

lary, in the variety of its connective particles, in the richness of its grammatical forms and above all in its power of combining words as thought wrestles in its agony to find emphasis of expression, truth is stated with such nicety of discrimination and with such delicacy of shade as to signalize the Greek for the conveyance of Christian dogma. The Biblical student, after warring through elaborate commentaries, often recurs to the original text, surprised to find in itself the best exposition of its own meaning. And who does not know that, in the great controversies through which the creed of the Church was articulately framed in the early centuries, it was the precision of the Greek tongue which enabled the Christian Fathers to detect error, sometimes impaling it upon the shaft of a single letter in a single word.

But if the Divine care is disclosed in thus preparing the languages for the reception of His truth there is deeper significance in the fact that both were broken from the chain of living tongues as soon as they had fulfilled this purpose. Both the Hebrew and the Greek, after gathering into them the Divine testimonies, were sealed up as the urns in which those treasures should be preserved from change through all time. The Hebrew was arrested in its growth, so that it never passed through the stages of development necessary to bring it to perfection. I shall never forget the impression of this incompleteness made upon me when I first entered upon the study of that venerable tongue—nor my wonder that our educators had not embraced it in the curriculum by which our youth are trained, of illustrating how languages are formed and grow in exact accordance with all the laws of thought. This arrest was made under a series of providential dispensations carefully interpreted to us by the prophet standing always close to the historian, and which are so wonderful in character that they are read by us with tingling ears after the lapse of more than twenty centuries. Certain it is, that upon the completion of the Old Testament canon, the Hebrew passed into the sacred dialect, no longer used in ordinary intercourse, free from the fluctuations to which every living tongue is exposed, and consecrated to the one high purpose of preserving in its ark the solemn symbols of a prophetic and typical economy.

The same great change passed upon the Greek tongue, though less abruptly than upon the more ancient Hebrew. But when it had fulfilled its mission, first in receiving into its verbal forms the mighty mysteries of redeeming Grace, and then in defining amidst fierce controversies the creed of the Church, it too became a fixed, hard crystal, protecting from abrasion the precious treasure of Divine Revelation which it enshrined.

The significance of this fact needs but a word of comment. All living languages are in a perpetual flux. Words lose their original meaning, becoming often ambiguous, sometimes obsolete, and in a few instances expressing the exact opposite of its first import. Why, at the end of three centuries we are unable to read Chaucer and Spencer without the aid of a glossary. The modern reader is perplexed in deciphering the early versions of Wicliff and Tyndale. Since the period of the Reformation different versions of the English Bible have been made; and the scholarship of the English-speaking world is at this moment engaged in another and more careful revision, with a view to the expurgation of archaisms and conforming our existing version more nearly to the present state of the English language. Let us suppose then that the Hebrew tongue had been subjected to this law of change through a stretch of twenty-three hundred years since the days of Malachi—and the Greek, through nearly eighteen hundred years since the days of John—where would be the standard text to which we could recur to ascertain the Revelation which God had given to man?

There is another aspect of this same matter. We have reached the period in the history of the church when her great duty is to unfetter these Divine Oracles, in this missionary age, when the church has harnessed herself to the imperial task of subjugating the world to Christ, these Scriptures must be translated into all the tongues and dialects of tongues which are spoken over