaps, can he afford to dispense with that of which I have been speaking. He must draw his illustrations from all surrounding objects, and each passing event must be made tributary to his purpose. From nature, from art, from science, from the living world as it surges around him, from the heavens above, and from the earth beneath, and from the waters under the earth, must he seize and press into his service whatever can illustrate, whatever can enforce or adorn. As the fabled Orpheus, by the sweet touches of his lyre, drew the wild beasts of the forest, and even inanimate objects, around him at his pleasure, so must the christian orator, by the power of his imagination, be able to command the presence and the service of things animate and inanimate, visible and invisible, in the onward march and progress of his thought. Not rocks and trees and wild beasts alone, but angelic and spiritual forms must come at his call, — beings that “walk the earth unseen, both when we awake

and when we sleep." As the prophet of Israel touched the eyes of his servant, and showed him the mountains round about him filled with angelic warriors and chariots of fire, so must he who speaks for God to this unbelieving world be able to draw aside at times the thin veil that hides the invisible, and show his astonished hearers the dread realities that lie so near to every one of us. As in the contest of Greek and Trojan story, over the embattled hosts upon the plain, the gods themselves were fighting for and against the mortal combatants below, so must the dull worshipper of mammon and of sense, as he comes to the house of God, be made to see that the very air above him and around him is full of armed warriors in fierce contest over a prostrate soul, — and that soul *his own!*

ARTICLE V.

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF JERUSALEM.

BY REV. SAMUEL WOLCOTT, D.D., CLEVELAND, OHIO.

In a former Article (Vol. xxiii. pp. 684–695) we reviewed the theory of the Topography of Jerusalem propounded by James Fergusson, F.R.S., an eminent British architect, and published in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, and gave some reasons for dissenting from it. After the Article had been printed, we met for the first time with a pamphlet of seventy pages, published by Mr. Fergusson subsequent to his Article in the Dictionary, entitled, "Notes on the Site of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, in answer to the Edinburgh Review." In our previous Article, written with a desire to compress the argument, in reply to the points brought forward in the Dictionary, into a brief compass, with as little of a controversial aspect as possible, we find that we passed over some points which did not seem to us essential to a