

§ 4. *Revival of Letters.*

Conspiring with this interest in the literature of religion, and promotive of it, was what is commonly called the Revival of letters—the revival of the study especially of the Greek and Hebrew languages—the languages in which the sacred literature had been composed—both of which had fallen out of rational and extended use in Europe. But, four hundred years ago, by means especially of the re-conquests on the part of the Christian power in Spain, and the consequent greater inter-communication there, between oriental and western minds, the Hebrew tongue began to be intelligently cultivated. While about the same time crowds of learned Greeks, scattered over Europe after the capture of Constantinople in 1453, gained a subsistence by imparting their native language to the scholars of the west.

The new learning as it was called—the renewed study of the neglected dialects of the sacred literature—was identified with the so-called new, but in reality old principles of thought and life—old as the idea of man himself in the Divine mind. Just as now, it is again the revival in modern times of an intelligent study of the same languages, combined with a wider acquaintance with all languages, that has given rise to the criticisms which occasion to inadequately informed minds such immense, but when calmly studied in the light of history, such irrational alarms. Just as then—so now,—let no man for a moment doubt that in due time, and by the patient employment of obvious means, the problem of Textual certitude will, under God's guidance, solve itself; as so many other problems in the same relation have done to the increased enlightenment of man and relief of his estate during the last three centuries of European progress. (Note II.)

But to return to the era at which we were glancing. Notwithstanding persistent efforts to curb and crush it, on the part of all who felt their authority undermined, an irrepressible activity of mind manifested itself more and more, in all classes, exercising itself with the curiosity of youth on all subjects of human inquiry. Thought once enkindled was loth to be put out.

Especially was each one's inner manhood roused to a new consciousness by the spirit of the teachings discovered to exist in the long-neglected *Bibliotheca* of religion—teachings felt to be suited to himself, alike by the philosopher and the unlearned. The entrance—the re-entrance of these divine words into the social world of England and of Europe, gave light,—gave understanding even to the simple—gave a dignity—a new meaning and value—to life, in the consciousness of prince and peasant, of woman and child.

Then it was, in the midst of this ferment in which mingled so largely an element that was divine, that the great fundamental writers of our wonderful English literature began to deliver to the world their profound, exhaustive Treatises.

Then the learned and judicious Hooker wrote his Books "Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity," in which, it was once said, "there are such seeds of eternity that they will last till the last fire shall consume all learning."