

perfect character of vocal language, contain error; and we readily concede that from the ignorance and inattention of transcribers before the invention of printing, from imperfect and incorrect collation, and from the impossibility that either the vocables or the idioms of one language can express the full force and richness of another, some mistakes have been committed, and the true sense of the Scriptures may not be apprehended; but it must be settled in our minds to what extent these things may affect the inspired truth of God's Word, or change the unity and the richness of the doctrines of salvation. Two things obviously preserve the faithfulness and immutability of the Divine record which are very much worthy of observation: *First*, The inspiration of the language of the Scriptures. I am aware that I now enter on a controverted point; but I cannot see how it is possible to hold any other opinion than that the language as well as the matter of the Holy Scriptures is inspired. In a simple narrative of events, and in so far as the inspired writers saw and heard personally, it might not in many cases be necessary that they should receive more aid than was required to preserve them from error, and hence every writer would be allowed to maintain his own peculiar style; but in delivering doctrines and messages, commands and comminations, expressed, as it were, by God Himself, we cannot see how the full and exact sense of God's immaculate truth and His supreme will could be given, unless suitable terms were at the same time suggested; for could they express doctrines which they themselves could not, in the circumstances, possibly understand? and the same argument applies with additional force to the mysteries and predictions of the Word of God. A mystery from its nature is above the comprehension of man, so that its real sense cannot be expressed without His aid, before whose omniscient eye all things are plain; and the prophets often delivered predictions, of whose nature, of the means and the time of their fulfilment, and of their design and effect they could not have the least conception. How could they employ language without the explicit dictation of the Spirit? for terms must be selected which express the limits of the revelation made, which set forth symbolically the persons, objects, events and time foretold, corresponding to the undeviating events of a concurrent Providence; and this view is confirmed by the fact that the prophets often studied their own predictions, in order to discover the mind of the Holy Spirit in them. Peter therefore says, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."* That the prophets did not employ their own language, but the words dictated by the Holy Spirit, appears from the following statement by the apostle Paul: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."† The exact and literal rendering of these words is, "Which things also we speak, not in the words taught by human wisdom, but in the words taught by the Holy Ghost;" and I should think the sense most apparent without any comment. They correspond to the promise made by Christ to His disciples, "But, when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."‡ These words are peculiarly expressive; for, though

the disciples were illiterate men, having neither learning nor experience to qualify them to appear before kings and governors, they were enjoined not to be concerned about the verbiage or the matter of their defence; and the reason is most satisfactory, especially to men who could use neither arguments nor language suitable to their circumstances and their cause;—the Spirit of their Father would speak in them, a Spirit in them prompting, controlling, and clothing in suitable words all their mental operations. The objection, that the language of Scripture cannot be inspired since every sacred writer has his own peculiar style, is not valid, for in general the dictation of the Spirit is necessary only to prevent error, so that the writer may be left to his own particular bias and manner of expression; and, even in other cases, when pure and complete dictation is required, God, who is infinite in knowledge and power, is not confined to one mode of expressing Himself, but He can adapt His revelations in any degree to the character of the instrumentality employed as easily as He has given every person his own distinct features and his peculiar disposition. The objection, that the inspiration of the language of Scripture would make translations unlawful and ungodly, is thoughtless and frivolous. There is no particular sacredness in one language more than another; all vocal languages consist of mere arbitrary signs, and a change of their signs may be made with proper care, and the very same ideas be expressed—the sacredness is not in the language, but in the matter revealed. Our chief concern, therefore, should be that the words and phrases preserve their peculiar force and the Divine majesty of Sacred Truth by an exact rendering of the sense of the two languages, as nearly as their respective terms and idioms will allow.

Another circumstance, which preserves the immutability and truthfulness of the Sacred Record is the condition of the languages in which it was first dictated. The classical student who admires the stores of ancient learning embodied in the rich and diversified productions of the historians and legislators, the poets and orators, and the moralists and statesmen of Greece and Rome, naturally reveres the languages in which their rich and inventive minds are expressed, exclusive of their own intrinsic merits; and every one, who is acquainted with the languages of the ancient nations, knows that they are a singular and lasting monument of the great power, the progressive working, and the high refinement of the human mind; and many a lamentation has been expressed over the death of these languages, while it has been supposed that modern languages have only substituted in their place imperfection, weakness and barbarity—it being assumed that the human race would have enjoyed mighty advantages if these or similar languages had still existed; but such speculations may not correctly estimate the true nature and effects of the matter. Language, like every other human thing, is subject to a perpetual flux, arising from certain irresistible laws, to which we have already referred, and which have an uncontrollable tendency to uniformity and simplicity; and it is questionable if mankind could or would barter the clear perspicuity, the great facility and the superior utility of modern languages for the massy but formal and cumbersome vocables, the extensive and compact construction, and the long and sweeping sentences of ancient languages, even though carrying along with them greater majesty, matchless beauty, and marvellous eloquence. We believe that the death of the learned languages was the omnipotent and resistless effect of causes over which man had no control. Extensive political convulsions, the rise of new manners and customs, a change of views and opinions, and

the commixture of new and distant nations must transform and new-model the language of man; and, if the ancient languages, or any other form of speech like them, had been required by mankind, rather than language more simple and facile, the necessities of mankind would have restored them; but, like as God has converted the death of man into a blessing, and has made it the means of man's restoration to a higher and more glorious state of being—ever educating His own goodness out of our greatest evils—so has He made the death of language one of the greatest blessings to mankind; for it is a singular fact in the history of Providence and Grace that the two languages, with their cognate dialects, in which the Scriptures were dictated by the Spirit of God, should die and become stationary at the very period when the canon of Scripture was finished; and if the silence of death came on the words which express the mind of God's Spirit, so has its immutability of condition, so that the Word of God is not subject to the ceaseless flux of living languages; for the laws of Heaven, promulgated at Mount Sinai, and the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, the predictions of the ancient New Testament prophets, revealing the coming state of God's Church, stand stereotyped for the inspection, the faith, and the obedience of men in every age. And who does not see that this arrangement is the result of a wise overruling Providence, so co-operating with the work of grace that every pious and enlightened student of God's Word is by this means made confident that the mind and will of God are therein immutably and truly expressed?—*Pollok's Dissertation on Prophetic Language.*

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QUEEN'S COLLEGE.

The Seventeenth Session of Queen's College will begin on the first Wednesday of October (6th October), 1858, at which date all Intrans and regular Students in the Faculty of Arts are required to be present.

The Divinity Classes will be opened on the first Wednesday in November.

Candidates for matriculation as regular Students of the first year will undergo an examination before the College Senate in the first three books of the *Æneid* of Virgil; the first three books of *Cæsar's Commentaries*; *Mair's Introduction*; the *Greek Grammar*; the first book of *Euclid*; and *Arithmetic*, as far as *Vulgar and Decimal Fractions*, and the *Extraction of Roots*, inclusive.

The only charges are £1 for *Matriculation Fee*; £2 for each class per session, to be paid on admission to the classes; and £1 additional in the *Natural Philosophy Class* for expenses of apparatus.

Each Student on entering must produce a certificate of *Moral and Religious character* from the Minister of the Congregation to which he belongs.

Intrans becoming candidates for *Scholarships* will be required, in addition to the ordinary *Matriculation Examinations*, to undergo an examination on the *Greek Grammar* and the first ten Chapters of the *Gospel of John*. For Students of previous years the subjects of examination for *Scholarships* will be those prescribed at the close of the session.

GEORGE WEIR, A. M., *Secretary to Senatus.*

THE PRESBYTERIAN

Is printed for the proprietors by John Lovell, St. Nicholas Street, Montreal.

* 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. † 1 Cor. ii. 13. ‡ Matt. x. 19, 20.