

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

by the strongest bonds to truths that are everlasting, to rights that are inviolable, to interests that are spiritual and imperishable. It is these that give to society its importance, and to history its dignity. Let the clergy of our country understand their true position and their legitimate influence and power on all great moral questions; and then let them be found at their posts, contending for the truth and standing up for the right with unfaltering fidelity and constancy.

---

#### ARTICLE IV.

#### ATHENS, OR AESTHETIC CULTURE AND THE ART OF EXPRESSION.<sup>1</sup>

BY REV. W. S. TYLER, D.D., PROFESSOR, ETC., AMHERST COLLEGE.

AMONG the distinguishing characteristics of Athens, as they are sketched by a master-hand in the funeral oration of Pericles,<sup>2</sup> especial prominence is given to freedom of individual culture, together with the versatility of character and the variety of pursuits and attainments which are the natural result of spontaneous development. These, in the estimation of that consummate orator, statesman, and ruler, who has given his name to the golden age of Athenian glory, made Athens *worthy* of the heroes who fell on the field of battle, and upon whose patriotic and heroic virtues he was chosen to pronounce a eulogy. Unlike the Spartans, and most of the other nations of antiquity, the Athenians excelled alike in the arts of war and the arts of peace. The land and the sea were equally subject to their dominion.

<sup>1</sup> This Article was delivered as an oration before the Porter Rhetorical Society, in the Theological Seminary at Andover, at its anniversary in August, 1862. The introduction and the conclusion have been omitted. In other respects it is now printed in the form in which it was then delivered.

<sup>2</sup> Thucyd. II. 35-46.

Agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, all flourished at Athens, and in those colonies which Athenian enterprize established on the shores of the Mediterranean. The virgin goddess who gave name to the city and presided over its affairs, was goddess at once of war and of wisdom : while she extended her patronage over the useful arts, the fine arts, at the same time, rejoiced under her inspiration. "The same persons," says Pericles, in the oration just referred to, "pay attention at once to their own private concerns and those of the public; and the same class of men who are engaged in the labors of life, show no want of skill in the affairs of government. For we are the only people who deem him that takes no part in state affairs not only indolent, but utterly worthless." Nor were the mass of Athenian citizens more adepts in the science and practice of government, than they were connoisseurs in literature and the fine arts. The Greeks cultivated every species of literature, science, and art, and they excelled in every species to which they gave their attention. As we gaze on the monuments of their genius which have come down to us, we are at a loss to determine which is the most admirable, which the most perfect, the history or the philosophy, the oratory or the sculpture and architecture, the poetry or the mathematics. As proof of this, it is only necessary to mention the names of Euclid and Sophocles, of Thucydides and Plato, of Phidias and Demosthenes, representative men of this representative city and people. The muses were all born in Greece, all daughters of the Grecian god Zeus, and brought up at the feet of his son Apollo; and the sacred nine, as they are represented in the Hall of the Muses in the Vatican, grouped around their divine leader, with all their variety of form and face and costumes and instruments, and followed by long lines of poets and lawgivers and orators and philosophers, are an appropriate symbol of the whole circle of mental activities at Athens, of the fulness and freedom of development, as well as the beauty and inspiration which marked the whole literary culture of the Greeks.

And the order in which the several branches of Greek literature were developed is even more remarkable than the freedom and fulness. They came forth, one after another, in the natural and normal order of succession, like the branches of a goodly tree planted in a fertile soil and under a genial clime; we might almost say, like the revolutions of the spheres, in that harmonious order and arrangement which is the highest beauty, and which the Grecian philosophers so well expressed by the characteristic word *κόσμος*. In no other age or country does the history of literature correspond so entirely with the philosophy; nowhere is the theory so fully sustained by the facts.

Theoretically poetry, the language of the memory, the imagination, and the heart, takes the precedence, in literary culture, of prose, which is the language of the understanding, the reason, and of every-day life. Moreover, epic poetry, which is national, objective, and unconscious, is naturally followed by lyric poetry, which is self-conscious, subjective, and individual; and this, again, is as naturally succeeded by dramatic, which, partly epic and partly lyric, partly objective and partly subjective, is a union of the two. Prose, when it becomes the vehicle of literature, naturally admits of a threefold division, corresponding with that of poetry: history answering to epic poetry, philosophy to lyric, and oratory to dramatic — history objective, narrative, self-forgetful, national, perhaps universal; philosophy subjective, speculative, discursive, self-conscious, individual, perchance more or less personal; oratory, combining the essential features of history and philosophy with a third element of action, at once objective and subjective, general and particular, and what is most characteristic, not only *speaking* itself, in the first person, and speaking *of* persons and things in the third, but speaking *to* an audience in the second; and the speaker and the hearers acting and reacting the one upon the other. And here, again, in the natural and normal order of development, philosophy follows history as theory follows practice; and oratory — oratory as a branch of *literature* that will live and be perpetuated — succeeds history and

philosophy, as the more complex comes after the more simple; and in fact oratory, like that at Athens, cannot *exist* except where a free and a cultivated people furnish a fit audience.

Now the remarkable fact in regard to the history of Greek literature — a fact so well known that it only requires enunciation — the remarkable and obvious fact is, not only that the Greeks had all these various branches rooted and matured among them, but that their literary history proceeded almost without an anomaly, developing, in due order and season, “first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear”; just as it should, according to the theory of literature and the philosophy of the human mind.

But in a book on *representative cities* — a book we should like to see written by the author of “Representative Men” — Athens would stand as the special representative of aesthetic culture and the art of expression. With the law of order, the idea of beauty pervades and fashions the whole literature of the Greeks. In the earlier Greek poets, this idea seems to be intuitive. The beauty of their conceptions and the harmony of their verse are spontaneous. Homer’s epics are beautiful for the same reason that the light of the sun is beautiful; and, for the same reason, they transmit a perfect image of nature — of men and things as they were in the heroic age. Sappho and Anacreon sing of love as naturally, as sweetly, as harmoniously, as swallows twitter or doves coo.

The Greek drama is apt to strike the uninitiated as unnatural because it is so unlike the modern stage. But it seems unnatural only because it is the *ideal* of nature. It is the harmony of nature and the supernatural; in other words, it is nature in a supernatural age and state. A tragedy of Sophocles is a perfect flower, a manifest growth; only it is so symmetrical and so perfect, that we are half-persuaded it must have bloomed in paradise. “The first idea of the Greek dramatists was to exhibit their personages with heroic grandeur, a dignity more than human, and an ideal beauty. The fidelity of the representation was less their object than

its beauty. With us, it is exactly the reverse."<sup>1</sup> The tragedies of the Greek masters are real, and yet eminently ideal. They are, in a sense, copies of nature; but they are, in a higher sense, pieces of that true and high art which is the perfection of nature. In reading them, we seem to see, not living men of our own day, walking before us in their ordinary gait, and conversing in plain, colloquial prose, but the heroes and demigods of a former generation, or, which is essentially the same, the animated statues of heroes and of gods, moving from their pedestals with a measured and stately step to the sound of music, and declaiming on superhuman themes in strains of lofty verse, and with a voice that may be heard by an assembled nation.

The prose literature of the Greeks is scarcely less artistic and ideal than their poetry. History, philosophy, and oratory, not less than architecture, sculpture, and painting, were fine arts, as conceived and executed by that tasteful and refined people. Their histories, like their epics, had an idea and a moral; had a definite subject and a limited period with "a beginning, a middle, and an end";<sup>2</sup> had a kind of plot with its development, crisis, and conclusion; had their narrative diversified with dialogue, and enlivened by speeches which were not, perhaps, actually made by the speakers, but might have been and ought to have been, and which shed light on the men and the times in which they lived. Herodotus felt that he was writing a great prose epic, a sort of sequel to the Iliad and Odyssey, in which the Persians and the Greeks — Asiatics and Europeans — still battle for king or country, to maintain their own rights and liberties, or to avenge the wrongs of former generations; and in all which "the will of Jove is accomplished,"<sup>3</sup> and an overruling, avenging providence asserts its unfailing "*Nemesis*."<sup>4</sup> And as if to consummate the analogy, his nine books were named after the nine muses, and were rehearsed, like the poems of Homer, at the Olympic games and the Panathenaic festivals.

<sup>1</sup> Schlegel's Dramatic Literature.

<sup>2</sup> Aristot. Poet. VII.

<sup>3</sup> Hom. Il. I. 5: Διὸς δ' ἐτελελετο βουλή.

<sup>4</sup> Herod. I. 34: ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεις.

The dialogues of Plato exemplify, to perfection, that love of beautiful forms and artistic structure which is characteristic of the Greek mind. They answer to Aristotle's definition of *poetry*.<sup>1</sup> They are *imitations* — imitations of actual Socratic conversations, with all the details of time, place, and circumstance. They are pictures, bodying forth to the senses the essential idea and spirit of philosophy; for what is philosophy but a continual *inquiry* and search after truth. Even the style is characterized by Aristotle as intermediate between prose and poetry. No tragedy of Sophocles has a more dramatic structure, no comedy of Aristophanes a more pleasing dialogue, no epic of Homer or lyric of Anacreon more grace and affluence of language, no temple or statue in all Greece a more artistic form and finish, than the dialogues of Plato.

Attic oratory was formed scarcely less to please than to convince and persuade. Or rather it proceeds on the principle that the way to convince and persuade a people so ideal and refined as the Athenians, is not more to enlighten their understandings and move their passions than to gratify their taste. The bema, like the stage, furnished entertainment to the labor-shunning, pleasure-seeking, laughter-loving Athenians; and that *action* which Demosthenes declared to be the first, second, and third requisite in oratory, was expressed by the same word (*ὑπόκρισις*) which originally and properly denoted the *representation* of the actors in the theatre. Never before nor since has there been such an audience as that which listened, or refused to listen, to the Attic orators. The mass of Athenian citizens, in whose hands were concentrated all the powers of legislative, judicial, and executive government, educated to a man, of acute understanding, of cultivated taste, difficult to please, requiring to be instructed like a senate, and yet to be amused as in the theatre; canvassing measures like statesmen, and criticising words like rhetoricians; played upon by demagogues, like an instrument of thousand strings, and at the same time swaying the sceptre over sea and land; they

<sup>1</sup> Aristot. Poet. I.

assembled in the Pnyx, from day to day, scarcely more to transact the business of the state than to see their orators enter the lists against each other, like gladiators in the Roman amphitheatre, or knights in the tilts and tournaments of the Middle Ages. Never before nor since has there been such an oratory as that of Demosthenes — so artistic in conception, so faultless in execution, so fitted to tickle the ear, and delight the eye, and satisfy the taste that Bulwer, with apparent reason, declared it to be a mere play, suited to amuse the Athenians, but utterly incapable of persuading a modern audience;<sup>1</sup> yet, at the same time, so replete with the facts and arguments and measures required by the emergency, so business-like and statesman-like that Legaré, with better reason, pronounces his orations “the true and only models of popular eloquence — its *beau idéal* — for all times and all nations.”<sup>2</sup> Nothing more strikingly illustrates the high intellectual culture and refinement of this wonderful people, as compared with the Romans, the Spaniards, or even the citizens of our own republic, than the fact that politics was their amphitheatre, the struggles of such orators as Aeschines and Demosthenes for political ascendancy were their bull-fights; and they called by the elegant name of τὰ καλὰ<sup>3</sup> those honors and offices of the state which we, with too much truth to our utilitarian ideas and our practical policy, denominate “the spoils.”

Religion at Athens was scarcely more a creed and a ceremony than a recreation and a fine art. With all its flagrant sins against the ἄγιον and the δίκαιον, the whole mythology of the Greeks, from the earliest times, was developed with the strictest observance of the καλόν and the πρέπον. In the golden age of Athenian civilization and refinement, the genius of their architects and sculptors was lavished on those temples and statues of the gods, so unlike the gloomy and sepulchral edifices and the images of deformity and monstrosity with which other heathen nations

<sup>1</sup> A Dissertation on the Eloquence of the Ancients, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Writings of Hugh S. Legaré, Vol. I. p. 444.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Xen. Mem. III. 1. 1.



have honored or dishonored their divinities,— those beautiful temples whose ruins, crowning the Acropolis, have taught architects in this nineteenth century lessons in architecture, principles of curvilinear beauty, ideas of grace, dignity, and proportion of which they had no previous conception, and those calm and majestic yet speaking statues, whose remains, marred and defaced by time, and exhumed from the rubbish of ages, are to this day the perfect ideal of the human “form and face divine.” The wealth and power of the state conspired with the genius and taste of individuals to adorn the sacred festivals. The festivals of Dionysus were the graceful and joyful occasion for the exhibition of “the new tragedies,” and for the proclamation of the honors which were bestowed on those who had deserved well of their country. The theatre, sacred to the god Dionysus, combined in its *logeum* the stage, the rostrum, and the pulpit, while its programme presented a curious mixture of pleasure, politics, literature, and religion. There, on the steep southern declivity of the Acropolis, basking in the sunshine of an Athenian winter, the citizens of Athens and strangers from every part of Greece, while they forgot not the worship due to the youthful and beautiful god, whose festival they celebrated and in whose theatre they were assembled, listened, day after day, to the trilogies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

The Panathenaic festival was a still more magnificent display. The solemnities began with prayers, sacrifices, and offerings to Athena, the patron goddess of the city. For several days the whole population gave themselves up to the celebration of games, contests, and processions. Footmen, chariots, and horses ran in the races. Gymnasts and musicians contended for the prize. Rhapsodists recited the poems of Homer; philosophers disputed on the merits of their respective schools; historians rehearsed their immortal productions — κτήματα ἐς αἰεῖ (as they fondly hoped) μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρήμα ἀκούειν;<sup>1</sup> and orators expatiated on the ancestral glories of Athens. And on the

<sup>1</sup> Thucyd. I. 20.

last day, the great day of the feast, the magistrates and the whole population of Attica, on foot, on horseback, and in chariots, marched in sacred procession from the Cērameicus along the sacred way, amid the monuments of the illustrious dead, first to the temple of Demeter at Eleusis, and then back through the streets of Athens, up the winding ascent at the west end of the Acropolis, through the Propylaea and beneath the towering statue of Athena Polias, to the Parthenon, where they laid the sacred *πέπλος*, embroidered with the triumphs of Athena over the giants, in the lap of the goddess whose festival they were celebrating. "Our laws," says Pericles, in the oration already cited, "have provided for the mind the most frequent intermission of care and labor, by the appointment of public recreations and sacrifices throughout the year, elegantly performed, with peculiar pomp, the daily delight of which is a charm that banishes melancholy."<sup>1</sup> A people of rare taste and culture must they have been whose favorite holidays were the Dionysiac and Panathenaic festivals! The Athenians derived something more than their name from the bright-eyed and brilliant goddess whom they worshipped.

Ethics was one of the fine arts among the Greeks. Their best philosophers identified the good with the beautiful; and this conception was so radical, so innate in the minds of the masses, that it is inwrought in the very composition of their language. The word by which they expressed the highest excellence is a compound word (*καλοκάγαθία*), which denotes by its constituent parts the union of the beautiful and the good. And practically the beautiful was the predominating element in their estimation. The beauty of goodness, "the beauty of holiness," is a Christian idea. The Greek idea was rather the goodness of beauty. This suggests the radical defect in the character of the Greeks, conspicuous in too many of their leading men, and seen too often in the conduct of the masses and the history of public affairs. The conscience, individual and national, was not developed. Instead of it the taste was cultivated, perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Thucyd. II. 38.

to excess. Hence judicial murder may almost be said to have been a fine art at Athens. They ostracised their political leaders by the same process of universal suffrage by which they elected their generals; and they administered hemlock to their philosophers with as much courtesy and grace as a cup-bearer would present a cup of wine to a king. Who can read the conclusion of Plato's *Phaedo*, without feeling that the death of Socrates was the poetry of murder on one side, as it was the poetry of martyrdom on the other. When we see the politeness of the executioner, the tranquility of the victim, the grace with which the poison was given and taken, and the decorum of the whole transaction, we ourselves partly forget the wrong in the beauty and dignity of the scene.

Even the mathematical and physical sciences became fine arts in the hands of the tasteful Greeks. Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, — so rigid is the demonstration, so perfect the unity of the *plot*, and so harmonious the development of the story, — is the very poetry of the mathematics. The *κόσμος* of Plato,<sup>1</sup> and of the larger part of the Greek philosophers, was a world of order and beauty; but it was as unreal as their world of ideas, and as much their own creation as the word which they appropriated to express it. Aristotle is an exception; but even his *Physics*, properly so called, are a series of metaphysical and, according to modern ideas, fanciful disquisitions on time, space, cause, and the like abstractions.

Conversation was a fine art at Athens. The elegant dialogues of Plato are only an imitation or expansion of the conversations which Socrates held every day of his life with the artisans in the shops and the people in the agora. When Paul visited Athens, "all the Athenians and the strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing."<sup>2</sup> And so when "certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him," they gave him Mars Hill for a

<sup>1</sup> See the highly poetical and truly magnificent description of the earth seen as a whole, seen from above (*ἐξ ἄνωθεν θεωρεῖτο*), in the *Phaedo*, LVIII. LIX.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 21.

pulpit, and bade him preach to them for their amusement.

In short, taste and imagination overflow all the speculations, all the productions, all the actions of this wonderful people: clothe them with graceful forms and expressions, invest them with an ideal and almost unearthly beauty. Paul says: "The Greeks seek after wisdom." They sought after beauty, also, with idolatrous veneration. In his funeral oration, — which ought, perhaps, to have been prefixed as a text to this Article, so often do we advert to it, — Pericles brings these two characteristics together, and uses two very characteristic words to express them: *Φιλοκαλοῦμεν*, he says,<sup>1</sup> *φιλοκαλοῦμέν τε γὰρ μετ' εὐτελείας, καὶ φιλοσοφούμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας*; that is, rendered as literally as possible into English, "We both love beauty (cultivate a love for the beautiful) with frugality, and we seek after wisdom without effeminacy." *Φιλοκαλία τε καὶ φιλοσοφία* — these words are both peculiar to the Greek language. The latter (philosophy) has been borrowed by the English and most of the modern European nations; borrowed from the same source from which they derived the philosophical impulse. The other (*philocaly*, it would be if transferred into English) does not exist, nor any single word that is an equivalent, so far as we know, in any modern language. It stands alone, the representative word of that remarkable people, "whom, whatever their errors" (we use the words of Bulwer's Athens<sup>2</sup>), "the world can never see again; with whom philosophy was a pastime — with whom the agora itself was an academy — whose coarsest exhibitions of buffoonery and caricature sparkle with a wit or expand into a poetry which attests the cultivation of the audience no less than the genius of the author, — a people, in a word, whom the Stagirite unconsciously individualized when he laid down a general proposition which nowhere else can be received as a truism, that the common people are the most exquisite judges of whatever is graceful, harmonious, or sublime."

If we inquire into the causes of this singular excellence,

<sup>1</sup> Thucyd. II. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Book IV. chap. v.

God laid the foundations for it when he laid the foundations of the earth ; when he based the whole country, not, like England and America, upon coal and iron, but upon Pentelic, Hymettian, and Parian marble ; when he not only built the mountains round about Athens of the finest materials for sculpture and architecture, but fashioned their towering fronts and gently-sloping summits into the perfect model of a Grecian temple, and lifted from the midst of the plain the Acropolis and Mars Hill — fit pedestals for temples and statues, fit abodes for gods and god-like men ; when he reared to heaven Helicon, Parnassus, and the snow-capped Olympus, where dwelt the muses and the gods, and poured down their sides the rivers in which the river-gods had their dwelling-place, and from which the muses derived their origin ; when he diversified the whole country with mountain and valley, with plain and promontory, with sea and land, with fountain and river and bay and strait and island and isthmus and peninsula, as no other country in the world, within the same compass, is diversified, and thus gave to each district almost every variety of soil, climate, and natural scenery ; when he drew the outline of the shores winding and waving, as if for the very purpose of realizing the ideal line of beauty, and spread around them the clear, liquid, laughing waters of the *πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης*, and poured over sea and land the pure, transparent air and bright sunshine which distinguish Greece in the dry season scarcely less than the rainless Egypt, and canopied the whole with that wonderfully deep and liquid sky, blue down to the very horizon, which is the never-ceasing admiration of foreigners who visit Athens.

God seems also to have made the Greek *race* originally of finer (we do not say *better*) clay than the other races, and moulded their persons more nearly after, not perhaps the divine archetype, but the *beau ideal* of the human form, and gave them an aesthetic nature singularly sensitive to all the beauties of the external world, attuned to all its harmonies, alive to all its life. For that philosophy of history is very defective which imputes the diversities of human character and life wholly to circumstances. Circumstances are only

the mould in which the nation is cast. Men, families, races, with their original and constitutional differences, are the materials which are run and fashioned in the mould. And the materials, not less than the mould, proceeded from the hand of God: *how, when*, we cannot tell; for the origin of races and languages, like the origin of countries and continents, is veiled in mystery which God alone can penetrate. But we may be sure that nature is only one pole, and that the negative pole too of human life. The positive pole is supernatural. And God is back of both. Earth *and* man — these are the elements of human history; and these both proceed from God. And it is just because *Greece* and the genius of the *Greeks* were so suited to each other, their nature was so adapted to their circumstances, or their circumstances were so adjusted to their nature — it was for this reason, that their whole development was so harmonious.

Hence their religion, the most refined system of idolatry that ever existed, was not the mere worship of nature, as some writers teach, nor, as others insist, the mere deification of man; but it was the worship of the beautiful and ideal in man *and* nature — the religion of nature in mysterious harmony with man and of man in wonderful sympathy with nature. Nature was full of nymphs, naiads, wind and river gods, and divinities of every sort. But even those gods that seemed to be impersonations of the elements, were more or less independent of the elements which they seemed to impersonate; and they all appeared in *human form*, not only when they manifested themselves to mortal eyes, but when they convened in the assembly of the immortals on Mount Olympus. And the idols (of which Athens was so full that, according to the proverb, it was easier to find a god in Athens than it was to find a man) were all modelled after some real or ideal type of humanity.

The Greek language, undoubtedly the most perfect medium through which human thoughts and feelings were ever expressed, — “the shrine of the genius of the Old World” (we quote from Coleridge’s familiar and magnificent

apostrophe to this wonderful language),<sup>1</sup> "as universal as our race, as individual as ourselves; of infinite flexibility, of indefatigable strength; with the complication and distinctness of nature herself; to which nothing was vulgar, from which nothing was excluded; speaking to the ear like Italian, speaking to the mind like English; with words like pictures, with words like the gossamer film of the summer," — this wonderful language was the *synthesis* of man and nature, as God made them in ancient Hellas; the genius of the Greek race clothing itself in the sunshine of Greece; Greek organs of speech speaking under a Grecian sky and through a Grecian atmosphere; the beautiful in man harmonizing and sympathizing with and expressing itself through the beautiful in nature, as probably man and nature never harmonized and sympathized anywhere else. And Greek literature is the music which that wonderful instrument of unknown sweetness and flexibility and depth and power, the Greek language, gave forth when played upon with its infinite number and variety of stops and keys by the masters of Grecian eloquence and song. Greek poetry is a reflection of scenes and scenery on the islands and shores of the Aegean. But Greek poets were the only mirrors — compassing those islands and shores like the Aegean itself, and more placid than that sea in its most tranquil moods, or its most quiet harbors — which could give back so perfect a reflection. Attic oratory is simple, unaffected, pure, clear, transparent as the air of Attica or the waters that wash her marble shores. But Turks and Bavarians, to say nothing of modern Greeks, breathe the same air and walk the same shores; and might do so forever without catching a breath of the same inspiration. The Acropolis is nature's own pedestal, and Pentelicus nature's own plan and outline for a Grecian temple; and Athens was alive with faces like those of Pericles, Plato, and Demosthenes, which were fit models for the statues of the gods. But other cities, too, had their citadels as grand, and some heroes as godlike as

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the Study of the Greek Classic Poets, concluding chapter.

those of Athens ; and yet no Parthenon crowned their brows, no Minerva Promachus invited ships far out at sea to their harbors. The Athenian Acropolis would not have been the envy of all Greece if the genius of Pericles and the architects and sculptors of his age had not adorned it with the Propylaea, the Parthenon and the Erechtheum, and those images of divinity which clustered in and around them. Mars Hill was made and set over against the Acropolis as if for the express purpose of being the judgment-seat of the Areopagus and the pulpit of Paul. But Paul only could have preached such a sermon there : combining the logic of the Jew and the learning of the Greek with the faith, hope, and love of the Christian ; gracefully acknowledging the devoutness of the Athenians, quoting their poets as authority, and even recognizing elements of truth in their religion ; but boldly censuring their idolatry, pointing to their gods of gold and silver and stone, graven by art and man's device, and declaring them to be no gods, and summoning the Areopagites themselves, with the whole crowd of curious spectators, to a coming judgment, infinitely transcending in solemnity that which they were wont to administer, before the Son of man whom God had raised from the dead, and appointed to judge the world in righteousness.

To the two causes already mentioned of the aesthetic superiority of the Greeks, we must add a third : the excellence of their system of education. Education at Athens was usually conceived as threefold : *γυμναστική*, *γράμματα*, and *μουσική*—gymnastics, letters, and music.<sup>1</sup> The first included the whole training of the body ; the second, instruction in the common branches of literature and science ; the third, the cultivation of the taste and the emotional nature : or, as the name imports, the whole department of the muses. Aristotle, and some other writers, add a fourth department, which they called *γραφική*, or drawing and painting.<sup>2</sup> Of these three or four departments, we scarcely recognize any but the second, the culture of the mind, as

<sup>1</sup> See Olympiodorus's Life of Plato, Plat. Op. Leipsic ed.

<sup>2</sup> Aristot. Polit. VIII. ii.



belonging to the system of education ; whereas the Greeks gave a special prominence to the very two which we leave out of our category, viz. physical, and emotional or aesthetic culture. The first, gymnastic or physical training, so important was, it deemed, occupied more time than all the others ; and even after the other branches were suspended, this was continued through life. Believing a healthy and beautiful body to be the essential condition of a healthy and beautiful mind, they *lived* out of doors, breathed the open air and drank in the sunshine ; thus perfecting and perpetuating the sympathy with nature which God had given them. Their young men might almost be said to live in the *gymnasia*, where, under porticos or in open courts, in the sunshine or beneath the shadow of lofty plane-trees, as they chose or the weather required, they ran, leaped, boxed, wrestled, danced, pitched quoits, played ball, and engaged in every variety of graceful and invigorating exercises. Thus were developed those fine physical forms which still live and breathe in Grecian sculpture. Thus were trained the hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, and the voice ; the whole speaking person and action of the Athenian orators. These schools were the germs of the entire elegant culture of Athens. Learning and taste gathered around them ; genius and art adorned them ; and at length the three principal Gymnasia — the Academy, the Cynosarges, and the Lyceum — grew into the three great schools of philosophy which have ever since engrossed those honored names.

The third department, *μουσική*, beginning with the soothing of the passions by music, properly so called, and the formation of the manners by the rhythmical movements of the dance, proceeded to the cultivation of the taste in literature, poetry, and the fine arts, and embraced finally all the accomplishments of the scholar and the gentleman. Homer taught the noble Grecian youth lessons in taste and morals, with the myths of their religion and the legends of their earliest national history. The tragic poets, whom Milton styles "teachers best of moral prudence," were even better teach-

ers of that purity and propriety of taste, that dignity and decorum in manners, and that harmony and proportion between the inward feelings and their outward expression, which may most fitly be denominated *music*. The philosophers lectured and conversed on the principles of aesthetics, while the orators and actors furnished the brightest examples of a faultless action; and even the comic writers, with all their license of ridicule and buffoonery, invested their productions with such graces of genius and taste, that the wisest and best of the philosophers wrote this epitaph for the wittiest and most sarcastic of the comedians: "The Graces, seeking an imperishable abode, found the soul of Aristophanes."<sup>1</sup> The theatre, the Pnyx, the Agora, the Areopagus, the Acropolis,—in a word, all Athens was a school of aesthetic culture, over which the muses presided, and in which, by the best masters, they taught all the arts; but more than all, and in them all, the art of *musical*—that is, harmonious and beautiful—expression. "All Greece was like an earthly Olympus,"—so says Frederic Jacobs, in his eloquent discourse on the "Moral Education of the Greeks," given to English readers by the most genial and elegant of American scholars, too soon, alas! snatched away, not only from Cambridge but from his country, by his recent sudden death,— "all Greece was like an earthly Olympus; and at every step the shapes of the immortals in human beauty, met the sight, or rose before the imagination of the traveller."<sup>2</sup> Jacobs's passionate admiration for the art and education of the Greeks, has led him into an indiscriminate apology for their vices, and a eulogy of their moral virtues which is not sustained by the authority of the ancients themselves, and which the best modern scholars, Professor Felton among them, refuse to sanction. The polished Greeks unquestionably sat for some of the darkest features of the dark picture of heathen depravity which the Apostle Paul has sketched in his Epistle to the Romans. And so prone is man to run to extremes and pervert even his virtues into

<sup>1</sup> Life of Plato by Olympiodorus, above cited.

<sup>2</sup> Classical Studies, p. 346.

vices, this corruption grew in part, no doubt, from the partial and excessive culture of the outward and aesthetic graces. It is no excessive admiration, still less indiscriminate imitation of Greek culture, that we advocate. On the contrary, we would repeat the proverb of the old Greek moralist: *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, and would fain hope we may "better reckon the rede than did the adviser."

One of the most discriminating, and at the same time one of the most beautiful articles that we have ever read on Greek literature, is another jewel in the same collection of gems from the German, rendered into English by another ripe and rare scholar, whose dust is among the sacred treasures of the seminary which he so loved and adorned by his life: "Nowhere," says Bishop Tegnér, in this article as translated by Prof. Edwards,—"nowhere have the materials, the stores of knowledge, been so closely united with their form, nowhere have they grown so much together, as with the Greeks. The *idea* was always one element only in culture. The other element, which was just as essential, was the expression, the visible representation of it in accordance with the general laws of the beautiful. The external form, for them, was never a matter of indifference. The Greeks were born to the love of beautiful forms. That which distinguished them was a natural sense for the apt and the fitting; an innate dislike of extravagance in any shape; an affection, as just as it was delicate, for true proportion—for that which is both the rule and the substance of real beauty. In aesthetics, we speak of the line of beauty. If it could be found, we might affirm that old Hellas lay within it. This separated the Greek from the barbarian. Hence the Greek taste has been regarded by all cultivated nations as the standard in various respects. Whatever falls short of it, or goes beyond it, is weak, extravagant, or confused." <sup>1</sup>

There can scarcely be a greater contrast than that which exists between the ancient Greeks and the Americans of our own day. In character, as well as in geographical situation,

<sup>1</sup> Classical Studies, p. 37.

they are almost the antipodes of one another — a long sea and a broad ocean intervenes between them. As in time, so in culture, they stand at the two extremes in the history of the great European family of nations. The Greeks were preëminently an aesthetic and ideal people. We are proverbially practical and real. They were nicely observant of the outward form and expression. We are content with the substance. In wealth of ideas, in depth of thought, and boldness of conception, we doubtless surpass them. But we are greatly inferior to them in beauty and fitness of representation. They finished every thing which they undertook. Their historians toiled all their lives on a single volume. Their orators spent a decade of years in polishing one oration. Their philosophers occupied the last days of a long life in revising and perfecting the style of their immortal works. Their artists were content to be a long time in painting pieces that were destined to last a long time. We are too much in a hurry to finish anything. With some honorable exceptions, our literature, like our agriculture and our architecture, to a foreign eye bears evident marks of haste. Our style of writing and speaking, like our gait in walking, is rapid, vehement; perchance negligent and rude. We are a fast people. We talk about "Young America." Has there ever been any America that was not young? We are a nation of young men, running the race of life, to see who will despatch every part of it the quickest. In this sense, we *finish* everything. We "finish our education" while we are boys; finish our business or profession, or are finished by it, before we reach middle life; and finish life itself just as we ought to be entering on the wisest and most useful portion of it. A model man, perhaps, would be one who should unite the understanding and wisdom of an adult with the innocence, simplicity, and joyfulness of a little child. The pattern teacher, preacher, man of business, man of power in any profession, wears an old head on young shoulders. His heart never grows old. The Greeks never grew old in their feelings and sympathies. They were as full of mirth and sport and life and joy as if

they had been a nation of children. They combined the natural and simple grace of childhood with the dignity and decorum of manhood. We are just the opposite. There are no children in America. It might almost be said there are no men. We are a nation of boys, wearing often at a very early age the wrinkles and furrows of age, but transacting private and public affairs with too much of the hurry and restlessness, not to say recklessness of boys not yet out of their teens. Previous to the commencement of the war, we had not passed beyond the sophomore year in our education. The nation is notorious, all over the world, for sophomorical bragging and bluster. And as the prevailing style always reflects the spirit of the age and the manners of the nation, our authors, particularly our orators, show a prevailing tendency to a sophomorical style of writing and speaking. That serene repose which is so characteristic of Greek and Latin authors that it is called classical, is wanting in a large part of our popular literature, especially in our popular eloquence, while the public taste inclines to that pomp and passion and extravagance to which the Greeks were so averse. The war has done much to make the people more manly, thoughtful, serious, earnest. The last year has wrought changes sufficient to be the work of an ordinary century. And it is to be hoped that henceforth we shall enter on a new era — an era of literary as well as social and political regeneration.

As in the complex nature of man, so in all the productions of human intellect, there are two parts: soul and body, substance and form, idea and expression. When either of these two elements is neglected, there cannot be a normal, symmetrical, healthy development. The ancient Greeks were, doubtless, excessively devoted to the culture of form, manner, style; and this was, negatively, to say the least, one cause of their moral degeneracy. The moderns are too exclusively absorbed in the substantial and the material. And among the moderns, none are so negligent of everything pertaining to mere form and outward expression, as Americans. Compare the eloquence of the American Congress

with that of the British Parliament: not more earnest and impassioned, perhaps not more thoughtful and profound, but certainly, as a whole, more manly, more elevated, more cultivated and refined, even as the manners of Westminster are more dignified and decorous than those of Washington,—more classical even, as British statesmen have almost all received a university education, while too many American statesmen are self-educated; which, in the sense in which it is commonly used, is another name for no education, though in another, and better sense, every man who is educated at all, is self-educated. Compare the English quarterlies with our own. How much more elaborate, complete, finished, are the articles! The same comparison might be extended to the English encyclopaedias, to the English and French dailies, to English, French, and German works in literature and science. The British pulpit, in general, is inferior to ours in learning, in earnestness, in depth, and power. But there is a breadth of culture, a savor of accurate and thorough scholarship, a classic repose, an unaffected ease and tranquil grace of manner in the brightest lights of the British pulpit,—such, for instance, as Robertson and Trench and the Bishop of Oxford,—which is rarely, if ever, seen in America. The New England clergy as a body, in intellectual discipline, in theological training, in moral and spiritual culture, in all the substantial qualifications for their work, were never surpassed, probably never equalled, by the clergy of any other country or any other age. At the same time, there is not now—it may be doubted if there ever was—so large a number of clergymen so indifferent to all the graces of style and elocution. There is no part of the world where there is such a prodigious loss of power in the delivery of sermons as in New England. In this respect, we are behind our brethren in the Middle states, at the West, and even at the South. Indeed, where is there a pulpit or a learned profession, from which the Congregational clergymen of New England—the most learned and pious, and in many respects the most able, ministry in the world—might not learn a useful lesson in regard to delivery? Soon

after the great Athenian orator failed in his first attempt to speak before the assembled people, he was met by a distinguished actor, who pronounced after him some passages from the Greek poets, and thus explained to him the cause of his failure. Would that some better Satyrus might meet our preachers after their miserable failures to move or interest their people on the Sabbath, and teach them the same lesson. They would soon come to the conclusion of Demosthenes, that action — that is, correct *representation, answering exactly* to the truths and emotions to be *represented*, — is the first, second, and third qualification of an orator. And if, by years of retirement, study, and practice, they could work in themselves, in any considerable measure, the change which that orator wrought in himself, their people would be startled, at their next appearance before them, as by a new creation. Delivery is by no means all that belongs to correct representation; but proper delivery alone, without any other improvement, would effect a revolution in the American pulpit and, through the pulpit, in the people. If the very same sermons which were read (and mangled and murdered in the reading) in the pulpits of the country last Sabbath, could be delivered in the same pulpits next Sabbath by such speakers as we have all sometimes heard, the audience would not recognize them; and the very same hearers who then went away unmoved or disgusted, would go away next week charmed, instructed, perhaps converted.

This is no trifling matter. Here is a loss of moral power which ministers ought never to have allowed, and have no right to perpetuate. Here are several *thousand* talents laid up in a napkin. Herein they wrong at once themselves and their profession. Herein they rob God and man, and violate the proper law and order of the universe. Grace is the proper dress of truth; and it is a shame to leave her naked, or clothe her in rags or ill-fitted garments. Beauty is the native form and expression of goodness; and to mar that form is to commit high treason against the majesty of goodness herself. God arrays truth and goodness in forms of ex-

quisite beauty, both in his works and in his word, and his ministers should go and do likewise. "Consider the lilies of the field. Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." This is the language of the Son of God to his ministers. Listen to the harmony of nature. Behold the beauty, variety, fitness of the scriptures. God hath joined truth and grace, goodness and beauty, as matter and form, as thought and expression, throughout his universe; and what God hath joined, let not man put asunder. Nay, God hath joined them together as body and soul; and to separate them is not only robbery and sacrilege, but murder. The connection between thought and style, ideas and their expression, is properly organic and vital, and anything which tends to sunder them, or to cherish one at the expense of the other, strikes at the health and life of both. Not only does thought necessarily act upon language: language reacts upon thought, speech upon reason, as the manners react upon the character and the body upon the soul. "Men believe," says Lord Bacon, "that their reason is lord over their words. But it happens, too, that words exert a reciprocal and reactionary power over our intellects. Words, as a Tartar's bow, shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment." And so expression reacts upon emotion, the delivery upon the heart and the character. He, therefore, who allows himself to write and speak in a cold or careless or slovenly or otherwise unseemly manner, is deranging, dividing, distracting his own nature, doing violence to his own physical, mental, and moral constitution, and thus greatly wronging himself as well as his hearers.

It is much easier, of course, to point out a defect of this kind than it is to apply the remedy. But it is not difficult to see at least the direction in which the remedy must be sought.

In the first place, our professional men, particularly our clergymen, should apply themselves more diligently, not only in the preparatory school and college, but in the study and practice of their profession, to the language and lit-



erature of the Greeks. There is the *supply* of the very article we *demand*. The Greeks had in its perfection the aesthetic culture in which we are deficient. They were masters of the art of expression, in which we are as yet but rude boys. They are the world's teachers in this art; and other nations excel in it just in proportion as they learn of them. The superiority which we have been constrained to acknowledge in the best English writers and speakers, is the result of their almost exclusively classical education in the English universities. The writers of the golden age of English literature, and especially the preachers of the golden age of the English pulpit, were nurtured almost entirely on the Bible and on Greek literature. Read Homer. "To be Homeric," as Coleridge remarks in the singularly graceful conclusion of his study of the Greek poets, "is to be natural, lively, rapid, energetic, harmonious." Study Plato. He is the divine writer as well as the divine philosopher, as affluent, flexible, and inimitably graceful in his style, as he is subtle, lofty, and profound in his speculations. Sit at the feet of the Attic orators. To be *Attic*, as we have before remarked, is to be simple, graceful, clear, transparent, as the air of Attica, pure and beautiful as the waters that wash her marble shores.<sup>1</sup> In a word, go to Athens. Adopt as your own the motto of all in ancient times who sought after the most finished culture: εἰς Ἀθήνας.

Were there time, we should be glad to dwell on several incidental advantages which would result from this familiar converse with the great lights of antiquity, especially of Athens, — advantages which, extending beyond aesthetic culture, penetrating deeper than style and manner, or anything merely external, might, peradventure, reach the moral and political philosophy of the age, and help to correct some of the most dangerous tendencies of modern civilization. The philosophy of Comte and Buckle, wholly mate-

<sup>1</sup> Of Demosthenes the pulpit orator might learn, not only to use "fit words in fit places," but also to stem the tide of popular degeneracy, to prefer a heroic failure to an ignoble success, and to breathe the breath of life into "the ribs of death" itself.

realistic and intellectual as it is, to the exclusion, and his moral and emotional culture, is at the expense of the Athenian philosophy; and it is, as a result, was not arrayed like historical as it is unchristian. That of the Son of God to of genius and industry, but no less by of nature. Behold of pride, vanity, and ambition, the scriptures. God hath never could have been written by a profound classical scholar. It could have been written only by a man who had broken loose from all veneration for the past, all reverence for authority, human and divine. And we know of no better antidote to its false teachings and corrupting tendencies, than the study together of the Bible and the classics.

The study of the classics might conspire, with the study of the Bible, to correct, also, that extravagant estimate of the intellect above the heart, that worship of the intellect and neglect and contempt of the heart, which is the besetting sin of our age; might contribute to restore the virtues of the heart to that place in the esteem of men which they hold in the divine estimation; and so teach us to honor, instead of despising, individuals and races which may perhaps be inferior to ourselves in intellectual capacity, but are certainly superior to us in wealth of emotions and the virtues of the heart. The Ethiopians, though deriving their name from their dark complexion, were the favorites of the gods in the Homeric age. And in the sight of him who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart, their modern representatives may still be looked upon with more favor than their haters and oppressors, and may yet have a grand history, when confederacies founded on the principle of their inferiority have become extinct, and when proud states which refuse to own them as brethren, or even to admit them within their territory, have been humbled beneath the mighty hand of him whom Greek poetry, as well as the Hebrew scriptures, recognize as emphatically the God of the poor and the stranger.

But to return to our subject. In the next place, appropriate and assiduous culture is required in the art of ex-

erature or The objects of mental education are usually said article we *demand* discipline of the mind and the acquisition aesthetic culture in which must be added, or these two will masters of the art of what use to a public speaker, and that but rude boys. They can, or the power of communicating and other nations expect to say: Make sure of the matter, and the manner will take care of itself. This is not true in good breeding, much less can it be true in good writing and speaking. Every faculty of the mind, like every organ of the body, must have its appropriate culture. The cultivation of the memory and the reasoning powers cannot take the place, or supersede the necessity, of cultivating the taste and the imagination. The exercise of the hands and the feet is no substitute for the training of the voice. Still less can the discipline of the mind supersede the training of the body, and of itself secure bodily health, beauty of person, or grace in action. Good writing, like everything else in our world, has a body as well as a soul; and the body as well as the soul must have its specific care and culture. Good *speaking* is doubly external, requiring not only a good style, but also a good elocution. Oratory is the most complex of all the branches of literature, the most difficult and at the same time the most useful of the arts, and therefore, perhaps, the highest attainment of human genius. It is the *whole* man speaking to the whole man; the whole spirit and soul and body of the orator speaking to the whole body, soul, and spirit of his hearers. Grecian eloquence was the culmination of Greek literature — the result of the whole physical, mental, and, to use their word, *musical* culture of the Greeks; and such eloquence will never be formed by the mere study of the sciences in college, or of theology in the seminary.

We shall not be suspected of an intention to depreciate literature or theology. Mental discipline, accurate scholarship, a thorough acquaintance with all the departments of human knowledge, as well as with that greatest of sciences, the science of God, must, of course, be the foundation of eminence in the clerical profession. But it is *only* the founda-

tion, and, so far as any practical use is concerned, might about as well not have been laid, unless the superstructure can be added. Alas! how many of us who preach the gospel give our hearers occasion to say: "This man began to build, and was not able to finish." If we could acquire a good delivery in no other way than by the sacrifice of half our knowledge (though we do not know any too much), those who are so unfortunate as to be obliged to hear us, would be great gainers by the exchange.

The practical difficulties in the way of reform, we are well aware, are very great. Our climate, our organs of speech and nasal pronunciation, our intellectual rather than emotional constitution, our undemonstrative natures and unsocial manners, our partial and one-sided education,—all these are against us. And though we have the grandest themes, the most inspiring objects and occasions for eloquence, yet there are circumstances not a few in our profession which tend to produce a hasty, formal, canting, and artificial style of writing and speaking. Still all these difficulties have been overcome; and what has been done can be done.

We must begin at the beginning. And that is physical education. Here, fortunately, the current of popular feeling and of educational effort is now setting in the right direction. The majority of clergymen have not the *bodily health*, the arms and *sides*, the lungs and organs of speech, to make good speakers. They want also the animal spirits, the physical courage, the strong and hearty *tone* which can come only from a hearty and healthy body. A good gymnasium in every college and theological seminary, with systematic and well-directed gymnastic and calisthenic exercises, continued *as a part of the course*, through the seven years curriculum, would do much to remedy this defect, and to give the next generation of ministers more ease and grace, as well as power of action and utterance. With this ministers and candidates for the ministry should connect as much as possible of that living *in the open air*,—not moping, but real *living*, walking, running, leaping, and laughing *in the open air*,—that communion with external nature, and

that observation of men and things, which, more than anything else, has given the most popular preacher in the United States his powerful frame and his commanding eloquence.

With physical culture must be connected the culture of the emotions. We must keep our hearts young, fresh, joyous, full of love and sympathy with all mankind. The heart is the fountain of eloquence. And if we would keep our emotions healthy in our own hearts, or impress them on others, we must not repress them, but express them in all natural ways and on all suitable occasions. If we would give forth music, like the Greeks, we must have their musical education. When our whole physical, intellectual, and emotional natures are thus brought into harmony with each other and with the world around us, then, perhaps, but certainly not till then, "have something to say, and say it," will be the only rhetorical rule which we need observe; then, like Milton, we can

"feed on *thoughts* that *voluntary* move  
Harmonious numbers."

In regard to the direct study and practice of elocution, it must be confessed that it has not ordinarily been attended with such success as to be particularly encouraging. The professors of the art, too many of them, like Hamlet's players, so overdo and "strut and bellow," that you "would think Nature's journeymen made men, they imitate humanity so abominably." And the best that can be said of not a few of their pupils, is, that they are not worse than their teachers. On the other hand, from the days of the Athenian orator to the present time, there have been examples of the most brilliant success in the most unpromising subjects; and the failures are so manifestly the abuse and not the proper use of the art, that so far from being an argument for its neglect or rejection, they plead eloquently for a wiser study and a more persevering practice.

In order to be really successful, the practice should begin earlier and take a wider range. It should begin in the family, in the very nursery, with the formation of the person and the manners, with the expression, in the common rela-

tions of life, of all right feelings by all right words and actions. It should be continued in the common schools by the cultivation of good breeding, good reading, and good speaking, step by step, along with the branches of elementary education. Good reading is the foundation of good speaking; and good reading, like good spelling, must ordinarily be acquired in childhood. Good reading is as rare in the pulpit as good speaking; and good reading in the pulpit—good reading anywhere—is a higher accomplishment than all the ologies. Instead of being crammed with a smattering of all the sciences, let children, in their earlier years, be taught, by competent teachers, who can teach by example as well as by precept, to cultivate *music* in the wide sense of the Greeks, and to sacrifice to the Graces. And so throughout the preparatory school, the college, and the professional school, instruction in rhetoric and oratory should keep pace with instruction in literature and science. As fast as our young men discipline their minds and acquire useful knowledge, they should cultivate, by persevering practice, the power of expressing their ideas in appropriate forms, and thus impressing them on others; remembering that, in this world, every living thing has a body as well as a soul, and that even the truth of God loses half its vital power if it is not clothed in “the beauty of holiness.”

After such an education, in which aesthetic culture has held its normal place, it will not be difficult to maintain the habit of expressing fit thoughts in fit words, and by appropriate actions. Still it behooves the preacher to remember through life, that the *idea* is only one element in preparation for the pulpit; the power of the pulpit will depend quite as much upon the *representation*. “Representation in accordance with the laws of the beautiful” was the element of immortal life and power in the literature of the Greeks. Expression was the life-long study of Greek orators, authors, and artists. Plato spent the last days of his life in revising the style of his “Republic.” Is not the art of expression worthy of assiduous study by those whose sacred office it is to communicate to men the true wisdom?