

A preliminary inquiry, however, will here demand attention, to which I have already given some thoughts in the first lecture. The inquiry relates to the mode in which the sacred writers describe natural phenomena.

Do they adapt their descriptions to the views and feelings of philosophers, or even the common people, in the nineteenth century, or to the state of knowledge and the prevalent opinions of a people but slightly removed from barbarism?

Do they write as if they meant to correct the notions of men on natural subjects, when they knew them to be wrong; or as if they did not mean to decide whether the popular opinion were true or false? These points have been examined with great skill and candour by a venerable clergyman of England, whose praise is in all the American churches, and whose skill in sacred philology, and profound acquaintance with the Bible, none will question, any more than they will his deep-toned piety and enlarged and liberal views of men and things. I refer to Dr. J. Pye Smith, lately at the head of the Homerton Divinity College, near London.<sup>1</sup>

He first examines the style in which the Old Testament describes the character and operations of Jehovah, and shows that it is done "in language borrowed from the bodily and mental constitution of man, and from those opinions concerning the works of God in the natural world, which were generally received by the people to whom the blessings of revelation were granted." Constant reference is made to material images, and to human feelings and conduct, as if the people addressed were almost incapable of spiritual and abstract ideas. This, of course, gives a notion of God infinitely beneath the glories of his character; but to uncultivated minds

<sup>1</sup> The news has just reached us that this venerable man is no more. I was present last summer at Homerton, when he resigned the charge of that beloved institution. From his addresses, and his prayers, so redolent of the spirit of heaven, I might have known that he was pluming his wings for his upward flight. I am thankful that I was permitted to see the man, whom, of all others in Europe, I most desired to see. Alas! how sad to think of such Christian philosophers, so soon removed from the world, and from all concern in it! Could I dare to hope that I shall meet them and kindred spirits before the throne of our common Redeemer, how should I exclaim with Cicero, "*O preclarum diem, quum in illud animorum concilium cælumque proficiscar, ut quum ex hac turba et colluvione discedam!*"