

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY
ON THE LANGUAGE OF MODERN
EUROPE. THE ESSAYS WHICH
OBTAINED THE BULSEAN PRIZE
FOR THE YEAR 1855**

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The Influence of Christianity on the Language of Modern Europe. The Essays Which Obtained the Bulsean Prize for the Year 1855 by William Jennings Rees & William Ayerst

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WILLIAM JENNINGS REES & WILLIAM AYERST

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HULSEAN PRIZE ESSAYS

FOR THE YEAR 1855.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE
LANGUAGE OF MODERN EUROPE.

The Essays which obtained the Gulscan Prize

FOR THE YEAR 1856.

BY

WILLIAM JENNINGS REES, B.A.

SCHOLAR AND HADY'S STUDENT OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE,
AND GROSSE UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR;

AND THE

REV. WILLIAM AYERST, B.A.

LATE SCHOLAR OF CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
ASSOCIATE, AND LATE SCHOLAR OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON.

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TO THE
REV. WILLIAM WHEWELL, D.D.
MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE, AND VICE-CHANCELLOR;

THE
REV. RALPH TATHAM, D.D.
MASTER OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE;

AND THE
REV. WILLIAM HEPWORTH THOMPSON, M.A.
REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK;

THE HULSEAN TRUSTEES FOR THE YEARS 1855-6;

Three Essays

ARE BY PERMISSION MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHORS.

CLAUSES *directed by the FOUNDER to be always prefixed*
to the HULSEAN DISSERTATION.

CLAUSES from the WILL of the Rev. JOHN HULSE, late of Elworth, in the County of Chester, clerk, deceased: dated the twenty-first day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven; expressed in the words of the Testator, as he, in order to prevent mistakes, thought proper to draw and write the same himself, and directed that such clauses should every year be printed, to the intent that the several persons, whom it might concern and be of service to, might know that there were such special donations or endowments left for the encouragement of Piety and Learning, in an age so unfortunately addicted to Infidelity and Luxury, and that others might be invited to the like charitable, and, as he humbly hoped, seasonable and useful Benefactions.

He directs that certain rents and profits (now amounting to about a hundred pounds yearly) be paid to such learned and ingenious person, in the University of Cambridge, under the degree of Master of Arts, as shall compose, for that year, the best Dissertation, in the English language, on the Evidences in general, or on the Prophecies or Miracles in particular, or any other particular Argument, whether the same be direct or collateral proofs of the Christian Religion, in order to evince its truth and

excellence; the subject of which Dissertation shall be given out by the Vice-Chancellor, and the Masters of Trinity and Saint John's, his Trustees, or by some of them, on New Year's Day annually; and that such Dissertation as shall be by them, or any two of them, on Christmas Day annually, the best approved, be also printed, and the expense defrayed out of the Author's income under his Will, and the remainder given to him on Saint John the Evangelist's Day following; and he who shall be so rewarded, shall not be admitted at any future time as a Candidate again in the same way, to the intent that others may be invited and encouraged to write on so sacred and sublime a subject.

He also desires, that immediately following the last of the clauses relating to the prize Dissertation, this invocation may be added: "May the Divine Blessing for ever go along with all my benefactions; and may the Greatest and the Best of Beings, by his all-wise Providence and gracious influence, make the same effectual to His own glory, and the good of my fellow-creatures!"

Subject proposed by the TRUSTEES for the Year 1855:

*"The Influence of Christianity on the Language
of Modern Europe."*

* * In accordance with the above Will, the Authors of these Essays have published them, in the same form as they were sent in to the Trustees, with the exception of some few alterations in the notes. The first Essay in order is by Mr Rees, the second by Mr Ayerst.

ESSAY I.

INTRODUCTION.

ON LANGUAGE GENERALLY.

THIS question is one that at first sight would appear to be of no ordinary magnitude, and to necessitate no ordinary amount of knowledge on the part of any that should handle it; involving as it might well seem to do, an acquaintance, not only with the general Philosophy of Language and with the somewhat obscure social history of the middle ages, but also with the principal, if not all, the languages of Modern Europe. But a little consideration will, I think, suffice to shew us, that this supposition though apparently reasonable, is erroneous; and that strictly interpreted, the phrase "Language (not 'Languages') of Modern Europe" would imply, that the question to be considered is not so much the influence of Christianity on the verbal structure of each or every language, though this will also find some place in our remarks, as its influence on those underlying ideas which are common to all or most of those languages,—the spirit as it were one and the same always, though in each country clothed upon with a different body.

But while our subject is thus limited (if we may so term what is rather a generalisation and therefore an extension) on the one hand to the consideration of language generally, rather than of six or eight different

languages; on the other hand we must notice a legitimate extension of the idea involved in the word Christianity. A deservedly popular and acute writer¹ of the present day, speaking of Christianity as a "new moral and spiritual force beginning to work and to stir society to its central depths," observes, that its influence on language, though only slightly touched on by himself, is "a subject well worthy of, and affording ample materials for, a whole volume." But worthy and wide as this view may be, there are two others not altogether unworthy of our consideration. Into *four*² of the principal *languages* of Europe Latin enters, if not as the primary root, at least as an important supplementary addition; and it may not be altogether unprofitable to discuss how far Christianity, considered as an established power of the state, at the time these languages were still in their plastic youth, contributed to introduce and maintain the Latin element in the new tongues, and how far it modified the element it thus introduced. But Christianity was not only a new power and an established estate of the realm, but further brought forward with itself a book, or rather *the Book*; and this fact will be found to be of no inconsiderable influence both as regards language and ideas. Before entering on the examination of our subject as thus finally particularised (*viz.* the influence of Christianity, as a moral power, a state establishment, and a "*book revelation*," on language), we would make this remark, that in most instances general influences and their results, and not particular effects, will be sought after and followed out, while in many cases mere hints will be all that can be given.

¹ Trench, *On the English Language. On the Study of Words*, pp. 9, 103.

² *i. e.* French, Italian, English and Spanish: *cf.* p. 21.