

ARTICLE VII.

NATURAL BASIS OF OUR SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE.

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VI.—THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

FROM circumstances in which the readers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* have no interest, the writer of these Essays cannot extend them so far as the nature of the subject may seem to demand. He is aware that many departments of the general subject remain to be developed, including such wide and suggestive topics as agriculture, architecture, domestic economy, food, garments, personal ornaments, amusements, occupations, trades, navigation, commerce, education, superstitions, diseases and medicines, death, funerals, and mourning, crimes and modes of punishment, miscellaneous manners and customs, and other things, almost innumerable, which have contributed more or less to the wealth of our religious language, but which do not readily group themselves around any common centre. Many of these considerations must be relegated to some future period.

The present Number will be devoted to certain topics which show that as the time drew nigh when the religion of the Bible ceased to be exclusively, or even mainly, confined to the Hebrews, the verbal vehicle — the names, metaphors, figures, and symbols — also ceased to be exclusively Palestinian. When, in the fulness of time, Christ came, and introduced that dispensation which contemplates all lands and is to include all people, these names, symbols, and similitudes became likewise universal, and many of them even Western and European. In a word, the natural basis for this part of our spiritual language must be sought for outside the Holy Land. To establish and illustrate this important fact, we select our

first example from the last chapter of the Old Testament. This selection will also show that some of these terms admit of indefinite expansion. So the amount of revelation — if the expression be allowable — which they contain will vary according to the knowledge and antecedent education of the recipients. This is pre-eminently true with regard to the sayings and parables of our Lord; but even such familiar words as Creator, Redeemer, King, Shepherd, and many others, will impart more or less of important truth in proportion to the previous culture of those who employ them. No better example of this principle can be selected than the prophetic title given to the promised Saviour by Malachi: “Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Mal. iv. 2). The attributes and offices of the material sun, obvious to all mankind, and which probably suggested the application of this name to the promised Redeemer, are, light-giver, ruler of the day, and source of genial warmth and universal life. Now, although these attributes and offices of the sun are in no way confined to Palestine, but common to all lands, yet our specific line of argument seems to demand that we find something in this country, or in the conditions and customs of the Hebrew people, which enhanced, in their estimation, the preciousness of light — light in the habitation, in the city, and in the road; and this, we believe, can be shown without difficulty by the following considerations: First, as to light in the habitation. The ancient houses in this country were destitute of windows, — those of the poor absolutely so, — and thus they continue to be until the present hour. If there were any apertures, besides the door, for the admission of air and light, they were very small; and, as there was no glass in existence, or at least none available for windows, these apertures were closed either with stones, boards, or other opaque materials. Consequently, their rooms were gloomy and dark. This condition of things may be illustrated by the parable of the woman that had lost one of her ten pieces of silver. She *lighted a candle*, and swept the house to find it.

The house was dark, and a lighted candle was necessary, even though the search may have been made in the daytime. And so it would be still in most peasant houses. To be without a light-giver of some sort—lamp or candle—is now felt to be a great hardship, even by the very poor. They have a superstitious dread of passing the night in utter darkness. It is a singular fact, also, that even the Arabs in the open desert are utterly unwilling to encamp where they cannot procure brushwood with which to kindle a light. Nothing but imminent danger of attracting the notice of enemies will induce them to pass a night in darkness.

Again, a lamp or lantern was very necessary in passing through the narrow, crooked, and vaulted streets in the cities and towns; and the same is true now. So, also, along the narrow, perplexed, and blind paths,—the only roads in primitive times,—persons were in great need of some kind of light to enable them to thread their way in safety, where slippery rocks overhang yawning chasms, into which one false step might plunge them to inevitable destruction. As is well known, much of the travelling in hot countries is done at night, and, although the days are bright enough, the nights are often intensely dark. We have ourselves been suddenly enveloped in dense fog when journeying by night over the broken hill-country of Judea. To advance was impossible. One could not see the ears of his own horse; and to proceed under such circumstances is sheer madness. We had to lie down on a smooth rock, and watch for the morning—a bit of experience which imparted a deeper meaning to the complaint of the Psalmist: “My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning,—I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (Ps. cxxx. 6).

These and other circumstances which might be mentioned rendered light precious, and darkness both dangerous and depressing. The light of the sun was especially delightful. His coming forth was welcomed by all the good and honest, and only the thief and the robber and the savage beast shunned the day. At early dawn the whole world wakes

up; the birds sing; the flocks are led out to feed upon the mountains; children gather in groups for play and frolic; and man goes forth to his labor, until eventide brings all home again to refuge and repose.

Now, to borrow imagery and figure and illustration of moral and religious matters from such physical phenomena is so natural that it has been done, to some extent, in all ages, and even by the most untutored savagés. The analogical process by which the spiritual is evolved from the material is often performed unconsciously. For example, it requires a distinct act of recollection ere we are aware of the fact that knowledge is light only in a figurative sense, and that ignorance is not actual darkness. An individual is seen to grope his way along a blind path in the night by the aid of a lamp — a very common, yet complex operation; but the mind readily compares this physical performance to man's moral conduct. His course of life is his path. To walk in it wisely and safely, knowledge, instruction, truth, are needed. This is his moral lamp, without which he gets bewildered, lost, ruined. Hence the propriety and beauty of such expressions as, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix. 105); "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (Ps. cxix. 130).

The consequences of walking in moral darkness are so tremendous that no language can overstate the value of true spiritual light and guidance. And as all men are, in this matter, by nature in equal darkness, that which reveals the future life and all its momentous concomitants and relations is absolutely the most precious boon that can be bestowed upon the human race. In this consists the transcendent value of the word of God. It is *the* lamp of life — man's only sure guide to heaven. Hence, too, the propriety of calling our blessed Lord the Sun of Righteousness. When on earth he himself unhesitatingly claimed to be the Light of the world, and repeatedly declared that those only who received him were children of light, while all others abode in darkness.

With these preliminary remarks on the general subject,

let us turn to the special consideration of this magnificent title, Sun of Righteousness; and we shall find that the *sum of divine revelation* embraced in, or which may fairly be deduced from it, enlarges and expands indefinitely, just in proportion to the extent and accuracy of the information which is possessed by those who use it. Abstractly and absolutely the most imposing and impressive sight in this world is the *rising sun*. Were we not familiar with it from earliest infancy, were it possible to behold it for the first time in mature life, it would appall the bravest heart, or overwhelm with wonder, awe, and terror. Essentially this is true in all lands and climates; but there are situations and circumstances in this country which add immensely to the magnificence of the event, — something that redeems from extravagance even such singular descriptions as that in the nineteenth Psalm. While driven about over the vast plain of Sharon by the rebellion of the Tullaheen against Mohammed Ali, some forty years ago, the writer had frequent opportunity to watch the mighty irresistible on-coming of the “growing day.” From the faintest possible line of silvery light, trembling in uncertainty along the mountain-tops of Judea, the process rushed on apace, changing momentarily from glory to glory, until the whole hemisphere was aglow with blended hues, — grey, peach-blossom, rosy red, passing rapidly into pure pearly white, — shimmering, palpitating and flashing in fussy earnestness, until, at length, the golden doors of the Orient flew open wide, and up blazed the king of day from his tabernacle behind the eastern hills, like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a strong man rejoicing to run a race. Instantly his lordly presence was felt and acknowledged by all the world; nay, even before he came forth from his tabernacle there had been a busy, bustling half-hour of preparation to receive and welcome him. If disposed to smile or doubt, go stand alone, as we have stood, at early dawn on Sharon’s flowery plain, and watch the manifest and manifold worship of nature towards the coming king of day.

“Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charms of earliest birds.”

It is enough almost to make one a Parsee to witness and to hear it all at such a time, in such a place. A thousand larks, high up among the listening stars, salute the very first rays of that flush along the dappled east. All nature hears their call, shakes off dull sleep, and hastens to join the general welcome :

“The lowing herd, the sheepfold’s simple bell,
The pipe of early shepherd, dim descried,
In the lone valley echoing far and wide;
The hum of bees, the linnet’s lay of love,
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.”

Even the vegetable world shares the general joy. No sooner does the sun appear than the flowers bend forward in mute reverence, turn round smiling to his ardent gaze, throw open their jeweled cups, and cast abroad their sweetest perfumes. This silent adoration of ten thousand times ten thousand flowers is most beautiful and impressive.

All this is poetical enough, you say, but what spiritual significance it has may not be so obvious. You do not see it! Why, it shows that an undevout man is the only atheist in the universe; and it may well start the inquiry, whether or not we ourselves meet the Sun of Righteousness when he arises, with any analogous welcome; or, whether, like midnight robbers and beasts of prey, we fear and shun his light. Does it annoy us, interfere with our business, or chosen pleasures? Does it make unpleasant revelations, leading us to act the very reverse of mute nature, to close up the heart, flee his presence, and, like Adam after the fall, seek concealment among the trees of the garden? But, besides these very practical inquiries, we may learn from this devout behavior of nature, this morning psalm of universal adoration and praise, to regard the world and all its furnishing and fitting up as one vast temple, every part of which has been glorified by the presence of the Lord, whose proclamation, by the last of the prophets, runs thus: “From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every

place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering" (Mal. i. 11). Moreover, the contemplation of these things tunes one's own harp to join the general anthem of thanksgiving. A hundred times while wandering through the solemn aisles of this august temple, especially about Hermon and goodly Lebanon, have we heard from voices manifold the welcome summons: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker; . . . let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God; and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land" (Ps. xcv. 2-6). And at such times, and in such society, it is the most natural thing in the world to call upon the "mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl; kings, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens, old men and children, to praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven" (Ps. cxlviii. 9-13). Equally beautiful and devout are the thoughts in the sixty-fifth Psalm: "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing" (Ps. lxxv. 8-13). I pity the soul that cannot understand this song; or understanding, cannot sing and shout with the little hills, the flock-clothed pastures, and the corn-covered valleys. Where, in the entire range of pastoral poetry, can

you find such an exquisite picture of natural scenery and rural happiness? But we must again observe that the originals are eminently Palestinian. The poet-painter sat before the living, singing, shouting model, and did little more than copy from what the Great Master's hand had perfected from the "beginning." We never look upon these master-pieces of Nature's workmanship without joining in the exhortation of the Psalmist: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord" (Ps. xcvi. 11, 12).

But, to resume the consideration of this glorious name, Sun of Righteousness. Science has furnished the modern worshipper with a splendid addition to its manifold significance as understood by ancient prophet and poet. So long as the geocentric theory was taught and believed, this little globe of ours was supposed to be the centre of the universe, and the sun, moon, and even the distant stars, were thought to be only so many lamps hung out in heaven, or whirled round the earth, for man's accommodation. But the heliocentric theory has changed all this, has magnified the sun almost beyond conception, and enthroned him in the centre of a magnificent planetary system, throughout which he not only dispenses light and heat, life and beauty, but over which he presides as lord and lawgiver. He assigns to all their stations, marks out their orbits, and guides and controls their complex revolutions. There is no confusion, no jostling one against another, no discord; but all move round him in heavenly harmony,

"Forever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine."

Now, he must be very blind who does not see in this a glorious analogy, illustrating the spiritual position and offices of the Sun of Righteousness in the "kingdom of heaven." In this divine domain he is the controlling, guiding, governing centre. He appoints the station of every member of the

great family, marks out their orbits, and upholds them in all their endless, diversified movements and relations. He is the beginning, middle, and end, the Alpha and Omega in the Christian world. They are no Christians, after the scriptural model, to whom this Sun of Righteousness does not sustain these complex and precious relations.

But we must not forget that on this theme all human language fails, all figures fall infinitely below the incomparable Being to be described. The sun, immeasurably the largest, most glorious, and most powerful object in our system, is but his faint shadow. Though his bright beams flash athwart the universe, though his going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, yet his glowing fires are kindled by the breath of this Sun of Righteousness whereof we speak. Moreover, vast and bright and potent as is our sun, yet shall his tabernacle be taken down, his light extinguished, his warm beams quenched. The heavens are the work of thy hands, Sun of Righteousness. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure,—yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; like a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end; and long before the tabernacle shall be struck and the old vesture changed we shall have ceased to sustain any relation to them. The light and heat and attraction of the sun will soon be nothing to us; our own frail tabernacles will ere long fall at the touch of death's icy fingers. But this will terminate none of the Christian's relations to and with the Sun of Righteousness. These are unchangeable and eternal. Death itself is but a servant sent to loose the cords that bind the believer to earth, that the emancipated spirit, drawn by mighty attraction, may rise up to the all-glorious centre of the soul and the mansions of the blest. Happy they who shall thus be caught up from earth to heaven—to the city of our God, where there is no night; and they need no more candle, neither light of the sun; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. The Sun of Righteousness never sets upon the New Jerusalem.

Beautiful and mysterious and multitudinous are the influences and operations of the sun. He sends his windy messengers for the humid vapors of the ocean, and gently distils them over valley and plain, hill-top and high mountain, causing grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, and springs with water-brooks to run among the hills and give drink to every beast of the field. He not only matures our golden harvests, loads our orchards with fruits and our vineyards with rich clusters; but he also adorns man's dwelling-place with all that is pleasant to the eye, grateful to the smell, or sweet to the taste. He gives to the rose its blush, and to the lily its purity, paints "the yellow cowslip and pale primrose," and robes all nature in refreshing green. Nothing can flourish cut off from communion with the blessed sun. In dark caves, or even in thick shades, all are of feeble growth and sickly hue. They must have sun shine, and bask in his warm beams. These conditions are not only necessary for the perfection of their beauty, but for their very existence. Now, there is another garden, about which the wise king sang songs and the Great Teacher spoke parables. Properly planted and cultivated, it yields flowers and fruits as superior to this world's brightest and best as heaven is to earth. But no fragrant flowers will bloom, no precious fruits ripen, here, without the vivifying rays of the Sun of Righteousness. You may attempt to supply their place by a thousand torches of your own kindling, but in vain. Nor will artificial heat quicken them into life, or perfect their growth. If the Sun of Righteousness does not shine upon them, the plants will languish, the flowers be mere sickly, scentless imitations, and the fruits will drop off like untimely figs. Let the Christian look well to his own garden. "Let him get up early to the vineyards, and see if the vine flourish, the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth" (Song of Sol. vii. 12). If not,—if there be neither blossoms of promise nor ripening fruits,—be assured it is because he has shut out from his plants the life-giving rays of this blessed Sun. Nor is improvement

possible until he restore that without which they cannot live. In this spiritual garden the fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and such virtues neither flourish in the heart nor ripen in the outward life without constant communion with this Sun of Righteousness.

Go, take your stand, where the writer has often stood, on some lofty terrace of Lebanon, and watch the gathering tempest beneath your feet. The sight is grand and awful. Dark clouds from the sea drive, in wild uproar, against the ragged cliffs; winds rage; the sea roars; lightnings flash; and mighty thunders shake the deep foundations of the everlasting hills. But where you stand all is bright and tranquil, rejoicing in the warm beams of a cloudless sky. No alteration had passed upon the sun. The change is altogether in the lowlands of earth. Thus it is in the spiritual world. The Sun of Righteousness remains yesterday and to-day and forever the same, without shadow of turning. The change, if to us there be any, occurs only in the moral atmosphere in which we live and have our being. We become enveloped in the fogs which gather over the sickly marshes of selfishness and sin. There is a height these earth-born vapors never cloud, these moral miasms never invade. We must go up higher would we bask in cloudless sunshine. But mistake not the sunny summits we speak of for the frigid heights of ambition. We once toiled up to the topmost pinnacle of Hermon, and, though the southern base was glowing beneath the blaze of a midsummer sun, the northern side was buried deep under the cold snows of winter. The sky was clear, the sun bright, the day intensely hot; but the temperature of that snow was not raised, not by the hundredth part of a degree. You cannot warm snow. Syria's burning sun could not even mitigate its frigid temper. So neither can the Sun of Righteousness warm frosty ambition into spiritual life. It must be dissolved, melted, and driven away from the heart, or man's moral winter will never give way to balmy spring. Alas, how many snowy

nooks and frozen corners there are in every Christian's heart ! And how many there be who show nothing but retiring surfaces and northern declivities, deep buried beneath the ever-accumulating snows of indifference, infidelity, and spiritual death.

Some one may suggest that an instructive analogy might be found in the death of winter and the resurrection of the vegetable creation to new life at the return of spring. But this thought comes from another country and a different climate. It would scarcely have occurred to a poet born and bred in this sunny land of Palestine. Nevertheless, it is legitimate, and very suggestive, and is one of those conditions which render this divine title, Sun of Righteousness, the common property of the entire human family. When in her annual revolution the earth turns her broad bosom towards the north, the fields put on sackcloth, and mourn ; the flowers disappear ; the leaves, sere and dead, fall to the ground ; the atmosphere becomes cramped with cold ; wind rages against wind, and tempest wars with tempest ; long night comes on, and rigid frost binds all things fast in its icy fetters. Nor is there any ransom from this sad state, until earth again returns towards her lord — bright king of day. Then surly winter retires towards the unblest pole, while southern gales dissolve the snow, and gently fan the face of youthful spring. Now, there is a winter of the soul, when the heart grows cold, and darkness and gloom enshroud the moral horizon. How has such a melancholy winter come over the soul ? Simply by withdrawing from the Sun of Righteousness. While basking in his love, the heart cannot grow cold, nor can faith and hope fail. If, therefore, doubts perplex, fears assail, Satan tempt, the world ensnare, and evil passions seduce, the cause is in ourselves, not in Him. He remains unchangeably the same glorious source of light and life and love.

Again, should our planet ever apostatize from her allegiance to the king of day, and start rebellious from her orbit to wander beyond the pale of that solar family to which she

belongs, what would be the result? Not easy to say certainly. The effect of such an hypothetical adventure would depend very much upon the direction taken by the erratic apostate. It might bring about some such catastrophe as that *ice period* about which geologists speculate so profoundly. The temperature might be so cooled down that all the moisture in the circumambient atmosphere would be congealed, and the entire globe wrapped in a winding-sheet of more than polar ice. Of course, every animal that roamed the forest, every bird that sailed the blue sky, every fish that sported in the deep, would perish. Nothing could survive the invasion of such a winter. Every fountain, too, would be shut and sealed up; nor would there be one babbling brook on all the earth, to give by its motion and its murmur even this sad manifestation of life. It would be the reign of absolute death. Now, should such a catastrophe befall our planet there could be no redemption but by returning to her rightful lord in her proper orbit. The sun alone could dissolve these icy fetters and emancipate the captive earth. He only could unchain the fast-bound brooks and send them laughing down to refresh the joyful fields; for he it is that clothes meadow and plain and swelling hills with painted verdure, wakes up the groves with hymn of birds and hum of bees, and bids air, earth, and old ocean teem with life.

Imagination can easily discover a startling analogy between this frightful fancy of the geologist and man's moral catastrophe. Our whole race has thus apostatized from the Sun of Righteousness, and not one solitary soul has escaped the ruin of this mad revolt; nor can there be redemption for any except by return to this Sun of Righteousness that has risen over our world with healing in his wings.

It is time to bring these manifold analogies to a close; and we notice but one more. The name was originally suggested, we suppose, by the fact that the sun is the great dispenser of light and heat to the earth. But light has another side, so to speak, and one which aptly illustrates an element in the character of the Sun of Righteousness. The natural

sun is a revealer of things that seek concealment in the dark. How many enemies, dangers, and deformities lie hidden beneath the veil of night! What deeds of darkness are then enacted unseen! To beasts of prey and savage man the rising sun is full of terror and dismay. Light is no comfort to them. Now such, in some sort, is the state of this apostate world. Man dwells in profound darkness. Beneath this moral midnight a thousand hideous evils lurk and work in secret. Pride swells, and anger burns, and malice plots, and deceit betrays, and hypocrisy makes up her double face, oppression maddens, avarice screws down her vise, and murder dyes her red hands in blood, and every ugly and monstrous sin and crime are perpetrated in the dark. But let the piercing rays of the Sun of Righteousness flash athwart this darkness, and the whole mass of deformity is instantly discovered. What a revelation is this! The heart, thought to be good and said to be pure, is seen to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The tongue, full of honeyed accents and courtly phrases, is a world of iniquity, which setteth on fire the course of nature and is itself set on fire of hell. Much of religion is now seen to be smooth hypocrisy, making long prayers to devour widows' houses. Fasting, clad in sackcloth, puts on her sad countenance to be seen; and charity, giving alms with sound of trumpet, turns out to be nothing but hateful selfishness. Now, sin and moral corruption are not created by the Sun of Righteousness any more than the natural sun perpetrates the enormities which his rising reveals. The light merely discovers what already existed; and, moreover, the revelation by this Sun of Righteousness is not made with the purpose of scattering abroad terror and despair. On the contrary, these evil things are unveiled that they may be hated and forsaken. Dangers and spiritual enemies are pointed out that we may be on guard against them. The way of escape is marked out along with the tremendous necessity of flight. The same light that shows man the slippery places on which he stands, and the gulf beneath them, illumines also the path

of safety. Or, to change the figure, this Sun that reveals man's mortal disease, spreads over him, at the same time, those wings beneath which are all the healing medicines he needs.

Let us dwell for a little on this attribute of wings. It may be said that the idea of ascribing wings to the sun is not original with the prophet; and also, that it might occur to any vivid imagination. Wings are a natural symbol of celerity, with the farther attribute of soaring, or sailing through the air, self poised, and resting on nothing apparent to the eye. Thus the sun comes forth from his chamber in the east. Up he soars with amazing velocity, above the hills, above the mountains, in triumphant majesty and power. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it. Wings were the only known apparatus by which such flight through empty space could be made, and it was natural to accommodate the sun with them. Grecian mythology added horses and chariots and charioteer, with other absurd fables,—details which suggest only ludicrous comparisons, wholly unworthy of the Supreme Being. But remembering the age in which Malachi lived, we may be quite certain that he was familiar with the winged globes with which the architects of Egypt and Assyria adorned the entrances to their cities, temples, tombs, and other monuments. We not only see them all along the Nile, and amongst the marvels of Nineveh, on the banks of the Tigris, but also on the sculptured rocks of Dog river, and on many of the ruins of ancient temples and public edifices in various parts of Palestine and Syria. And it is worthy of notice that not until after the Hebrew writers became acquainted with the Assyrian and Babylonian architecture, where wings were attached to almost everything, — to bulls, and imaginary creatures in endless number and variety, — did they employ these winged conceptions and terms in their writings. But from Ezekiel's visions to the gorgeous costume of the Apocalypse we can trace the influence of this familiarity with these architectural ornamentations on the style of the Hebrew

prophets and poets, and from them our scriptural language has been largely enriched. This was in entire accord with all other parts of the Bible. No one acquainted with Egypt, for example, can fail to discover that Moses was not only learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but that he drew largely upon that learning in the fulfilment of his great mission. The peculiar education which a prophet received from the circumstances under which he was born and bred in no way affects the reality of his inspiration. So far as this is concerned, it matters not whether he write in Hebrew, Chaldee, or Greek; whether he derived the drapery and costume in which he clothed his message from the city or the country, from Egypt or Palestine or Assyria; and therefore, there is nothing derogatory to the prophetic status of Ezekiel, Daniel, or John in the fact that they drew much of their figures and metaphors from Babylon, Nineveh, and the Graeco-Persian cities of Asia Minor. Malachi may have learned to assign wings to the Sun of Righteousness from the same source. The architectural figure was before his eyes; he did nothing but spiritualize it.

The farther idea of ascribing medical virtues to these wings is, I believe, entirely original with Malachi; and there is something in it very beautiful and consolatory. It reminds us that man is not only ignorant and wants light, but also diseased and requires to be healed. And, alas! it needs no argument to prove that the whole world, from end to end, is one vast moral hospital, crowded with sin-smitten patients, in every conceivable stage of the dismal plague. And this ascription of medical virtues to the wings of the Sun of Righteousness brings forward another of his most precious attributes. He is the Healer of the nations; the great Physician. In his almighty wings are heavenly medicines adapted to every disease, infallible remedies for even the most desperate. These mighty wings overshadow the whole world, and hence the significance and beauty of entrusting to them the healing medicines for the race. Hovering over all, a refuge and shield to all, they can gently distil into

every sick and dying heart the balm that comforts and restores to health; that raises even the dead to a new, a higher, and an eternal life. In the poetic parts of the Bible especially, wings are frequently mentioned, and with various moral and spiritual significations. In the Psalms they are represented as a covert, or place of protection. This figurative idea was probably suggested by the conduct of the hen in gathering her brood beneath her wings at the approach of danger. This was certainly the action which lies at the basis of that pathetic lament of our Saviour over Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. xxiii. 37). No other example in nature is more striking and suggestive; and though, strange to say, there is no other evidence that our barn-door fowl was common in the early ages of the Hebrew nation, yet the frequency of this comparison, or metaphor, in the Psalms and elsewhere, renders it probable that, from the time of Ruth at least, both the act and the actor were familiar sights in Palestine. Boaz says, quite naturally, to Ruth: "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, *under whose wings thou art come to trust.*" It is true that reference may be here intended to the wings of the cherubim that overshadowed the mercy-seat; and the figure, thus explained, is both appropriate and beautiful; but I am inclined to believe that the thought was derived from the act of the mother hen, which Ruth could fully understand and appreciate. At any rate, other fowls and birds, which we know were common enough in Palestine, manifested similar care and affection for their young. The fair Moabitess must have often seen the sparrow and the swallow, the lark and the dove, thus warming, comforting, sheltering, their unfledged families with parental love. This is clearly the point in the promise made to him who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, under the *shadow* of the Almighty: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust" (Ps. xci. 1, 4).

There is also another figurative application of wings which is eminently poetical. In the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, David says, in reference to the omnipresence of Jehovah: "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (9, 10). This personification of the morning, and endowing it with *wings* is very beautiful, and is perfectly original with the sweet singer of Israel. Moreover, its connection *with the sea* indicates its Palestinian origin. David had doubtless often watched the glorious orb of day blaze up above the eastern mountains with a mighty bound, and *wing* his burning beams with lightning speed over the blue Mediterranean westward, far westward, into that mysterious domain where endless night was supposed to reign supreme. To flee to the uttermost parts of this shoreless sea appeared to the Oriental apprehension the most secure hiding-place in the world. Jonah seems to have entertained the foolish idea that he could there escape from the presence even of the Lord himself, and actually made the attempt with the wings, not of the morning, but of a Phœnician ship. But the inspired Psalmist well knew that even in the utmost parts of this unexplored region the hand of the Lord would find and hold him prisoner.

Wings of the morning! Nothing on this subject, within the entire range of poetic imagery, sacred or profane, is more beautiful. Poets of every age and century, from Homer to Longfellow, have exhausted the powers of imagination, and the tricks of their art, to glorify the early morning. They have personified her in many a fanciful character, and baptized her with many a pretty name. They sing of her golden gates, her dewy couch, her rosy fingers, her smiling face, her crimson blush, her sparkling eyes, her fragrant breath, her dazzling robes, with endless epithets and attributes besides; but not one of them approaches, in sublime simplicity, this metaphor of the Psalmist, in its connection with the mighty thought of the poet: "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of

the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (cxxxix. 9, 10).

The phenomena of storms in almost every land will suggest the expression "wings of the wind"; but there are certain circumstances and features in this border-land between southern and eastern deserts, and the rugged mountains and deep defiles of Judea, which impart great additional power to such poetical conceptions and combinations as the following: "He bowed the heavens, also, and came down, and darkness was under his feet; and he rode upon a cherub, and did fly, — yea, he did fly on the wings of the wind" (Ps. xviii. 10). There is something so sudden and terrific in the rush and roar of these tempests that the spirit, appalled, cowers before them as though the day of doom had come, Breaking forth from his pavilion of dark waters and thick clouds of the sky, the storm-spirit flies abroad, careering in frenzied exaltation and huge delight at the mighty uproar. But we cannot farther pursue this theme, rich and suggestive as it is. Prolonged, however, as has been the discussion, and wide its range, it has not led us away from the chief purpose of these Essays — that of illustrating the natural basis of our rich spiritual nomenclature.