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THESIS.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE POET
IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THEOLOGY,
ETHNIC AND CHRISTIAN.

BY

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE POET
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Theology is manifestly a development. It did not begin as a Divinely given and ready-formulated code, and will doubtless be in process of growth for centuries to come. Man's spiritual nature is Divinely implanted; in this he is well-furnished of God. But his religious conceptions are predominantly human. There is a heavenly illumination for his mind and soul, in which light mankind has assurance of far-off, supernal destinies. His feet are on the upward pathway; his eyes see visions, and in his heart there linger dreams; he feels that in God he lives and moves and has his being. But there are human limitations. His horizon is cut short with mountains of difficulty; his sky is clouded with forms of shade and fear that too seldom arch within them a bow of promise; he sees more of this world than he can picture for himself of another. His teachers are, for the most part, like him. They have his

limitations, his infirmities. Their words too often "darken counsel without knowledge." Their want is not willingness, not honesty; but clearness of vision, outlook of faith. For this is the rare gift of the world; rare, not because the Giver withholds, but because men know not to accept. And it is easier to teach the past to men than it is to grasp and cling to those thoughts of God which move on before us. Hence theology, ethnic and Christian, has been chiefly man's word about God. Sometimes it has become more. But only once, and in Christ, did it become incontestably God's word about man. Now man's religious teachers, as here considered are three: the Priest, the Propagandist, and the Poet. Each has had undeniable right to his place as teacher. Each has exercised great influence. The sphere and range of this influence has been oftentimes contemporary; to some extent it may always be so. And yet it shall be my task to show that while this is naturally true, to a degree; nevertheless in a closer analysis, the growth of humanity's spiritual life, and the resulting needs which are theirs for a corresponding spiritual ministry, make it inevitable that the completed

record of man's religious progress will disclose to us that the eras of these teachers are not mainly synchronous but rather successive. Therefore while my thesis is to be chiefly of the developing influence of the Poet, as the last and greatest of man's earthly teachers, it will be natural, and not without profit, that the work of priest and propagandist shall furnish the suggestive background for this study. One cannot overlook the fact that the question has another side; and that it would also be interesting to trace in outline the debt of the poet to these other helpers. But since, to my mind, it is the poet who shall give us the ultimate form of spiritual counsel the thesis as stated appears to me to be most natural.

We consider, first, the poet in the age of the priest. The beginnings of religion among all people are a matter of conjecture; and one cannot therefore say in what way the first religious teachers of men came to authority. It is sufficient to observe that in the first authentic views which we have of the past the priest is that teacher. Perhaps the most natural interpretation is, that as the

father was the teacher of his household so there was set up a common spiritual father of many households or a tribe, from whom developed the community priest. Certain it is that such office allowed him peculiar opportunities for self-advancement, for magnifying his office, for asserting his authority over men. He came gradually to usurp the right of interpreting the mind and the will of God. His interpretation was doubtless the best which he could give. He should be blamed not for inability but for false pretension. In magnifying his office he resorted to strange devices. These are at the same time different and alike in all religions. They consist in revolting sacrifices, in complex and mysterious rites, in ways of penance and means of self-infliction, in ceremonies of propitiation offering a supposed access to God. We read in the religious history of the Mexicans that at Thaloc's festival the priests, in imitation of frogs, flung themselves pell-mell into a pond; that the priests of Ixthilton, the healing god, concocted a blackish panacea of no value save to the depraved imagination. Among the Incas the priest-idea had developed into a family of priest-kings

who reigned as children of the Sun over the Peruvian land, and the Sun himself was the over-ruling deity. Hence to obey the Incas-priest was to obey the supreme god. Yet this is merely a chance statement, a foot-note, from the history of the world's priest-craft. In India and Iran human sacrifices, so familiar to the student of religions, were carried to the extent that sacrifice came to be regarded as a cosmic force, a creative act. The gods themselves were supposed to have sacrificed as a means of creation. After these might yet be mentioned,

"A crew who, under names of old renown,
Osiris, Isis, Orus, and their train,
With monstrous shapes and sorceries abused
Fanatic Egypt and her priests to seek.
Their wandering gods disguised in brutish forms
Rather than human."

What place had the poet in the age of the priest? Manifestly it was not his time. And yet there were evidences of his coming. Poetry seems to have begun among all nations with lyric expressions of myth and legend, passing thence in its

lyrical forms to a more subjective expression of ideas and emotions. The myths and legends were then seized upon and developed in epic narrative, and also later in the great literatures by the method of dramatic presentation. It is natural, then, that in an age which made the priest a peculiar teacher the poet should have dealt with myth and legend. This was the theme suitable to his age. The ascents and descents of some Ishtar, the fabulous tales of creation in Babylonian and Assyrian record, the legend of some flood in Chaldean and Grecian folk-lore, the stories of the origins of arts, manners, institutions and peoples would be the natural themes of religious significance which would attract the imaginative writer of such age. One may find example in the familiar song of Lamech. But even now we find that the poet inclines to lay his emphasis upon those thoughts and feelings which are of deepest meaning. His words may have much of the unworthiness of his age but they also have something that is more significant. He comes closer to human life and its native feelings than the priest-craft of the age can bring us. And when his words are forced into a subser-

vience to priestly rules, as in the half poetic Vedic hymns, there is yet something of a human feeling about them, a beauty and honor, which are attracti~~ng~~^{ing}.

If one would appreciate the difference between priest and poet in their influence on the theology of a people, it is only necessary to compare the religion of Egypt with the religion of Greece. To the student of religions there may be more value in the study of the Egyptian, considering the complexity of its system, and especially its influence on the Hebrew faith; but for the man who loves life most where he finds it achieving liberty, and in forms of truth and purity, the Grecian cannot but be more satisfying. Priest-craft has perhaps had no freer field than in Egypt; poetry has nowhere held so nearly an acknowledged supremacy as among the Greeks. But Egyptian priest-craft had in it little that could make vital a national life, little that could be offered in explanation of the great problems which produce great thinking, little that could lift the mind of a people to anything that was spiritual and invigorating. Theirs was a religion of bondage, not of liberty. Their instruction, as that of the

priesthood in all times, led rather to knowledge of superstition than to an enlightened or rational faith. There was no saving power in it. And whatever the Hebrews got from them could become of value only as Egyptian forms became animated with the Hebrew spirit. But the religion of Greece had in it much that was of living worth. Their theology seems to have had hitherto a mainly classical interest, but I see no reason why it should not also have a great value to the student of religious faiths. That it is a theology less complex, less concerned with symbolism, less blindly adhered to by those who were its devotees, cannot reasonably make it of less interest. It can only give it the more interest to him who values religious conceptions in proportion to their inherent worth and nobility. When it is objected that the religion of the Greeks was notably anthropomorphic, that their gods were little more than men deified, one has only to answer that such is greatly to the credit of the Greeks. For if men are to create their gods, after whose image would they better fashion them? When we consider the bestial, serpentine, and worse unholy forms^{iv} which the gods of other ethnic peoples

were conceived, we can only rejoice that the Greeks were wise enough to make their gods human. It shows that their religion was not born of that fear, that depraved spirit, which are inseparable from an ignorantly developed priesthood.

Now it may not be positively known whom to praise for the Grecian theology. But certain it is that so far as we can judge, the poet has right to the greater part of our encomium. The Greek theology which we know is the theology of their poets. And their influence may easily be traced to a considerable degree. Heroditus makes Hesiod and Homer to be the creators of the Greek theogony. The elements are to be found in the work of Hesiod. We are told how the earth arose out of chaos, how Zeus came to supremacy, how the various gods of Olympos came into being. It is a natural and sane narrative, advanced with the earnestness of a prophet. Homer carries forward this development in a remarkable and wholly commendable way. His ideas are never subservient to the priestly conception. Says Professor Jebb, "Priests, in the plural number, are mentioned only twice in the Iliad, and both times with reference to local or special rites.....Religion has

now its central seat, not in the authoritative lore of a priesthood, not in a close corporation which jealously guards its secrets, but in the free consciousness of the people..... Nevertheless, no lay disciple of those priesthods can have felt a truer reverence for the divine than is manifested by the Greek warrior of the Iliad and the Greek wanderer of the Odyssey." To show the native feeling which a Greek poet had for a noble theology, reference may well be made to Pindar who, in his first Olympian, changes the current legend of the ivory shoulder of Pelops into a new version which does not, like the old, make out Demeter to be a cannibal, but presents a more just and refined account. This "eagle among the poets" could have no base conception. He is always "the inspired poet, who feels, as a Greek of his age would feel, that his gift is strictly divine,---that Apollo or the Muse is speaking through his lips,---and that to exalt his own gifts is to honor the divinity who bestows it."

To speak of the Greek drama is to bring at once before our eyes a world of noble religious thought. Here the great problems of human life are considered, principles of Divine government are dwelt upon. From no other ethnic source have

there come to us such sublime and thought-compelling reflections. What splendid values did Aeschylus give to religious faith! Some questions he raised and left unanswered, but he was sublime and so inspired, he touched the empyrean, and such a man the world must follow. If he could not harmonize fate and free-will, he could at least^{see} the elements of truth in them, and was honest enough to leave them unsolved. Many later theologians in "solving" the problem have done so simply to yield their own dear honor to a sad nemesis. Aeschylus knew the human heart, and was not unfaithful to it. He vindicated the ways of Zeus, affirming insistently his righteousness. His difficulties have remained the difficulties of later times. Sophocles likewise had a message. Not emphasizing the doctrine of a nemesis to the extent that Aeschylus did he pressed home all the more the fact of personal accountability, the goodness of Divine administration, and the very valuable belief that suffering is not necessarily evil. He invested "the traditions of Hellenic religion with a higher spiritual and intellectual meaning, and more generally in the harmonious perfection of his poetical art." He could do this because he "saw life

steadily, and saw it whole." Euripides was also a prophet of the soul. He was not afraid to criticise the popular religion, but it was ever in behalf of morality and reason. His scepticism was a mist from the deeps and by no means a fog on the land. Whether he dealt with things "human", or rose to gather music from "the spheres", he was always a great poet of religious faith. And so we might continue to speak of Grecian theology. It was the poet who made it. "Greek poetry, in its noblest forms, was indeed the *πτερόν δύναμις*, 'the power of the wing', for the human soul."

I have thus purposely dwelt upon the religion of Greece, contrasting it with a representative priestly religion, as an important testimony to the comparative worth of priest and poet as teacher.

Consider now the poet in the age of the religious propagandist. By this term I mean that one of man's religious teachers whose chief work it is to instruct, to win men to an acceptance of his religious views. He is a missionary. The priest's duty was to mediate between God and man; the propagandist is concerned with the advancement of the faith

to which he clings. His place is not a prominent one in ethnic religions. The sphere of his propaganda then was among his own class of people. Exceptions are found, but are not of great significance. "King Tarquinius of Rome," who as President Warren relates, "caused Valerius Soranus, a duumvir," to be sewed up in a sack and thrown into the sea, for the crime of showing to Petronius, a Sabine, a book relating to the Roman religion," is a testimony to their general lack of missionary feeling.

But nothing is more natural than the work of the propagandist to a living religion. It has been because ethnic religions have been of those who regarded themselves a "peculiar people", separated from others, that they had not this desire. Whenever emphasis is laid upon a universal brotherhood, whenever it is admitted that "God has made of one blood all nations of men", the zeal of a propaganda is sure to appear. Christianity brought this feeling. It was and is the world-religion. Its command was to "go", and to "teach." Its yoke was to be an apostleship; its burden was to be the patient responsibility of an evangel. Hence it could only be natural

that the epoch of Christian evangelization should be the peculiar epoch of the propagandist. His work was of primary importance. It cannot be said, on the whole, that he has done it well. He has been absorbed in other things, in speculation, in self-seeking. His sceptre has not always been a right sceptre. The Lord has not hastened things very much in his time. His work is evidently then far from being fulfilled. Until the world is made one under the power of the Christian evangel, until the religions of the world become the world-religion, the command is yet unto the Christian missionary, the Christian preacher, the Christian pastor. It has been the teaching age. The thirst of the world has been for knowledge.

What has been the influence of the poet in this period? Poetry is not essentially didactic. The poet may teach great truths, may indeed bring knowledge to men, may see and disclose something of the unseen mysteries of life; but in his great moods the poet is not didactic. Knowledge is to him, not the message, but is a power behind the message. God without his own peculiar wisdom could not fashion his poem

of the sunset, but his sunset is not a text-book. The Hebrew bard who said, "The heavens declare the glory of God," and spoke of the speech and knowledge which were "uttered" and "proclaimed," viewed such manifestation from the standpoint of the human truth-searcher, and in this he was right; had he meant that the end and aim of such manifestation were educational, his sentiment would need to be regarded very differently.

There are indeed to all wise men

"tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

Sermons in stones, and good in everything;"

but the man who would, therefore, suppose that nature is a pedagogue would accuse himself of strange misconception.

Knowledge is indeed essential to progress. Education must be the burden of all beginnings of development. New life must come before new aspiration, that aspiration may itself bring a new and sweeter life. The first bearer of the world-redeeming evangel brings, as his Master brought, of this abundant life. He has learned that the Truth makes men free, and his is the consuming passion to carry that message of deliverance. Yet the world by wisdom cannot know God; it can only know about

Him. The work of the one teacher, therefore, should be supplemented by the work of another. Men must be made to realize that knowledge is life only as it shall emancipate from those earth-born and dust-returning ideas which mean death. The desire for this truth, then, has been too much the desire for it in preconceived forms. Men have cared more for the dead shell of form than for the sustaining kernel of the truth itself. Matthew Arnold has said, "Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion." Yet the development of Christian theology has unfortunately been more associated with philosophy than with poetry. Especially was this true until the great and noble expression of modern verse. The Founder of Christianity was necessarily a teacher. But in his power of soul-interpretation, in his gift to inspire, in the sublime theophany of his own transfigured, spiritual glory, he was nearer poet than philosopher. He who was the Truth and the Wisdom of God is less conceived of as a bringer-in of knowledge than as one whose life and vision brought inspiration and motive. It may be said that He who was the Truth was not philosopher because He was also the life. In his wisdom he chose common men to his

apostleship that they might also care less for theories than they cared for the message of life. In so far as men have been obedient to his standard Christianity has been a power; in so far as they have gone to the other extreme it has been a philosophic mood. And the choice is yet between Christianity as a world-mood and Christianity as a world-power. The past inclines to one; the signs of late-returning promise give hope of the other. It is right to speak of "the philosophical undertones of poetry", since all true poetry must have them. But they are precisely "undertones." Great poetry, however, must have also its overtones. They are the overtones, not of philosophy, but of spiritual intuition. It is the undertones of this truth-searching, the overtones of this spiritual interpretation, as well as the full harmonies of a specific and sincere expression of a message to the age which alone can make great poetry. In this the true minstrel follows the guidance of Him who was and is the life, the truth, and the way. There is, therefore, as much a logical likeness between the Divinely commissioned minister and minstrel as there is radical likeness between their first meanings.

Now when we turn our attention to men who may be called representative verse-expressers of the truth to which we have been speaking we cannot but feel that it is true indeed of any great poet. For while there is a way in which each is closely related to his age there is also an highway, cast up for these ransomed souls, in which they are "not for an age but for all time." Evidently one cannot here be limited to poets of the Christian era. As the priest of the past has continued to live, with a lessening influence, in this epoch of propagandism, so the poet of the past has continued to live, with a widening influence. Ethnic pride has sometimes served to narrow his sphere, but in his more sublime moments he has uttered that which unites all human hearts.

Consider even the creators of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, epic poems of India. Their limitations are many. There is something even of priestly arrogance when the creator of the one says, "The study of the 'Bharata' is an act of piety. He that readeth even one foot believing hath his sins entirely purged away." Yet his confidence is not to be dispised when he says, "The son of Satyavati (Vyasa) having by penance and meditation analyzed the eternal Veda afterwards

compiled this holy history." But the Mahabharata rises far above priest-craft in its general worth. It is in reality a protest against Vedic rites as a means to man's highest destiny. It is a call to faith, less noble indeed than would issue from a prophet of the world-religion, but as clear as could be given to the people for whom it was written. The Ramayana is fanciful to an extreme, filled with the super-human in its details of the conflicts on the blood-stained hills and plains of Lanka. But it does not lack human sympathy in its more significant meanings. The hero, Rama, is perhaps as noble as one could expect in a time and among a people where our ideals of nobility were to some extent wanting. He wins for man a higher place than most ethnic religions have given him. Man becomes at least, according to this Poet's interpretation, a servant of his God, not his victim and not his care.

One can hardly refrain from some mention of the brilliant astronomer-poet of Persia, Omar Khayyám. His also was a message that lives. The man whose soul was touched with light of stars, whose faith had something of the serenity of

that ether in which he also dwelt apart, could only be expected to have broken with the priest-made orthodoxy of his times. His sympathy was with man and not with creed. He knew that creeds were but garments which become moth-eaten; but, celebrating as he did the supremacy of the good things of life over the sorrows and the corruption, his fame also does not sleep out has the eternity of that good in which he reposed his faith.

The Hebrew religion was also ethnic in form. That which was living within it has indeed entered into the world-religion; it has fulfilled itself in Christianity. But there was no college of the propaganda on Mt. Zion until its gathering at Pentecost. Yet the Hebrew poet, because a prophet not only of Israel but of the human soul, proved his right to be herald of that world-power. Observe how that which has been of vital interest in the awakening and enriching of man's spiritual nature, through the Hebrew's gift, has come through the message of Israel's poet-prophets. The prophet was unquestionably poet; the poet is as certainly prophet. The Roman's tongue was right, -- vates means both. So then, the men who gave us the inexpressibly beautiful religious lyrics,

the touching and courageous rhapsodies, the grandly heroic prophetic drama, are the men of Israel who gave the world its religious faith. The Hebrews had a priest-craft, but it bequeathed the world only the traditions of men. It was the prophet, whose lips were touched with living fire, who had dreams of holiness and saw visions of glory, whose feet never got above the earth yet whose heart never mingled its blood with dust,--it was the poet-prophet who gave men the redeeming and satisfying faith of Hebrew theology. He made the missionary zeal of the Cross possible.

To speak of Christian poets it is necessary to pass thirteen centuries of Church history. These were the centuries which saw the origin and development of those forms of mental and spiritual bondage which modern times have so labored to free us from. The propagandist failed to rely upon the enthusiasm of an experimental faith, but chose rather a certain machine of his invention to do the work of evangelization. He was concerned with the mechanical operation of the machine. The whole thing was very unpoetical; it was, after a manner, wonderful to be sure. So is any Juggernaut. That of the Hindoos which only crushed the flesh and bones of men was; this of the

Christians which crushed reason and aspiration was even more so.

But in such an age Dante was born, one of the early signs of a promise to be fulfilled. It was an inauspicious age for one of his sort. But some one had to rescue the soul's own Alcestis from the grave. This man had Herculean proportions. Upon his face was the sorrow of his age and mission. His countrymen thought he had been in hell. No, for then he would have had the smiles of release upon his face. Dante knew that he was in hell. Yet, beginning there, on men's level, inspired with that "new life" which had been already given him, led by reason and revelation and sainthood, he opened the twelve gates of heaven itself to men. Grant that his ideas are sometimes crude. The forms of his expression are the forms of a period of thought which we do not delight to recall. But this is only saying that in this instance as always the poet begins on the plane of the mental and spiritual culture of his surroundings. It was for this reason, in part, that the name "Commedia" was given to his masterpiece; he had adapted himself to vulgar conceptions that he might lead up and away to grander ideals. He was a Catholic, but only in the sense that the whole Christian world was then Catholic. He was helping to

initiate faith's protest, reason's revolt; and from his day unto this no great poet, none who in any sense could be called a world-prophet, has ever been of that Church. The antiquity of her forms, the stateliness of her worship, the interest and wonder of her traditions, all might seem to command a poet's Muse. But they do not. Nothing can wing the true poet's fancy that does not also wing the sincerest aspirations of his soul. Ireland may be as rich in legend and story as England, but she is not as rich in poetry.

To a striking degree John Milton is much like Dante. His greatest work also is bound up with decaying forms of vulgar belief. One must know his age to estimate rightly his work. But there is also resemblance in a more creditable way. To both there were those

"Thoughts that wander thro' eternity;"

both had the epic grandeur which attends the words only of chastened souls; both put all that was enduring of the heritage to which they were born into their work. Each of them gave expression to a better theology and a stronger life than the age which they represented held to.

Such then are representative men of the periods which we have considered, in so far as men whose insight makes them to be "for all time" can be so associated. There must admittedly be something arbitrary in such classification. And yet it is not wholly, I think, a matter of convenience. There is a certain affinity. But we must consider now whether or not the poet may have an age peculiarly his own, and what may be his worth to such a time.

I have held that the priest was not without his mission, that the propagandist was a natural requirement for his commissioned task. However much one may blame either that he was not something better, one cannot blame either that he was not poet. They prepared the way for a sweeter minstrel. The poet cannot be either priest or propagandist, although he unites both in himself. He is mediator and he is reformer; but only as he can be these in pursuing his different aim. He also, as they, is teacher; yet his mission is not to instruct but rather to inspire. He is himself a seer, and brings to others a revelation. But his revelation is not of that ore which philosophy brings up from the mine, delving in nature's gloom, lighted by a feeble torch; it is rather the making clear of

another kind of secret. Of this Goethe spoke, naming it "the open secret;" and Carlyle asks, "Which is the great secret?"-- only to answer, "'The open secret,' open to all, seen by almost none." The world should give thanks that some few men value the blue sky and the living green more than they value a smoky heaven or an upturned sod. Their thoughts if less commercial are at least more inspirational. With them we can associate the thoughts of an immortal spirit; of the others we can only speak as of men who choose the associations of the sepulchered dead. We may indeed be inclined to think such men visionary. Very well, this may be only to commend their sight. They do see. To them there is a "light that never was on sea or land" to any filmy-eyed mortal, because it is "the consecration, and the Poet's dream." The sea of glass mingled with fire is to them no unreality. Give them a chance and they will disclose new meanings unto us. They will not bottle the light, but they will open our eyes.

There are names yet to be mentioned---and unfortunately they can only be mentioned---which represent to us very much indeed of what may at last be found as the influence of such teachers upon our ultimate theology.

Here stood Shakspere who gave to us the most voluble, and the most accurate, expression of the human heart which the world has yet heard from any one man's lips. The heart unlocked its secrets to him that he might utter them to his fellowmen. The moods of the human soul through every change, from lowest despair to supremest aspiration, are traced upon his unequalled canvas. It was his to be the high-priest of this new line. He also was without descent or posterity, since that which is of the race makes of little concern such minor affinities. To this Melchisedec faithful Abraham must again pay tithes of reverence. Yet while cosmopolitan and of the race two elements are especially marked in this man. Shakspere was Greek---the spirit of those ancients breathed with new force and faith through his drama; Shakspere was Teutonic---the chivalry, the clash of arms, the hearth-side love, the wild freedom, the looseness and the glory of past centuries lived, and died to live again, upon his platform. He staged nothing less than the world itself. It is moral principle that gave strength to his work; it is spiritual insight that approves it with / immortality.

Shelley, as Shakspere, was Christian; but as Shakspere

had Greek and Teutonic strains of notable strength, Shelley was in a broader sense ethnic. Some would hold that he was altogether heathen. In his best moments it was far otherwise. He was ethnic only in form; the shreds and patches betray their source. But the real fabric was made in other looms; and is worthy to be a part of the garment of God, a vesture for the clothing of man's intellectual and spiritual nakedness in forms of grace and beauty.

Robert Browning was in some sense yet greater. His antecedents of character lead us to the Hebrew. Little wonder, therefore, that his poetry should be of great religious meaning. He had the Hebrew's mind for interpreting God. He knew the secret faith of the world,---that faith which is hidden under forms and shadows of fear and creed,---and was a world-interpreter thereof. He could make David and Renan speak one language, and that the language of a purified belief. His words will free us from many trammels. He has given a light that will shoot rays of condemnation through outworn creeds, showing them to have been but crude ideas. Yet he was not reformer save as light reforms. In this is such teacher's greatness.

Alfred Tennyson is also a prophet of our faith for these better times. He is perhaps the most wholly modern of whom mention is made,---modern because so representative of all the past which is good, and because facing all the future which is bright with hope. To him the world was young; its greatness was not in its perfection but in its early promise. The human soul was on an upward pathway. We were but leaving the animal age, sensuous in its power for low enjoyment, for the spiritual age, sensuous in its power for extraordinary happiness. He perhaps as much as any man broke through the veil of flesh to commune with that known but inexperienced world which surrounds us. His verse is nobly attuned to "that world-prophet in the heart of man." Knowing him no man but must "cling to faith beyond the forms of faith," and realize that a new prophet of power has been among us.

What shall I more say? The time would indeed fail me to speak of men who in any thorough study would necessarily be included; or to undertake such elaboration as would show the full extent of the poet's influence on the theology which is now ours; or, finally, to insist that the religious teaching of the future must be, not indeed by verse-makers principally,

but by men who learn well their method of teaching. The Carlyles and the Ruskins are as truly of this class as are the Tennysons and the Brownings. These are men who have the prophet's mantle, men who are seers moreover, men who rejoice at the gleams of dawning hope as the warder in the "Agamemnon" rejoiced, though with a better knowledge to match their zeal. The true teacher of men must bring inspiration; he must enlarge our hopes that we may widen our horizon. The hope today of spiritual progress is, as it has ever been, with the men who "through prayer to that eternal Spirit" see visions and dream dreams. The poet has spiritualized our religion, made it something different from the ceremonies of the temple, from the dogmas of the schoolmen. He has made it attractive with all the beauty of holiness, an attractiveness which is not begotten of fear, nor of ignorance, but of love. He has freed it from burdensome limitations, from unwholesome doctrines. He has shown the reality of that world around and above us, of that joyful habitation coming down out of Heaven as the city of God. This prophet needs no temple, for "the walls of the world are that;" he needs to claim no special right to be mediator, since he has but proved what he invites all men to

prove. He does not go against nature; knowing well the truth of the Dutch proverb which (when translated) is, "Nature is too strong for doctrine." He holds ever to the reality, even though it be the reality of the unseen. His power is what it is only because his own life is at the full. In the Norse mythology Odin himself, as sovereign of the soul, was represented as the inventor of poetry. Aptly does this fact signify to us the relation which this Divinely commissioned teacher must ever have to the bringing about of that ultimate spiritual dominion which the Sovereign of the soul meant should henceforth be ours.

Wm. French Martin

