

methods of revelation, so it has insured the permanence of life to the vehicle of revelation. The living truth enshrined in the written oracles has preserved, and must preserve them, in their integrity, through all the generations of men.

It has pleased God to commit His eternal counsels to human language, and to human language under all the penalty of Babel. From age to age he has raised up men to utter His words to their fellow-men in their own fleeting speech, and to deposit those words in documents which were not visibly shielded from the vicissitudes of all human things. He did not create for revelation a dialect that should never change, or write it upon tables that might defy the hand of man or the breath of time to destroy them. The ancient tongues of the earliest revelation are now dead languages. The original autographs are lost; nor is there a single sentence extant written by inspired fingers. God's book, like the books of men, has been transcribed and continually reproduced; it has been translated, and must be translated into all the languages of the earth, more or less suffering, *for a season if needs be*, in the process. Christendom does not remember, nor ever can now retrieve, any one central authoritative copy. Such an archetypal Bible might indeed have been preserved in the ark of the church, even as the law was long preserved in the ark of the sanctuary, from the waters of oblivion. It had been a light thing for Omnipotence to do this. But God has ordered it otherwise: and, in ordering it otherwise, He has protected His people from the danger of enshrining and worshipping a book, whilst He has given their faith in perpetuity one of its sublimest exercises.

The church's faith in the permanent integrity of the written word has every presumption in its favour, is sustained by the express assurance of Scripture itself, and is justified by the results of Christian learning.

If God has condescended to inspire holy men to an-