

tianity stands at the centre of things, and fulfils and completes them all.¹

Oh, turn me, mould me, mellow me for use.
Pervade my being with thy vital force,
That this else inexpressive life of mine
May become eloquent and full of power,
Impregnated with life and strength divine.
Put the bright torch of heaven into my hand,
That I may carry it aloft
And win the eye of weary wanderers here below
To guide their feet into the paths of peace.
I cannot raise the dead,
Nor from this soil pluck precious dust,

¹ William Scott Palmer.

Nor bid the sleeper wake,
Nor still the storm, nor bend the lightning back,
Nor muffle up the thunder,
Nor bid the chains fall from off creation's long
enfettered limbs.

But I can live a life that tells on other lives,
And makes this world less full of anguish and of
pain ;
A life that like the pebble dropped upon the sea
Sends its wide circles to a hundred shores.
May such a life be mine !
Creator of true life, Thyself the life Thou givest,
Give Thyself, that Thou mayest dwell in me, and
I in Thee.²

² Horatius Bonar.

Pioneers in the Study of Old Testament Poetry.

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I.

Lowth.

It is self-evident to the modern reader that much of the Old Testament is pure poetry. Yet this sense was long in penetrating the mind of the Church. The Reformation had broken down the magical conception of the Bible that prevailed under Romanism. But gradually the older view regained its influence. Intent as Protestant scholasticism was on rearing a solid system of infallible knowledge, its leading representatives came to regard the Bible as a mere quarry for texts, with little appreciation of the literary quality of the books. There were, no doubt, many sensitive souls who still felt the warm breath of pulsing spiritual life in those thrilling utterances of devout men of old, and æsthetic natures, often without the pale of the Church, who were deeply moved by the spell of Bible poetry. But in the orthodox schools the whole was read as hard, dry prose, and the loftiest imaginations of inspired seers were brought down to earth, and trimmed and shaped into square-cut, uniform blocks for the dogmatic structure.

The honour of having given the first impulse to better things belongs to England. By natural inheritance as well as training Robert Lowth (1710-1787) was a typical English scholar. The youngest son of Dr. William Lowth, rector of Buriton, in Hampshire, himself a distinguished

writer on Biblical subjects, he evinced from his early schooldays in Winchester remarkable aptitude in Classics and Hebrew, besides winning somewhat extravagant encomiums from admiring friends for certain poetical effusions in the then current mode. His subsequent course as a student of New College, Oxford, added to his reputation, while his ecclesiastical career was one long triumphal march. His first preferment (in 1744) was to the rectory of Ovington, in his native county; thence he was promoted successively to the Archdeaconship of Winchester, the Canonry of Durham, and the Episcopal Sees of St. David's, Oxford, and London. In 1783 he was chosen to succeed Dr. Cornwallis in the Primate's Chair; but this crowning honour he was single-minded enough to decline, on grounds of age and infirmity.

The distinction which brought himself the keenest pleasure, however, and that which was to prove so eventful for Biblical scholarship, was his appointment to the Oxford Chair of Poetry in 1741. This involved the delivery of a certain number of lectures on some aspect of poetry during the usual ten years' tenure of office. The subject chosen by Lowth—*De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum*—at once attracted attention by its novelty. Interest deepened as the course proceeded. But it was only with the pub-

lication of the lectures in 1753 that the epoch-making character of the work won full recognition. A signal proof of the value attached to it by the ripest scholarship of the age was given as early as 1758, when the famous German Orientalist, J. D. Michaelis, issued the first volume of his annotated Göttingen edition. The publication of the second part in 1761 was accompanied by expressions of profound gratitude to the author for the 'insight, acumen, and industry' so conspicuously displayed throughout the work. By 1775 this German edition was twice reprinted. In England, too, fresh editions were called for. Translations into English and French followed in due course. And till well into the nineteenth century the book maintained its place as the standard authority on the whole subject of Old Testament poetry.

Of late years Lowth has been treated with scantier respect. This is perhaps the inevitable fate of pioneer work, the broad results of which, achieved with such toil of heart and brain, soon become common property. But the lectures also suffer from certain weaknesses that lie on the surface. Lowth had admittedly little knowledge of the cognate Semitic languages, and brought to his appreciation of Hebrew poetry a mind trained rather on classical models. He was, moreover, a child of the mid-eighteenth century, who shared in the general æsthetic prejudices of the time. His polished, 'elegant' Latin style seems anything but a fitting dress for a sympathetic presentation of the 'simple, sensuous, and passionate' genius of Hebrew. The 'occasional' character of the lectures, too, betrays itself in a certain lack of scientific method. In the earlier stages of the work the author is often evidently groping after light. Thus he may throw out swift intuitions, which are only fully developed when he has passed on to other portions of the field. But with all its limitations, Lowth's work is a real classic, which still deserves careful attention. He was a genuine scholar, with a sufficiently exact knowledge of Hebrew to entitle his judgments to the respect of more technical experts; he enjoyed, too, the friendship of Kennicott, who has enriched the later editions of the work with valuable annotations. He was filled with a warm enthusiasm for his subject, espousing the cause of the despised Hebrew writers with all the ardour of a Schleiermacher before the cultured indifferentists of his day: 'Why,' he asks, 'should we allow the writings

of Homer, Pindar, and Horace to engross our attention and monopolize our praise, while we pass Moses, David, and Isaiah silently by?' (p. 22).¹ The latter are for him the very princes of poetry; and all his efforts are devoted to opening blind eyes to see their real glory. In spite, too, of his classical traditions, he is all for reading the Hebrew poets by their own light. 'We must endeavour, as far as possible, to read the Hebrew writings as the Hebrews themselves would read them,' imagining ourselves 'in the same position as those for whom they were originally written, or even as the authors themselves' (pp. 55 ff.). And though a son of the eighteenth century, Lowth was possessed of a critical genius that raised him quite beyond his time. He had a real feeling for poetry. It was naturally the results of his highly original investigations into the more formal aspects of the subject that brought him fame as an epoch-maker. But his genuine appreciation of the force and fire of the old folk-songs of Israel, and the prodigal wealth and boldness of Oriental imagery, together with his insight into the heart of prophecy, may justly entitle him to be regarded equally as a father of inward, spiritual criticism, a herald of the oncoming romantic movement, which was to infuse new life into Biblical study, as into so many other regions of human interest.

The opening lecture, delivered within a few weeks of his appointment to the Chair, sets forth his general conception of poetry. Here he moves at first strictly inside the narrow bounds of eighteenth-century criticism. The ultimate end of poetry is defined as *utility*—specifically, *moral utility*. The poet is really a teacher of the moral virtues. His function is thus essentially the same as the philosopher's. The two, in fact, differ only in the means they severally adopt to reach their common end. 'The one appeals exclusively to the reason; the other addresses the reason in such a way as to engage the feelings also on his side. The one pursues the nearest and most direct way to virtue and truth; the other leads thither through various deviations, by a winding but much more pleasant path' (p. 4). The poet is even likened to the physician who 'tempers his most disagreeable medicines with pleasant flavours' (p. 5). But

¹ The references throughout are to Michaelis' edition, as revised by Rosenmüller (Leipzig, 1815). In the English renderings I am indebted for many idioms to Gregory's translation.

as he warms to his subject, Lowth also is caught up in the 'poet's ecstasy,' and under its influence rises almost clear of the prison walls. He feels increasingly that the real genius of poetry consists in 'that peculiar frenzy of poetical natures which the Greeks, attributing to Divine inspiration, term *ἐνθουσιασμός*' (pp. 41 f.). This is most evidently the secret of the 'amazing power' of lyrical poetry, which is the immediate utterance of intense human feeling. But all true poetry is found to flow from the same well-spring of emotion. In particular, the Divine sublimity of Hebrew poetry is traced directly to the freedom, force, and passion of the poets' feeling (pp. 148 ff.). 'Indeed, by far the greater part of the sacred poetry of the Hebrews is little else than a continuous expression of different emotions. For what in reality forms the sum and substance of all these poems, but the feeling of admiration, excited by the contemplation of the Divine power and majesty; joy, springing from the sense of God's favour, and the happy issue of events as directed by Him; the passion of holy wrath and indignation against the impious enemies of God; the emotion of grief arising from the consciousness of sin; and terror from the apprehension of Divine judgment' (pp. 182 f.).

With this growing sense of the inward inspiration of poetry, Lowth recognizes the secondary importance of mere rules of art. 'It is evident that the principles of art must be deduced from the monuments of distinguished genius, not that works of genius acquire their distinction from the applied adornments of art' (p. 23). The one thing needful in literary criticism would thus be sympathy with the spirit of the writer. Yet an acquaintance with artistic principles is of real help to spiritual appreciation. Thus Lowth addresses himself to a penetrating investigation of the form of Old Testament poetry, to discover, if possible, the general rules of versification. Here he found himself in a peculiarly difficult field, one strewn with the wreckage of former attempts.¹ He went boldly on his way, however, and met with a rich reward. It might be impossible ever to reach certainty; for the original

¹ Lowth played an effective part in exposing the weakness of one of these attempts. In 1736 Bishop Hare published an edition of the Psalms, to which he prefaced a metrical hypothesis based on classical models. Lowth subjected the whole to a careful analysis, and as the result claimed that his own metrical speculations and Hare's were entitled to equal attention and authority,—'that is, none at all!' (Appendix to *De Sacra Poesi*, pp. 401 ff.).

pronunciation of Hebrew has been lost, probably beyond recovery. Yet Lowth remained convinced that Hebrew poetry had some sort of metrical structure. For he had already divined the intimate connexion between poetry, music, and dancing, and felt that poetry must have a 'measured movement' to be accompanied by song and dance. He was able to trace in the Hebrew poets, too, certain indications of regularity in metre. Such poetic liberties as the contraction of ordinary forms of speech and the addition of old case endings, for example, could only be explained as attempts to produce lines of approximately equal length. He noted, besides, a general symmetry in the structural arrangement of poems (pp. 28 ff.). How the rhythm of the separate verses was measured he was too early an investigator to discover. But even in the first stages of his work he had the genius to perceive the rhythm of thought or feeling that links the members of the verse together into an artistic harmony. 'The poetry of the Hebrews shows a peculiar conformation of sentences, the nature of which is, that a complete sense is given in practically every one of their component parts. . . . This is chiefly observable in those passages, found almost universally among the Hebrew poets, where they treat one subject in many different ways, dwelling all the while on the same theme; where they repeat one and the same idea in different words; or where they combine different ideas within the same form of words, as when like things are related to like, or opposites set in contrast to opposites'; the whole arrangement yielding 'an agreeably measured cadence' (p. 36). In this paragraph we have the first explicit recognition of the principle that was to be henceforth so intimately associated with Lowth's name—that of the *parallelismus membrorum*. But much ground had to be covered before the principle could receive its full development at his hands.

No fewer than fourteen lectures are devoted to the artistic graces of poetic speech, including such subjects as the choice and arrangement of words to secure a more exquisite mode of expression than befits the common dialect of prose, the sententious style so characteristic of Hebrew poetry, the bold ellipses and sudden transitions of tense which heighten the pictorial effect, the love of personification, by which 'all is animated and informed with life, soul, and feeling,' the lofty sublimity of the poets' aspirations after God, and

the chief realms of nature and life from which they draw their imagery. Many a fine saying is to be found scattered through these chapters, notably on the picturesque power of the simple Hebrew tenses (pp. 160 ff.), the daring flights of Oriental imagination (pp. 59 f.), and the ennobling of the commonplace through the consecrating touch of inspired Hebrew genius (pp. 70 ff.). But one dwells with more interest on the appreciations of illustrative passages which meet us from time to time, such as the dramatic close of the Song of Deborah, with its note of 'eager anticipation' broken by a silence more expressive than the most highly coloured speech (pp. 140 ff.), the 95th Psalm, with its 'revelling joy' in God (p. 184), the mingled terror and majesty of Job (pp. 150 ff.), and the soaring imagination of Isaiah, whom he does not hesitate to describe as 'the sublimest of poets' (pp. 142 ff.). If some of these judgments appear trite and obvious to the modern reader, this is but added evidence of Lowth's essentially modern viewpoint. In his literary tastes he had really far more in common with the renaissance of the close of the century than with the artificial oracles of his own age. He was, indeed, one of those prophetic souls who saw and welcomed the dawn of a new day from afar.

In his survey of the various species of Old Testament poetry, Lowth deals first with prophecy. For he had the insight to perceive the real spiritual kinship of prophet and poet. Not merely was the prophetic movement in early days closely associated with music, dance, and song, but much of its classical literature abounds as fully 'in metaphors, allegories, comparisons, and even in sustained descriptions' as poetry; it possesses 'the genuine enthusiasm which is so germane' to poetry; 'it excels, too, in that boldness of imagination and energy of spirit which are the main springs of poetic sublimity; and thus also it shows itself often exceedingly happy in the expression of the feelings, though it is more constantly given to the rousing of them' (p. 231). In spite of his entanglement in the outworn conception of prophecy as 'impenetrably obscure' foreshadowing of things to come, this recognition of its vitally poetic quality made Lowth in this field also a breaker of new and very fruitful ground. No one has acknowledged the importance of his suggestion more cordially than Eichhorn. 'In what a miserable condition did he receive this inheritance from the hand of former interpreters!

The combined strength of theology and philology then seemed devoted to the darkening even of the feeble light that had been kept alive from antiquity. If one except the fine example of Grotius, what an array of foolish will-o'-the-wisps did not exegetes bring to the interpretation of the prophets? Now, with Rabbinic lexicon in hand, these writings were literalized, and expounded in the driest and most barren of ways; again, they were dragged down to the lowest abysses of mystical explanation; and yet again, out of an excess of Western philological knowledge, they were overlaid with etymological burdens. . . . What we are now, we owe, in part at least, to Lowth's help; through his investigations and the example he has given us of scholarly achievement, he has carried forward Biblical science several steps nearer to the goal.¹ Lowth was one of the first interpreters of Scripture, likewise, to do real justice to the individuality of the writers. 'For the mind of the prophet is by no means so possessed by the Divine Spirit that the natural genius of the man is crushed under. Rather are the faculties elevated and ennobled; and though the writings of Moses, David, and Isaiah always breathe the spirit of a certain celestial impulse, we can yet clearly discern in them the marks of a Moses, a David, and an Isaiah' (p. 167). Thus he is led to a careful study of the peculiar characteristics of the different prophets. Here, too, we are struck by the distinctively modern touch of his sympathies. Thus, for example, he enters a warm protest against Jerome's depreciation of Amos as 'rude in speech'; to Lowth 'our shepherd is not a whit behind the very chief of the prophets' (pp. 245 f.). He notes the heart-broken pathos of Hosea, the copious flow of Joel, and the animation of Micah. 'But none of the minor prophets seems to equal Nahum in sublimity, ardour, and boldness. His prophecy, too, forms a regular and perfect poem; the exordium is not merely magnificent, it is majestic; the description of the preparations for the destruction of Nineveh, and the picture of its actual downfall, are drawn in the most vivid colours, and are luminous and powerful in the highest degree' (p. 246).

It is in connexion with prophetic poetry that Lowth elaborates his principle of parallelism (pp.

¹ *Allgemeine Bibliothek der biblischen Literatur*, i. 717 ff. On the significance of Lowth's intuition for the interpretation of prophecy, cf. also Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der Christlichen Kirche*, p. 650.

205 ff.). There is the less need to dwell on this subject, that the result of his researches has been incorporated, practically entire, in all modern discussions of poetic form. One may, however, note with interest, in the succeeding section on Elegiac Poetry, Lowth's suggestive anticipation of Budde's discovery of the *Kīnāh* or Elegiac measure. 'The length of the lines (in the four corresponding chapters of the Book of Lamentations) is worthy of more careful attention,—for here there is scarcely any possibility of error. The verses are clearly longer by almost one half than those we usually meet elsewhere' (p. 260). It needed but a surer catch of the pulse of Hebrew poetry to detect in Lowth's 'long line' a real couplet, whose second half has broken down beneath the strain of the heart's pent-up emotion.

In the chapter on Didactic Poetry—in which are included Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Ben Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon—there is little that can be claimed as distinctive. But when we pass to Lyrical Poetry, Lowth is again seen at his best. No more trace is to be found of the 'utility' motif of earlier lectures. 'The ode is by its very nature sufficiently expressive of its origin: it is the outflow of the most intense and delightful emotions of the human soul—joy, love, and admiration' (p. 285). The history of Hebrew lyrics is traced from the old folk-songs of the historical literature to the incomparable outpourings of the devout spirit in the Psalter. For combined sweetness and sublimity Lowth does not hesitate 'to prefer these Odes to all the monuments of lyrical poetry among other nations' (p. 290). The interpretation of the two remaining books—Song of Songs and Job—suffers from traditional prejudices. But here too

there are gleams of light. Though lacking in a sustained plot, and thus not to be described as dramas in the strict sense of the word, the two are dramatic in their general cast and play of characters. The former is really an *epithalamium* or 'nuptial play,' having for its theme Solomon's union—possibly with the daughter of Pharaoh (pp. 341 ff.). But underlying its secular dress the Church is probably right in reading a mystical allegory of the love of God for His bride, the spiritual community of believers. At all events, its note of fervour combined with the finest delicacy of affection makes the book worthy of such a motive (pp. 346 ff.). Lowth follows the tradition of his age in regarding Job as the oldest extant piece of literature,—though he denies its supposed Mosaic authorship on the basis of a comparative study of the 'Mosaic' books. The portrayal of Job and his friends, he maintains, is founded on fact, though the dialogue proper is largely embellished with pure poetry (pp. 365 ff.). The object of the poem appears to be 'the commendation of humility and faith, combined with the profoundest reverence for God, as necessary even to the holiest of characters' (p. 378). Inspired by such a motive, the book rises to the very height of poetic sublimity. 'As this poem easily excels all the other monuments of Hebrew poetry in arrangement and disposition of parts, so does it yield to none in sublimity of style and all the other graces of diction' (p. 398).

Even from this rapid sketch it will be seen in how many ways Lowth prepared the ground and sowed seed for a rich harvest in days to come. But the first-fruits of that harvest were to be reaped in another land and by a very different genius from his.

The Twelve Stones in the Apocalypse.

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SOME years ago my attention was drawn to the lists of precious stones mentioned in Ex 28¹⁷⁻²⁰, Ezk 28¹⁸, and Rev 21^{19, 20}. A comparison of the LXX Version of the lists in Exodus and Ezekiel convinced me that in all probability the lists were equivalent. (This I afterwards saw to be in agreement with the conclusion of Professor Flinders

Petrie in his article in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.) It was necessary, however, to assume a transposition of the 6th stone in the Ezekiel account or the 12th in the Exodus list, as the identity of *yāshēpheth* (the 12th stone in Exodus) with *iaspis* (the 6th stone in Ezekiel as given in the LXX Version) could not reasonably be