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I.

THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM.

THE Greek term βασιλεία signifies *dominion, rule, reign*, the exercise of kingly power. It signifies also a *kingdom, dominion, realm*, a people and country under kingly rule. The Greek word answers to the Latin *regnum*, which is also equally adapted to express the English terms, *reign* and *kingdom*. The first relates to the time or duration of the sovereignty; the second, to the place or country over which it extends. Though it sometimes signifies, in the Gospels, *reign*, yet it is always translated *kingdom*.

Three forms of expression are employed in the New Testament to designate the reign and spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. These forms of expression are ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ χριστοῦ. All these forms of expression are considered to be synonymous. They all signify the kingdom of the Messiah.

The idea of the kingdom of God has its origin in the Old Testament, in which the coming of the Messiah and His triumphs are foretold. We cannot, therefore, adequately understand its import, unless we first trace its historical development in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The book of Genesis begins with the announcement that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (i. 1). It states that He made man in His image, and gave him dominion over all the earth (v. 26); and Abram calls God "the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (xiv. 22). God, by the act of creation, is possessor of all things and universal sovereign. Moses in his sublime song (Ex. xv. 18), says, "the Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

II.

THE HOMILETICAL VALUE OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY.*

THE criticisms which immediately followed the publication of the several volumes of Wordsworth's poems, read to-day, aid in confirming the cheerful faith, that criticism is impotent to destroy, or even seriously to impair, the influence of genius. It is difficult to believe that a man as great as Lord Jeffrey, characterized the "Excursion" as "a tissue of moral and devotional ravings," and added, "it is often difficult for the most skilful and attentive student to obtain a glimpse of the author's meaning, and altogether impossible for the ordinary reader to conjecture what he is about."† Lord Byron cordially hated Lord Jeffrey. They were at war with each other on many subjects. They were bitterly at war on the subject of poetry. But Byron's view of Wordsworth did not differ materially from that of Jeffrey. Two years after Jeffrey had published his criticism of the "Excursion" in the *Edinburgh Review*, Byron published a new edition of the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"; in which the author of the "Ode on Immortality" is described, as one

"Who, both by precept and example, shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose."

These quotations accurately express, as they aided largely to form, the popular opinion of Wordsworth at that time. How greatly this opinion changed, even before his death, may be inferred from a description of the scene at Oxford, when Wordsworth came forward to receive his honorary degree. "Scarcely had his name been pro-

* Poems of Wordsworth chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold. London: Macmillan & Co. 1879.

The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, D.C.L., Poet Laureate, etc. 7 vols. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1854.

"Biographia Literaria; or, Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions." By Samuel Taylor Coleridge. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1871.

† "Modern British Essayists," Francis Jeffrey, p. 459. D. Appleton & Co.

nounced than from three thousand voices at once, there broke forth a burst of applause, echoed and taken up again and again when it seemed about to die away, and that thrice repeated."* This was in 1839. From this date until his death, his poems maintained their popularity. But from his death onward their popularity waned. "I remember," Mr. Arnold writes in the preface of his "Selection of Wordsworth's Poems," (p. v.) "I remember hearing Lord Macaulay say after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honor to Wordsworth, than was now raised throughout all England." Within a few years the conviction has been deepening and spreading, that he has suffered undeserved neglect. Something like a Wordsworth revival has been attempted, not without success. To this revival Mr. Arnold three years since made a valuable contribution. He "disengaged" from the body of Wordsworth's works "those poems which show his power"; and declared his firm belief to be, that mentioning those poets only who are dead, "the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time" (p. x).

Though we thus connect what we shall say with Mr. Arnold's preface, it is not our purpose to repeat the considerations by means of which he defends his opinion. We mention his paper, mainly because it attacks a large portion of Wordsworth's poetical product; and this the very portion most highly valued—we believe with justice—both by Wordsworth himself and by Coleridge. To this poetry, whose poetical character Mr. Arnold denies, our specific subject invites special attention. We have distinctly in view the function of the sacred orator: to whom we wish to commend Wordsworth's poetry, and to recommend a study of it, long enough and careful enough, to enable him to grasp Wordsworth's dominant and persistent motive and to imbibe his spirit. Such a study, not to mention at this point other reasons for urging it, would prove specially valuable to the preachers of to-day; because they preach in communities, in some degree under the influence of sceptical theories or habits of thought, and are tempted either to yield somewhat to this influence, or to oppose it with fierce pugnacity and by special arguments. The temptation to choose between these methods of preaching—alike if

* "Life, Letters, Lectures, and Addresses of F. W. Robertson," p. 820. Harper & Brothers.

not equally vicious—would, we believe, in all cases be seriously weakened, and in most cases be rendered innoxious, by the study which this paper recommends.

In one respect, we are fortunate in our particular subject. It does not involve a detailed criticism of any of Wordsworth's poems. It compels simply a notice of the bold and outstanding features of his poetic product, considered as a whole. And here, we may say in passing, that whatever interest this subject shall excite, ought to be deepened by the fact that Frederick Robertson was indebted more to Wordsworth than to any other English author, certainly than to any other poet, for what was best in him as a preacher. The sermons of Robertson have largely determined the spirit of the later preaching of the British and American pulpit. We may well ask, who inspired him? His biographer informs us, that

“During the beginning of his college life, the poets that seem most to have attracted him, were Coleridge and Shelley; but the more his thoughtfulness deepened, the more he gave to Wordsworth a veneration which increased as life wore on, and which gained additional depth from the respect which he felt for the poet's character.”*

Poetry, it will be conceded by all who have reflected on this subject, should engage the special study of the orator. Between poetry and oratory there is indeed a striking difference; both in the instruments they employ and in the ends they seek. Poetry presents truth in forms addressed to the *imagination*, for the purpose of awakening *emotion*. Oratory presents truth in forms addressed to the *discursive faculty*, for the purpose of securing *action*. To awaken emotion is the end of poetry; to secure action is the end of oratory. But this wide difference is itself the basis of an alliance, by which each becomes the complement of the other in lofty speech. There is no great oration which does not owe its greatness largely to the poetic element it contains. There is no great poem that is not also eloquent.

This alliance, noticeable in all great poetry and eloquence, becomes absolute fusion when the poet or the orator is engaged on a spiritual theme. The cause of this fusion is plain. In the realm of spirit, emotion the end of poetry, and action the end of oratory, are one; indivisible and indistinguishable. The characteristic action of spirit is emotion; love or hate. This emotion is no involuntary and constitutional feeling like the feeling of remorse. It is self-determination and action, and may be, as it is, the theme of a commandment.† For

* “Life of F. W. Robertson,” p. 37. Harper & Brothers.

† In the realm of spirit we must distinguish between active and direct feeling on the one hand, and passive and reflex feeling on the other. The former is personal and voluntary; the latter is constitutional and necessary. The spirit loves God. This love is active feel-

this reason it is always difficult and often impossible to separate the poetry from the eloquence of a literary product, composed for the purpose of awakening spiritual feeling. The synthesis of its poetic and its oratorical elements is not artistic, but vital, and therefore absolute.

Hence the oration, in proportion as it grows eloquent, assumes even the more formal traits of poetry; and the poem, in proportion to its reflective character, assumes the trait of oratory. It is said that those listening to Grattan were often surprised by finding themselves beating time to his rhythmical sentences; and to refer to an example more familiar to us in America it is obvious that—whether regard be had to its musical periods, or to those higher qualities by means of which it presents truth to the imagination, and by rendering it vivid, excites emotion—the peroration of Webster's reply to Hayne may accurately be described as poetry. Mr. Arnold tells us in his preface, that "if he is to tell the very truth, he finds the great ode not wholly free from something declamatory." It may be that he employs this language without precision and definiteness; and in very much the way in which as he tells us in "Literature and Dogma," the writers of the Bible employed language. "The language of the Bible," he says, "is literary, not scientific language; language thrown out at an object of consciousness not fully grasped." This phrase, "not wholly free from something declamatory," which Mr. Arnold "throws out" at the great ode, would seem to indicate that he believes that the poetry of the ode approaches eloquence. We are sure that it does, and that very closely, if indeed it is not eloquence itself.

But to see the consummate fusion of poetry and oratory, the preacher must go to those holy men of old who are his predecessors. The preacher of the New Testament Church is the successor, not of the priest, but of the prophet of the Old Testament. In the writings of the Hebrew prophets, we find abundant examples of poetry and oratory that are absolutely one. Space does not permit us to illustrate largely. But we cannot refrain from asking the question whether the fortieth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy is poetry or eloquence? Is it poetry and not eloquence? But what element of eloquence is want-

ing and personal determination or inclination. The reflex influence of this love on the person loving is the constitutional and necessary feeling of blessedness. Of this *active* feeling, it is true that it is both emotion and action, or rather the absolute union of the two in abiding self-determination. Here then the end of oratory (action) and the end of poetry (feeling) are one. The ends being one, the means (poetry and oratory) are not only similar, but indistinguishable. This we take to be the truth which lies at the basis of Wordsworth's contention, satirized by Byron, that the language of prose may be the language of poetry.

ing, or what peculiar effect of eloquence on man does it fail in producing? Is it then eloquence and not poetry? But by what canon shall we deny it a place among poems? Where shall we find poetic elevation, poetic "heightening" of style, of language; or, where shall we find poetic imagery if not in its answer to the question, "to whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?"

Because the poet and the orator, in their inspired moments, are so strikingly alike, and because in the prophet they are in fact one, it behooves the orator to pore over the great poets; not indeed to find quotations that shall serve to patch his brief or pad his thin discourse, but to imbibe their spirit and glow with a kindred fervor. Mr. John Bright has for many years employed his annual season of retirement from public duties, in studying one of the greater poets of our mother tongue; and Mr. Gladstone has confessed that it is to Homer that he returns again and again for rest not only, but for inspiration.* The sacred orator may well follow the example set by these great living orators of the British Senate. If there is truth in the assertion that the pulpit is losing power, it must be due largely to the fact that lofty oratory is becoming a lost art. The art needs to be found. The sustained and glowing locution of the prophets and earlier preachers must be revived. It cannot be revived until the orators of the pulpit master the great poets of the world. The preacher can well afford to know far less than he does of current politics, and even of current Agnostic and Materialistic theories, if he will devote the time given to their study, to imbibing the spirit of the poets who lived above all current events, or pondered them in the light of the unseen and eternal. The human spirit and its profound needs and experiences abide the same amid all changes of governments and of scientific theories. It is because they addressed the abiding spirit in man, that the great poets are immortal; that Æschylus and Dante and Shakespeare and Milton will always be read. They interpret man to himself. This is also the first function of the preacher. He reveals the human spirit to the human spirit, and thus prepares the way for his declaration of the spiritual gospel.

Moreover, since the end of sacred oratory is spiritual activity (which,

* "Mr. Gladstone's long experience of the world has taught him the better to appreciate Homer's wonderful knowledge of human nature; the practical aspect of his poems, the deep moral and political lessons which they teach, become a far more true and living thing to the man of busy life, than they can ever be to the mere solitary student. And perhaps his familiarity with the purest and most ennobling source of inspiration may have had some effect in adorning Mr. Gladstone's oratory with more than one of its noblest features."—(Edward A. Freeman, D.C.L., quoted in Smith's "Life of Gladstone," p. 227).

as we have seen, is also emotion, the end of poetry), the preacher stands nearer to the poet than does the secular orator. And the poet to whom he stands the nearest, with whose spirit and theme he most easily sympathizes, is not the objective and descriptive poet, rapt before the vision of material beauty, but the reflective poet who spends himself in the endeavor to interpret in imaginative forms the profound significance

“Of man, of nature, and of human life.”

When, therefore, we say that the sacred orator should study closely the poets, we mean the poets of the spirit of man, the poets of the spirit's tragedy and longings, the spirit's trembling hope and dark despair; the poets who belong to all lands, all ages, and all literature, in that they interpret the underlying and substantial elements of humanity which constitute men one family, and leave to lesser and lower genius to sing the superficial and temporary differences that distinguish and divide men. These great reflective and ecumenical poets, the preacher ought to know—the author of the book of Job, David, Æschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth. Each of these was thoroughly Hebrew, or Greek, or Italian, or English; but it is both their chief and their common glory, that they pierced the outer covering of national or individual peculiarities and addressed the human spirit.

In this careful study of reflective poetry, the sacred orator will do far better at first to bring his mind into contact with one great poet until he is imbued with his spirit, than to range superficially over the vast field of literature designated by that name. Anthologies are valuable to the mere reader who has in view simply enjoyment. But whoever would derive the whole good that the orator may obtain from the poet, must at first study intensively rather than extensively. This will involve selection. In selecting, he may well be guided largely by the age to which the poet belongs. For language and the forms of civilization change so rapidly, that the poets of the Elizabethan age, of the Commonwealth, and even of the age of Anne, are archaic. It is not easy to read them, so widely do their formal traits differ from those of the poets of our time. Wordsworth, on the other hand, may almost be said to have originated the forms of modern poetry; and he is distinctively modern in his view of man. He belongs to our age. He “came to himself” as a poet, under the inspiration of the French Revolution; the reformation by which the social order was subordinated to man. With this reformation he was from the first in full sympathy. His earliest poems therefore breathe the

modern spirit. We find ourselves at once *en rapport* with him. Of no other great reflective poet can this statement so emphatically be made. If, indeed, Wordsworth left his students content with his own poetry, this nearness to our times would not of itself entitle him to special study. But it is one of his great merits that he awakens a love of lofty poetry as such. His catholic spirit is caught by his disciples; and he thus conducts them to the great poets of all ages.

If the sacred orator, led by considerations like these, shall begin the earnest study of Wordsworth, he will find in his poetry distinct qualities, which give it great and peculiar homiletical value. These will be evident on a brief consideration of his theme and spirit, his philosophy and his style.

The theme of Wordsworth's poetry is man; and of man—and this is his spirit—he writes with the sympathy of a brother; never with the contempt of the cynic or the hatred of the misanthrope; never even with the indifference of the artist. This is the testimony of all his reviewers.

"Long ago," writes Mr Arnold, "in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth from his application, I say to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas 'on man, on nature, and on human life,' which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject of ideas 'on man, on nature, and on human life'" (Preface, p. xiv).

Mr. Arnold unfolds this remark in his own happy and striking manner. But he was by no means the first to make this statement. This is the feature on which both hostile and friendly critics fasten for censure or for praise. Prof. Wilson attacked Wordsworth as an enemy of religion on the ground of what he omits. But that he does not disagree with his friends as to his theme, is evident from his statement that "from the first line of the lyrical Ballads to the last of 'The Excursion,' Wordsworth's poetry is avowedly one system of thought and feeling, embracing his experiences of human life and his meditations on the moral government of this world. The human heart, the human soul is the haunt and main region of his song."* His close association with Wordsworth, and his own original and poetic mind gave Coleridge a better right than that which any other contemporary possessed, to speak of Wordsworth's subject and his treatment of it; and the testimony of Coleridge agrees with the testimony of both Arnold and Wilson. Writing of his friend's poetry

* "Modern British Essayists" (Wilson, p. 188).

in the "Biographia Literaria," he refers, among other traits, "to his meditative pathos; a union of subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate; but of a contemplator, from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature; no injuries of wind and weather, of toil, or even of ignorance, wholly obscure the human face divine. The superscription and image of the Creator still appear legible to him, under the dark lines with which guilt or calamity had cancelled or cross-barred it."*

Man then, without controversy, is Wordsworth's theme. Not man in his surroundings, except as these are the "properties" by which he is set off; not his secular or intellectual life; but man the responsible spirit,

"Trailing clouds of glory as he comes
From God, who is his home,"

is the subject that constitutes the whole body of Wordsworth's poetry an organism, and causes it to throb and glow with a common life. Nor does he contemplate man with mere artistic regard, which distinguished that consummate genius, Shakespeare.† He loves man with a profound spiritual affection; and this because of man's spiritual nature and his consequent unlimited possibilities of glory. He is not, indeed, a poet of the religious sentiment, like Herbert or Cowper. He is a poet of the human spirit; and there is little in the life of the human spirit that has escaped his searching and loving scrutiny.

We might well content ourselves with this testimony of Coleridge to Wordsworth's love of man as a spiritual being. But we add, as a striking and direct evidence of it, the fact that his muse almost utterly ignored the mere accessories of human life. One of the finest passages to be found in any modern fiction, is in the first chapter of

* "Biographia Literaria," p. 493.

† That Shakespeare, when writing his dramas, contemplated man chiefly with artistic regard, is, we think, conclusively proved by the perfection of his plays regarded as dramas. His intuition of man is almost absolutely accurate and universal. But he takes as much delight in Iago's as in Hamlet's action. This impartiality or indifference is exactly the feeling of the artist. Wordsworth's love of the spiritual man, and of the spiritual in man—in other words, his partisanship and partiality—prevented his becoming a dramatic artist. Byron was a partisan of another kind; and his dramas as such are failures. Shakespeare is the consummate dramatist, not more because of his wide and accurate, if not profound, intuition of man, than because he is the partisan neither of the good nor of the evil. He simply portrays men; or, rather, makes men portray themselves. His delight is in his varied exhibition; in the contrasts of high and low, good and bad, great and little, on one stage in one picture. The exhibition is unexampled. But Shakespeare's affection for his characters is the exhibitor's, that is, the artist's affection. This is not Wordsworth's, nor should it be the sacred orator's love of man.

Thackeray's novel of the reign of Queen Anne, "Henry Esmond." "The Muse of History," writes Esmond, "hath encumbered herself with ceremony as well as her Sister of the Theatre. She, too, wears the mask and the cothurnus, and speaks to measure. She, too, in our age, busies herself with the affairs only of kings; waiting obsequiously and stately, as if she were but a mistress of court ceremonies, and had nothing to do with the registering of the affairs of the common people. I wonder, shall History ever pull off her periwig and cease to be court ridden? Shall we see something of France and England, besides Versailles and Windsor? Why shall History go on kneeling to the end of time? I am for having her rise up off her knees, and take up a natural posture; not to be forever performing cringes and congees like a court-chamberlain, and shuffling backward out of doors in the presence of the sovereign." The muse of poetry, during this period, was encumbered, as well as her sisters of the drama and history. Literary rewards were dispensed, largely by the patronage of the socially and politically great. There was little hope for the poet of man, when Addison owed his preferment to his fulsome eulogy of Marlborough, in "The Battle of Blenheim"; of which poem Thackeray makes Esmond say, "Many a fourth form boy of Mr. Addison's school of Charter-house could write as well as that now." The great reflective poem of the age was Pope's "Essay on Man"; and this is simply a system of morality, derived from Locke, modified by Bolingbroke, and done into heroic measure. The "Essay on Man" is undoubtedly a great literary product; but it may well be doubted whether it is poetry.

The influence of the poetry of the reign of Anne on the poetry of the reigns immediately succeeding it was in a high degree pernicious. The thirty years preceding the year 1780, according to Lord Macaulay,

"form the most deplorable part of English literary history. They have bequeathed to us," he goes on to say, "scarcely any poetry that deserves to be remembered. Two or three hundred lines of Gray, twice as many of Goldsmith, a few stanzas of Beattie and Collins, a few strophes of Mason, and a few clever prologues and satires were the masterpieces of this age. They may all be printed in one volume, and that volume would be by no means a volume of extraordinary merit. It would contain no poetry of the highest class, and little which could be placed very high in the second class."*

* Lord Macaulay makes this statement in his review of Moore's life of Byron. The statement is perhaps undeservedly harsh. Mr. Palgrave, whose large knowledge and critical discernment have enabled him to accomplish the difficult task of compiling a satisfactory anthology of English Lyrics, whose opinion therefore is entitled to great respect, feels for the poetry of this period, by no means the contempt to which Macaulay gives such vigorous expression. He refuses to call it "artificial." But he evidently regards the poetry of the eighteenth century as far below both that of the

Poetry like this could not long satisfy a people from among whom had sprung Shakespeare and Milton. A change was demanded in poetic themes and in their treatment. This demand synchronized with the first mutterings of the French Revolution; the revolution, which, with all its horrors, and even by means of them, called attention to the wants and hopes and woes and longings and spiritual possibilities of man, as distinct from king or subject, noble or commoner. The demand was made, not formally, but spiritually, by the pervasive spirit of the age; that the muse of poetry, to quote again the words of Henry Esmond, should no longer "be forever performing cringes and congees, like a court-chamberlain, and shuffling backward out of doors in the presence of the sovereign."

Of the great English poets who obeyed the voice of this potent spirit, Robert Southey was chronologically the first. But though first in time, he was far from first in poetical genius; and, because he wrote too much, was not even second in poetical performance. The greatest of these English poets was William Wordsworth. He also heard the call. He obeyed it with the heroism of a missionary; against the invective, and, what was worse, at times the neglect of the reviewers. Against all this he persisted in fulfilling his conscious mission, to write of man as man, and apart from all accessories. For this he lived in great simplicity among the pastoral people of the Lake Country. He would not be moved from among them, because

seventeenth and that of the nineteenth. He says that the tendency, which led poets to expend their power in portraying "the aspects of courtly or educated life, represented by Pope, was carried to exhaustion by his followers." The poetry of Collins and Gray he calls the "Poetry of Nature and Man, viewed through a cultivated, and, at the same time, an impassioned frame of mind."

It may serve to illustrate the influence on his poetry of the "cultivation," which tempered Gray's "passion," to follow Coleridge in setting side by side a bold metaphor of Shakespeare, and the metaphor as employed by Gray in "The Bard." A comparison of the two extracts will also throw light on Wordsworth's impatience of what he called "poetic diction."

"How like a younker or a prodigal,
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay
Hugged and embraced by the strumpet wind!
How like a prodigal doth she return,
With over-weather'd ribs and ragged sails,
Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!"

—*Merch. of Venice. Act II., Sc. 6.*

"Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
Youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
Which hushed in dim repose, expects its evening prey."—*The Bard.*

he would not be disturbed by the conventionalities of the city, in his loving study of man, as related to God and nature. He wrote poems of common men and women; of common life; and of the more familiar scenes and objects of nature. He found heroes and heroines in his humble neighbors; Ruth and Margaret and the mother of the Idiot Boy. The beauties of nature that he celebrated, are those that he discerned during his walks:

"A primrose by the water's brim."
"A crowd of shining daffodils,"

a storm that he saw gathering while standing at the door of his cottage. To him

"The meanest flower that blows, could give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

This was the first impression that he made on Coleridge. While the reviewers were "writing him down," while the wits of "Maga" were finding food for sport, on an "Ambrosial night," in the Ode on Immortality—Coleridge was receiving the impression, which a closer acquaintance deepened, and which he afterward recorded. Speaking of what it was that first awakened his admiration of Wordsworth, he says, "It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth, in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all, the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the height and depth of the ideal world, around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up all the sparkle and the dew-drop."*

The close affinity between the sacred orator, and the poet whose theme is the human spirit and whose predominant emotion toward man is sympathetic affection, is obvious upon its statement. For the theme and spirit of the sacred orator and of such a poet are one. Indeed one, at least, of the functions of the former cannot better be described than in the very words employed by Coleridge to designate Wordsworth's pre-eminent and original gift—"the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and, with it, the height and depth of the ideal world, around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up all the sparkle and the dew-drop." We but paraphrase the words of Coleridge, when we say, what will not be denied, that, as preparatory to the declaration of the Gospel, and as only second in

* "Biographia Literaria," p. 201.

importance to that declaration, it is the function of the sacred orator to exhibit the ideal, the spiritual significance of common duties, joys, and trials; and so, to awaken men's consciousness of their spiritual being and to produce the conviction of their spiritual destiny. The value, to the preacher, of such a poet is limited only by the limitations of the latter's poetic genius. The limitations of the genius of Wordsworth we shall not now discuss. But if the estimate of both Coleridge and Arnold may be taken as correct; that is, if his poetic product is below only those of Shakespeare and Milton, his distinctive spirit renders him more valuable to the sacred orator than even Shakespeare himself. In all that preparatory preaching, by which, awakening the consciousness of a spiritual nature, he draws his hearer toward the One, in whom alone all spiritual longing is satisfied; Wordsworth, among all the great English reflective poets, is best fitted, by the union of theme and spirit, both to inspire and to inform the sacred orator.

But it is not only his theme and spirit that give homiletical value to Wordsworth's poetry. That value derives a special quality from the philosophy which pervades his entire literary product. Mr. Arnold writes at some length, and in a vein of delicate and playful satire, of those "fervent Wordsworthians," who, like Mr. Leslie Stephen, value Wordsworth "because his philosophy is sound; because his ethical system is as distinctive and as capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's"; because "his poetry is informed by ideas, which fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought." Mr. Arnold has never professed to hold in high esteem the formulas of either philosophy or theology. He announces the thesis, as one prepared to defend it, that "poetry is the reality; philosophy the illusion." Still he acknowledges the existence of Wordsworth's "formal philosophy": and we are glad to refer to so eminent a name, as authority for the statement, that the poetry of Wordsworth is highly charged with that spiritual philosophy of which Plato was the apostle in Ancient Greece, and Coleridge was the apostle in Modern England.

The remark has often been made, and in a large way is true, though it is somewhat unjust to Aristotle, that differ as men may on minor points, there are at last but two schools of philosophy: those of Aristotle and of Plato.* It were better, perhaps, to call them tendencies or drifts. The history of philosophy is largely a history of the conflicts and compromises between these two tendencies. Men have been driven by them into the extremes, now of philosophic

* Shield's "Final Philosophy," p. 539. Hamilton's "Metaphysics," p. 75.

scepticism and now of philosophic credulity. On the one hand, the world has been asked to believe in "Nescience," "Relativity of knowledge," "Positivism," or "Agnosticism." On the other, the world has been asked to "assist," in the next lecture, at the creation of God; or to assent to the process, by which the Absolute and the Nothing are resolved into the same idea. When one or the other of these drifts has landed men into one or the other of these extremes, it has expended all its power. "The force of nature can no further go." Men thus disprove their own systems, to the satisfaction of reasonable men, by a process not unlike *reductio ad absurdum*.

Of these two tendencies, the sceptical or Aristotelian has commonly attended the despair of men, when suffering under political tyranny. This was the case just before the French Revolution. Sceptical philosophy was dominant on the Continent and in Britain. We say the sceptical philosophy; we mean the sceptical drift. To speak only of England, it were difficult to exaggerate the hold on the English mind, possessed by Locke's formula, "There is nothing in the intellect which was not beforehand in the senses." From Locke's formula to Hume's nescience was an easy descent; and it thus occurred that just before that great social upheaval, the French Revolution, scepticism, nescience, pyrrhonism—call it what we will—was in England in the ascendant. Then came the political revolution; and with it new hope for man; and with the new hope a new philosophy, a revival of belief in man and spiritual truth, a revival of Platonism. Happily for us the apostle of this philosophic revival in Great Britain was a man not only of profound and original intellect, but also of profound religious experience—Samuel Taylor Coleridge. To his intellectual force, his conservatism, and his religion, it is largely due that English philosophy and literature escaped the vagaries of extreme transcendental thought. His Platonism was expounded and defended by himself as a distinctly Christian philosophy.

The philosophy of Coleridge has been criticised on many grounds by those who, like himself, have defended fundamental truth, and have proclaimed the gospel of spiritual reality. We express no opinion here as to the value of some of his distinctions, as that between the reason and the understanding. It may be true that, as the school of Scottish realism believes, his rich and fertile imagination endowed his metaphysics with imaginative rather than with real wealth. Or it may be that Coleridgians are right in retorting upon their North British allies, that the metaphysics of the latter is too meagre. But the irenic student will not attach too much importance to these differences of detail. He will note the alliance rather than the oppo-

sition, and will emphasize the great fact that both are engaged in defending the trustworthiness of the intuitions.

This intuitional philosophy is, we believe, at this very time, surely defeating the scepticism, which, whether as materialism or agnosticism, so lately announced the destruction of spiritual beliefs. Signs are abundant that the term of the dominion of this scepticism is fast approaching. Nor will it be difficult for the pulpit to complete the defeat which the intuitional philosophy has begun to achieve. For this great work, the pulpit can find no better weapons than this philosophy itself furnishes.

This spiritual philosophy, that discerns the spirit in man, that affirms his accountability, his childhood of God, and his capacity for fellowship with God, that fixes a great gulf which cannot be passed between brute and man, and that predisposes us to believe that man will one day hold communion with the Father and with the Son; this philosophy saturates the poetry of Wordsworth. It may be seen as well in the Lyrical Ballads, and the Sonnets, as in the Prelude, the Excursion, and the great Ode; in the last of which the poet revels in his delight in the intimations of man's immortality, and in the very child's perception of

" Truths that wake
To perish never ;
Which neither listlessness nor mad endeavor,
Nor man nor boy
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy."

But while it pervades the whole body of Wordsworth's poetry, it is not there in scientific formulas. It is there as the animating, the formative spirit. It is the presupposed but unformulated premise, the primal postulate of all his poetic teaching. He employs it, just as the preacher should employ it, not as a conclusion reached by logical processes, but as the introduction to all high religious discourse.

But it is time to notice the literary quality and traits of Wordsworth's poetry, which specially commend it to the sacred orator. Mr. Arnold, quoting with approval a remark made by Wordsworth, namely, "Goethe's poetry was not inevitable enough," adds: "Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is as inevitable as nature herself. It might seem that nature not only gave him the matter for the poem, but wrote the poem itself." Wordsworth's "plain manner" in his "best poetry," Mr. Arnold declares to be "unique and unmatchable. His expression may be often called bald, but it is bald as the bare mountain-tops are bald, with a baldness

that is full of grandeur." This is superlative praise. It is his recognition of the great literary value of "his best poetry" that has led Mr. Arnold to place Wordsworth almost beside Shakespeare and Milton. His assertion that "it might seem that nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote the poem for him," or, as he repeats it, "Nature herself seems to take the pen out of his hand and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power"—this assertion recalls Wordsworth's own remark, that "language is not so much the dress of thought as its *incarnation*." In point of fact, Mr. Arnold's eulogy is simply a periphrastic mode of saying, that Wordsworth's supreme literary excellence is this: that his language not only expresses and conveys, but *incarnates* his thought. This is almost an ideal employment of language, and the resultant style almost an ideal style. A literary product in which thought thus incarnates itself is not only life-like, but living.* Its "thoughts breathe" and its "words burn."

* We use the phrase, "a literary product in which thought incarnates itself," because, in a style naturally formed, thought is the *active agent*; and language is the plastic material which it instinctively seeks out, and moulds for its most intimate and expressive habitation. So Wordsworth's thought (for it is eminently true of his poetry, that it began in thought and not in expression), burst the prison-house of the "heroic couplet" and the "poetic diction," in which custom would have confined it; not, however, that it "might be unclothed, but clothed upon." It is perhaps impossible to find on earth an analogue of that "spiritual body," which will at last supersede the body of flesh and blood, that at present as often conceals as it reveals the spirit. But one may well look for it, if anywhere, in great poetry; as of Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth; in which thought is embodied so perfectly, that we recognize the incarnation as ultimate; and say, as by intuition, "these words will never die. This body will not dissolve. It needs no resurrection."

It is the fact that the incarnation of thought is consummate, that enables us so easily to remember and repeat great poetry. This ease in remembering is not due merely or chiefly to the happy collocation of words. For words themselves, however rhythmical, are not easily remembered, as all know who have studied the Greek verb. But thought is easily remembered. And when a great thought has found its perfect embodiment in language, the language will abide in the mind together, and almost as consubstantial with the thought.

The whole subject of "the Relation of Thought to Language and Style" should be carefully studied by the sacred orator. For no one else is so often called on to exemplify that relation in lofty discourse. The study of Wordsworth's reflective poetry might well be commended on this ground alone. But the preacher will do well to go deeper, and instruct himself in the philosophy of the subject. In thus instructing himself, he will find great aid in Dr. Shedd's profound and luminous paper with this title, published in his "Literary Essays." In addition to its other merits, that paper is itself a noble example of the view which it defends; the view, namely, that the mind by deep thought must have effected a living union between thought and language, "before it can speak *out* (*e loquor*) the given topic in a grand, impressive style which, while it is weighty and solid, also dilates and thrills and glows with the living verity."

Thought forming for itself a body out of language: this is the genesis of style. The process is vital and dynamic. Language confining thought in predetermined forms, whether of prose or of poetry, whether couplet, epigram, or antithesis: this is the

Mr. Arnold has undoubtedly seized the fundamental literary quality of Wordsworth's poetry. But he is conspicuously in error, in limiting his eulogy to what *he* calls "his best poetry"; and in reserving for satire, largely on the ground of the absence of this high quality, that portion of Wordsworth's poetry in which he "unites poetry and philosophy." Mr. Arnold's error we believe to be due to his habitual failure to distinguish two things in themselves very different; the emotion that follows upon the poetic representation of the sublime or beautiful of *nature*, and the emotion that follows the poetic presentation of the sublime or the beautiful of *truth*. The former emotion is not wholly relieved of its sensuous element. It is still allied, however refined, to passion, and is therefore physically exciting.* The other emotion is purely spiritual. It is, however profound, without passion or physical excitement. It is emotion of the very kind that we can predicate of the spiritual Deity who, while he loves and hates, is also the impassable God. Mr. Arnold's failure to appreciate the depth, or even, it would seem, the reality of purely spiritual emotion, constitutes him an incompetent critic of Wordsworth. Poetry, to secure Mr. Arnold's praise, must provoke sensuous excitement. He is simply an artist. Delicate and refined as are his æsthetic perceptions and his artistic tastes—because their refinement constitutes his consummate culture—he must fail in estimating any poetry which evokes only spiritual emotion. Had the son of Thomas Arnold cultivated his spiritual nature with the assiduity that his father brought to that culture, or with the care with which he has cultivated his æsthetic nature, he would have escaped both the error he committed, when attempting to formulate the Hebrew conception of Deity, and the error he has committed in placing Wordsworth's poetry of nature above Wordsworth's philosophic poetry.

For the fact that this philosophic poetry does not call forth the

genesis of mannerism. The process is mechanical manipulation of dead matter. Labor of this latter kind is unworthy of the orator; certainly of the sacred orator. But let him not underrate the value of *style*. To quote the concluding words of Dr. Shedd's paper: "Style, when having this mental and natural origin, is to be put in the first class of fine forms. It is the form of thought; and as a piece of art, is as worthy of study and admiration, as those glorious material forms which embody the ideas of Phidias, Michael Angelo, and Raphael. It is the form in which the human mind manifests its freest, purest, and most mysterious activity—its thinking. There is nothing mechanical in its origin or stale in its nature. It is plastic and fresh as the immortal energy of which it is the air and bearing."

* The subject of the intimate relation between æsthetic emotion and physical excitement, is finely, if briefly, treated by Isaac Taylor in one of the papers in *Saturday Evening*, entitled the "Dissolution of Human Nature." A thorough knowledge of this intimate relation would serve to correct not a few of the mistakes that are made with respect to the relations of Fine-Art and Christian Worship.

sensuous excitement awakened by poems of nature, cannot be used to prove the absence of the supreme literary merit which Mr. Arnold attributes to Wordsworth's best poetry; the merit, namely, of exact incarnation of thought in language. We venture to assert that never is the relation between Wordsworth's language and Wordsworth's thought so intimate and vital, never does his theme so formulate and vitalize his poetic style, as when he is employed on what Mr. Arnold would call "a philosophic theme." One needs only to turn for proof to the ninth strophe of the Ode of Immortality, at once the most profoundly philosophic passage of the poem, and the passage whose language is, above that of all the others, tremulous with the life of the lofty theme.

That Wordsworth united abstract philosophic thought with vivid poetic expression, not rhetorically, but vitally, by a real incarnation, we take to be his greatest literary achievement. To embody, in poetic forms, the aspects of nature or of the external life of men, and to give exalted expression to the feelings they evoke, is to employ one's self wholly in the realm of the outward and temporary. This is not the final triumph of poetic genius. But to give *truly poetic (imaginative) expression to philosophic thought*—this is to make the invisible visible.* Pope failed in the attempt; for he sacrificed

* Mr. Arnold, in order to make out his case against Wordsworth's philosophic, or, as we prefer to call it, reflective poetry, quotes from the "Excursion" the following lines:

"Duty exists; immutably survive
For our support, the measures and the forms
Which an abstract intelligence supplies,
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not."

He adds, "The Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the disinterested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry" (p. 19).

On which we remark, that Mr. Arnold's quotation is unfairly made. He has violently wrested these lines from a passage, the poetical character and merit of any part of which can be determined, only after reading it where Wordsworth placed it. Indeed Mr. Arnold has not quoted an entire sentence. No one knows better than he ought to know, how great is the injustice that he has done to Wordsworth, in asking judgment from an æsthetic point of view, on an amputated limb. A feature of the face, however beautiful when seen in place, can scarcely be expected to reveal its beauty when cut out or cut off. Had he given his readers the entire sentence, he would not have been so unfair to the poet. But his remarks would have lost most, if not all of their apparent pertinence. In proof of this we quote the entire sentence:

"Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat;
But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,

the poetic to the philosophic style. He announced truth discursively; not in imaginative forms. Indeed, the "Essay on Man" is simply an argument in verse. Neither Pope's literary genius, nor his temperament, nor his spiritual life was such as to make him equal to the achievement, we will not say, of writing philosophy, but of writing philosophic poetry. It required a profounder spiritual nature, a calmer temperament, and a far higher literary quality than Pope possessed. These Wordsworth possessed. His intuition of first truths, "Truths that wake to perish never," was profound and rapid. So unmoved by passion as to seem cold to his nearest friends, he was always under the sway of calm, but strong and profound spiritual emotions; while language and poetic imagery were as plastic to him as clay to Angelo. Never so possessed by his theme as not to possess it, never so excited as to be unable genially to employ all his powers and soar calmly "on ample pinion"—Wordsworth, especially in his philosophic poetry, is at an almost infinite remove from the poets of the second class: the poets of nature and of the human passions.

Duty exists; immutably survive
 For our support, the measures and the forms
 Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
 Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not."

As will be seen, the lines quoted by Mr. Arnold for the purpose of justifying his adverse criticism of Wordsworth's philosophic poetry, are part of a bold and vivid contrast between things, on the one hand, that "vanish," "change," or "fluctuate"; and things on the other, that "immutably survive." Each member of the antithesis must of course be present, to enable the reader to determine the poetical character and merit of the whole passage. Mr. Arnold would scarcely justify one who should blot out the foreground of a painting by Claude, in order to determine the merits of the picture, by the merits of the middle distance and background; regarded not as middle distance and background, but as fairly representing the whole painting. But his treatment of this passage from the "Excursion" is treatment of this very kind.

Undoubtedly the second member of the contrast is "elevated and abstract verbiage" (if by verbiage is meant expression); for Wordsworth's theme is an "elevated and abstract" theme. In order to give this theme poetic vividness—that is to say, in order to present this abstract truth (usually addressed to the discursive faculty), in the form which would effectively address the imagination and awaken feeling—the poet properly employed antithesis; and he employed it powerfully and in a truly poetic manner. Now it is just this antithesis by which vividness is secured for abstract truth; by which, in other words, the invisible is made visible; it is just this that Mr. Arnold conceals, in order to make out his case; and while he quotes the elevated and abstract statement, "Duty exists," which by itself is prose, he omits the two noble lines which precede it, and lift it up into poetry:

"But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
 And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
 Duty exists."

This we say is an unfair mode of quotation. That Mr. Arnold was compelled to resort to it, in order to make out a case against that "sweet union of philosophy and poetry," in which the "Wordsworthians delight," reveals the weakness of the case he has made out.

These latter breed passionate excitement in the reader, both by their subject and by their own frenzied efforts after expression. Wordsworth's literary genius was not only equal to the achievement of philosophic poetry, of incarnating abstract thought in poetic imagery, but so easily equal to it, that we may employ what Coleridge has said of Shakespeare, to describe him as a philosophic poet.

"No automaton of genius, no passive vehicle of inspiration, possessed by the spirit not possessing it—he first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely; till knowledge, having become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class."

This vital union of philosophy and poetry, of spiritual truth and vivid imagery, this exact incarnation of ideas in forms of imperishable beauty, in order, by making the spiritual world vivid, to awaken spiritual feeling, is Wordsworth's supreme literary merit; and his philosophic poetry is the supreme triumph of his genius.

The method which the poetic genius of Wordsworth adopted to secure this triumph, like most of the methods of genius, was an open secret. It was simply a return to nature in the employment of language. Of course, just as Sir Joshua mixed his colors "with brains," Wordsworth's simple and natural diction was always radiant with "the light that never was on sea or land." Even simplicity and naturalness in expression will not render fruitful barren thoughts, or elevate a sentiment essentially low. The invaluable service performed for English literature, in the department of style, by the great lake poet, was his demonstration and illustration of the great truth, that profound and abstract thoughts and elevated sentiments and spiritual emotions are not aided, but hindered in their expression, by what, in his day, was called "poetic diction." Wordsworth substituted the art of imaginative expression for the artifice of mere fanciful expression; * with the marvellous result which Mr. Arnold has so finely de-

* Perhaps in the distinction between the fancy and the imagination, as these two words have been defined, and as the two faculties they designate have been described by Coleridge, is to be found the true secret of Wordsworth's power as a "philosophic poet." In the "Biographia Literaria," this subject is discussed at length. But in the "Table Talk" (p. 518), a remark is preserved sufficiently distinct and full for the purposes of this note. Coleridge there says, "The fancy brings together images which have no connection, natural or moral; but are yoked together by the poet, by means of some accidental coincidence. The imagination modifies images and gives unity to variety. It sees all things in one." When, therefore, Coleridge tells us that that which first impressed him in Wordsworth, was "the fine balance of truth in observing, with the *imaginative faculty* in modifying the objects observed," he uses the words "imaginative faculty" in this special sense, and as distinct from the fancy. The imagination, the esemplastic power, the power which "sees all things in one," and gives "unity to variety," must obviously act under the influence of laws or ideas, that, to the

scribed in the words already quoted; "nature herself seems to take the pen out of his hand, and to write with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power."

Wordsworth did not write poetry characterized by this fine simplicity of a natural rhetoric, in ignorance of its greatness; as we may conceive Bunyan to have written the "Pilgrim's Progress." He wrought always upon a theory that was the product of reflection, and with a purpose that he was prepared to defend. Just as he was driven by conviction to his theme, just as the spirit of his treatment of it was spiritual affection—a knowing choice as distinct from blind sensibility—and just as a philosophy of man pervades his poetry, so also a conscious philosophy of expression is exemplified in his natural and original diction. Wordsworth possessed, in almost exact equipoise, both the critical and the creative gift. He not only wrote "philosophic poetry," but defended the theme as poetic. Written, as this paper is, to recommend, not a mere leisurely perusal, but a study of Wordsworth, it is proper to say that such a study cannot be intelligently conducted by one who neglects the prefaces and appendices of the several volumes of his poems, which announce and defend his rhetorical theory; the theory by whose application he achieved the singular power of making abstract truth vivid to the imagination, as well as plain to the discursive faculty; and by which, in his poems of nature, he displayed the "bare, sheer, penetrating power of nature herself."

Without attempting duly to set forth this rhetorical theory, we may say that, historically, its origin was Wordsworth's profound dissatisfaction with the "poetic diction" of the English poetry of the period immediately preceding his own; because of its utterly artificial character, and because the feeling, which it expressed and excited, was as artificial as the diction itself. In the appendix to the preface of the "Lyrical Ballads," after affirming that "the earliest poets wrote naturally as men," he points out that "in succeeding times, men ambitious of the fame of poets," but not animated by the passion which naturally seeks figurative language, "set themselves to a mechanical adoption of these figures of speech. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men in any situation." This poetic diction he denounces and dis-

poet, are permanent, uniform, and universal. The fancy acts obviously under no fixed ideas or laws, but in an arbitrary manner, according to the individual poet's temporary pleasure. Now, if as Coleridge thought, Wordsworth's supreme poetic endowment was imagination as distinct from fancy, it is easy to understand what it was that impelled him to write "philosophic poetry."

cards, because it " thrusts out of sight the plain humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas." For this crying evil Wordsworth proposed, as a remedy, a return to the language that men naturally use in the situation which the poet depicts. Believing in the adequacy of this remedy, as he believed in his own existence, Wordsworth dared to defy the reviewers; to write " The Brothers," and " Michael," and " She dwelt among the untrodden ways." He dared to be " bald " in the " Prelude " and the " Excursion "; and his reward was, that he brought man and nature into the closest sympathy; he invested elemental truth with new power; and bald as his poems became, they were " bald as the bare mountain-tops are bald, with a baldness that is full of grandeur."

That a great poet, whose fundamental trait is the exact incarnation of his thoughts in language; whose genius is equal to this incarnation in poetic forms, even when his thought is abstract thought; and who achieves it by the open secret of a return to nature in the employment of speech; that such a poet merits the careful study of the sacred orator, is a proposition for whose further proof no one will ask, if he has reflected at all on the function of the preacher. Never was this study more emphatically needed than it is to-day. For, to-day, the chief rhetorical danger that besets the pulpit is the danger of sensationalism; an evil, so protean, that it may be defined in many ways, but whose supreme viciousness is this: that being meretricious artifice itself, it provokes an artificial excitement that simulates spiritual emotion.

But " the whole is more than all the parts." Worthy of study as Wordsworth's poetry is, in view of the special traits on which we have dwelt, and of others that we have not mentioned, the supreme value of these traits will not be understood by the preacher, until he sees them in living synthesis; until he is brought into communion with the deep, solemn, sincere, and spiritual man. We have no space left in which to say anything of Wordsworth's character beyond this: that he was a subjective poet, in the sense that his character as well as his thought is incarnate in his poetry. His theme and its treatment reveal the man. Robertson finely describes Wordsworth's subject, in a sentence in which he contrasts him with Shakespeare. " Shakespeare is a universal poet, because *he utters all that is in men*; Wordsworth, because *he speaks that which is in all men.*" What is " that which is in all men " ? What is the same in every age and circumstance but the *spirit* ? The spirit of man, with its beliefs and aspirations, its love and grief, its dissatisfaction with self, and its crying out

after God, found a universal voice in Wordsworth, above all, because Wordsworth was a profoundly spiritual man. Herein is the supreme homiletical value of his poetry.

The poems which this paper recommends the sacred orator earnestly to study, are those especially of what we may call Wordsworth's philosophical period; those in which he reveals himself as under the powerful and almost exclusive sway of spiritual ideas; ideas that are universal; which exist, uninterpreted perhaps, but still exist in all men. Now, it may be objected, and this is the objection of Christopher North, that precisely these are the poems in which Wordsworth is not "a sacred poet," because he does not present in imaginative forms, Christian dogma. To quote Prof. Wilson's words, "he speaks not, he expounds not the word as the servant of the Lord, as the follower of Him crucified."* Prof. Wilson is writing of the "Excursion"; and he laments that it was not written at the later date at which the Ecclesiastical Sonnets were composed. "These," he says, "are sacred poetry indeed." But it is not in the interpretation of Christian doctrine that the preacher may expect to derive special aid from Wordsworth; but, rather, in that great preceding and preparatory work of convicting man of his spiritual nature, and of predisposing him to belief of the spiritual gospel. It is indeed true, that the announcement of positive, distinctive, and revealed Christian truth, must always be the great work of the sacred orator. But never, since Christ came, has the preacher's function of making the spiritual universe vivid to the view, and powerful in the life of men, been so important or so difficult as it is to-day. To-day it is especially "desirable that the religious teacher dwell consecutively upon topics that are connected with that which is *within* man; his settled motives of action, and all those spontaneous on-goings of his soul, of which he takes no notice, unless he is persuaded or impelled to do so."† In this difficult and, at present, all-important preaching, whose method is psychological, and whose theme is man, Wordsworth's subject, spirit, philosophy, and style will all be found special and powerful auxiliaries. Called, week after week, to confront men and women, whom the prevailing habits of thought and tone of society tempt to doubt or deny the reality of everything that the eye sees not or the ear hears not, the sacred orator may well join to his other studies the faithful study of this original and profound poetic and philosophic mind. It is his chief glory, that, in an age when poetry was the slave

* "Modern British Essayists," Wilson, p. 19.

† Shedd, "Sermons to the Natural Man." Preface, p. 9.

of earthly pomp and circumstance, he gave not only freedom, but spiritual range to the English muse. He sang, not of accessories and men, but of nature and man. The eternal pomp and circumstance of the spiritual universe

“ Flashed upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude.”

The beauty and sublimity of nature he invested with a new significance, as penetrated by the revelation of the spiritual God. And man, he invested with a dignity to which the poets of his age of kings were blind ; for the poets of his age, until he compelled them, would not see that

“ The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar.”

JOHN DEWITT.