THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

OF

LANGUAGE.

"Without speech knowledge would have but little value, and without knowledge speech would have but little weight. The union of these in their highest perfection is the great ornament of man, and the strong characteristic that distinguishes the human from the animal species."—THOMAS SHERIDAN, M.A.

PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
NO. 146 CHESTNUT STREET.

LONDON:
RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

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PREFACE.

This volume is intended to present an impartial view of the origin of language, and to contain an epitome of the facts connected with its historical progress, so far as that progress might seem to bear upon the more important question of its origin. It has not been attempted to write a general history of language, as this would have been incompatible with the limits assigned to this treatise, and would not have added much to the illustration of the main object of the author, which has been to prove, that language was not invented by men, but bestowed at first upon them by the Author of their being. An attempt has been made to exhibit the complete harmony of this fact with the statements of the Bible, and thus to present another argument for the authentic and inspired character of that book, which professes to be the exclusive written revelation of the Divine will.

There is no separate work on this subject, in our language, constructed so as to aim systematically at the elucidation of this great and interesting truth. The learned are familiar with many treatises on language, some of which are unfavourable to the views here maintained; while the conclusions of others, so far as they are carried out, point only incidentally to the same result as this essay. An attempt has here been made to treat the subject on Christian principles, to compress all that is essential to its right understanding into a narrow space; and so to simplify the facts and reasonings as to render them intelligible to the young, and to those classes of society who have no learned leisure to employ in extensive reading on such a theme. If the book shall be found to render instruction and pleasure to inquiring minds, and tend in any case to produce or strengthen belief in the obligations of the world to the sacred Scriptures, the author will be thankful, and endeavour to present the glory resulting from such events at the feet of Him to whom all praise belongs.

London, July, 1848.

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THE tongue is the glory of man; inasmuch as its wonderful power of embodying living thought in appropriate and intelligible language, for the purpose of communicating it to others, distinguishes him from the brute creation. His intellect does not more surely indicate his ennobled birth as the offspring of God, or intimate his exalted destiny as an immortal being, than does this capacity of expressing his most abstruse and consecutive ideas demonstrate his superiority to the various orders of animated creatures by which he is surrounded. Communication is obviously held

between one mere animal and another, in relation to wants and desires, to attachments and to aversions, carried on partly by means of inarticulate sounds, and partly by motional signs; but the faculty of speech—through which a perfect interchange of thought is accomplished, and by which mind is enabled to commune with mind, in reference to all that embraces the interests of time and of eternity—is reserved to man alone. It is the last seal of dignity impressed by Deity upon his most favoured earthly creature; and proves, even more certainly than does his upright form, the glance of his eye, or the intelligence of his countenance, that he was made in the image of God.

It diminishes nothing of the weight of these statements, that we find some few of the feathered tribes capable, after much instruction, of imitating the human voice, because their attainments in this respect are very limited and imperfect, and leave all their attempts at an immeasurable and unmistakeable distance from the perfect exercise of articulation. And not only so; but there is, we think, according to the expressed opinion of some anatomists, an essential imperfection in the organs of utterance of all irrational animals, which forbids the modulations required by rational speech, though they are well fitted for the utterance of long or continued sounds. Once, indeed, there was an exception to this rule, when the Lord opened the mouth of the ass on which Balaam rode, and, by this wondrous instrumentality, saved

the infatuated and guilty man from impending destruction, as "the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." This, however, was a miracle, an extraordinary interposition of the power of God, who made man's mouth, and who, for the accomplishment of his own glorious purposes, imparted for a season that capacity to a brute, which otherwise exclusively belonged to man. Out of this fact, probably, arose the legendary heathen tales of the ass of Bacchus, the horses of Achilles, and the bull of Europa, all of which are reported to have spoken. Heathenism—unwilling to come behind the religion of the Bible, in anything which might appear to accredit its falsehoods—has invented imitations of the genuine miracles recorded in Scripture, and has oftentimes, as in this instance, sought to establish its erroneous doctrines and practices by fabulous lying wonders. But the imitation here is palpable, for the fact is unquestioned and unquestionable, that the case narrated in the Bible is unique, and thus by its miraculous character it serves to establish the constancy of nature to the law under which the Creator holds it.

From observation, we are justified in concluding, that the most sagacious of the inferior creatures are incapable of attaching a meaning to a general term. "Some of them learn to articulate sounds by imitation, but they understand not the words they use as expressions of thought, any more than the clever puppets of Professor Wheatstone, when they give us, me-

chanically, some rudimentary sounds of speech, like the half-articulate babblings of a little child. The chattering of a parrot, and the whistling tunes of a bullfinch, are beautiful instances of animal imitation; but the one bird no more comprehends the abstractions of language than the other does the principles of music." Words descriptive of character are indiscriminately applied by parrots, but the ideas they represent are incomprehensible, except by beings endowed with reason and a moral faculty. Throughout the whole animal kingdom there is no proof that a single noise expresses a thought, an abstraction, or a generalization, which is a property characterizing the language of man. To him alone, in this lower world, belongs the power of classifying objects, which in some respects resemble, and in others differ from each other, and of analysing and decompounding the various objects of thought; and to him is confined the privilege of describing by distinctive terms and appropriate phraseology the things he thus comprehends.

In other worlds there may possibly be found intelligent beings who need no such medium of communication as language. Thoughts may be conveyed through their ranks as with lightning rapidity, without waiting the slower explanation even of winged words; and we, when freed from the imperfections of our present state, having laid aside the garments of mortality, may rise to the enjoyment of equal freedom of spiritual intercourse. To us, how-

ever, as intelligent and social creatures, dwelling in the house of an earthly tabernacle, the endowment of speech is not only an adornment, but an indispensable appendage of our comfortable and useful existence. Without going the entire length of those philosophers who—with Plato, Wollaston, Herder, and Lavoisier—contend that language is the indispensable instrument of thought, and that reason cannot be exercised without it, because men think through the medium of words—we may, by an appeal to our consciousness, learn that much of our thinking is conducted by mental speech. It is, likewise remarkable, that not only in the philosophy of the Greeks, but also in the phraseology of the New Testament, reason and language are denominated by one and the same term, *logos*, a word. It does not, however, appear that all thought is dependent upon the aid of language. Abstract terms are necessary for conveying an abstract thought to the mind; while the names of things or deeds are not necessary to thought respecting them. We do not, with Dugald Stewart, for a moment hesitate to express an opinion on the possibility of God so forming us, that we might have been capable of reasoning concerning classes of objects without the use of signs, as He, who made man by his wonder-working power, could employ an infinite variety of methods of teaching him wisdom; but we do hold, with that gifted writer, that man, as now constituted, "is not such a being."*

* Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. i. chap. iv. sec. 3.

The gift of speech thus appears to be an indispensable instrument of accomplishing the ends of our earthly existence, in reference to society at large; and while exalting us to a high order of privilege, it clearly involves corresponding responsibility. Its influence on the improvement of our own minds and hearts is of unspeakable importance, while its bearing on the advancement of civilization and religion in the earth is incalculable. It is the great bond of social life, the channel of intellectual and Christian intercourse with our fellow-men, and a powerful instrument for good or for evil, as it is wisely or otherwise employed. It vastly increases the perfection of our individual nature, changing us from solitary beings to persons fitted for the highest and holiest communion. By its possession we have, as it were, bestowed upon us a duplicate and multipliable existence, inasmuch as we are enabled to enrich others with our own intellectual stores, and that, too, without impoverishing ourselves. Indeed, so far from diminishing our mental treasures, this circulation, by the aid of speech, increases their value; for to this interchange and transmission of thought, by vocal utterances, we are greatly indebted for the improvement of thought itself. It has been gracefully and truthfully said by one of our poets:—

"Thoughts shut up want air,
And spoil, like bales unopened to the sun;
Had thought been all, sweet speech had been denied:
Speech ventilates our intellectual fire,
Speech burnishes our mental magazine,
Brightens for ornament and whets for use."

Supposing that the human family had not been endowed with this power of communicating their ideas and sensations to each other, reason itself, if not otherwise affected by its absence, would have proved comparatively an unavailing power, because one great end of its possession would have been defeated. In the absence of speech, we should feel ourselves to be imprisoned, even while we were at large; we should be solitary in the midst of our companions and equals; and, to us, the most intellectual assembly would prove a perfect blank. Indeed, on this supposition, we should soon be placed amidst the wreck of society; forasmuch as we believe human beings could not long be held in amicable relation to each other without the attractive and binding aid of vocal language, unless the Creator were to endow us with other modes of conveying thought and feeling, which should prove equivalent to, and a substitute for, the appointed instrumentality of which we speak. If it should be thought by any reader that these benefits are stated too strongly, and that social intercourse is not in reality so entirely dependent upon speech as we have represented—inasmuch as the dumb have signs which to a great extent supply its wants—let it be remembered that these signs would not have existed but for speech. They were invented, not by the dumb, but by persons more favourably situated, being in the possession of the power of language, by which they were aided in the construction of signs to compensate, in some degree, for the absence of speech in others.

The human voice is so constituted, by the Divine Author of our being, as to be susceptible of articulate modulations in an almost endless variety; and no other conformation of the mouth than that given to man can admit, so far as we can perceive, of the perfect articulation of which he is capable. The wisdom and beneficence of our Heavenly Father are strikingly displayed in that adjustment of the powers of speech, by which, ideas being attached to sounds, and the mind rendered master of these sounds, we are enabled to employ them at will for the purpose of obtaining or imparting information. And equally wonderful is the fact, that the organs of the voice are so constructed as to be exactly adapted to the properties of the atmosphere through which its sounds are conveyed, while the undulations excited by vocal utterances are carried to the ear of the listener, whose organs of hearing are fitted to receive with pleasure the sounds conveyed: we say with pleasure, because, without such an arrangement, men, while capable of hearing, would be unwilling to employ this power. On the supposition that the sense of hearing were disproportionately acute, mankind would be reduced to a miserable condition: "What whisper would be low enough but many could overhear it? What affairs that most require it, could be transacted with secrecy? And whither could we retire from perpetual humming and buzzing? Every breath of wind would incommode and disturb us. We should have no quiet nor sleep in the

silentest nights and most solitary places; and we must inevitably be struck dead, or deaf, with the noise of a clap of thunder."*

Another beautiful illustration of the wisdom and goodness of our Creator is furnished in the power of the human voice to assist in the mutual recognition of friends and acquaintances. Through the visual organs we recognize well-known persons by their countenance, their form, or their peculiar gait, when present with us, even in a crowd. By their handwriting our absent friends are recognized, and rarely are we imposed upon by the imitation of a hand with which we are familiar. So the peculiar tones of a voice enable us to recognize a friend in darkness; and this power has often proved of signal advantage in the midst of scenes of confusion and danger. Without this distinguishing power of the human voice, many and great disadvantages would be felt. It was possibly in allusion to this beautiful arrangement that the Saviour said, "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me; but a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers."

The mere utterance of sounds would be of no value in the commerce of social intercourse, except a definite meaning were attached to each sound, as in the midst of voices we should realize the state graphically described by the apostle Paul: "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a

* Bentley's Confutation of Atheism, p. 98.

barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." The same inspired writer tells us, that "there are many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification;" for the common intelligence of men, and their mutual acquaintance with a given language, enable them to comprehend the sentiments announced by a lengthened speech, and to interpret the meaning of each separate word, with undoubted precision. Nor is this arrangement limited, as it might have been, to the utterance, by slow and painful efforts, of words prompted by the ordinary or more pressing wants of our nature; for the power of speech is so vast and varied, as to be available to the enunciation of every supposable subject of human opinion and interest; while the glance of the eye, or the general expression of the countenance, adds emphasis to articulated language, and, in certain exigencies of life and death, conveys emotions which are too overwhelming for vocal utterance.

The rapidity of speech is so great as usually to keep pace with our mental conceptions and desires, when these are indulged under the government of enlightened reason, and to meet the capability of comprehension on the part of those who are addressed. A public speaker, who delivers himself with rapidity, may pronounce from seven thousand to seven thousand five hundred words in an hour. The medium number allows of the utterance of a hundred and twenty words in a minute, or two in every second. This computation, made by an in-

genious man and a scholar,* relates to the English language, and would slightly differ in reference to other tongues, according to the comparative increased or diminished facility with which they may be spoken. Numerous, however, as may be the words poured forth in a limited space of time, the modulations of the human voice which utters them may be even more numerous, and often exceed the words themselves. These may inspire the heart with terror, and then awaken hope—may electrify the soul through all its powers, and then suspend its capabilities of action—may bow down the spirit with overwhelming sorrow, and then transport it with unutterable joy.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to over-estimate the moral influence of this astonishing faculty, for the use of which we should be daily grateful to God, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." Of all created power, the power of opinion is the most influential in its operation on the character and destiny of men; and its influence is vastly greater when it falls on the ear with a graceful utterance and fervent eloquence, than when it is simply presented to the eye. The living voice comes in to the aid of the sentiment it conveys, which thus acts with augmented efficiency in moulding the faith, and in forming the character of communities; while its effects are equally decisive in the creation of individual purposes, and the regulation of personal conduct. We may affirm, without the fear of

* The late Lord Sheffield.

successful contradiction, that greater exploits have been achieved by the tongue than by the sword, and by the use of language than by the power of armies. The pages of history furnish numerous illustrations of the exciting and subduing power of eloquent and wise discourse, as actually realizing the import of that legendary tale, which poetically represents Orpheus taming the most ferocious animals, and making the forest dance in concert to his lyre. The eloquence of Demosthenes roused the Athenians against Philip; the orations of Cicero saved his country from threatened calamities ; the earnest tones of Peter, a solitary hermit, filled Europe with phrensied emotion, and called forth the flower of its population to struggle and to perish in the crusades. In more recent times, the voice of Luther shook the Vatican, and emancipated the Protestant part of Europe from the dominion of Papal Rome. "Life and death are still in the power of the tongue." At the utterance of the name of Austerlitz or Marengo thousands have rushed to a forlorn hope, and met a premature death on the field of conflict.

Daily experience and observation instruct us in the power of vocal language to decide the judgment and to move the affections. It has been our happiness, occasionally, to listen to the melody of the human voice, announcing great commanding truths, till we have been alternately melted to pity, and transported to the mountain tops of joy. Carried away with the earnest, impassioned utterances of the speaker, we have hung upon every word, and

almost wished that the music of their intonations could flow on for ever. This exquisite delight is not peculiar to a select few, for it is evidently shared by multitudes around us. Witness the deep, delighted anxiety with which the crowds who, on great occasions, fill our halls of justice, listen to the eloquent appeals, "in thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," which are put forth by gifted counsel, on either side, when life and death appear trembling in the balance, and wait to be decided by the power of the tongue. With what unutterable emotions have speeches been listened to in the senate of our country, when adorned with the brilliancy which distinguished the mind of Fox — when graced with the earnest, simple benevolence of Wilberforce— when animated with the glowing fire of Curran—or when uttered with the dazzling eloquence of Chatham! With what breathless attention and absorbing interest will an auditory listen to the discourses of an eloquent preacher, who, after the example of that prince of preachers, king Solomon, seeks "to find out acceptable words!" His doctrine drops as the rain, and his speech distils as the dew. With the law of kindness on his lips, and the love of the Saviour in his heart, he is enabled to utter words in season—whether of warning or of encouragement, of terror or of consolation—the full effect of which can never be comprehended but amidst the disclosures of eternity. The pathetic, subduing eloquence of Whitfield moved, not only the illiterate multitude, but

the polished and educated nobles of the land, who were led to admire the doctrinal statements, or to endure the practical appeals of the preacher, for the sake of the way in which, like Apollos, he expounded the Scriptures.

True it is that much of the effect of public speaking may, with propriety, be attributed to the influence of an acquired art, and to a careful attention to those rules which are laid down for the proper management of the voice. But no art can be a substitute for nature, and it may be more than a conjecture that the rules of oratory are little more than a classification and arrangement, such as nature has indicated should control the voice and gesture when we wish to impress our fellow-men. There is, doubtless, a great difference between the voice of an untutored peasant, who never thought of the potency residing in this faculty, and who, consequently, addresses his equals in loud and discordant tones, and that of the man who, with an educated mind and cultivated taste, understands and uses his voice, as Handel understood and employed the organ; and who, whether he thinks of it or not, sways those who hear him as with the rod of a magician. Some of the most surprising effects of language are, however, found in the history of savage life. The eloquence of the various Indian tribes of North America has often been described by travellers as most wonderful. Sir Francis Head, in narrating the proceedings of a council of Red Indians which he attended in his capacity of governor of Upper Canada, says:

"Nothing can be more interesting, or offer to the civilized world a more useful lesson, than the manner in which the red aborigines of America, without ever interrupting each other, conduct their councils. The calm dignity of their demeanour—the scientific manner in which they progressively construct the frame-work of whatever subject they undertake to explain—the sound argument by which they connect, as well as support it—and the beautiful wild flowers of eloquence with which they adorn every portion of the moral architecture they are constructing—form altogether an exhibition of grave interest; and yet these orators are men whose lips and gums are, while they are speaking, black from the wild berries on which they subsist."* In more civilized communities, without any pretensions to oratorical skill, a few earnest, straightforward sentences have brought the minds of a multitude of hearers into agreement and co-operation with that of the speaker.

We are not shut up to the forum, to the council, or to the pulpit, for illustrations of the extraordinary effects produced by articulate speech, for we meet with its wonder-working power in the most retired scenes of life. Of a word fitly spoken it may be said, "How good is it!" Words of warning and admonition fall upon the ears, and sink into the hearts of men, by which souls are saved from death. Words of kindness cheer the labourer and the discouraged, who toil in the humbler departments

* The Emigrant, p. 147.

of human exertion. The utterances of consolation, derived from the gospel, are like a balm to heal the wounded minds, and to bind up the broken hearts of those who mourn for sin, or are tried by suffering in this dark, bleak world. The melody of speech, whispering words of comfort to the departing Christian, is frequently the last sound falling on the spirit before it is welcomed by angel voices and by the Son of God himself into everlasting habitations.

It is one of the crowning honours conferred upon speech, that God has employed it as a medium of communicating his revealed will. "He spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets." In sounds intelligible to mortal ears, the voice of God was heard by Moses, while the many thousands of Israel assembled around the mount of Sinai said to the prophet, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." That voice was often heard by inspired and sainted men under the Old Testament economy. Subsequently it spake out of the cloud, at the Jordan and on Tabor, and testified to the Sonship of the Redeemer, and to the Divine approbation of His conduct who was "the brightness of the Father's glory."

And the Saviour, who was in all respects made like unto his brethren, not only used the language of the country in which he was born for social and domestic fellowship, but employed it as the medium of pouring instruction on the ears of people who were very attentive to hear him.

As in all things he had the pre-eminence, so as a preacher of righteousness he was unrivalled. The awful glories of authority, supreme and overwhelming, mingled with his words as they were uttered with the majesty of Deity, and subdued the minds of his hearers, who "were astonished at his doctrine," and said, "Never man spake like this man." The wisdom of his preaching was beautifully attractive. He spoke of all beings and worlds, as one who was alike familiar with them all. With exquisite simplicity he brought down the mysteries of his kingdom to the comprehension of the meanest minds, and illustrated the glories of the heavenly world by the lowliest figures derived from the things of earth and time, so that the common people heard him gladly. With unexampled tenderness he reproved and instructed, cheered and animated, those who followed in his train and listened to his words. Whether he spoke to his disciples, in the darkness of the night, on the lake of Galilee, subduing their fears with the announcement, "It is I; be not afraid"—whether, in the hearing of parents forbidden to bring their little ones to receive his blessing, he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me"—or whether, in tones of lamentation, he poured out his grief over the devoted city, or in language of supplication besought his Father for his destroyers—we see how true is the representation that "grace was poured into his lips," and wonder at the kindness with which he conveyed his messages of mercy to the children of men!

Now, forasmuch as it is unquestionably the glory of our common nature that the Son of God took it into intimate union with his own, so it is the glory of human speech that he employed it in teaching mankind the way of salvation. By many it is believed that our Lord used the Syro-Chaldaic language; but, supposing that he spoke generally, as we incline to think he probably did, in Greek, and in Aramaic occasionally,* this circumstance confers greater dignity on the Hellenic language than do the writings of Plato and Homer. He who knew what was in man, commanded the glad tidings of salvation to be proclaimed in all the world by the living voice; and now, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, he continues to employ it as the great instrument of regenerating men, and of training them up for a nobler state of being. It still "pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

In every point of view in which it occurs to us to consider the influence of human speech, it appears to be of great value. Its bearing on personal happiness and relative enjoyment is immediate and decided. Its importance to domestic comfort and social intercourse is beyond a doubt. As an agent for advancing pure morality and Scriptural piety its beneficent power is vast and unquestionable. It may

* Persons who take an interest in the question involved in this supposition may see the subject fully argued out in the essay of D. Diodati, entitled, "*De Christo Græce Loquente:*" republished, with a learned preface, by the Rev. Dr. Dobbin. London. 1843.

well excite our deepest regret that this mighty instrument of thought and will has been so frequently wielded by the hand of weakness and wickedness—of malignity and profanity. "Therewith," says an inspired apostle, "bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men." A most powerful reason is furnished for the right application of this faculty by the declarations of the great Teacher of mankind, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."—"And I say unto you, That for every idle word that men speak, they shall give account."

It imparts peculiar value to language that while it is, as we have seen, the appropriate medium of conveying religious truth and consolation to the mind, it becomes, in turn, the channel of utterance for the devotional feelings of the regenerated heart, whose daily fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. When God, by the power of his Spirit, and by the agency of his word, whether read or preached, is pleased to awaken in the sinful mind of any individual of the human family a conviction of its guilt and demerit, its unworthiness and exposure to final condemnation, the anxiety thus produced vents itself usually in the vocal inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" or prompts the utterance of the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And when our heavenly Father, who taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but welcomes the returning prodigal to his heart and home, imparts to the contrite spirit that faith in Christ by which the

ungodly are justified, and blots out as a cloud, and as a thick cloud, by the sunbeam of his love, the aggravated iniquities of numerous years, the pardoned believer joyfully exclaims, "O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Thus, while "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In the subsequent exercises of the Christian life, speech is sanctified and employed for noble ends. The believer may use it, as he invites others, in the language of the psalmist, to come and hear him declare what great things God "has done for his soul." His secret communion with the Father of his spirit from day to day is aided or carried on by the words of his lips. In the closet, the tones of his own voice affect his heart, and help it to rise to the fellowship of the skies, while he pours out mingled expressions of sorrow and joy, of fear and hope. In social devotional exercises, speech is employed as the vehicle of adoration and gratitude, of confession and prayer, even while we worship in spirit and truth the God of our salvation. On the couch where parting life is laid, the Christian employs the failing power of speech, as it flows from the tongue, in part paralysed by the hand of death, to breathe out the prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and then goes up to hear the Saviour's voice, uttering the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

It is cheering to remember that in this world

of ignorance and guilt, the melody of human speech is hourly flowing from countless lips in praise and prayer. Infant voices proclaim the honours of the Redeemer, the voice of thanksgiving and rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the righteous, and from the ends of the earth sounds of salvation are heard, ascribing glory to the Righteous One. The visions of prophecy reveal to us the coming of a period when from every land, and in every tongue, a loud united voice shall be heard ascribing, "Blessing and honour, and glory and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." May the Lord hasten it in his time!

These somewhat extended references to the superlative value of language are made with a view to awaken interest in the subject of this essay, and to engage the attention of the reader in an investigation of the origin and history of an endowment of the human race of the highest order. Its advantages are confined to no one class of the community, to no one age or clime, but are extended to the whole family of man. Even the comparatively few persons who, in consequence of having been born deaf and dumb, have never heard the music of speech, nor have ever been permitted to exercise its organs, owe much of their comfort and security to its capabilities, as employed by their more favoured brethren of mankind. With these rare exceptions, individuals of every rank and station, of every age and character, can avail themselves of the full advantages of this boon. And while we are individually realising all the benefits

which flow from it as the instrument of mental interchanges with our fellow-creatures, we may consecrate it to higher purposes, while in appropriate phrase, adapted to move our own minds, we address the great Author of our being as dependent on his goodness and mercy; and offer vocal thanksgiving to him, who has made us rational and immortal creatures, capable of worshipping and of loving him for ever. The blessing of speech is like the light of heaven, or the common air, or the running streams, the unmonopolised heritage of man; and, like these ordinary advantages, it is but too often undervalued, because of its commonness.

CHAPTER II.

Early attention bestowed on the origin of language—The theory of one existing parent language—Diversity of opinion as to the one—The revival of learning in Europe—Its influence on this question—The comparative study of languages a new branch of scholarship—Labourers in this department—Objects of their study—Its supposed bearing on Holy Scripture—Present state of the question—The design of this inquiry.

It may be readily imagined that the subject of language, being one of such deep and universal interest, early and extensively engaged the attention of mankind, and led to various inquiries into its origin, and to the steps by which it arrived at its existing form amongst the nations of the earth. This has evidently been the case, inasmuch as we know that distinguished writers, both ancient and modern, have pursued the investigation, and have advocated, with more or less of ardour and success, different and opposing theories. Very many of the researches, however, even of learned men in former times, have proved themselves to be of little value to the general question, in consequence of their direction to the attainment of what is now regarded, by competent judges, as an impracticable end. Assuming, as they did, that there must be some one primitive language in existence, from which all others were derived, they were principally concerned to determine

which was the one entitled to that honourable distinction. But here an endless number of competitors started up, and claimed the superiority; and almost every advocate of a favourite theory was as confident that he had found the lost language, as some recent travellers and speculators have been that they have found, in regions wide as the poles asunder, the ten tribes of the house of Israel. Amidst these conflicting claims, pertinaciously maintained, there was little prospect of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion.

The greater number of writers who pursued their speculations by this theory were content—on the authority of tradition, or from respect to the language in which the Old Testament was written—to assign the coveted pre-eminence to the Hebrew tongue; while some others conceded it to the Abyssinian, regarding that language as the one from which the former was derived. National partialities and limited views of the philosophy of language led other persons—and those, too, of no mean name in the republic of letters—to imagine that their own native tongue was the oldest, and the parent of all the others, whether living or dead. This ancient and parental character was claimed, with great positiveness, in the absence of all proof, or with a show of very slender evidence, for the Chinese, the Biscayan, and some of the Celtic dialects, as the Welsh, and the low Dutch. At this period the learned world—so far as it entertained any opinion on the subject—received the impression that all existing languages

must have derived their descent from some one parent stock yet extant; and, with few exceptions, believed that this was the Hebrew.

The grammatical studies which the Romans had borrowed from the Greeks, and which they had reduced to an excellent system, were nearly lost sight of in what are called the dark ages. The revival of letters in Europe—which preceded and stood in close connexion with the great reformation from Popery—with the invention of the art of printing, gave birth to that philological spirit which distinguishes modern scholarship. Originating in Germany, it was soon transplanted to our own country, and flourished to a great extent in our universities, as is indicated by the fact that Erasmus taught Greek at Cambridge as early as the year 1510. But, in all that was done down to the days of Bentley, regard was principally had to verbal criticism, and to the correction of ancient classic authors. Many able successors arose, from Dawes to Porson, who have advanced this department of scholarship to its utmost limits. During this whole period, the long and much cherished opinion of an existing parent language was held in this country, and generally on the continent.

In the eighteenth century, this notion was strongly or indirectly attacked by the theories of language advocated by several writers of sceptical tendency. Considerable doubt soon began to be entertained, even by persons friendly to revealed truth, as to the sound-

ness of the received opinion, and its sufficiency to account for all the facts of the case bearing on the origin and progress of language, so as to harmonize with the statements contained in the Mosaic record. Up to this time the history of languages, founded on an extensive and accurate analysis of their grammatical as well as their verbal relations, was an almost untrodden field. Leibnitz—whose comprehensive genius, it has been remarked, seems to have suggested the beginning of almost every improvement in science—had long before expressed his dissatisfaction with the forced etymologies resorted to with a view to establish the affiliation of the European languages to an oriental parent; and showed that we must proceed by comparison, rather than by derivation, and take the widest possible deductions; comparing the most simple and necessary terms in the languages of nations most remote in geographical position. But although the right method, as we now think, was thus suggested, nothing of great importance was performed till the opening of the Sanscrit, or sacred language of India, to European scholars. The similitude of Sanscrit words and grammatical forms and inflexions with those of Persian, Greek, and even of Latin, presented new channels of investigation, and tempted the earnest and the bold—many of whom were stimulated by the desire to resist the growing sceptical spirit of the age—to explore these untrodden ways of learning, guided by the sound and comprehensive principles of careful comparison, with a view to the classification of

languages. This marked a new era in philological disquisition, alike rendered memorable by the names and labours of a host of competent scholars, and by the brilliant and satisfactory results of their researches. These toils and rewards have served to prove that the Christian church has no interest in repressing philosophical inquiries and scientific pursuits, inasmuch as truth can never be at enmity with truth; and that while errors may arise from partial discoveries and prejudiced views, to the injury of Christianity for a time, their refutation, by the aid of clearer light and advancing discoveries, cannot fail to enrich the evidences of revealed religion through all coming ages. It is contended by some writers, that the efficient commencement of this study was undertaken by a few of our countrymen in India, as Sir W. Jones and Dr. Carey, who acquired a thorough and critical knowledge of the Sanscrit language from the Pundits, and made it, by their writings, accessible to European students. From England the knowledge thus acquired of this language passed into Germany, and gave a wonderful impulse to the study of comparative grammar there. The Sanscrit was first cultivated on the European continent, by a German Jesuit, Han Hanxleden, and a German Carmelite, named Paulinus. They published a book on the subject, at Rome, in 1790. These pioneers were followed by the Schlegels, Frederick and William, and Othman Franke, who published a chrestomathy, and a host of other scholars, among whom two of the

most distinguished, who still survive, are Professor Lassen, of Bonn, and Professor F. Bopp, whose Comparative Grammar, now accessible to the English student, is beyond all praise, and has vastly aided the study of language. Others, as the Humboldts, Ritter, Remusat, Grimm, Chezy, and Rosen, have distinguished themselves in this department of learning, and laid mankind under deep and lasting obligations.

If it be imagined that England has little to offer that will bear comparison with our continental neighbours, in regard either to comparative philology in general, or to Indian scholarship in particular, let it be remembered that the labours of Sir W. Jones, Sir Charles Wilkins, and Professor Wilson, in the latter department, and of Dr. Pritchard, Dr. Wiseman, and Mr. Sharon Turner, in the former, have resulted in no insignificant contributions to the general design. And it is no small honour to have been pioneers in this enterprise. While the disposition to undervalue English in comparison with German learning is foolishly prevalent in this country, it is worth knowing that the Germans give great praise to our countrymen for their enterprise and industry in the study of the Sanscrit language.

This vast improvement in the spirit and object of philological investigations, in modern times, is seen in the fact that its most distinguished votaries now pursue it, not with the intention of building up some previously-conceived theory, but in the genuine spirit of the inductive philosophy; endeavouring rather to

ascertain facts, and to arrive at any truthful conclusion to which these will lead. And whereas, in former times, inquirers principally directed their attention to a verbal comparison of languages, and traced out, minutely, real or fancied resemblances, with a view to prove that a given language was the descendant or offshoot of another; recent investigations have been successfully directed to the distribution of languages into groups or families; by which process, languages, which were usually regarded as the most dissimilar, have been classified and arranged in orderly form, by their undoubted affinities. Of this result, and of its bearing on the ultimate design of this essay, we shall have occasion to furnish certain illustrations in some of our subsequent pages. In the mean time we content ourselves with observing, that, in this comparative study of languages, their grammatical elements are minutely decomposed and compared, as well as their words, and that no direct affinity is admitted between any of them that will not abide the most severe scrutiny. The advocates of verbal, and those of grammatical comparison, have severally denounced the principles of the other school; but philological learning has, unquestionably, derived advantage from both; as their labours have resulted in the disclosure of the most important connexions in languages, grouped by the idioms of nations, and in showing a wonderful conformity between those which were never suspected to be mutually related.

The systematic labourers in this new depart-

ment of learning have been much aided in their work by the diligent inquiries of travellers, who have, for various purposes, collected lists of foreign words, and brought within reach vocabularies of most languages of civilized and barbarous communities, thus furnishing the materials of extended comparison. Amongst these voluntary contributors, justice demands that we speak in honourable terms of many Christian missionaries, who, in addition to their chosen and appropriate work of preaching the gospel of salvation to the heathen, with a view to turn them from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to the service of the living God, have devoted themselves, with untiring zeal, to the advancement of civilization. In securing their great design, as the benefactors of the most degraded of our species, they have given letters to some barbarous nations, and constructed written grammars for those who knew nothing of the laws or parts of speech. They have also formed extensive dictionaries of many other tongues, by which they have greatly aided philological science in reaching its present exalted height, and facilitated all future inquiries into the origin and relation of language in general. In this, as in some other things, they have shown that learning and religion are compatible, that taste may be combined with piety, and that Christianity promotes all that appertains to the welfare of man, as an inhabitant of earth and time, while it alone secures his happiness in the endless duration of the world to come. Men

who have secluded themselves for years from the refinement of civilized life to acquire a perfect knowledge of a difficult language, in which to speak words that should drop like seeds of power into savage hearts—or who have dwelt, like some of the African missionaries, in filthy hovels, to catch the peculiar *click* of the Hottentot language—have proved themselves, in other particulars, capable of sympathizing with the most refined and exalted pursuits which bear, however remotely, on the general good of mankind. Like the great apostle of the Gentiles, they have deemed themselves "debtors both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise."

During the period when the science of philological ethnography was in a transition state, it was much feared by some pious persons that its researches were pointing to a conclusion adverse to revelation; and other parties could ill conceal the pleasure with which they anticipated that its demonstrations would falsify the statements of the Bible touching the original perfection of man, and the unity of the different races of the human family. We are told, in the sacred writings, that the first inhabitants of the world were a single pair, and that from them descended all the nations of the earth. This pair, of course, and their immediate descendants, spoke one language; and this language was, after the deluge, broken up, by a miraculous interposition, into a number of idioms. We are not told, nor is it probable, that the original Adamite language was abo-

lished, and that all these varieties were so many new creations ; on the contrary, we should expect that, however different these tongues might become by the confusion introduced at Babel, and by the incongruous habits of different tribes, there would still be traces of a common origin. It is the acknowledged tendency of philology to establish this.* Thus it has happened with language, as with astronomy, geology, and the hieroglyphics of Egypt—from all of which, at different times, an unfavourable verdict has been anticipated on the truthfulness of the Bible—that every conclusion arrived at is in entire harmony with the testimony of the Scripture which "cannot be broken." History, science, and sound philosophy, can never be found adverse to that blessed book, which bears upon its pages the impress of heaven, and which has been exposed to every possible test, through a succession of ages, still proving itself to be the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

"Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm;
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

By the labours of others, as thus narrated, though pursued with an object different to that which we propose to ourselves, our path is happily prepared for prosecuting our present inquiry with a degree of safety and pleasure, and with a confidence of success, which could not otherwise have been felt. Still, it must be

* See Donaldson's New Cratylus, p. 13.

admitted that there are many and formidable difficulties remaining in the way of our arriving at undoubted conclusions on some of the debateable points which are fairly opened by the question; for conflicting opinions are still maintained concerning them, with considerable ingenuity and show of reason. The subject itself is involved in deep obscurity as it recedes, in some of its principal features, from our view, into the most remote antiquity, and as it is blended with some matters of doubt, not capable of easy solution. Human knowledge in this, as in other departments, has its boundaries, which we may approach, but not pass over. While, however, the precise limits of attainment are not clearly defined, there remains a vast space of open ground on which we may lawfully exercise our powers of investigation. Inquiries, such as those to which we now bend our attention, if undertaken in a right spirit, may be made at once interesting and instructive, for the streams of human learning roll over golden sands, and we may collect their scattered grains, work them into fine gold, and present them as an acceptable offering on the altar of the cross, in the sanctuary of heavenly truth.

The questions which are now to claim our consideration respect the manner in which mankind were first induced to employ articulate sounds for communicating their thoughts to each other, and the steps by which the various languages of the earth have reached their present form. In other words, we may state

the former part of the subject thus: Is the faculty of speech natural, or acquired? Is it the result of instruction, or of imitation, or of both? Is it the gift of God, or the invention of men? When these points are settled, so far as we are able to accomplish their settlement, we shall proceed to examine the questions: Was there one primitive language, or many? And, if the former, by what means was the existing diversity effected?

It will be at once perceived, by every thoughtful reader, that these interrogatories open a wide field of contemplation, and present to view some interesting collateral subjects, which will claim passing observation, in order to the due elucidation of the main topics of inquiry. It would ill become us to dogmatise on any of the matters involved in the subject, which may be supposed to furnish but imperfect data, or even to profess to exhaust a theme so prolific, within the limits assigned to this treatise. Extensive grammatical or etymological comparison would scarcely comport with our design, which is to convey a popular view of a somewhat intricate subject, and consequently will not be attempted; while the results of such comparison, as effected by others, will be stated in aid of our object. To affect great originality would only be a betrayal of vanity, forbidden by the master spirits who have brought to this department of scholarship their most mature and learned capabilities. Some service may, however, it is thought, be done to the cause of science and of revealed religion,

if we condense the facts and reasonings on the subject of general language, which are scattered over many volumes, inaccessible to the masses of our reading population, construct our own argument out of materials thus collected from various regions, and avail ourselves of the refreshing light shed by the most recent investigations upon our theme. As it would be alike unphilosophical and unchristian to make this attempt without reference to the Mosaic records, the oldest writings in the world, we shall gather up the intimations which the inspired and invaluable history of Genesis and the other sacred books contain on the subject, walk fully in their light, so far as it shines, and estimate the conclusions at which we may arrive, just in the proportion in which they shall appear to harmonize with the testimony of Holy Scripture. We value this book, and are made to feel its supreme worth in all studies connected with the nature of mind, and with the history of our race; for while it is emphatically a revelation of God, it is scarcely less so of man, describing as it does the time and manner of his creation—the capabilities with which he was endowed in his primeval state—the mournful change which passed over him in consequence of sin—and the possibility of his restoration, by the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, to greater dignity and happiness than that from which Adam fell; while the destiny awaiting him, as an heir of immortality beyond the grave, is herein unfolded to his believing view.

CHAPTER III.

Definition of language — Metaphorical application of the term — Natural signs — Symbolical representations — Systematic signs — The supposed connexion between words and ideas—Examples supplied by the Hebrew and English languages — Radical expressive sounds and letters—The object of language—THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE—Question stated — Theory of its invention—Advocates of this hypothesis — Its absurdities — The weight due to names as authorities on the subject — Advantages possessed by modern over former writers on language.

SOME definition or description of what is intended by language may be desirable before we proceed in our design to speak of its origin. The English word is derived immediately from the French, *langue*, and that from the Latin, *lingua*, a tongue. We employ the term, vaguely, to describe the various established methods by which human beings convey to each other their thoughts and desires, and more strictly we apply it to articulated speech and to written communications. Dr. Blair defines language to be " the expression of our ideas by certain articulate sounds, which are used as the signs of those ideas." This definition is substantially adopted by subsequent writers on the subject, in encyclopædias, and other works; but it appears to us, nevertheless, to be defective, because it does not include a reference to all the states of mind of which language is

expressive. Language may be briefly and comprehensively described as "The vocal or written expression of thought and emotion," constituting itself, as it does, the handmaid both of the intellect and of the heart.

The term, language, is applied metaphorically to several other modes of expression, by which ideas are made to pass from mind to mind, as when we speak of the language of looks, or of the language of signs. The whole class of natural signs, consisting of modifications of the features, gestures of the body, and other more passionate expressions of emotion, are usually brought under the denomination of *natural* language. These are, with some propriety, termed natural, in contradistinction to conventional language, as they appear to be made, if they are not interpreted, instinctively. We tremble, turn pale, or blush, not because we have seen others thus act, nor with a design to develope our mental feelings—which we may often wish in such circumstances to conceal—but because these indications are prompted by nature, and are generally the manifestations of existing states of mind. It is not, however, so clear, that these signs are instinctively interpreted aright; for, on the supposition that we had never laughed or trembled, nor had seen others thus act, nor had been instructed in the connexion between the mental feeling and its expression, we should be unable to understand the meaning of laughter or of trembling. Even the smile or frown of a mother is not instinctively interpreted by the babe, whose

powers of observation must be awakened, and, to some extent, cultivated, before it is able to attach any meaning to the frown or to the smile, and still less to the one as distinct from the other.

Several other modes of communication, in frequent use, are generally described as natural signs, because they furnish methods of speaking by action, which can be readily adopted where oral communication is undesirable or impossible. Inclining the head forward, as a token of assent; or shaking it, as an intimation of disapprobation, is almost natural to children, and is often adopted for convenience by adults. Waving the hand, to denote a wish that a person should recede or approach; or kissing it, in token of respect, are actions all but universally understood. The use of such signs is more common with some other nations than with ourselves, either as a substitute for, or as an aid to, articulate speech. Amongst ancient oriental tribes, moral instruction was extensively conveyed by the language of signs, and it is still used in eastern countries for ordinary purposes to an extent unknown in this land.

And as adapting itself to the habits and predilections of the Jewish people, God was pleased, at times, to employ a most striking and impressive series of symbolical representations, embodied in a series of actions which he commanded—as when Jeremiah broke a potter's vessel, threw a book into the Euphrates, and put on bonds and yokes—or as when Ezekiel

portrayed on a tile a besieged city, or scattered, divided, or burned, the locks of his head. We do not refer to these for the purpose of classifying them under natural signs, but regard them as remarkable methods adopted in the wisdom and condescension of the Divine Being, with a view to express affecting truths to a people who were slow to comprehend, and still more backward to believe, the parabolic or even the literal words of the holy prophets.

A carefully constructed system of signs has been invented, by the benevolent ingenuity of the present day, to alleviate the calamities of the dumb, by means of which they are not only enabled to hold intercourse with each other, but to receive elementary truths from others, and, above all, to understand and to enjoy the consolations of that religion whose gracious Author, in the days of his flesh, according to the prediction of ancient prophecy, caused "the tongue of the dumb to sing." All these signs, however, and many others, including the art of pantomime, as formerly in extensive use, are clearly inadequate to our entire wants as intellectual and moral agents, and are, therefore, not strictly included in our view of language. In the more restricted sense in which we now employ the term, we shall regard it as the vocal utterance of words and sentences; because these embody and convey the understood illustration of the sentiments, of which written language is constituted, more palpably and permanently, the sign.

Whether words are merely conventional

symbols, or whether any natural connexion exists between ideas and words, were points much debated by some ancient writers, and are matters on which some diversity of opinion exists at the present day. Allowing it to be very probable that, at first, such a connexion extensively, if not universally existed, the connexion can only affect a small portion of the fabric of language as now constituted; because different articulated sounds are now employed in various tongues to describe the same thing. The connexion, therefore, between most thoughts and words may justly be considered arbitrary, and the result, generally, of agreement amongst men. There is, however, little reason to doubt that language, the nearer we approach to its rise, becomes not only more natural and simple, but, so far as it goes, more capable of expressing by sounds the qualities of the things which it represents. Hence, we find in some of the Semitic languages, which have not undergone any great amount of change for many generations—as in the Hebrew, for instance—that proper names are, to a remarkable extent, expressive of the properties of the things or of the persons which they were intended to designate. The attempt, naturally made in the earlier stages of civilization, to represent by vocal sounds the qualities of the objects denoted by these sounds, was evidently, to a great extent, successful; for, in all languages, we find some words, at least, thus constructed.

The opinion has been entertained by several writers on language, that it is comparatively

easy to imitate, by the tones of the human voice, the quality of the sound or noise made by any external object around us. As an illustration of this theory, we may observe that the Hebrew tongue is known to have many words, the sounds of which are considered to accord well with their signification. A familiar instance of this is furnished by the word קֹרֵא *korey*, a partridge, which means "a caller," and is expressive alike of the nature of the bird, and of the cry it utters.* The word לַיְלָה *la-ye-lah*, *night*, has been cited, by Calmet, as another instance, because the sound of the word is supposed to be imitative of the nocturnal howlings of hyænas. These examples, however, appear to us more fanciful than true.

Other and more extensive illustrations of this theory are furnished in the structure of the English language. We have many words in common use, the signification of which seems to be definitely conveyed by their sound, as when one sort of wind is said to *whistle*, and another to *roar;* when a serpent is said to *hiss*, and a fly to *buzz;* when falling timber is said to *crash;* and when a stream is said to *flow;* or hail to *rattle*. In these, and in many other instances which could readily be selected from our own tongue, some kind of analogy between the words and the actions signified by them is plainly enough discernible.

Notwithstanding all that has been plausibly said in favour of this theory, and the somewhat striking proofs and illustrations occasionally

* Gesenius's Hebrew Lexicon. *In loc.*

presented of its truthfulness, we venture to question the opinion that words of this order have a definite meaning in themselves, or an adaptation to suggest the particular thought or feeling usually attached to sound; and we still incline to the belief that they obtain all their meaning from convention and use. When uttered in the hearing of an Englishman, they suggest certain analogies, but to a foreigner, ignorant of our language, or to one unacquainted with all its niceties of idiom and of sound, even the characteristic words we have now cited as examples would fail to convey any adequate conception of the qualities of the things they describe. It is not intended by these remarks to deny altogether the natural significancy of some words, because apparent remains of a relation between them and the objects represented by language can be traced to a considerable extent; but, forasmuch as the analogies thus instituted furnish so much scope for the play of fancy and the flights of a wild imagination, all speculations and assumed results of investigations, in this department, should be received with much caution in the attempt to form a general theory.

This principle has, however, been imagined extensively to pervade all languages in another form, inasmuch as it is said that they contain radical letters and syllables expressive of the most distinguishing qualities of sensible objects. M. De Brosses* and Dr. Wallis have elaborately defended this view. The last-named writer

* In his *Traité de la Formation Méchanique des Langues.*

represents it as a peculiar excellence of the English language that, beyond all others, it expresses the nature of objects and actions be sounds, which we sharpen or soften, weaken of strengthen, according as the idea to be suggested requires. Examples of what is intended in these views are furnished in the initial letters of words in daily use. For instance, those which are formed upon *st*, are supposed always to belong to, and to denote properties of firmness and strength, as *stand*, *staff*, *stamp*. Words beginning with *str*, are said to be indicative of violence and energy, as *strive*, *stripe*, *stretch*. Those commencing with *thr*, are held to imply forcible motion, as *throw*, *throb*, *through*. This theory likewise assumes that the terminations of words frequently present the same characteristics. Hence, those ending in *ash*, are supposed to denote something acting sharply, as *gash*, *rash*, *slash*; and those terminating in *ush*, something acting more obtusely, as in *crush*, *brush*, *hush*. Some radical letters, it is held, carry this expressive power in most, if not in all, European languages; as *fl*, denoting fluency; *cl*, a gentle descent; *r*, as having relation to rapidity of motion; and *c*, to cavity or hollowness.*

There is much more of ingenuity than of sound philosophy in the opinions now passing under review. Something of this supposed analogy may have pervaded language in its earlier stages; but as terms came to be multiplied in its progress, words would, by various

* Blair's Rhetoric, Lec. vi.

irregular methods of derivation and composition, deviate widely from the primitive character of their roots, and so lose all conformity in sound to the things they designate. Moreover, in the names of objects which address the sight only, where neither noise nor motion is concerned, and still more in the terms appropriated to moral ideas, the analogy appears altogether to fail. But this question is fully argued in Harris's Hermes, to which work reference may be made for further information on the subject. He says, as the result of an extended investigation,* "Language is not a picture of the universe where the words are as figures or images of all particulars. Words are the symbols of ideas, both general and particular; yet, of the general primarily, essentially, and immediately; of the particular, only secondarily, accidentally, and mediately." This view appears to us to be reasonable and just, as it represents words to be the symbols, and not the imitations, of things; for that verbal signs are for the most part arbitrary, is evident from the fact that other signs might have been fixed upon equally well adapted to teach the meaning which the present symbols convey. "A rose would be as sweet with any other name."

The object or design of language appears to be so simple, that we might well wonder that any diversity of view should have been entertained concerning it; and yet different notions have been propagated respecting this, which resolve themselves into two distinct theories.

* Book iii. chap. 3.

One of these assumes that the object of language is to express our thoughts and feelings to our fellow-creatures; and the other, that its design is to produce certain thoughts and feelings in the minds of those we address. An objection, more plausible than sound, has been brought against the former opinion, by affirming that language is often subordinated to the purpose of concealing the thoughts, or of dissembling the feelings of the speaker. "What is the object of language?" said some one to Talleyrand, who is reported as having quickly replied, in the true spirit of a mere diplomatist, "To conceal thought." It is admitted that language is sometimes employed for such an end, but this use or abuse of speech is justly held to be a deviation from its original purpose. It was not intended to be an instrument of deception, nor is it usually so employed in communities pervaded by correct moral sentiments and a regard to the authority of the God of truth. The law of mutual relation and dependence, under which the human race subsists, teaches us that we are not to live to ourselves, but for others; and that, in carrying out the great design of our earthly existence, the strong should help the weak, and the wise instruct the ignorant. This principle, applicable to language as to all other endowments, conveys to us a conception of the object of speech, which is to impart our opinions and emotions with a view to benefit and enrich others; while this direct end may be considered in connexion with the ultimate design of pro-

ducing impression and eliciting thought. It is the means of exhibiting our views to our fellow-creatures, and that exhibition becomes the instrument of producing similar thoughts in the minds of others. The object embraced by language is comprehensively benevolent.

Having offered these definitions and general descriptions, which were apparently necessary for the right understanding of our subject, a more important question now claims our attention. This respects the origin of language. Is it then "of heaven or of men?" Only two substantially opposite opinions can, we think, be formed respecting it, as it must have been either the gift of the Creator, or the fruit of human invention. Yet these separate views have sometimes been held with such modifications, or have been stated with so much of reserve, as to conceal the more objectionable features of the one—which attributes it exclusively to man; or to explain away much of the value and philosophical clearness of the other—which ascribes the faculty of speech to the benevolence of the ever blessed God, "from whom cometh down every good gift, and every perfect gift." The ancient and modern advocates of those speculative systems of unbelief, which aim at excusing the moral pravity of our nature by depreciating that nature itself, have assumed that man is a mere animal, an organized clod of a superior order, and that the savage state is natural to him. On the basis of this assumption some modern philosophers have built up their theory of language, contending that the faculty of

speech is the mere instinctive expression of the wants and desires of associated animals, who contrived for ages to do without it, and who only gradually invented language for mutual convenience, which in due time was established in its present form, by the general consent of the parties employing it.

This theory assumes that in the infancy of society men would put forth an effort, aided by the promptings of necessity, to communicate to each other their common instincts; and that for a considerable period they confined the interchange of thought to those natural signs of which we have already spoken, namely, variations of the countenance, gestures of the body, and movements of the hands. It further supposes that men eventually found out that they possessed the power of uttering certain cries, such as Oh! and Ah! and that they poured forth these exclamations under the influence of some of the passions or feelings of which they were susceptible. Beyond this, it is imagined that when any particular noise distinguished any object to which they wished to direct attention, they attempted to secure that end by imitating the sound, with their own unformed, unmodulated voices; and that the effort thus put forth suggested to some distinguished genius the possibility of employing articulate sound as the basis of conventional language. While the advocates of this theory suppose that so difficult an art has not been the invention of many nations, they think that it was originated by different communities,

at various times, and in remote parts of the world, and that this accounts for the diversity of spoken language now existing. The writers who espouse this theory of invented language imagine that, aided by analogy, they can trace all the steps by which the newly-discovered powers of the human voice became fully employed, and likewise the method by which the rude materials of language were gradually built up into an orderly system.

Holding that the motive, in a barbarous state of society, for attempting to speak at all would be to obtain gratification from the possession of some object, for which the concurrence of other persons was necessary, they assume that the imperative verb—as denoting the desire to accomplish an end, either by direct command, or by request—was created as the nucleus, or fundamental part of language; from which not only the other forms of the verb branched forth, but from which the other classes of words and parts of speech were gradually formed. This hypothesis has been advocated by others, only with this difference, that they imagine that savages who had never been taught to speak would, when they met in the chase or in fishing expeditions, endeavour to make their sentiments intelligible to each other by uttering certain sounds, whenever they meant to denote visible objects, and would thus begin to give names to things; after which, they would classify individuals under a species denoted by a common name, and then proceed gradually to the formation of all the other parts of speech.

The great champion of this theory, in its most objectionable form, was Lord Monboddo, who has sought to establish it by the most reckless assumptions, the boldest conjectures, and the most contemptible sophisms, affecting the form of arguments. He asserts that man, in his natural state, is a mere untamed animal, and supposes that he at first possessed the countenance and appendage of a monkey, but that education has gradually brought him to his present erect and intelligent form. To prove his point, he cites the opinions of Lucretius and Horace, who describe the human race as rising from the earth, mute and savage. He quotes descriptions from Diodorus Siculus, and other ancient travellers, in support of the hypothesis that men were found in this state. When pressed with the difficulty, that there could be no rational society without language, he resorts to a subterfuge, and selects examples from beavers and foxes! Such is the candour, the logic, and dignity of the chief advocate of the invention of speech.

This theory of the origin of language is more worthy of the ravings of an insane mind, than of the calm deductions of a rational creature. To imagine a number of bipeds, little removed from the beasts that perish, simultaneously smitten with a desire to improve their mental and moral condition, by using the dormant faculty of speech, exceeds all the bounds of a moderate credulity. To suppose them by some inexplicable method assembling to express this desire to each other, though as yet no word had been spoken, vastly augments the folly.

And then to think of their adopting a language, however rude, and resolving on henceforth employing it, instead of the howl or bray, which had previously served their purpose, is the climax of absurdity. But as this hypothesis is supported by a show of proof, however fallacious—by an array of authorities, frequently garbled or misquoted—and by the most unblushing assertions of its truthfulness — it becomes us to rebut it with the weapons of reason, to which edge and power may be given by a reference to the history of man, as contained in the book of God.

And here we wish distinctly to observe, that the great questions involved in this inquiry are not to be settled by the authority of names, however ancient or learned. Still we do not shrink from any comparison which might be instituted between the writers who have maintained opposing theories on the subject; whether the investigation has respect to numbers, or to the weight justly attached to their opinions. We grant that some ancient heathen authors imagined that language was earthly in its origin, and maintained, with Lucretius,* that it was gradually formed by savages for mutual convenience, and by mutual consent; but this opinion being in harmony with many of their grovelling ideas, now discarded, it can have but little weight with reflecting men in times vastly in advance of the darkness of heathenism. If it should be alleged that these authors lived nearer to the sources of informa-

tion than we do, the reply is obvious, that they had no means of acquiring information on the subject which are not accessible to us. Besides, the preponderating weight of opinion amongst the ancient philosophers, in reality, lies on our side of the question. Their references to it are, indeed, few; but in these they usually ascribe the origin of speech to the gods. They generally held that language was coeval with man; and it was reserved for the infidels of Europe, in the eighteenth century, to describe it as a human invention. Cicero,* in speaking of the original state of man as brutish, makes eloquence the instrument by which social institutions were established; clearly implying that he thought men, even in that state of degradation, possessed the power of language, and consequently the means of intellectual and moral improvement. Indeed, nearly all the voices of antiquity agree in this, that knowledge in general is derived from the Supreme Being, and that, by parity of reason, speech—as the means of extending that knowledge—must claim equally a Divine origin.†

And it should be remembered, that if, half a century since, some distinguished persons among the literati of Europe embraced and advocated the theory of a human invention of language, there is reason to believe that their aversion to Christianity, and to revealed religion in general, led them but too readily to

* *De Inventione.*

† See Ellis "On the Knowledge of Divine Things," who quotes from Plato and others, to this effect.

adopt any hypothesis, upon any question of history and science, which appeared to militate against the authority of the sacred Scriptures. They made no secret of their deadly hatred to the gospel of Jesus Christ; and any scheme of history, or of interpretation, which promised to be a means of impugning its veracity, was unscrupulously adopted by them.

Moreover, and apart from all reference to the alienated state of mind from the Bible, in which they evidently commenced and carried on their examinations of our subject, it is not to the opinions of Volney, Monboddo, and Adam Smith, that we are called, by the reason of the case, to submit our judgment, as they lived at a time when the true principles of philological comparison were not generally understood, nor even extensively propounded. They had no such means of arriving at a just conclusion on the subject in debate, as are furnished by recent investigations to the most slender scholar. All the persons who have most profoundly studied the question have arrived—and that, in many cases, without any respect to the authority of revelation—at a conclusion diametrically opposed to that of flippant infidel writers, but to one in general harmony with the Scripture narrative. Now, as an intelligent writer on astronomy would be a better authority on that science, coming after the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton; or on the nebular hypothesis, if writing after the observations made by Lord Rosse's telescope, than would a person of equal intelligence who went

before; so, other things being equal, the opinions of modern writers on the origin of language are of more value than those of persons who wrote previously to the discoveries of Humboldt, Adelung, Vater, and others, their fellow-labourers.

The boasted authority of infidelity for the invention of language thus falls to pieces. But, as we have said, the question is not to be determined by names, but by arguments derived from the facts of history, sacred and profane, and from the nature of the case. Our opponents give us, indeed, but little in the shape of argument to demolish, but, in its stead, present to us the most dogmatic statements of improbabilities, which they require us to regard as well-ascertained facts. To these, and to the objectionable principles involved in their theory, we now proceed to direct our best attention.

CHAPTER IV.

Objections to the theory that language is a human invention —No period can be assigned to its invention—If invented, it is more than probable that there would be some record of it—The strong improbability of men inventing it—The relative perfection of the most ancient languages—Their independence in structure of the advances of civilization—The physical impossibility of inventing speech—Language indispensable to some of the ends of man's creation—Physical construction of the organs of speech—Harmony of Divine wisdom and benevolence in the entire creation—The savage state is not the natural condition of mankind—Causes which have promoted or retarded social improvement.

As our first objection to this notion of language having been invented by the ingenuity of man to meet the necessities of his advancing nature, we confidently state, that no period has ever been assigned by its advocates as the one in which it probably originated. The recorded history of man stretches backward over a line which embraces, not merely centuries, but thousands of years, and the traditional recollections of many nations ascend upward to a time still more remote; yet in the written or unwritten traditions of all these communities no era is marked as the one when this wonderful power took its rise. The memory of events far less important to these nations is retained and cherished, but all of them are silent concerning the origin of speech. The invention of

printing in Europe, and the introduction of letters to some ancient as well as modern nations, when emerging from barbarism, are narrated as interesting and unquestioned facts, and rival claims have even been set up for the honour of introducing the one and the other; but no solitary claimant appears for the unrivalled distinction of having conferred this inestimable boon upon his species. The periods when some of the arts and sciences sprang up, flourished, or decayed, are inscribed on the roll of history; but no note is taken of the time when men began to speak, nor of the method by which they acquired that wonderful power. This is a negative argument which none will call in question.

Now it is preposterous to imagine that so great an epoch in the career of any nation, as that which would have been created by the discovery of language, should have passed over it without leaving some memorial of itself, in the grateful recollections of subsequent ages. If language owned a human inventor, it is next to impossible that no traces of the master mind which laid the whole human race under such imperishable obligations should now exist; but, though we should travel over the whole range of man's history, searching all the archives of the past, and interrogating all the oracles of existing intelligence, we nowhere find any vestiges of such a benefactor or benefactors of the human race. The conclusion, in the absence of all incidents that could invalidate it, appears to be inevitable, that language is

an indispensable attendant of man's existence; that no community of human beings ever lived without it; that it would be as wise to inquire when man began to see or hear, as to ask when he began to speak; and that God, who conferred on him the gift of reason, at the same time bestowed on him the power of speech, as the channel through which his reasoning powers should flow and act.

This conclusion is strengthened by the great improbability of men in a savage state, or, indeed, in any state, being capable of inventing language. There are, unquestionably, many wondrous things which man can do, and there are many other things which as clearly lie beyond the province of his most exalted powers; and this appears, without any reasonable doubt, to be included amongst the things he cannot accomplish. There are individuals who, in regard to particular subjects and operations, possess, instinctively, that discernment and facility of acting, which, in the generality of cases, are the results of habits acquired only by long and laborious exercises. Thus some persons, in early years, almost intuitively acquire a knowledge of music, and even compose very difficult pieces. Others have mastered, by a speedy or instantaneous operation of the mind, very abstruse questions in arithmetic; while others have a wondrous aptitude to comprehend and to solve mathematical problems. And in reference to the subject more immediately under our consideration, there are examples on record of individuals, who attained a

knowledge of several languages in early life with the most wonderful facility. Superior skill in invention has characterized other minds in a no less extraordinary degree; yet amongst all these no one has ever arisen, who discovered an aptitude for the invention of a new language. We have yet to learn that man, in the most favoured circumstances of earth, is competent for the undertaking.

There is no fact, in the ascertained history of our race, which would favour the notion that the idea of speech originated with man—that he laid its foundation, or reared its glorious architecture. On the contrary, all the existing testimonies, furnished by the history of languages, decidedly discourage the idea. If it were otherwise, we might expect a gradual improvement in the grammatical structure of a language; and to find some tribes at least, in the lowest stages of civilization, using nothing but interjectional words, or employing language incapable of being reduced to anything approaching to grammatical forms. The very reverse of this state of things is, however, realized. We find, on comparison, that the ancient languages are usually the most perfect, and have the greatest number of inflexions, as may be seen by comparing the Sanscrit with the Greek, and the Latin with the Italian. This opinion is supported by the decisions of the most competent scholars. "If any one thing,"* says Mr. Donaldson, "more than

* New Cratylus, b. i. ch. 3, p. 52.

another, can show the absurdity of those who speak of an invented language, it is simply this fact, that the oldest languages are always the richest in materials, the most perfect in analogy, the most uniform in etymological structure. Philology, too, instructs us that those very words, which the advocates for an invented language consider the most difficult to invent, and, therefore, as the last introduced, are, in fact, the basis of all language; for instance, the pronouns and numerals, which Adam Smith considers of recent introduction, are known to have been the oldest parts of every tongue, for it is just these words which retain their identity in languages which have been longest separate, and have, therefore, become most unlike in other particulars. The effect of increased use upon the structure of inflected language is rather to weaken and corrupt, than to improve and amplify."

There is no evading the force of these striking facts by assuming that the older known languages sprang out of others, rude and less perfect; for the most barbarous tribes, hitherto discovered, are found to possess not only the faculty of speech, but a regular system of vocables, presenting to the philologist a symmetrical language, realizing all the organic attributes of the most polished tongues. Ample illustration of this is supplied in works, published by Christian missionaries, relating to the inhabitants of the Sandwich, the Samoan, and other islands of the South Pacific ocean, and to the Bechuana, and other barbarous tribes

of Southern Africa, into whose languages elementary books, and even the sacred Scriptures, have been translated without difficulty, as they were found to furnish words adequate to represent all the truths which these books contain.

The structure of language is evidently independent of the stages of civilization, for we find in the grammars of some barbarous languages a framework as perfect as in that of the most polished nations; and it would be impossible to invent, or to bring into their construction, an additional part of speech. The principal difference in existing languages, even amongst those the most remote from each other, is found in their relative copiousness of terms, or comparative harmony of sounds, in which some modern languages may have the advantage; though this is often gained at the expense of some of the more valuable qualities of language. The speech of natives in a state of rude simplicity would stream freely from the breast, swelling with redundancy of expression, replete with the richest and most significant compounds, and ever bursting forth into melody and song. "The pride of literature," says an acute anonymous writer, in the Cambridge Philological Museum,* "is sadly humbled when we examine the rustic dialects, whether of our own or of any other tongue, and perceive how very slight and minute is the influence exercised by books, even in the course of many centuries, on the

* Vol. ii. p. 248.

spoken language of the people. A few extraneous words will now and then take root among them; but even if you sow the finest pippin it comes up in the shape of a crab. So far are the lower orders from borrowing grammatical forms from the higher, that the very words which they do adopt they almost always disfigure and distort, in order to bring them under the analogies they themselves are wont to be guided by."

The impossibility of inventing language is not in any degree removed by the supposition that ages, or even thousands of years, were allowed for its accomplishment. Jean Jacques Rousseau—whose opinions on the theoretical history of language are entitled to some regard, and who was himself far removed from any suspicion of a desire unfairly to uphold the credit of the Bible—has said, "If language be the result of human convention, and if words be essential to the exercise of thought, language would appear to be necessary for the invention of language. But when, by means which I cannot conceive, our new grammarians began to extend their ideas, and to generalize their words, their ignorance must have confined them within very narrow limits. I stop at these first steps, and intreat my judges to pause and consider the distance between the easiest part of language, the invention of physical substances, and the power of expressing all the thoughts of man, so as to speak in public and influence society. I intreat them to reflect on the time and knowledge it must have required to discover

numbers, abstract words, aorists and all the tenses of verbs, particles, syntax, the art of connecting propositions and arguments, and how to form the whole logic of discourse. As for myself, alarmed at these multiplying difficulties, and convinced of the almost demonstrable impossibility of language having been framed and established by means merely human, I leave to others the discussion of the problem, whether a society already formed was more necessary for the institution of language, or a language already invented for the establishment of society?"*

The ordinary circumstances and phenomena which gather around the history of language all tend to invalidate the hypothesis of its invention. For instance, it is just possible for a person to lose the art of speech, by omitting to employ it. A language imperfectly learned may be readily forgotten; and it is only with extreme industry and perseverance that a man advanced in life can overcome the difficulties of learning a new language, so as to speak it with anything like propriety and fluency. How, then, could the uncivilized learn of themselves to speak? It is true that there are some few instances on record of individuals who were born dumb being taught to speak; but the difficulties of the attainment were overcome by skilful masters, who moulded the organs of speech, and taught their pupils, by imitation, to articulate words. There could,

* Quoted in the Dissertations of the Encyclopædia Britannica, 4to., p. 174.

however, have been no one to do this for the assumed inventors of speech, as all must have been alike ignorant of the means by which articulation is effected. "The experiment," says a judicious writer, "has been made more than once, of training up children separate from the society of men; and the event has been, that they talked no language at all; they could not so much as articulate, nor utter any more sounds than deaf and dumb persons can do; and it is reasonable to believe that, without the Divine instruction at first, and human instruction since, men would have continued *mutum et turpe pecus*, little superior to the beasts of the field."* The instance mentioned by Herodotus† is no real exception to this invariable result; while the case recorded by Purchas,‡ and the more recent one of a savage, who never learned to speak, though placed under suitable instructors in the deaf and dumb school of Paris, confirm this statement.

The physical impossibility of men inventing speech has been well described by several writers, and among them by Dr. Sumner, the present learned and pious primate of England. He says, "Whoever has watched the progress of speech in children, will have found that it is not dependent upon the gradual enlargement of their ideas, since they always understand much more, and earlier, than they can express; but upon the facility, acquired by degrees, of adapting the organs of speech to the expression of

* Dr. M'Gill's Rhetoric, p. 8. † Lib. ii. cap. 2.
‡ Jesuits' Letters.

certain sounds."* And Dr. Johnson is reported by Boswell characteristically to have said, "Language must have come by inspiration. A thousand, nay, a million, of children could not invent a language. While the organs are pliable, there is not understanding enough; and by the time there is understanding enough, the organs have become too stiff. Inspiration seems to me to be necessary, to give the man the faculty of speech, and to inform him that he may have speech, which, I think, he could no more find out without inspiration than cows or hogs."

These statements and reasonings appear to us to be conclusive, and their weight is greatly increased by the fact, that they apply with much greater force to man in a savage state than in a civilized condition. We are, doubtless, entitled to ask, Do barbarous men, or savages, invent languages, or even create original words now? And if not, when did the process cease? and why? The fact is, that it appears to be almost as practicable for man, whether savage or civilized, to create a particle of new matter, or to form a sixth sense, as to invent a fresh verbal root, and to secure its general adoption. And if unable to do that which is less, how can he do that which is vastly greater? Experience and observation teach us that it is much easier to improve than to invent, and by this our conviction is strengthened that it is impossible for man, in a savage state, to possess the intelligence and ingenuity

* Records of Creation, vol. i. p. 44.

involved in the construction of the most imperfect jargon that has ever been dignified with the name of a language. Indeed, before we could yield our assent to the possibility of an invention of language, we should require to be shown, either a species of animated beings which, not being naturally endowed with speech, has supplied the defect for itself; or, a species which, having the power of articulate speech, does not possess an actual language. As we have no expectation of meeting with either of these phenomena, we unhesitatingly reject a doctrine, which, for self-evident absurdity, is only equalled by the theory of spontaneous physical development, to which it appears closely allied, as we shall presently perceive.

Still further, our objections to this theory rest not even here, for it is assumed by the hypothesis we are combatting, that the human species was brought into being in such a state as to make it an exception to the perfect condition in which all other creatures came out of the hand of God. The entire absence of articulate language, on the part of man, would have placed him in circumstances so incongruous to his exalted rank in creation, as to be at variance with all the just conceptions we are compelled to entertain of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, as displayed in all the other departments in which his creative energy has been observed. An examination of the wide and diversified field of nature, so far as we have surveyed it, convinces us that every

organized and living thing, above, beneath, and around us, is qualified for its end, and fitted to realize the design of its being. It appears to us, that it would have been a violation of the unity and harmony thus pervading the universe, if man had been constituted an exception to all the other productions of Divine wisdom and benevolence, by being left to work out, through a tedious process of generalization, a vehicle of utterance for the dictates of his understanding, and for the desires of his heart. Though possessed of a superior nature, he would have been incapable, till this uncertain work was accomplished, of giving expression to any emotions loftier or purer than those which he possessed in common with the brutes that perish; and to indulge the notion that such was the fact would be "to charge God foolishly."

Nor is this all; for, on this supposition, brutes were dealt with more favourably than man, as they were enabled more readily, and without any degree of uncertainty, to reach all the ends of their creation; while it is assumed that for ages men were unable to realize some of the great objects for which they were constitutionally intended. From the beginning, man was placed at the head of this lower world, and invested with mental endowments far beyond mere animal life and sensation, however delicate; and beyond instinct, however wonderful. He was possessed of a rational and social nature, which is indicated by the intelligence of his countenance, and the warm and

friendly emotions of his heart. Yet, without the gift of speech, most of this capacity would have been lavished upon him in vain. Socially, it would have been of no advantage that the first human pair had powers of intellect to contemplate the beauties of external nature, and to make observations upon them, if they had not the power of expressing to each other their sense of the great happiness they possessed. "All the brute creatures had their natural language adapted to their several organs, and understood, by instinct, from the beginning. And can we think that man, who was more especially made for society, should be the last to share in the privileges of it?"*

The vocal organs in the human subject are clearly constituted with a view to the utterances of the voice. The larynx, epiglottis, pharynx, tongue, palate, and lips, are all framed in such a manner as to show, incontestibly, that they were designed for producing such sounds as we employ in articulation. The original possession of a physical conformation, so admirably adapted for the formation of articulate sounds, certainly indicates that God blessed man with the power of speech immediately upon his creation, and furnished him with the ability to exert these organs to their proper end. If it be worthy of God to provide the minutest insect with the means of obtaining its sustenance, and with the instinct necessary for its preservation, it is at least equally worthy of his benevolent wisdom to have enabled the highest

* Winder's History of Knowledge, vol. i. p. 11.

creature under heaven, made only a little lower than the angels, to perform at once the greatest ends of his being. "The use of language would be immediately necessary for the tolerable accommodation of human society; what is requisite for us now must have been so for them; and it is plain we can have very little mutual satisfaction without conversation."*

On the principle for which we contend, we discover a beautiful harmony in the arrangements of Creation and Providence, in making adequate provision for the wants of our animal and rational nature. When the Almighty furnished man with a desire for food, and with proper organs to masticate and to digest it, he did not leave him painfully to seek for the necessary supply, but placed him at once in the midst of a rich and plentiful variety. "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat."† In like manner we reason that, when God endowed him with powers which could find their appropriate exercise only in the communication of thoughts to his equals, or in the expression of devout gratitude to his Maker, he did not leave him and his descendants to labour, doubtfully, for ages, to invent the medium of such utterances, but blessed him at once with the capacity he required, and furnished him with knowledge, directing him to the right use of faculties worthy of his cha-

* Dr. Winder, vol. i. p. 9. † Genesis ii. 9, 16.

racter and position, as the great proto-type of the human race.

The theory of invented language is built upon an assumption utterly baseless and untrue. Its advocates insinuate, or take for granted, the notion that the lowest state of human existence was the starting point of every nation of the earth. This opinion meets with no sort of countenance from universal history, nor from the history of any particular community with which we are familiar, but the contrary. We have no authenticated instance of any tribe emerging from a savage to a civilized state by its own unaided energies. The writers to whom we except have taught, in direct contradiction to the only authoritative statement on the subject, that man was created in the lowest condition of savage life, that his religion was the rudest worship of nature, and his morality that of the cannibal. All civilized nations are represented, by their hypothesis, as having risen from this point, and gradually passed, through barbarism and polytheism, to social refinement and the worship of the true God. A figure, involving a fallacy, has been used to obtain consent to this theory. The similitude of an individual passing through infancy and childhood to youth, and to the perfection of manhood, through successive stages of being, in which the feeblest moral powers and the strongest passions are exhibited, is not a correct figure by which to portray the intellectual and moral progress of the race. As no historical nor other proof is offered to establish

this hypothesis, we reject it, and incline to the belief that, if men had been created savages, they would have remained such. The fact, that human beings are found in a savage state, proves nothing against this view of the subject, because it is well known that men and communities retrograde as well as advance in the career of civilization; and are deteriorated quite as readily, to say the least, as they are improved by the influence of circumstances.

As no good reason hitherto has been afforded, so we apprehend that none can now be given, to show that the first state of mankind must have been the lowest position of humanity, and that society commenced its progress from the most dismal and wretched of all earthly conditions. We are bold to affirm, on the testimony of revealed truth, that the savage state is not the natural state of man. Indeed, it is evident that he is fitted and designed, by his original formation, for nobler ends than that state implies. It is every way reasonable to conceive that he was created with intelligence vastly superior to that of savage life; that being a finite and dependent creature, he has wandered from the path of holiness and bliss, and sunk, intellectually, as he has degraded himself morally, in the scale of the intelligent creation. This conception harmonizes with the word of God, from whose teachings we learn that man was made upright, that he fell from his allegiance to his Creator, and that nations have wandered greatly from the primitive faith and standard of morals into all the labyrinths

of heathen error. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge." But society, in its most degraded type, could not long have existed without speech; and the notion is most preposterous, as we have shown, that it could have been invented by parties who existed without the bounds of a civilized community. It affords us pleasure to cite from the writings of John Gottlieb Fichte a sentiment in favour of this truth. The philosophy of that distinguished man was pantheistic, and exercised a baneful influence on the rising mind of Germany and other lands; but there is, happily, good reason to believe, that several years before his death he renounced his philosophic atheism, and became a Christian. He thus stated his conviction of the primitive state of man. "Who educated the first human pair? A Spirit took them under his care; as is laid laid down in an ancient, venerable, original document, which contains the deepest and sublimest wisdom, and presents results to which all philosophy must at last return."*

The historical facts, which may appear adverse to our interpretation of the inspired record, are in reality not opposed to it. Many nations have been elevated from a savage condition to a lofty standing in the rank of cultivated communities; this improvement, however, originated not in their own enterprize, but appears to have sprung from the influence of individuals or colonies belonging to nations more intelligent than themselves. Thus the

* Dr. Pye Smith's Lectures on Geology. 2nd. ed. p. 224.

aborigines of Greece were tamed, and had the germs of civilization implanted in their midst, by the Pelasgi, a race of doubtful origin, but whose power on the destinies of that community for good is unquestioned. The Romans were advanced in the earlier stages of their improvement by foreign aid; and their conquest of Europe paved the way for the civilization of its barbarous regions. Our own country was delivered by the Roman sword from Druidism, the great barrier to its social and religious advancement, and had some of its foundations of prosperity laid even during the time it wore the Roman yoke. Some barbarous tribes are now rapidly rising to take their place in the great family of civilized nations, by the mercantile and Christian influence of Great Britain and other enlightened nations. Had the savage state been natural to man, we see no reason, therefore, to doubt that it would have been perpetual; but it bears no evidence of having been the original state: on the contrary, "the fine sentiments and romantic traditions which gleam through the fables of men found in the lowest stages of barbarous life, point to a purer condition in a departed age."*

Nothing approaching to the uniform progress of nations, supposed by the theory we oppose, has been realized. Differences of national character, in distinct families of the human race, have immensely advanced or retarded their moral and intellectual progress; and it is equally clear that the physical geography of

* Dr. Hamilton's Nugæ Literariæ, p. 116.

the several parts of the earth has influenced the happiness and greatness of their respective inhabitants. These influences, in connexion with the results of the religious truth or error held by any people, fully account, under the providential arrangements of God, for the relative position now occupied by nations and smaller communities on the scale of extended civilization. That distinguished and lamented man, and eminent historian, the late rev. Dr. Arnold, has said, "The boundless and unmanageable mass of earth presented by the continents of Asia and Africa has caused those parts of the world which started the earliest in the race of civilization to remain almost at the point from whence they set out; while Europe and America, penetrated by so many seas, and communicating with them by so many rivers, have been subdued to the uses of civilization, and have ministered with an ever-growing power to their children's greatness. Well, indeed, might the policy of the old priest nobles of Egypt and India endeavour to divert their people from becoming familiar with the sea, and represent the occupation of a seaman as incompatible with the purity of the highest castes! The sea deserved to be hated by the old aristocracies, inasmuch as it has been the mightiest instrument in the civilization of mankind. In the depth of winter, when the sky is covered with clouds, and the land presents one cold, blank, and lifeless surface of snow, how refreshing is it to the spirits to walk upon the shore, and to enjoy the freshness and liveliness

of the ocean! Even so in the deepest winter of the human race, when the earth was but one chilling expanse of inactivity, life was stirring in the waters. There began that spirit whose genial influence has now reached to the land, has broken the chains of winter, and covered the face of the earth with beauty."* We will not detract from the force of this exquisite passage by any comment; but content ourselves with adding, that those nations who are most favoured by their natural position, as Great Britain obviously is, are laid under strong obligation to render their best assistance to those whose lot is less happy and less promising. It is a circumstance, on the whole, highly favourable to the interests of humanity and religion, that English institutions and British influence are extending themselves in every part of the earth.

* Note on the Progress of States, appended to the first volume of the Edition of Thucydides.

CHAPTER V.

Continuation of objections to the invention of language—The theory is opposed to the statements of the sacred writings—Authority and value of the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses—Substance of its statements on this subject—Notices of man when created—In his abode, employment, social relation, and religious character—Inference as to the possession of speech—Scriptural proof of the advanced civilization of the early patriarchs—Their existence as communities required the use of language—Strength of this argument—Rapid improvement of mankind—Conclusions deduced from it.

Our ultimate appeal, on that particular branch of the subject which has now passed under review, as on all the other points which it involves, is to the authoritative statements of the Bible. Happily for our present argument, we are not only able to invalidate the dogmatic assertions of sceptical writers on this point by such considerations as those we have adduced, but we are in a condition to prove that, so far from the savage state being that of our first progenitors, they were created in such circumstances as to demonstrate their having possessed the power of speech, and the knowledge of language.

On the authority of the Mosaic record, we learn that the founders of our race were brought into the world in the full maturity and perfection of their nature; made, as they were, intellectually and morally in the image of God.

Apart from the inspiration of the writings of Moses, that great prophet and legislator of Israel, there are many circumstances which challenge the attention and homage of mankind to him as the historian of the earliest ages. His history "merits our greatest veneration on every account which makes history valuable. Whether we consider the high antiquity of its dates; or the vast importance of his materials; or the exactness of his chronology from the beginning of the world to his own times; or the perfection of his intelligence.

"The learned pagans distinguished all past time into three divisions; the hidden, the mythic, and historic time. But where is the unknown time of Moses? Where is his mythic or fabulous time? He is altogether as clear in his accounts of the creation as of the flood; and the plantation of the antediluvian, as of the postdiluvian, world."*

Moses has been termed—with far more propriety than Herodotus was—"the father of history." Sanchoniathon, Berosus, and Manetho, are the oldest human historians; but Moses wrote "five hundred years before the first, and more than a thousand before the last." His writings, consequently, are the only competent authority by which to decide the primitive condition of the race. His direct and unhesitating testimony to the intelligence and holiness of man, when created, is sustained by the traditional recollections and impressions of the most ancient nations. Interrogate them as

* Winder's preface to History of Knowledge, vol i. p. vi.

you please, in reference to their early history, and you will find some traces of an impression that their fathers lived in a golden age. Many of their fables seem to shadow forth the fact, as when Minerva is represented springing full armed from the head of Jupiter. Some of their more enlightened philosophers, as Plato and Socrates, had glimpses of this truth. Aratus of Cilicia, and Cleanthes—in his noble hymn—were quoted by the apostle Paul in the court of Areopagus, as having said that "men are the offspring of God."*

The brief authentic account of the original condition of man given in the Bible will only appear meagre and unsatisfactory to a superficial reader of that inspired and invaluable record. On careful examination, it will be found to yield a variety of precious hints in reference to the intellectual condition of man when he came out of the hand of his Creator. As we examine his condition by the lamp of revealed truth, we shall find that—so far from being cast upon the world to perish in ignorance and destitution, or to work his way up with laborious difficulty and uncertainty, from the disadvantageous position in which he was placed—all the germs of the loftiest civilization resided in his spirit, or surrounded his person. And with a view to the illustration of this fact, we shall now proceed to gather up those scattered intimations, which are contained in the earlier pages of the sacred book, concerning the primeval condition of man.

* Acts xvii. 28.

The place previously created and prepared for the abode of the first human being was not the lair of a savage, nor the desert of a barbarian, but the home of a highly civilized being. Thus we read in Gen. ii. 8, "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed." While we are unable to determine the precise locality and boundaries within which Paradise was situated, we have reason to conclude that it was in the fairest part of the new-made world. And it is unquestionably evident that the productions, animate and inanimate, of the garden were such as to minister gratification to Adam, as a being far in advance of barbarous life, for "out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight," Gen. ii. 9. Placed thus in the midst of a region of fertility, and in a garden presenting exquisite forms of physical beauty, he would be, to a certain extent, divinely instructed in the use of nature, and especially in the properties of the various fruits assigned for his support.

The activity and stated employment to which the first man was introduced, was compatible only with the attributes of a civilized being. God had ennobled labour by his own works which he had created and made, and he suspended the happiness of his newly-formed creature on his daily service; yet this was not of the lowest or most fatiguing form. He was not employed to hunt the beasts of the earth and to live on prey, but was engaged as a

cultivator of the soil. "The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it," Gen. ii. 15. He was not to be a wanderer over the face of the earth, but to possess a "local habitation," a sure and quiet dwelling-place. Accordingly, we read nothing of hunting as a mode of supporting life, till the days of Nimrod, after the flood. Adam did not pursue a wild nomadic calling, but cultivated a garden for his support, drinking the limpid stream, and partaking of fruit—the prepared bounty and recompense of his labour. This employment supposes the use of suitable implements, the formation of which, though the simplest description alone was necessary, would exercise his ingenuity, and, in the absence of all models, would prove the possession of considerable mental power and skill.

The employments of man in Paradise involved some knowledge of zoology, of the domestication and training of animals, which were placed under his control. This is evident from the recorded fact, that the Lord God brought every beast of the field and fowl of the air "unto Adam, to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof," Gen. ii. 19. In this act, joined with the subsequent one of naming Eve, we have not only evidence of the varied knowledge and intelligence of man, immediately after his creation, but we have unquestionable proof that language was coeval with his origin, and that it was applied

by him to a wide range of objects in the earliest days of his existence.

We thus find man, in his first occupations, immediately capable of giving suitable names to the various tribes and classes of animals, and of reasoning consecutively, and in perfectly appropriate terms, concerning his own situation, and the relation he stood in to other creatures. In his first attempts at speech we can discover no crudeness of conception—no barrenness of ideas, no inexpressive or unsuitable terms. It is, therefore, rational to conclude that, when endued with corporeal and mental powers perfectly adapted to his condition in life, he was blessed with the power of speech as essential to the perfection of his being ; while the exercise of the newly-bestowed power would be regulated by the force of circumstances and the exigencies of his untried position.

We have further evidence, from the same inspired source, of the moral civilization of the first man in the notices furnished of his social condition. The institution of marriage, while ministering to his personal comfort and to some of the ultimate ends of his creation, clearly indicates the high state of his affections, and the holiness of his character. There was found, in the mother of us all, a being fitted to be the companion of unfallen man, who was constituted the husband of one wife ; though it is intimated by the prophet Malachi, chap. ii. 15, that God, "having the residue of the Spirit," might have given him more than one such

companion: but one alone was granted, that a godly seed should be preserved in the earth. Polygamy is ever an attendant upon a barbarous, or a semi-barbarous, state of society; and its entire absence amongst the earliest of the patriarchs, excepting Lamech, is a significant intimation of the advanced character of the life to which the immediate descendants of Adam were introduced.

The responsible position of the first man, shows his acquaintance with vocal language. He was placed under laws given through its medium. To him, and to his, were allowed the free use and enjoyment of all the fruits of the garden he occupied, with one solitary exception: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it," Gen. ii. 17. The tree of life, in the midst of the sacred inclosure, appears at once to have been to him the sacramental pledge and means of life. Those laws under which he was wisely and benevolently placed were enforced by the promise of reward, and by the threatening of punishment. The right apprehension of this rule of his being, and of the results of obedience and disobedience, involved rationality and responsibility of a high degree; and the way in which it was proclaimed, not by symbol or by type, but by the voice of the eternal Jehovah, intimates to us that he became familiar with his duty and with his destiny by a gradual comprehension of the power of language, as it fell upon his newly-opened ear.

In addition to this, the laws given by the

Creator to the first pair respecting marriage, the propagation of their species, and the subjugation of the earth for their support, together with other discoveries of the Divine will, were communicated through the medium of language. They obviously conversed with God and with each other. It was by the channel of an oral language that the tempter infused the first taint of sin into the human heart, breathing his poison with his words. And this is a statement of facts, embracing a real event in the history of man, and not a mythical representation to be understood by the fanciful aid of an allegorical system of interpretation.

The art most necessary for man as a social being, from the moment that Eve was formed out of him to be his companion, was language. "In what sense could it be said that a meet companion for the man was found, if there were not given, to both, the power of communicating their thoughts by appropriate speech? If God pronounced it not good for man to be alone—if with multitudes of creatures surrounding him he was still deemed to be alone, because there was none of these with which he could commune in rational correspondence—if a companion was assigned to him, whose society was to rescue him from this solitude—what can be inferred, but that the indispensable requisite for such society, the powers and exercise of speech, must have been at the same time vouchsafed?"*

And the nature of man, as a religious being,

* Archbishop Magee on the Atonement, vol. ii. p. 68.

demanded the exercise of speech from the beginning. The earliest worship of our first parents could not have been purely mental and meditative, but would be maintained socially, and by oral language. The knowledge which man, in his individual capacity, would possess of the Father of his spirit, called for the power of language suitably to employ it. Though there appears to have been no written revelation of the Divine will, made to him at the beginning, yet from the various works of nature, spread out before his wondering gaze, he would learn much of the character and perfections of God. In the heavens above, kindled with noonday splendour, or lighted up with nocturnal glory; in the earth around him, with its foliage and flowers, its green sward and meandering streams; and in his own person "fearfully and wonderfully made," he would view, with unclouded mind, the evidences of eternal power and Godhead, written as with a pencil of living light. As a creature who felt and cultivated the consciousness of his entire dependence upon his Creator, he would be prompted to those exercises of devotion which would bring his mind into fellowship with Deity, and in this he would be greatly aided by the utterances of his own voice. Remembering, as he frequently would, that all the conveniences and blessedness of his new-formed existence were the gifts of Divine love—that the breath he drew, and the rational capabilities he possessed, were all bestowed from heaven, and depended for their continuance on the sovereign will of

Jehovah—he would be led to the utterance of thanksgiving, blended with fervent supplication. True it is that no altar was erected in Eden, and no expiatory sacrifice presented there ; but in the temple of man's grateful spirit the incense of a pure devotion would constantly ascend to God.

From such considerations as those which we have now adduced, it appears to us as clear, as though it had been expressly revealed in so many words, that the conscious power of vocal, intelligible utterance was coeval with man's existence; and that the first human pair, called into being in all the perfection of an adult state, did at once exercise that power, and recognise it as the gift of God. And this conclusion, while diametrically opposed to the theories framed in opposition to the sacred Scriptures, is equally adverse to those which, admitting the truth of the Mosaic record, yet attribute to Adam the gradual formation of language as his wants and circumstances demanded. The Bible represents him as using the powers of speech before the production of Eve ; and, consequently, immediately after his own creation. It is unreasonable to suppose that he could have devised such a mode of communication with others before any human being with whom to converse existed ; and utterly impossible that he could intuitively have applied his inflexible and unexercised organs to the delicate and difficult work of articulation, without Divine aid. The first use, as well as the capacity, of oral language is to

be attributed, therefore, to a supernatural revelation.

Although the apostasy of man from his Maker involved him and his posterity in the most awful consequences bearing upon his moral character and destiny, there is not the slightest reason for supposing that it removed from him the power of language, or threw his immediate descendants down into the gulf of a savage state. On the contrary, we find the Creator reasoning with his rebellious children on their guilt, passing sentence of condemnation on them and on their tempter, couching in figurative but beautiful phraseology the promise of the Saviour's advent and victory in the fulness of time, and dealing with them in all respects as with beings who, though rendered guilty and miserable by their fatal apostasy from him, were yet rational and responsible.

The narrative with which we are favoured of the early history and settlements of the family of Adam, represents them as living together in one place, or diverging to separate localities in companies, and attending, in general, to agricultural and pastoral avocations. During the long period which intervened between the fall of man and the destruction of the greater part of the human family by the waters of a flood—which, according to the most valuable chronologists, was about two thousand, or two thousand two hundred and fifty years*—mankind were preserved in a state of civilization, and, in all probability, made considerable ad-

* See Dr. Hales's Chronology, 2nd ed. vol i. pp. 212, 215.

vancement in the arts of life, and in the career of general improvement.

Man, though fallen, was still favoured with a revelation of the Divine will, and with the means of approach to God by the presentation of atoning sacrifices, which were types of the great Sacrifice offered in the end of the age, on the brow of Calvary. It is not true that Fetichism, or the deification of nature, is the infancy of religion. Neither its lowest form—the worship of beasts, nor its highest—the Sabean reverence paid to the host of heaven, was known before the flood. A pure Theism prevailed, and the one true God was worshipped. Seasons of social or public worship were periodically observed, as is evident from this fact, that, from the beginning, time was divided into weekly periods of seven days, and the sabbath, set apart from secular purposes, was devoted to the service of God. On that day we can readily imagine the patriarchs, who were at once the priests and prophets of their families, assembling their households at an appointed locality. This, probably, was at first in front of the garden of Eden, where were the cherubim, between which was the presence of the Lord, and which appears to have been the place where, by Divine appointment, men ought to worship. Places sacred to the worship of God were afterwards multiplied.

The civilization implied in the constant orderly worship of one God was unquestionably realized by all the patriarchs, and this mode of worship, teaching, as it does, that there is one

equal Father of the human family, would have been incompatible with the spirit and institutions of savage life. This worship, we know, was maintained from Adam to Noah, and various spots in the antediluvian world consecrated to the service of Jehovah. "Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God," Gen. xxi. 33. Jacob summoned his family to "arise, and go up to Bethel," the scene of his early dedication and of gracious manifestations, there to redeem the vows he had made in trouble, Gen. xxxv. 3. It would appear that on temples were then erected, but altars were reared, pillars were set up to commemorate interesting events in connexion with the Divine government, and to these sacred spots the tribes went up as unto the testimony of the Lord. It is probable that fire from heaven marked the Divine acceptance of the worshipper by consuming his offering;* and that, assured by this of the favourable regard of his Maker, he would go down to his house justified and comforted. The Christian mind cannot fail to rejoice in these intimations of the glorious fact that the light which now shines perfectly upon us in the gospel shed its morning beams on the earliest of the patriarchs, who, like Abraham, desired to see the day of the Messiah, beheld it, and were glad. Men thus favoured to hold communion with God, and to anticipate the advent of the world's

* Compare Genesis iv. 4—7 with 1 Kings xviii. 38.

Redeemer, in the far remote future, must have been in a state greatly removed from that of savages.

It is still further evident, from the fragmentary notices and incidental glimpses of domestic and social life, afforded in the Pentateuch and in the book of Job, that all the elements of a civilized condition were found in the earliest patriarchal communities. They enjoyed the blessings of the domestic compact, and the advantages of combination for mutual support and defence. They were not wandering savages, who procured a precarious existence by hunting and fishing, who met each other but seldom, and then in disjointed bands, and without the privilege of interchanging thought by oral language. On the contrary, they usually dwelt with each other in peace, surrounded by the means of social comfort, and bound to one another by the ties of clanship or of fraternal affection.

The philosophic theory, as it calls itself, of a gradual improvement and constant advancement from the lowest point to the perfectibility of human nature, is thus confuted by the strongest evidence—the evidence of facts. According to this progressive philosophy, Adam and his immediate descendants were hunters, supported by the produce of the chase, till their increase of numbers forced them up to the occupation of shepherds, and afterwards to the higher employments of agriculturists.* There is, however, abundant evidence to prove that

* Wealth of Nations, book v. chap. i.

such was not the early state and progress of civil society. We are told of Cain, that "he builded a city," Gen. iv. 17; and, though it is readily granted that this name is, in Holy Scripture, sometimes applied to a small collection of houses, and that, probably, it should be so restricted here, yet, such residences in a mere village or hamlet were clearly in advance of the use of tents for human dwellings. And not only so, but they were actually anterior in their construction and use to the more fragile and moveable habitations. It is declared, subsequently, of Jabal, that he was "the father of such as dwell in tents, and have cattle," Gen. iv. 20. There is much safety in our inferring from such a statement that the nomadic life was introduced subsequently to the pastoral, by men wearied with the daily and nightly watchings of the plain, or the monotonous labour of the field. Agrarian pursuits clearly preceded the wild and exciting sports of hunting, as a means of support.

That a division of labour, involving a principle which lies at the foundation of all civilized life, was understood and acted upon from the beginning of man's history, is evident. The first two men born of woman were devoted to different employments. One of them, Abel, was "a keeper of sheep;" and the other, Cain, was "a tiller of the ground," Gen. iv. 2. The principle, thus early recognized, was unquestionably generally adopted and incorporated with the arrangements for manual labour amongst the immediately succeeding genera-

tions. While pasturage and husbandry appear to have claimed the principal attention and toil of the first men, they were not all exclusively given to these pursuits, but followed other branches of labour, involving, not only industry, but skill. Cain could not have built a city, which he called after the name of his son Enoch, without some considerable knowledge of more than one mechanical art. Separate departments of artistic skill were occupied by individuals and by classes in the earliest patriarchal times. Thus, Tubal-Cain was distinguished as the "instructor," or head, of the class who were artificers "in brass and iron," Gen. iv. 22. This branch of art implied some considerable intelligence, as it involved an acquaintance with metallurgy, and some knowledge of the methods of softening and working the materials mentioned, and probably of other metals too, for the gold of Havilah, found in the vicinity of Eden, is described as being good. There is little reason to doubt that many of the conveniences and comforts, which could only be appreciated or collected by persons elevated much above a barbarous state, belonged to society in the period we are now contemplating. Some acquaintance with music, beyond the rude sounds which were emitted by the shepherd's reed, belonged at least to Jubal and his descendants, or followers, who handled "the harp and organ," Gen. iv. 21.

The poetic form of the recorded address uttered by Lamech to his wives, would teach

us that some poetic skill was realised in these early times. Thus we read, Gen. iv. 23, 24:

> "And Lamech said to his wives,
> Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
> Wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech.
> I, indeed, being wounded, have slain a man,
> And being assaulted, a young man.
> If Cain shall be avenged seven times,
> Certainly Lamech seventy and seven."*

Whatever may have been the design of this address, its form is highly poetical.

That a knowledge of astronomy was added to the arts then in use, may be inferred from the nomadic mode of life of some tribes, which was favourable to its cultivation, as afterwards seen among the Chaldees, and from the familiar references to the names of stars in the book of Job. Some system of noting the flight of time appears to have been in use, from the minute accuracy of the genealogical tables in the book of Genesis, and from the records of the birth, age, and death of the patriarchs, as well as from the intimation of the year, month, and day, in which some important events are described as occurring.

The condition in which men dwelt, usually in peace with each other; the scrupulous regard enjoined upon them as to the sacredness of human life; the authority of the patriarchs in enforcing laws, whether human or Divine; the reference to judges sitting in the gate; and the deference paid by men when grown up to the will of their parents, all indicate a state of things in which piety and morality gave se-

* Dr. Boothroyd's version.

curity to personal liberty and property. The men described in the first pages of the Bible were not brutes nor savages, but civilized beings.

The building of the ark, at the end of the antediluvian period, though begun and carried on by Noah under a Divine direction, nevertheless supposed considerable knowledge and skill on the part of the workmen engaged in its construction. Some superiority in mensuration and mechanics is implied in rearing so large a structure as the ark. Some acquaintance with the varieties of timber is indicated in the selection of the proper kind of wood; and some knowledge of the properties of those bodies which were fitted to protect the vessel from the corrosion of the elements, and from the havoc of marine insects, is implied in the injunction to "pitch it within and without with pitch," Gen. vi. 14.

Immediately after the miraculous preservation of a root of the human family by the construction of the ark, we find Noah and his sons taking possession of the new world. From this fresh starting point mankind continued to advance, and we distinctly trace the indications of their civilized state. "Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard," Gen. ix. 20; and his three sons, by whom the whole earth was overspread, in all probability devoted themselves to separate callings. Their immediate descendants, when settled in Shinar, were acquainted with the art of making bricks,

and used them with bitumen instead of mortar," as they began to build a city and a tower, the top of which, they vainly hoped, should reach unto heaven, Gen. xi. 4.

Other glimpses of patriarchal life, after the dispersion, are afforded us, and they are in perfect harmony with those which we find in the more remote periods. We see shepherds and husbandmen, artificers and merchants, associated together in communities and nations. They do not present themselves to us in squalid poverty and wretchedness, but as possessing flocks and herds, and silver and gold. We meet with allusions to the "smoking furnace," and to the "burning lamp." Mention is made of sepulchres, of shekels current with the merchant, of golden ear-rings, and of bracelets of gold. The right to land was recognised, and parted with for pecuniary considerations. In the march of luxury, linen cloth appears to have superseded such garments as "aprons of fig-leaves," and "coats of skins," in which the first human pair were temporarily arrayed. Abraham told the king of Sodom, that he would take nothing of him, "from a thread even to a shoe-latchet," Gen. xiv. 23. Rebecca is said to have covered herself with a veil," and Joseph to have had "a coat of many colours."

It would be interesting to enlarge on the biblical notices of the early state of mankind, but our present use of them is limited to an examination of the evidence they supply to the fact that society, as historically portrayed

in the Scriptures, possessed, in its origin and subsequent stages, an oral language. And when we consider in how rude a state, compared with that of the patriarchs, the Mexicans and Peruvians were found, when discovered by Europeans, though they had belonged for some centuries to a settled and populous community, and yet find among them well-constructed and articulated languages, we see the most conclusive reasons for affirming that such society as that existing in patriarchal times could not, unless by the intervention of a miracle, have been formed, nor retained in the bonds which held it, without the aid of language. Indeed, when we remember the barbarism into which some insulated tribes have sunk in the lapse of time, and the slow growth of human improvement under the most favouring circumstances, it is just possible that the progenitors of our race were not entirely left to their own ingenuity in the invention of useful arts in general, but received Divine instruction, of a peculiar kind, in the use of the powers with which they were favoured. The world is much more indebted to the church for its means of comfort and usefulness than it is ready to acknowledge; and we incline to the opinion, that even our literature owes much more to the Hebrews than it does to the Egyptians, though a contrary notion has been entertained by many.

CHAPTER VI.

The theory of physical spontaneous development held by some advocates of invented language — Statements and estimate of this philosophy—No actual case illustrative of the theory—Impassable gulf between man and the inferior creatures—General results arrived at in the argument—Steps by which it has been reached — LANGUAGE IS DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN — Explanations — Character of the primitive language—Review of the several arguments for this theory — Consistency of the conclusion with the reasons and facts of the case—Its harmony with revelation.

THE advocates of the human invention of language adopt, as we have seen, a theory concerning the history of our race, at once untenable and absurd; but the more offensive and impious conclusions of the theory have not yet been glanced at. It is, indeed, little more than a revival of the Epicurean atheism, which held the fortuitous concurrence of atoms to be the cause of the existence of all organized beings. This extravagant creed of infidelity may be traced up to Moschus and Democritus. It was presented to the world, with some modifications, by La Marck, in his System of Appetencies, and has recently been put forth in an English dress, under the attractive form of a new theory of animal development.

This wretched philosophy teaches that electricity, or some similar power—how derived and obtained is not said—produced the monad, the

humblest form of organic structure; that nature, having made a start, proceeded progressively to perfect her work; that monads in time worked their way up to monkeys; and that monkeys, in like manner advancing, became at length the parents of men. These, as they were formed into families, from their natural appetencies to speak, gradually invented language; and, having so far advanced, their descendants are moving on to some yet higher form of earthly being.

It is pretended that the gradual steps of this development are in conformity with a principle at work in the entire animate creation. It is said, though without the shadow of proof, that the insect, desiring to improve its condition, gave birth to marine tribes. Some of these, forming the desire to walk, became quadrupeds; and others, under an appetency to fly, became birds. Quadrupeds, as they herded together, became men. Such is the philosophy that repudiates faith, rejects revelation, and attempts to annihilate human responsibility!

This miserable theory is alike an insult to the dignity of human nature, and to the wisdom of our heavenly Father. That we have not exaggerated its wicked absurdities, or dealt unfairly with the infidel advocates of the invention of language, in charging its folly upon them, is evident from the following representations of Lord Monboddo. After endeavouring to identify man with the hare, the beaver, and the sea-cat, he says: "It is unnecessary to give more examples from the brute

creation, since it appears to me that *our own species* furnishes sufficient for my purpose. There are the ourang-outangs, who are proved to be of our species, by marks of humanity that, I think, are incontestible; and they have one property more of the species than the quadruped savages above mentioned, that they walk erect. They live in society, and build huts; but have not yet attained the use of speech."*

In terms of triumph—which we do not choose to transfer to our page—this grave and learned judge appears to glory in his assumed discovery, that men and monkeys are of the same species. It is truly pitiable to see a human being of rank and learning attempting to render his race the butt of low conceit and fiend-like banter. The singular and awkward reasonings, by which this attempt to degrade our nature is bolstered up, present few points of argument, and these require but little for their refutation. The anatomical argument for identifying man with brutes is admitted to be a failure by all well-instructed physiologists; it is not a mere pectoral or partial conformity that must consign man to a level with brute beasts. It would only be philosophical to demonstrate an analogy in limbs and features, in trunk and extremity, before human beings are treated as mere animals. Till this has been done, let the gratuitous reckless assertions of those who affirm that perpendicular attitude and motion are inven-

* On Language, vol. i. p. 289.

tions, receive the just condemnation of all candid minds.

No case illustrative of spontaneous development, or of the assumed appetency for improvement, has shown itself during the long period of recorded observation. Of all the men who have chronicled prodigies, from Pliny downwards, not one affirms that he saw the lower animal rising into the higher, or detected the animal emerging into the man. Egypt has preserved, in the mummies of its animals, a museum of natural history, which presents to us, at the distance of three thousand years, every species then as now. Amidst all the strivings of man after new resources and new powers, there has not been, from age to age, the development of any additional organ or faculty, nor the opening of a new channel of perception. And this stationary formation harmonizes with the general law under which created beings are placed. "The bee has been striving without intermission in the art of making its sweet confection since the days of Aristotle; the ant has been constructing its labyrinths since Solomon recommended its example; but, from the time they were described by the philosopher and the sage, till the beautiful researches of the Hubers, they have not acquired a new perception, or a new organ for these purposes."*

These facts tell, with irresistible power, against

* Dr. Wiseman's Lectures on the Connexion between Science and Revealed Religion

the puerile and debasing notions of the ancient Theogonies, and against all the confident declamations of the modern pantheistic schools, and may serve to assure us that no cycles of time, even if they amounted to countless years, would suffice to raise irrational brutes to the dignity of rational and immortal man.

The fact unquestionably is, that a gulf, never to be passed, divides the human race from all the inferior creatures by whom we are surrounded. The superiority of man consists in the possession of a social and immortal nature, and of a capacity for indefinite improvement. "He is, in short, a man in every condition; and we can learn nothing of his nature from the analogy of other animals. In his rudest state he is found to be above them; and in his greatest degeneracy never descends to their level. With him the society appears to be as old as the individual, and the use of the tongue as universal as that of the hand or the foot. If there was a time in which he had his acquaintance with his own species to make, and his faculties to acquire, it is a time of which we have no record."* But our acquaintance with him, as we have seen, goes back to the period of his creation; and in every age we meet him as a man and a brother.

Having thus opened up and examined, at some length, and with considerable care, the several questions involved in a full inquiry into the origin of language, and having, by a course of inductive investigation, proved that the

* Ferguson on the History of Civil Society.

theory of its invention is unfounded and false, we are now in a position, without any great risk of the charge of presumption, to reiterate our frequent statements made at the several stages of our reasoning, and to affirm, in the most unhesitating manner, that the faculty of speech, and the origin of language, are alike the gifts of God. He appears to have created Adam with the capacity of speaking, and to have given him the desire to communicate the ideas he received through the medium of his senses. In addition to this, the benevolent Creator appears to have imparted a knowledge of the elements of language with the being of man; and to have presented to him at once, in the opportunity of naming the animals, a suitable range of subjects on which to employ his newly-created powers. We may conclude that Eve possessed the like capacity of language, when created, with at least an equally strong desire to use it. Their mutual converse, worthy of their position and destiny, would immediately call into exercise a copious vocabulary. The scope of their language would be enlarged with their daily experience and observation. In process of time they would, both of them, instruct their children in the use of speech; and thus, naturally and obviously, would begin and spread the first language of the world.

We do not intend, by the avowal of this theory, to maintain that God put into the mouth of Adam the very words he should employ on all ordinary occasions; and that in

this absolute and unqualified sense he thus Divinely created the language of Paradise, but that he instructed him to use aright his powers of mind and of tongue. Nor do we mean to affirm that the whole *copia verborum* of the primitive speech was immediately invented. The framework of language would be at once perfectly constructed, and rendered capable of whatever service should be demanded from it for the immediate use of mankind. Their language was fully adequate to their wants, and exquisitely adapted to their unsophisticated and happy life. Its foundations being Divinely laid, the additions afterwards required could easily be made by human minds. Thus, language would at once become what it usually is, the measure of human knowledge, and the external index of social attainment.

We have no means of positively determining the degree of perfection which pertained to the primitive tongue. As, however, the original knowledge of man must have been sufficient for all the purposes of a pure and blessed existence, and as the principle of a progressive development entered into the constitution of his intellectual nature, his language would not only be sufficient for his primitive state, but would expand and adapt itself to the measure of his advancing intelligence. It would keep pace with the growth of invention, and with the general cultivation of his mind and heart; while it would powerfully aid the improvement of his mental endowments, and be a chief instrument of his great and rapid strides in

general attainments. Thus it would be enriched and adorned, from time to time, by numerous additions. From being, in its earliest age, the child of necessity, it would become the parent of ornament. From merely denoting the perceptions of sense, it would advance to represent, by appropriate terms, the instruments and operations of art, the flights of imagination, the deductions of reason, and the results of observation and experience. New objects and new wants would continually render new signs and symbols indispensable; and these were so numerous as soon to call into existence a varied and extensive vocabulary.

We are not to imagine that this primitive language was a mere collection of words, without much regard to mutual relations and grammatical structure. Oral language, of every kind, must consist, under one form or other, of five parts of speech. For example, it must include the signs of things, which we call nouns; of actions, which we call verbs; of attributes, which we call adjectives, or adverbs; of the relations of some things to others, which we call prepositions; and of the natural expression of emotions, which we term interjections. Such principles did, unquestionably, enter into the structure of this Divine language, which became, in after times, a model on which all existing tongues are formed. This language of Paradise was the mother of them all; it prevailed through the eight extended generations of the patriarchs, during which "the

whole earth was of one language, and of one speech," Gen. xi. 1.

Language thus appears to us originally to have assumed the form that it would have done, if it could have been developed by man, in a long course of experience, to meet the wants of his civilized condition. It was completely in harmony with the laws of human consciousness, and exactly fitted to give them utterance, so that the point in reference to language at which God set down man, was precisely the point which man would have reached, at a corresponding stage of the advancement of his nature, if he had possessed the power of developing both that nature from its dormant faculties, and his language from its mere elements.

This view of the origin of language we regard as a simple and satisfactory solution of the subject, so far as its extensive bearings have hitherto occupied our attention; and it is one that commends itself to acceptance by a variety of considerations. It agrees with the purest traditions and with the noblest sentiments and opinions of the most ancient nations, and it harmonizes with the reasonable expectations suggested by enlightened views of the character and government of God. More than all this, it is entitled to favour from those who submit to the authority of revealed truth, by the fact, that it is in perfect conformity with the authentic and interesting statements of the sacred Scriptures concerning the creation of the human race and their early history, who

could not have existed in the state there described, without the use of speech.

Our argument for the Divine origin of language—understanding this phrase in the light of those definitions and restrictions we have appended to it—has been intentionally interwoven with a statement and refutation of the dogmatic assertions by which it has been sought to establish the opposite theory. In reality, there can be but two opinions on the subject. Language is of Divine origin, or of human invention. Now, if the last-mentioned theory be overthrown, the first is easily, if not of necessity, established. In each of our advancing and substantiated objections, some proof in favour of our own position has been secured; and the cumulative evidence is conclusive, that language is from the Creator and not from the creature.

The bearing and force of these arguments, blended as they have been with the positive conclusions derived from the Scriptures and from other sources, may thus be summed up and exhibited to view. If it be the case, as we have proved, that no period for the supposed invention of language can be assigned, and that no traces, either historical or traditional, of its inventor or inventors can be found, then the inference is by no means an unreasonable one, that the faculty and use of speech are coeval with the existence of the human family. Our establishment of the position, that men are unable, under any circumstances, to invent language—as the previous

knowledge of it must have been required for the construction of the most simple language of the least instructed tribes—strengthens and advances the argument for the Divinity of its origin. In the absence of all proof that savages ever did, or could, invent speech, and with the demonstration of the physical impossibility of their doing it, we are conducted, with inevitable precision, to the conclusion, that it was an original endowment of our nature. If, upon all the evidence derived from just views of the character and government of God, and of the nature and destiny of man, from observation, and from the history of the world, it appears that the savage state was not natural to the human race; and that, though some tribes have fallen into it, none have ever, by their own unaided powers, emerged from it; then it follows that, from the beginning, man was made a speaking as well as a thinking being; and that necessarily, and from design, because he was a social and civilized creature. If the gratuitous assumptions of spontaneous development be so triumphantly annihilated as to prove that man is identical with himself in every age and clime, always a rational and accountable being, then it follows that oral language is not an accidental, but an indispensable attendant of his earthly condition. His tongue is an important member of his frame, and the use of it was taught him by his Maker.

And these inferences and conclusions are not merely unopposed by Scripture testimony.

To say this only of them would not be to state their real character. Nor is it enough to add that there is no apparent collision between them and it; for they are established by all the incidental notices and positive statements of the Bible, which can be brought to bear upon the entire subject. All the representations it affords of the mental and religious condition of man, at the period of his creation, justify our conclusion, that oral language was indispensable for the ends of his existence. Its statements of domestic life, as they refer to the first human pair in Paradise and after their expulsion, exhibit them conversing with God and with each other; and prove that Adam, immediately upon his formation, was directed to the suitable employment of the wondrous faculty of speech. The lives of the earliest patriarchs, embodying exercises of oral devotion, and of intercourse with their families and neighbours, represent them as maintaining these acts by the use of that one language, spoken first in Paradise, and afterwards through the district known in the early Scriptures as the East.

Now, forasmuch as arguments are to be judged of less by their number and variety, than by their cogency and adaptation to the case in hand, we venture to deem our proofs conclusive and unassailable in their general testimony, whatever may be thought of any particular proof or mode of illustration. The various lines of thought over which we have travelled have all converged to one point, and

landed us, necessarily, on the one great conclusion, that man was originally indebted to his Maker, not only for the organs of speech, but also for a knowledge of the fact that he possessed them, and for the inclination and power to employ them. This conclusion appears to us to be as reasonable as it is scriptural, and to furnish the only view that is truly worthy of the origin of a faculty which has diffused so widely and constantly, through all the branches of the human family, the varied and unnumbered blessings of which it is the appointed channel.

This interesting subject, in its multiform shapes, and contemplated from the numerous points of observation from which it has been surveyed, presents to us one uniform aspect and result. Whether regarded through the medium of history or testimony, of observation or a sound philosophy, whether looked at in the light of experience or of Scripture declaration, it shuts us up to the conclusion that language is not a human invention, but a Divine gift, and is, like reason itself, the boon of the infinitely wise and benevolent Creator to his most favoured earthly creature—Man.

CHAPTER VII.

One common language in the early patriarchal times—Advantages which would have resulted from its perpetuation—Evils and benefits of a variety of existing languages—Objection to the Divine origin of language arising out of the present diversity, stated and met—The unity of the human race—Declared in the Old Testament, and recognised in the New—Illustrated by modern physiological researches—The unity of language hence inferred—Verbal affinities and grammatical resemblances in all tongues—Classification of languages—Family groups—Indo-Germanic—Semitic—Malayian—African—American—Inferences from the ascertained present state of language.

DURING the lengthened period of human history which connected the career of Adam with that of Noah, the inhabitants of the whole earth spoke one language. No direct Divine interference was requisite to maintain this unity. Many natural circumstances would concur to prevent any considerable deviations from the primitive speech. It would be held in reverence by the whole human family; the more pious part of the community sacredly using it as the gift of God, and the entire race valuing it as a boon derived from their common parents, to whom every descendant was deeply indebted. Wherever any portions of this family wandered, they would cherish its recollection, and preserve it in use, not only for immediate intercourse with their present companions, but

as the means of future communication with the brotherhood from whom they had departed, and to whom it might be hoped they, or their children, would be restored. The limited extent of country which it is probable the antediluvians covered would allow of such frequent intercommunion as to make all advancement in the polish of language, or in the multiplication of words, accessible to the entire speaking population of the earth. The extreme length of human life in the patriarchal ages would be highly favourable to the fixed and universal character which the primitive language retained till after the flood. At the same time, there could be no temptation to any portion of the race, from the prevalence of other forms of speech around, to break down, or change, or forsake the tongue in which they were born. There is much reason to believe that, on the whole, considerable advantage would have resulted to the human family if the primitive language had been preserved intact, and had prevailed in its unity from age to age, as successive generations multiplied and extended themselves over the surface of the earth. It would have proved a bond of universal brotherhood, to cement society in its various and dissimilar parts.

It is evident that the division of tongues has created mournfully strong and lasting prejudices and antipathies amongst men. Nations have been alienated from each other as much by difference of speech as by diversities of politics, or of religion. There is a mental, if not a moral, deformity, falsely enough attached

by many persons to those who are unable to speak the language of our country. The man who cannot do it is an alien to us, and we are instantly alienated from him. A strong dislike to a foreigner may frequently be detected in children, and in the unlettered rustic who knows no other language than his own, and who has never visited a land in which other languages are spoken. Unreasonable jealousies, as a consequence, are engendered, and strong national prejudices have been thrown up and perpetuated. These have interfered with the commercial intercourse of nations, who have deliberately regarded each other as natural enemies, have led to paltry acts of oppression and tyranny, to neglect of the exile, and cruelty to the stranger cast on a foreign shore. The prejudices thus created have served to perpetuate the existence of partial and unjust laws; and have, moreover, originated many of the unrighteous and exterminating wars, whose hateful progress may be tracked by desolated countries stained with human blood.

The diversities of speech prevalent amongst men have interfered with the diffusion of those benefits of civilisation enjoyed by some highly favoured nations, to the more destitute and degraded sister nations of the earth. The efforts of the Christian church to evangelize the heathen world have been seriously retarded by the obstacles thus supplied. The missionary of the cross, charged with his message of mercy to the guilty and the wretched, has been impeded on the very threshold of his benevolent

embassy by the long and laborious exercises, which were necessary to enable him to speak, in intelligible terms, the simplest portion of the glad tidings he was sent to communicate. And even after he has become, to a good extent, familiar with the language of his adoption, his imperfect acquaintance with its idioms, and his faulty pronunciation of its terms, have greatly diminished the efficiency of his public ministrations. This disadvantage is so keenly felt by the promoters of Christian missions, that the hope of the church for the salvation of the more erudite heathen nations of the world is now placed greatly on the agency of a well-trained band of native teachers and preachers, who may speak in their own tongue, in which they were born, "the wonderful works of God." It was when an infuriated Jewish mob, thirsting for the blood of the apostle Paul, heard him speak to them in the Hebrew tongue, that they kept profound silence; and so, when men, fired with the love of Christ, shall speak to their fellow-countrymen the words of the truth of the gospel, we may expect that these words, through Divine grace, will calm the mind, subdue the passions, and change the hearts of multitudes now living without hope in the world.

From these considerations we may conclude that the disadvantages resulting from a diversity of languages are very great; but the evil is not an unmixed one. That some good has been educed from it by the superintending providence of God, who, by his course of benevolent

operation, is reversing every malediction, is evident on the most superficial view of all the workings of this calamity. Its existence has proved a barrier to the licentiousness and wickedness of mankind. It has been a check to the ravages of superstition and idolatry ; and but for its influence some of the gigantic forms of error, which, at different periods, have flourished in the earth, might have become universal, and all but immutable. It has presented a limitation to the subjugation of nations to great tyrannies, which have sprung up and widely extended their dominions. The Roman empire made an attempt to destroy the nationalism of society, and to establish a universal despotism, by the means of the enforced adoption of its language, but happily failed in its endeavours to exterminate other tongues. Subsequently, the Roman church, panting, like pagan Rome, for universal conquest, and, like it, reckless of the means employed for this end, laboured with untiring zeal and energy to annihilate the gentilism of society, by the imposition of its faith, through the medium of the Latin language ; but this purpose, in like manner, has been frustrated, so far as it embraces universality.

Much of the disadvantage resulting to the Christian church from the diversified tongues of earth has been surmounted, or even subordinated to the fulfilment of its hallowed designs. In the first age of Christianity, the gift of tongues possessed by the apostles and other ministers and members of the church

furnished the most indubitable evidence of the Divine character of the gospel, and facilitated its rapid introduction to all the nations of the then known world. "Tongues were for a sign to them that believed not," and a means of subduing them to the faith of Christ. And in modern times eminent Christian scholars have succeeded in translating the sacred Scriptures into the principal languages of the earth. That noble institution, the British and Foreign Bible Society, has been the honoured instrument of aiding the printing of the word of God in no less than one hundred and thirty-eight languages and dialects spoken amongst men; while the American and other Bible societies have increased the number of versions, in languages not comprehended in this enumeration. The way is thus preparing for the final contest of the religion of truth and love, with the sin and superstition of the world, in which it will be triumphant. Christianity is the only religion adapted to become universal, and the only one that has toiled extensively to propagate itself, by the diffusion of its writings, in all the languages of the earth.

Nor are these the only advantages that have been realized by mankind from a diversity of languages; for, in the development of different forms of speech, different modes of thought, different attributes of mind, different tastes and talents are cultivated, which, taken together, make the human family more accomplished than it could have been by the use of one universal language only. This division is to

thought, what the division of labour is to mechanics, as it perfects the art of thinking. Some languages, like the German, are best adapted for metaphysical analysis; others, like the French, are fit for familiar intercourse; and others, like the English, are best suited for the general enterprise of active life. The ardent pursuit of individual nations, in what appears to be their peculiar callings, modifies the character and tastes of other communities, who do homage to their talents in their several departments of thought and activity.

The power of a language in forming character, and influencing opinion, must be evident to all who have studied the subject. Its advantageous influence on opinion may be traced in its happy etymologies, and in its affluence and precision of words. "Some virtues are more sedulously cultivated by moralists when the language has fit names for indicating them; whereas they are but superficially treated of, or rather neglected, in nations where such virtues have not so much as a name. Languages may obviously do injury to morals and religion by their equivocation; by false accessories, inseparable from the principal idea; and by their poverty. There is an illustration of this last-named evil influence in the Ethiopians, who, having but one word both for *person* and for *nature*, could not comprehend the doctrine of the union of Christ's two natures in one single person. Among the Greeks and Romans, the Deity had no particular identical name; and to this may, probably, be imputed

the badness of their philosophy, and their defective notions in everything relating to theology."*

The study of comparative languages has not only been beneficial as a discipline of mind to individuals, leading them to form habits of patient inquiry, and inducing a diligent pursuit of general knowledge, but it has frequently led, incidentally, to such researches in other departments of human and sacred learning, as have conferred important benefits upon society at large. Thus it is remarked, in reference to the learned philological labours of Leibnitz, that "he struck out a new and unexpected light to guide his successors through the seemingly hopeless darkness of remote ages. This light is the study of etymology, and of the affinities of different tongues in their primitive roots; a light, at first faint and glimmering, but which, since his time, has continued to increase in brightness. It is pleasing to see his curiosity on this subject expand from the names of towns, and rivers, and mountains, in his own neighbourhood, till it reached to China, and other regions in the east; leading him to some general conclusions concerning the origin of the different tribes of our species, approximating very nearly to those which have been since drawn from a much more extensive range of

* See Biblical Review, vol. ii. p. 370; where may be found an able article by the learned J. D. Michaelis, on "the Mutual Influence of Language and Opinion," which obtained a prize from the Royal Society of Berlin.

data, by Sir William Jones, and other philosophers of the same school."*

Thus we find, in this arrangement, as, in everything else that belongs to the Divine government of the world, the working of the great law of compensation. One thing is set over against another. Events, which in themselves were most disastrous, and which threatened only the entailment of calamity, have been so counteracted or modified by the Divine benevolence, as to afford light mingled with darkness, and to present the mountain tops of joy in the vicinity of the regions of depression and gloom. So fully has this happened with the infliction of a judgment of confusion on the speech of men, as to render it now an open question, whether the good that has flowed from it eventually has not, in some good degree, approached to its counteraction.

An objection to the Divine origin of language, arising out of its extensive diversity, has been frequently urged, and urged with some plausibility, but with little force, because those who have advanced it have thoughtlessly or wilfully chosen to overlook those historical facts and circumstances which completely meet it. Nevertheless, to this objection we must now look, as it presents itself to our notice while tracing the progress of language. It has thus, in substance, been stated:—If the first language was communicated by inspiration, it

* Professor Playfair. Dissertations of the Encyclopædia Britannica, vol. i. 4to., pp. 262, 263.

must have been perfect, and would, consequently, be held in great reverence by all the human family, and be thus preserved from the ravages of time. But great varieties of language prevail. They are now to be counted not by tens, nor by hundreds, but by thousands. Some existing ones are obviously imperfect, and there is reason to believe that others are utterly lost. These things are deemed by the objectors fatal to the truth of the Divine origin of language. To meet the difficulties involved in the invention of many languages, they boldly affirm that the races of men were as distinct in their origin as are the languages they now speak, and refer, in proof of their opinion, to the varieties of colour and physical conformation which mark different tribes, and assume that these can only be adequately accounted for by admitting that the human race did not descend from a single pair, but were created at different times and places, or started up in the various parts of the earth in which we now find them.

The principal, but insufficient support to this absurd opinion is derived from the old polytheistic systems, the genius of which was local and national. Each heathen nation had its own god, and was identified with its tutelary divinities. They knew nothing of the unity of the race as an historic fact. In the ebb and flow of empires, they perceived no law of unity; and, in the natural division of nations, they saw no arrangement of Divine Providence for the comfort and advantage of the great family

of man. They recognised the unity of a tribe, but had no feeling, no conception of universal humanity. If they had enjoyed access to the Hebrew Scriptures, they might have been taught the unity of the race; for these writings recognised the common relation of man to man, however diversified in language, colour, or physiological peculiarities. The Old Testament narrative described the settlement of the nations, and the foundation of empires, in the descendants of Noah. It anticipated the coming of a Messiah, in whom "all the families of the earth" should be blessed. It exhibited Abraham called in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all who believe in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. It unfolded the character of Jehovah as "the God of the whole earth," proclaimed the utterance of his condescending love, "All souls are mine," and declared that unto him, as to the God hearing prayer, all flesh should come.

When Christianity descended from heaven, it announced, in the song of angels, the sublime end of its mission: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." As a dispensation of mercy, it was exquisitely adapted to the wants and woes of every human being, and went forth to bless all the tribes of earth. It recognised the universal brotherhood of mankind, by its precept to "Honour all men." By the expansiveness of its benevolence it forbade the most privileged to call any man "common" or unclean. It taught that "in every nation he that feareth" God "and worketh righteousness

is accepted" of the universal Parent, the Father who is in heaven. When the apostle Paul stood amongst the Athenians and asserted the unity of the race, he announced a fact alike new to the philosophers and to the multitude, that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined .... the bounds of their habitation," Acts xvii. 26. This great truth was recognised as lying at the basis of all the early Christian churches, which sprang up in Judæa, Galatia, Asia Minor, and the isles of the Mediterranean. An equality of privilege was claimed for believers in the Son of God. The distinctions of Jew and Greek, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, male and female, were all merged in the relationship which each sustained to the Father of spirits, and to Jesus Christ, "by whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

The researches of modern physiologists have tended invariably to the illustration of this Scripture truth. By the collection of many interesting facts relative to the human race in various conditions, Dr. Prichard proves that the whole human family was derived from one stock. If the unity of the race is not to be made out genealogically, because profane history does not ascend so high as to meet the historical narrative of Moses, in reference to Gentile nations, he demonstrates that unity by the fact, that it is essential to the nature of man. Agreeing with Buffon and Cuvier, to define species as "a constant succession of individuals capable of

reproducing each other,"* he goes on to prove that there is a law, prevailing alike in the vegetable and animal creation, which renders the perpetuation of hybrids, so as to produce new and intermediate species, impossible. The facts adduced lead, with the strongest force of analogical reasoning, to the conclusion that, as the various tribes of men may, by intermarriage, perpetuate their race, they belong to the same species.† Additional light is thrown on the subject by his careful analysis of collected evidence on the nature and origination of varieties. He appears to us to have solved all the elements of the problem by a course of patient and impartial induction. The great question is, Could such various nations and tribes, as are now existing amongst men, have all sprung from one stock? In answer to this he proves, by an appeal to facts, that sporadic or accidental varieties may arise in one race, tending to produce in it the characteristics of another; that these varieties may be perpetuated; and that food, climate, employment, and other secondary causes, account for the existing varieties of the human race, and for the perpetuation of these peculiarities.

This conclusion, in harmony with ascertained fact, commends itself to our judgment by its simplicity and sufficiency. "It is superfluous to do by many means what may be done by fewer. This is an axiom received into courts of judica-

* "La succession des individus qui se reproduissent et se perpétuent," Buff. "His. Nat." Cuv. "Regne Animal."
† "Natural History of Man," sections iv. and v.

ture from the schools of philosophers. 'We must not, therefore,' says our great Newton, 'admit more causes of natural things than those which are true, and sufficiently account for natural phenomena.' But it is true that one pair, at least, of every living species, must, at first, have been created; and that one human pair was sufficient for the population of our globe in a period of no considerable length, is evident from the rapid increase of numbers in geometrical progression."*

A French analogical philosopher maintains, absurdly enough, that there were twelve original families of men. He has, however, no better reason for his bold assertion than this, that, in the chromatic scale of music there are twelve notes; that there are twelve signs in the Zodiac; and that there were twelve tribes in the house of Israel, representatives of the human family. But the twelve signs are unitized by one sun; the twelve notes originate in the unity of sound; and the twelve tribes all descended from one father—whose name they bore. Unity is the true principle of commencement, and from it varieties proceed.

The unity of all the human race, once admitted, goes far to demonstrate the unity of original language; because the inference is just, that, as all the varieties of men descended from one common pair, so our diversified languages originated in theirs. The verbal affinities and grammatical structure of existing languages strikingly indicate the fact that they

* Sir William Jones's Works, vol. iii. p. 187.

all bear a common relation to one primitive source; such affinities are sought in words, which are regarded as the material of all language; and in grammar, which is looked upon—not as the moulding or fashioning of this material, but—as an essential element in the composition of language. If there be danger, while tracing out mere verbal affinities, of being conducted into a region of fancy rather than of facts, as unquestionably there is, this danger is readily avoided by adopting the safe and satisfactory principles of procedure which have been laid down by modern philologists on the subject.

In reference to verbal affinities, Dr. Wiseman has thus enunciated the rule: "Not to take words belonging to one or two languages in different families, and from their resemblance, which may be accidental or communicated, draw inferences referable to the entire families to which they respectively belong, but to compare words of simple import and primary necessity, which run through the entire families, and consequently are aboriginal therein." Mr. Sharon Turner* applied this principle in tracing a common relation between all the great groups of families of language, so as to demonstrate their connexion with a primitive language, with considerable success. Beginning with the numerals of nations, he shows that they are, in a vast majority of cases, com-

* In the published Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, vol. i.

binations of simpler terms, used also for numerals by other nations, not in immediate contiguity, and who, in other respects than those, appear to have no visible relationship. In several hundred cases he brings illustrations of analogy in the terms by which the numbers one and two are expressed by various nations, with a view to show that they are described by simple sounds of one syllable; or which are resolvable into these simple elements, and, most probably, were always made from them. Thus the sounds *e*, *i*, *y*, used by the Chinese for *one*, are traced in various combinations with each other, or with the addition of certain consonants, in a multitude of tongues. So with the number *two;* and especially in the very extensive use of the form *duo*, which is identical with it, and is familiarized to us in the well-known Greek and Latin terms. Upwards of seventy languages are cited, in which that form of expressing this numeral is used. Illustrations of the analogy, equally remarkable, are furnished in several of the higher numbers. We subjoin a table of numerals, in which the resemblance is striking, placing the English near the centre, so that the eye may readily trace the conformity in the languages ranged on each side of it.

Sanscrit.	Persian.	Greek.	Latin.	English.	Dutch.	Icelandic	Danish.	Russian.	Erse.	Welsh
aika	yika	heis, hen	unus	one	een	einn	een	odin	aen	un
{dwi {dwau	du	duo	duo	two	twee	too	to	{dva {dvie	do, du	{dau {dwy
tri	seh	treis	tres	three	drie	thrir	tre	tri	tri	tri
chatur	chehaur	{pessures {tessares	quatuor	four	vier	fiorir	fire	chetyre	keathair	pedwar
panchan	penj	pente	quinque	five	vÿf	fimm	bem	pyat	kuig	pump
shash	shesh	heks	sex	six	zes	sex	sex	shesh'	se	chwech
saptan	heft	hepta	septem	seven	zeven	sio	syv	sem	secht	saith
ashtan	hesht	okto	octo	eight	acht	atta	aatte	osm	ocht	wyth
navan	nuh	ennea	novem	nine	negen	niu	ni	dayat	noi	naw
dasha	deh	deka	decem	ten	tien	tin	ti	desyat	deich	deg

In some of these cardinal numbers a striking resemblance will be found, as in the numbers two, three, six, and nine; while in the whole there may be traced a remarkable conformity. Professor Bopp observes, in explanation of some exceptions, "In the designation of the number one, great difference prevails among the Indo-European languages, which springs from this, that the number is expressed by pronouns of the third person, whose original abundance affords satisfactory explanation regarding the multiplicity of expressions for one."*

The apparent discrepancies of the table are fully removed when, in addition to this, it is considered that letters of the same class, and pronounced by the same organs, are interchanged readily one with the other. The transformations that thus occur between the English, German, and other languages, are very numerous. As an illustration of our meaning, we observe that the Sanscrit word for the numeral ten, *dasha*, and the German word for the same number, *zehen*, have but one letter in common; and yet no doubt need be entertained respecting their identity, when it is shown that the *d*, in Sanscrit, constantly corresponds to *z*, in German; and that the palatal *s*, of the Sanscrit, corresponds to the German *h*.

Mr. Turner, in pursuit of his interesting object, undertook an extensive inquiry, with a view to ascertain whether the words used in different and remote languages of the

* Comparative Grammar, p. 416.

world to express the first, the dearest, and the most universal relations of human life, would be found to confirm or to overthrow the conclusion suggested, as the result of previous investigations, in the department of cardinal numbers. In the course of his researches he collected three hundred and fifty-nine words, which have been used in as many different languages or dialects to express the idea of *mother*. These words, while susceptible of some very remarkable arrangements and classifications, were found, in the great majority of instances, to fall, naturally, within two large classes; the one, in which the letter *m* is the governing sound, as in ma, mamma, mâtar (Sanscrit;) and the other in which the letter *n* prevailed, as in na, nae, etc. In like manner he found the idea of *father* expressed generally by da, pa, papa, and words of similar construction. The analogies in words expressive of other common relations of life he traced out with equal clearness, in terms conforming more or less closely to the Sanscrit words *bhrâtar*, brother, and *duhitar*, daughter.

The fact of extensive conformity in languages the most dissimilar to each other in many particulars, has been pointed out by other writers, in an assemblage of words expressive of common universal ideas, or which relate to things of daily occurrence or observation: as the pronoun *I* or *me*, and its plural forms; the words descriptive of *nature;* the terms used to express the elements *water* and *fire;* and those descriptive of *mountains*. "The far greater part

of the names of mountains, lakes, and rivers in the British islands, are, to this day, descriptive and significant only in some Celtic language. The appellations of these vast and permanent parts of nature are commonly observed to continue as unchanged as themselves."* A few specimens only of extensive illustrations in this department are furnished in the following conformities between the English, Latin, German, Russian, and Sanscrit.

Sans... *aghni*, fire	Latin... *ignis*	Russ.. *agu*
Sans... *hyma*, cold	Latin... *hiems*, winter	
Sans... *megali*, great	Greek... *megale*	Saxon.. *maga*
Sans... *sourgo*, a height	Latin... *surgo*	
Sans... *marcca*, frontier	English... *mark* (land)	German.. [*mark*, a frontier.
Sans... *mîra*, sea	Latin... *mare*	Celtic... *mor*
Sans... *udakani*, water	Greek... *hudor*	Welsh.. *igder*

Mr. Turner gives nearly two hundred examples of affinities between the Anglo-Saxon and Laplandic, in words of common and daily use; and states that there are many more as close, which he omits, that he may not overburden the attention of his readers. From these we select the following.

ANGLO-SAXON.	LAPLANDIC.
aide, help	*aide*, a favour
aer, brass	*air*, brass
acer, a field	*aker*, a field
aecse, an ax	*aksjo*, an ax
bearn, a son	*bame*, a son
bonda, a husband	*bond*, a husband.

* Sir James Mackintosh's History of England, vol. i. p. 11.

The conclusion deduced by Mr. Turner from the very numerous affinities of the two languages is thus stated: "As the Laplandic is a branch of the Hunnish stock, which came latest into Europe, its affinities with the Saxon indicate a consanguinity from primeval ancestry, which concurs, with other resemblances, to corroborate the ideas of the original unity and subsequent dispersion of mankind." A good idea of the extensive affinities of other words in the languages of unrelated nations may be obtained by an examination of the specimens of the Lord's Prayer, in a great number of languages, in Adelung* and Chamberlain.

These statements and examples will be sufficient, we apprehend, to convince every unprejudiced reader that the idea of arranging the numerals and other fundamental terms of general language into classes, according to their more primitive elements and apparent consonances, is not a fanciful undertaking. The coincidences which thus appear afford as much evidence as such topics may be expected to yield that they cannot all have been accidental. No doctrine of chances can account for their existence. That distant tribes, supposing them even to be independent in their origin, should accidentally have many similar sounds, may be admitted as not only possible, but highly probable; at the same time, it must be allowed, that it is more than probable that they would be employed to express very different conceptions. If fifty different nations were found using the hexameter

* Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachenkunde.

and pentameter lines in verse, the French Alexandrine, or the poetical form of Tasso's stanzas, no reasonable person would suppose such a conformity to be purely accidental. It would arise either from some inherent law of poetry, which impelled to their adoption, or from the study of some prototypes which suggested their employment. It is still more certain that no chances of human pronunciation can account for the sounds *ma*, and *pa*, and their compounds, being fixed upon by so many independent tribes to express the relation of parents, in preference to all the other utterances of the voice, if every one of these tribes had expressly invented them for its own use, and from its own untaught impulses. Their general adoption indicates a common relation to one primitive form of language.

There is, moreover, another point of analogy found in languages, equally important with that which we have considered. The enlightened advocates of verbal comparison, as we have seen, do not presume to found conclusions on mere casual resemblances. They do not even deem it sufficient to detect indubitable analogies, unless the coincidences are found in words which express ideas of primary and universal necessity. And when a tolerably extensive coincidence is discovered in primitive words, it is safe to seek for the severer requirements of conformity in grammatical structure. Then only is it believed that the languages in which these coincidences of words and form are found should be considered as related. This has led

to the discovery of a prevailing uniformity in the general principles of universal grammar.

It is evident that all languages employ similar classes of general terms, such as pronouns; and appear to connect them with terms indicating action, so as to produce verbs, varying through numbers and persons. They employ terms descriptive of things and objects as nouns, and adopt methods by which they express the relation of nouns, which we term cases. These statements are so obviously true as to require no illustration. This conformity in the general principles of the mechanism of language is too decided and universal to be explained by ascribing it to an identity in the metaphysical operations of the human mind, or the creative genius of differing nations who might possess much in common. "No language has yet been discovered, either among savage or polished nations, which was not governed by rules and principles which nature could alone dictate, and human science could never have imagined."* The prevalence of these principles in all languages points to a common origin, and is every way incompatible with the irrational hypothesis of a thousand different tribes inventing a thousand different tongues.

There are instances where, from the action of some external cause upon a language, its words appear to assimilate with one tongue, and its grammar with another. And there are numerous instances in which the words are

* Mr. Du Ponceau, an American philologist.

unique, while the grammatical structure is conformed to that of language generally. In the principal languages of America, we can trace but few marks of verbal coincidence; yet the elaborate mechanism which pervades the whole, and the methods by which they all express very complicated relations and various modifications of original ideas, evince the most remarkable identity. An accomplished writer, some years since, in the Quarterly Review, says: "Of all the European tongues, Finnish is, perhaps, the most remote from Sanscrit. The numerals have nothing in common, and there are very few coincidences in the names of ordinary objects. Nevertheless, the personal, relative, and demonstrative pronouns, and the terminations of the verbs, are composed of nearly the same elements in both. It would be as absurd to ascribe this coincidence to accident, as to suppose that one race had borrowed terms of this sort from the other. The only rational supposition is, that they are, in both languages, derived from the same source, and, consequently, existed long before Sanscrit and Finnish had assumed their present forms."

Mr. F. Adelung has exhibited some remarkable affinities between the Russian and German. He has "put together a few sentences in the two languages, containing in the whole fifty words, literally translated from the one language into the other, and striking out all the vowels, and leaving only the consonants as the bones or skeletons of the words, has shown them to be exactly the same."

As an example of languages which furnish analogies, both in their grammatical structure and affinities, we subjoin the present tense of the verb TO BE, in the Latin and Russian.

	SINGULAR.		
Latin .	sum	es	est
Russian .	esmi	eti	esti
	PLURAL.		
Latin .	sumus	estis	sunt
Russian .	esmĭ	este	sŭte

Some verbal affinities between these two languages are presented in the following instances, which could readily be multiplied.

LATIN.	RUSSIAN.	ENGLISH.
Pastor	Pastir	Pastor
Ovis	Ovets	Sheep
Agnus	Agnets	A lamb
Spina	Spinu	A thorn
Pascit	Paschet	He feeds
Videt	Vidit	He sees
Jugum	Igum	Yoke
Crumena	Kamana	A purse
Carus	Charosch	Dear

These examples are principally taken from Adelung; but the same principle and modes of comparison, verbal and grammatical, are employed by Professor Bopp, in his work on the Sanscrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Gothic, German, and Sclavonic languages, though his illustrations are principally derived from an analysis of their different grammars. Further illustrations of these coincidences may be found in an able article on Language in the

Penny Cyclopædia, understood to be the joint production of Professor Long, Dr. W. Smith, and the Rev. Philip Smith, B.A.

The study of comparative languages has brought into visible relationship many which seemed hopelessly disunited, and "wide as the poles asunder." Out of these, great groups or families have been formed, so that nations and tribes, covering vast tracts of country, are in this study accounted one people, connected by the indestructible tie of language. These researches have tended, in almost every instance, to diminish the number of independent languages, to widen the pale of the larger provinces, to bring the number of original stocks into much nearer relationship than was at all imagined half a century since, and in a most beautiful and unintentional manner to shed the light of confirmatory evidence on the Scripture account of the history of the human race. The earliest disclosures of ethnography, as to the enormous number of languages spoken throughout the world, threatened to falsify the Mosaic narrative, but further investigations brought out results overwhelmingly fatal to infidelity. As one language after another took its place in the group to which it belonged, these groups were found to be included in a yet wider generalization. Of the nature of these affinities and their results, we shall now proceed to speak in general terms, availing ourselves of the statements of some of the most gifted of the literati of Europe in this department of scholarship.

Referring to the conclusions of Humboldt,

Klaproth, Schlegel, Niebuhr, Balbi, Pott, Adelung, and Vater, Dr. Wiseman observes: It was found that the Teutonic dialects received considerable light from the language of Persia; that Latin had remarkable points of contact with Russian and the other Sclavonic idioms; and that the theory of the Greek verbs in *mi* could not be well understood without recourse to their parallels in Sanscrit or Indian grammar. It was demonstrated that one speech, essentially so called, pervaded a considerable portion of Europe and Asia, and, stretching across in a broad sweep from Ceylon to Iceland, united in a bond of language nations possessing the most dissimilar institutions, and bearing but a slight resemblance in physiognomy and colour. This family has received the name of Indo-Germanic, or Indo-European. Its great members are the Sanscrit and Persian, ancient and modern; Teutonic with its various dialects; Sclavonian, Greek, and Latin accompanied by numerous derivatives; and to these must be added the Celtic dialects. Extensive is the territory occupied by these, including the whole of Europe, excepting only the small tracts held by the Biscayan and Finnish family; thence it extends over a great part of Southern Asia.*

The interesting nook in Spain, and Aquitaine, in France, constituting one of these small exceptions, is occupied by the Basque, who are supposed to be a remnant of the old Iberians,

* Wiseman's Lectures on the Connexion between Science and Revelation, vol. i.

whose language, though it contains words of Celtic and Latin origin, has essential differences, which shut it out from the Indo-European family. It is supposed that the Iberians arrived in Europe before the Indo-European nations, and maintained their language distinct from that of the tribes who surrounded them.

Further researches have not only confirmed the general conclusions touching the affinities of the Indo-European languages, but have disclosed wider coincidences. Klaproth, by his journey to the Caucasus, has made it clearly appear, that the Armenian language, contrary to previous supposition, is a branch of this great family. He has published a vocabulary of Armenian words, occupying seventeen quarto pages, in which a considerable proportion is proved to be Indo-European. The Affghan language, also, which was supposed to be an exception, has been included in the same family. Klaproth compared a vocabulary of more than two hundred Affghan words, and proved them to belong to the same race. The Hungarian has been shown to belong to the Finnish family, though left out by Wiseman, and this has been found to include various nations, extending over the north of Asia. The principal of these are the Tschudish and Samoiede, in whose languages numerous analogies are found with the Caucasian. These coincidences are not attributable to accident, nor to recent intercourse, and "they consist of words designating the most simple and universal objects." Dr. Prichard states that, in the few

specimens we have of the dialects of the Mordanans, and other Teshudish nations, and in those of the Samoiede stock, he observed traces of coincidence with the Anglo-Saxon.

Another great family of languages embraces those which are well known as the Shemitic, or Semitic, languages. Of these there is no necessity for speaking at any length, as the intimate relationship between the dialects into which they branch out has long been acknowledged. They include, among others, the Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldaic, Arabic, and Abyssinian, and the old Phœnician languages. An exception has been taken to the name of this group on the ground that these languages were not peculiar to the race of Shem, nor yet co-extensive with it. And it has been proposed to adopt the term Phœnicio-Shemitic, as implying the two-fold character of the races who used these languages; the Phœnician branch of the race of Ham, as well as the western division of the family of Shem.* It is not, however, very probable that any change of designation will be readily admitted for this well-known family of languages. They are related closely to each other in structure and in words, as the Chaldee and Syriac, with the Samaritan to the Hebrew. There is a striking conformity in the Ethiopic to the Hebrew, and the Arabic is very similar to the last-mentioned language. "In this tongue were laid up the mysteries of the Old Testament. It began early, and continued, and increased in glory, till the captivity in Babylon. The whole

* See Preface to Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon, Bagster's edition.

tongue is contained in the Bible; and no one book else in the world contains in it a whole language." *

The Malayian languages, as they have been called, lead us in their examination to a conclusion similar to that resulting from a review of other groups. According to Marsden and Crawford, who have written on these languages, they should, however, rather be called the Polynesian than the Malayian family, as the Malay, properly so called, is only one among many to which it is related. In all the languages comprised in this group there is a great tendency to the monosyllabic form, and to the rejection of all inflexion, by which they approximate to the neighbouring groups of Transgangetic languages, with which Dr. Leyden is induced to unite them. Thus, again, we have another large family stretching over a vast portion of the globe, and comprising many languages which, a few years ago, were considered independent of each other, and related by no one common tie or principle.

With the languages of Africa we are less familiar than with those of most other parts of the Old World. The prevalence of the cruel and inhuman slave-trade carried on upon the African coast, and the destructive influence of the climate of that continent on European life, have hitherto mournfully checked the progress of Christian missions in that region of barbarous idolatry. The same causes have limited the enterprises of commerce, and the researches of

* Dr. Lightfoot's Works, vol. iv. p. 48.

travellers. Consequently, no very extensive or accurate comparison of these languages has yet been effected. In the darkness of ignorance concerning them, there has been a tendency to exaggerate their probable numbers. Seetzen spoke of one hundred and fifty languages as prevailing in Africa; but there is reason to believe, from the analogy supplied by the other quarters of the globe, and from the result of incipient examinations, that this number may be actually reduced to one-fourth or to one-fifth of that amount. Dr. Prichard affirms that every new research in the African dialects displays connexions between tribes the most dissimilar, and even between those which are geographically separated by intermediate nations. In the north, he says, conformities are to be found in the languages spoken by the Berbers and Tuaricks, from the Canaries to Sava; in central Africa, between the dialects spoken by the Felatas and Foulahs, who occupy nearly the whole interior; and in the south, among the tribes across the whole continent from Caffreland to the Atlantic Ocean.*

The American languages were once thought to be all but innumerable, and to be totally independent of each other; but even these strange tongues of the New World are now found to be comparatively few, and to be united to each other by a strong family tie. "From a careful examination," says the Rev. J. D. Conybeare, "of the information which Vater, in his great philological work, has col-

* Celtic Researches, p. 61.

lected concerning the dialects of America, I am persuaded that the distinct parent tongues of the New Continent cannot exceed forty, and more accurate investigations would probably reduce that number."*

And the process, which has reduced their supposed numbers, has proved their close affinity. "Recent examinations of the structure pervading all the American languages have left no room to doubt that they all form one individual family, closely knitted together in all its parts by the most essential of all ties, grammatical analogy. This analogy is not of a vague indefinite kind, but complex in the extreme, and affecting the most necessary and elementary parts of grammar; for it consists chiefly in the peculiar methods of modifying conjugationally the meanings and relations of verbs, by the insertion of syllables. Nor is this analogy partial, but extends over both great divisions of the New World, and gives a family air to languages spoken under the torrid and arctic zones, by the wildest and the more civilized tribes."†

American philologists have bestowed much attention on this subject. The result is that striking analogies have been recognised, not only in the more perfect languages, as that of the Incas, the Mexican, and the Cora, but also in languages extremely rude. Idioms, the roots of which are most dissimilar, have surprising resemblances of internal mechanism. All the languages of America, so far as they

* Bristol Lectures, p. 288. † Conybeare's Lectures, p. 289.

have been investigated, appear to have a distinctive character in common with each other, and differing from those of the other continents.

We are now in a position to hazard an opinion on the probable number of what may be termed the parent languages of the world, by summing up the results which have thus been patiently arrived at. From these it will appear that, allowing the opinion to be founded in fact, that there are five hundred existing languages and dialects, differing more or less in structure, in words, or pronunciation, yet the tongues which, in any sense, can be called parent, must be reduced to a comparatively small number. The languages of Asia, it is thought, amount to about twenty-three, to which Europe adds only one, namely, the Basque. America furnishes, probably, about forty, and Africa, it is believed, about twenty-five. These swell our estimate of the parent tongues of the whole globe to eighty-nine. Many of these it must, however, be remembered, stand in near relations to others which compose great families, as we have seen in the notices furnished of the Malay, Semitic, and Indo-European families; while all these, however dissimilar to each other in a thousand particulars, have features common to each and to all, which point to the fact of a common origin.

"Now if we look at the inferences deducible from this leading and indisputable fact, we should, even if we were unable to advance another step, find these inferences most satisfactorily converging towards the biblical theory,

which teaches us to regard the whole human race as a single species. It is difficult to conceive any hypothesis of the origin of languages, which must not necessarily limit a peculiar language to the members of a single family, at the period of its first appearance; and we may, therefore, gather very satisfactory evidence, that the many million actual families of the earth must assuredly have descended from not more than one hundred families. It is surely a far easier step than this to deduce that hundred from a single family in the first instance; and this I call a converging argument."* Julius Klaproth, to whose magnificent work, the "Asia Polyglotta," we have before alluded, says, with a confidence which, in such a man, is not unbecoming, "He flatters himself that, in his works, the universal affinity of language is placed in so strong a light, that it must be considered by all as completely demonstrated." Let infidelity, renouncing its flippancy and boldness of conjecture, philologically overturn these conclusions, or henceforth be silent, and forbear to blaspheme!

* Archæologia Americana, vol. ii.

CHAPTER VIII.

Additional historical confirmations of the sacred Scriptures —The state of society and language after the deluge— Confusion of tongues at Babel—The period of its occurrence—Scripture statement of the miraculous event— Scene of the division—Evidence for fixing it in the vicinity of Babylon—Design of the builders—Nature of the confusion—No other event in history accounts for all the existing diversities and conformities in language— This does fully—Harmony in the facts and the testimony— Confirmation by heathen opinion.

In the advancing steps of our subject we find that every part of the biblical narrative respecting the early history of our race is beautifully illustrated and variously confirmed by the facts which that history develops or supplies. And this is especially the case as we go back in thought to the memorable period when, as the waters of the deluge subsided, the ark rested on one of the highest summits of Ararat—a mountainous range in eastern Armenia—and Noah and his family came forth to re-people the earth. Society had been thrown back by the catastrophe, and reduced to its first elements. The treasures of knowledge had sunk, with their possessors, "like lead in the mighty waters;" and the few fragments preserved in the ark were as so many imperishable seeds, from which the tree of knowledge might grow, so as to overshadow the race. The first act of

Noah after his deliverance was to build an altar to the Lord, and to present a sacrifice of thanksgiving. This was graciously accepted. God renewed his covenant with the earth, confirmed to the patriarch the temporal blessings granted to Adam, with some additions, and republished the injunction to multiply, to replenish the earth, and to subdue it. As a sign of this covenant, the rainbow, which must have existed from the beginning, in consequence of the immutable laws of the refraction and reflection of the sun's rays in drops of falling rain, was appointed. From this small remnant, mercifully snatched from the wreck of our race, society started anew, with multiplied means of social and religious improvement; and from this, as from a fountain, all the streams of population, with their evils or benefits, have flowed. Profane history gives her effective, though tacit, testimony to the fact of the deluge and to this late commencement of the career of society. All records of the origin and establishment of existing nations are subsequent to this period. No statements, on which any dependence can be placed, affect to reach higher, or even so high. The time when communities became numerous or formidable, when they extended their limits, planted colonies, refined their manners, and formed their literature, all confine our attention within the date assigned by Moses, as that at which the postdiluvian race began its career.

The period of time which elapsed from the deluge to that great event, the confusion of

tongues at Babel—to which we are prepared to ascribe the *origin* of the existing diversity of languages—has been very variously computed. Dr. Hales, to whose "Chronology" we have already referred, computes it at six hundred and one years. Shorter periods have been assumed by other writers, but the briefest of these would be sufficient to allow of the multiplication of the human family, so as to form the foundation of many separate nations, when the longevity of life, as then possessed, is taken into account. In the days of Peleg occurred a division of the earth, according to the will of its Creator. That is, we think, the decree was then definitely promulged, and men began in part to act upon it. Journeying in a prescribed direction, they suddenly halted on the plains of Shinar, and resolved to build a tower, as a rallying point, to prevent their dispersion. Their ungodly design was frustrated by the miraculous confusion of tongues at Babel. This event preceded the general dispersion, and affected the whole of the descendants of Noah; for the settlements of the three primitive families are said to have been, "after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations," Gen. x. 5, 20, 31.

This great event, which satisfactorily accounts for all the existing phenomena of language, is thus narrated in the sacred Scriptures: "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth," Gen. xi. 1—9.* The meaning of each sentence, and of almost every word in the narrative, has been keenly contested and critically examined, while conclusions the most dissimilar have been drawn from the whole. It is not our intention even to state, much less to refute, what we deem erroneous interpretations of the passage, but simply, by a few explanatory remarks, to exhibit what we believe is its real meaning;

* Compare Gen. x. with Exod. xv. 14—16, and Deut. xxxii. 7—9.

especially in the bearing of the event it describes on the progress of language.

The place of this primitive encampment is usually allowed to have been near the site of Babylon. "The city appears to have received its name from the Aramean term, *confusion*, alluding to the confusion of tongues which originated there; and it is not a little confirmatory of the authenticity of the Scriptural account of that circumstance, that the Arabic word *bulbul*, which is formed from the same root, should still mean to talk with a confused and mingled language; and that, even in the dialects of the Teutonic, now used by the English and French, there should be a recognition of that event in the application, in the one dialect, of the word babble to a confused and indeterminate method of speech; and, in the other, of the noun *babillard*, to denote a man whose conversation is confused, or one inordinately loquacious."* The tower of Belus was, probably, the original tower of Babel, repaired and finished by some subsequent monarchs. There are now to be found ruins of great magnitude and antiquity in the neighbourhood of ancient Babylon, which the wandering tribes of the desert regard as remains of the stupendous enterprise of its first settlers. Modern travellers tell us that bricks of an antique construction are there frequently dug up, and that the temper of these bricks is of a kind which nothing but the intense heat of a furnace could have effected, reminding us of

* Lectures on Prophecy, by C. N. Davies, p. 78.

the language of the builders of this memorable tower, "Let us make bricks, and burn them throughly."

The supposed locality of this erection was about twelve hundred miles from the plain at the foot of Ararat, in which the immediate family of Noah dwelt. By what route the travellers reached their place of encampment is not certain. The Chaldean historian, Berosus, says, "they proceeded circuitously to Babylon." It is probable that they followed the course of the Euphrates. This river, rising in the mountains of Armenia, flows at first in a westerly direction; then it turns to the south, and at length, bending eastward, it reaches Babylon, from the north-west. This route corresponds with the Scripture statement, which represents the multitude as travelling, from the original settlement, eastward.

The design of the people in attempting this erection was to get themselves a name, and to counteract the Divine intention of their being scattered abroad on the face of the earth. This incurred the displeasure of God, who is said to have come down to confound their plans. This may be a figurative expression to aid our conceptions of the Divine interposition, or may denote that the Shekinah was brought to earth, attended with tokens of disapprobation. In either case, we conceive that direct efficiency by the hand of God is the idea intended to be conveyed. The confusion introduced caused the builders to desist from their work, and thence they were scattered abroad.

The exact nature of this confusion may be determined from its immediate results. Words derived from the root בָּלַל, Genesis xi. 9, which simply means confusion, occur nearly forty times in the Pentateuch, in the sense of mingling things together so as to produce compounds or heterogeneous bodies, as mingled wine, flower, and flesh for sacrificial rites. It is also used in Hosea vii. 8, "Ephraim, he hath *mixed* himself among the people." Some writers suppose that a diversity of opinion among the builders, about the erection, or concerning worship, confounded their counsels; and others understand by it a mere temporary confusion of speech. But the plain express terms of the history go beyond these hypotheses, and imply a permanent confusion of languages. This might have been effected by a miraculous breaking up of the one language into many, or by a divergence into varieties of dialect mutually unintelligible, with decided alterations in the pronunciation of words retained in common, so as to prevent their carrying out their design in building.

There is no recorded event in human history which can adequately account for the existing diversities and conformities in language—but this. If it should be said that time and separation, and the descent of one language from another, would realize the present state of things, we demand proof of the assertion: and none can be given. Some known languages of Asia have existed four thousand years. In all that time they have not approached nearer to each other than

they were in the remotest antiquity to which we can trace them. In all languages there is a strong tendency to preserve their original structure. There is no instance of a monosyllabic language becoming poly-syllabic; or *vice versâ*. The Sanscrit and Chinese are unchanged by the flight of time. Lepsius has proved the ancient Egyptian, as written in hieroglyphics, to be identical with the Coptic of the Liturgy. The Basque, surrounded for ages by hostile idioms, retains its ancient structure. The oldest Greek is, in all essential qualities, the same as that of the Attic tragedies. The Grecian tongue rendered the Latin language more easy and pliable, "but not a declension was added to its grammar, a particle to its lexicon, or a letter to its alphabet," by the efforts of Greek philosophers and grammarians.

This grand Scripture event accounts for all the peculiarities which belong to language. Before the social disruption at Babel, one primitive language was universal, and this accounts for all the identities and resemblances now found amongst scattered and widely-separated nations. The confounding of the original speech of mankind fully explains the origin of the variety of languages, whose separate peculiarities would become more decided and indelible by the lapse of forty centuries. As the primitive language was subjected to a violent disruption, fragments only of it could be carried away by each diverging tribe, who would gradually build up new languages, while all retained some elements of their former speech.

Such a state of things as that which might be supposed to result from the confusion of Babel is actually realized in the present state of the languages of the world. They all display such affinities as suggest the idea of a common origin, and yet exhibit such disparities as preclude the notion of regular descent and tranquil formation. If the primitive language had not been suddenly broken up, but many languages had been gradually formed from it, each one might be supposed to exhibit that general similarity to the rest which exists in the Spanish and Italian to the Latin; and not the correspondence of fragments of identity, amidst far more abundant diversity of materials. Identity without structural diversity would prove only a common derivation; diversity without identity would disprove a sameness of origin; but so much resemblance, and so much disparity, exactly coincide with the statement of an anterior unity, and of a subsequent confusion and dispersion.

We observe, without attaching any undue importance to the circumstance, that ancient profane writers corroborate, by their testimony, the fact of a confusion of tongues, as occurring at Babylon. The fable of giants attempting to climb the heavens probably originated in this fact. Josephus quotes one of the Sibyls as affirming that all mankind spoke the same language, till some of them erected a tower, immensely high, which was overthrown by the gods, who assigned to each a particular lan-

guage. Alydemes, as preserved by Eusebius, uses similar terms in reference to the remarkable event. Indeed, all early traditional accounts correspond with the Mosaic in this particular. The Greeks attributed the diversity of human languages to a Divine interposition, though, according to their practice, they have wrought it up into fable. They report that under the reign of Saturn all terrestrial creatures had one common language, and that they sent a deputation to Saturn, entreating that they might be endowed with immortality. He, in great indignation, refused their petition, confounded their language, and thereby separated and scattered them.* A tradition, preserved in an Egyptian temple, describes whirlwinds as beating down a tower, when all intercourse ceased among men, who strove in vain to disclose their mind, but their lips failed them, and they produced a babbling sound.† Thus heathens unintentionally confirm the truth of the Bible in this particular, as in many others; and this remarkable transaction seems to be blended with the early recollections of most ancient nations.

* Redford's Holy Scripture Verified, p. 158.
† Bryant's Mythology, vol. iv. p. 100.

CHAPTER IX.

State of society immediately after the Dispersion—The origin of nations—Descendants of Shem—of Ham—of Japheth—Correspondence in the classes of languages to the triparte division of the human family—Influence of secondary causes in augmenting diversities of tongues—Deteriorating process of language—Means of its improvement—The influence of literature on language—Relation of poetry to prose—Origin of writing by alphabetic characters—It was not the offspring of hieroglyphical symbols—Not invented by different nations—Appears to have been disclosed to Moses in the writing of the law—Gradually extended to other nations—Notices of the materials employed in ancient writing—Scarcity of books in the dark ages — Invention and progress of printing.

At the dawn of secular history, we find the ancient world occupied by tribes, differing from each other in circumstances of physical constitution, outward form, usage, and especially language; all of which differences might be anticipated from the brief historic glimpses afforded by Moses. The first nations, though separated, were yet settled in adjoining countries, and retained, with their characteristic differences, such a similitude to one another as distinctly marked out their common origin. It would be difficult, if not impossible, we think, to trace, with perfect accuracy, the wanderings and settlements of subordinate divisions of the primeval family; but the Scripture narrative in Genesis supplies the grand outline of the principal settlements. The multiplied

ruins scattered along the banks of the Euphrates confirm the representation that the plain of Shinar was the depository of the earliest memorials of the human race and of human art. It was the fountain-head whence the streams of population flowed into all the other regions of the earth. Hence nations, the most remote from each other, and especially those possessed of any tolerable degree of civilisation, possess proof or retain traditions of their connexion with the east, or with those that migrated from it.

From Noah proceeded, according to the Bible, three principal families, each of which became the parent stock of many nations. It is remarkable, that nearly all the known inhabitants of the world can be traced up to one of these three roots, and to no others. The domestic prophecy uttered by Noah, and recorded in Genesis ix. 25, 27, respecting the permanent condition and destiny of his threefold descendants, embraced such facts as no human sagacity could have foreseen. It has been literally accomplished in all its particulars, and thus clearly proves the inspiration of the patriarch. The earliest civilized nations which inhabited Asia and Africa appear to have issued from the line of Ham. The elder stem of Japheth furnished that posterity which has taken the lead of the human race, since the introduction of Christianity, and has become in modern times distinguished for a course of civilisation and improvement, which has sur-

passed all that existed in the ancient eras of humanity. From Shem proceeded the Abrahamic nation, and apparently the Assyrian state, for Asshur was his son, and is said to have built Nineveh, the metropolis of the Assyrian empire. In this line of descent was Abraham, who was the ancestor of four great streams of nations. These were the Edomites or Idumeans, the red men of the east, who descended from his grandson Esau, and fixed their name on the Red Sea; the Jews, who descended from his grandson Jacob; the Arabs, who were his descendants through his son Ishmael; and those tribes which arose in the east of Syria from his children by Keturah. Two of these races, the Jews and the Arabians, multiplied, and have continued in ever-renewed and preserved generations to our own time.

Ham had four sons. named Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. These represent, according to the Hebrew geography, the regions and ancestors of Ethiopia, Egypt, Libya, and Canaan. Cush represents to us Ethiopia; that part of the east district of Africa which spread from Meroë in Upper Egypt, along the Red Sea, toward the Indian Ocean. Some of his descendants settled in Arabia, and his most celebrated son, Nimrod, was the founder of Babylon. From Mizraim descended the colonies which established themselves in Egypt, and several other tribes who peopled portions of Africa. Phut was the ancestor of the Libyan population. From one of the sons of Mizraim sprang the Philistines. His son, Canaan, was the progenitor of the Phœni-

cians. The Sinite nation sprang from him, and it now appears to be represented by the Chinese. From Canaan sprang those depraved nations whom Israel drove out from Palestine.

Japheth seems to have been the ancestor of the chief populations both of ancient and modern Europe, and Upper Asia. He had seven sons, and as many grandsons from two of the others. The Turks and Tartars, the Medes and Grecians, the Cimmerians and Thracians, with many other nations, sprang from these. The descendants of Javan appear to have had large relations with Europe, and to Japheth and his offspring are ascribed generally, by the Mosaic record, all the insular or maritime populations and colonies of the Gentile nations. "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in the nations," Gen. x. 5.

We find the cradles or nurseries of these first nations, not on the high and barren tracts of the earth, but on the banks and estuaries of rivers, and on extensive plains, or in valleys. Three such regions appear to have been inhabited by three descendants of the sons of Noah, who became remarkable for founding cities, or inventing arts. In one of these localities the Semitic nations exchanged the simple habits of wandering shepherds for the splendour and luxury of Nineveh and Babylon. In the second, the Japhetic people founded those institutions, and built up those languages which are now

so advanced in Europe. In the third, the land of Ham, on the banks of the Nile, were invented that symbolical literature, and those arts, in which Egypt excelled the ancient world.

Soon after the dispersion of these different roots of families, it is reasonable to suppose that the diversities of language, which at first led to their separation, would begin to assume a more definite and permanent form, which, with the lapse of ages, created the variety of languages now existing among men. As they multiplied, and spread to a great distance from each other, the original confusion was not only kept up, but the differences between their dialects became greater. Tribes that settled near to each other would, though of different families, retain more resemblance to each other's speech than those who became separated by immeasurable distances; while these last would become in turn the parents of new nations, and propagate their language, not only amongst their own descendants, but by blending it with some existing language of a conquered tribe.

The triparte division of the human family appears to have had a remarkable analogy in the broader features of all languages. Hence many philologists have included all existing known tongues under three great divisions, which they distinguish from one another by the following characteristics.

1. Languages composed of monosyllabic roots, without the capability of combination and contraction, and hence without any forms of gram-

mar. To this class belongs the Chinese, in which we find nothing but naked roots, and in which the meaning of words is determined, not by grammatical relations, but by the position of words in a sentence.

2. Languages possessing monosyllabic roots, which are capable of combination, and which thence derive a great abundance of grammatical forms. To this class the Indo-European, American, and other tribes of language belong.

3. Languages whose verbal roots consist in their present form of two syllables, and require three consonants for the expression of their fundamental meaning. Of this class, which embraces the Semitic tongues, the Hebrew may be regarded as a familiar type. This family contains but few examples of compound words, and possesses few grammatical forms.

The general relations of languages included in any of these divisions may thus be stated. Languages that differ from each other as the Anglo-Saxon from the Latin, differ as languages of the same tribe, but of different stocks. Languages that differ as the Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon, differ as languages of the same stock, but of different branches. Those that differ from each other as the Anglo-Saxon and Mœso-Gothic, differ as languages of the same branch, but of different divisions. Languages of the same division that differ from each other as the English from the Dutch, differ as languages, using the term in a restricted sense, and in opposition to such provincial differences, as

obtain between Durham and Devon, which are dialects of the same language.*

While we affirm that nothing short of the supernatural agency employed at Babel could have originated the existing diversity of languages, or can account for the very early existence of those immense diversities which all ethnical histories attribute to the very beginning of their respective nations, we believe that dialectical differences and extensive grammatical variations would be effected by secondary causes, when once the primitive division had taken place. There would be no longer the attraction to one common form of speech derived from the first parent, and regarded as the gift of God, which existed as the bond of language before the confusion. New objects and new modes of life presenting themselves to persons settling in various climes would, with new customs and habits, produce a considerable number of new terms, and combinations of old ones. The amalgamation of tribes with each other would again produce fresh combinations. Comparatively slight dialectical differences would gradually introduce considerable divergence in the forms and sounds of words, inflexions, and terminations.

Languages which have thus descended from, or were gradually formed out of, others, can be readily identified by their conformity to the parent stock, or elder branch. Thus the Greek is supposed, by some writers, to be closely allied

* See illustrations of this in Professor Latham on the "English Language," chap. i.

to the Hebrew, as most of its common words are similar, when allowance is made for changes in the termination and some characteristic qualities. The resemblance between the English and the Anglo-Saxon, between modern Greek and ancient Greek, the present language of Italy and the language of classic Rome, are striking and undeniable, after all sorts of diverging influences have been working upon them for more than a thousand years.

The ordinary causes, to which we now refer, appear also sufficient to account for the relative perfection of different languages. By their influence the language of a people may be greatly deteriorated. The founders of colonies have often emigrated in small parties, or were borne to their destination by what appeared accidental circumstances. Settling in a waste uncultivated region, they would separate widely, and direct their chief attention to obtaining the means of subsistence. Thus situated, neither they nor their children would require to use all the words and forms of speech which belonged to their former condition. They would soon forget a part of their language which they once understood. The next generation, hearing only those words spoken which their immediate wants demanded, would understand less of the language familiar to their ancestors. Such families would readily employ abbreviations, introduce vulgar phrases, and adopt peculiar pronunciations. The stamp of custom would in time give authority to these forms of speech ; and the language, while retaining a likeness to a family

group, would become a deteriorated member of that family.

And from such a state of things as that which we have now described there may have arisen the means of improving a given language. We suppose some of the scattered families, in process of time, to unite, and to become mutually useful in the advancement of the social constitution. As they improve in the arts of life, new terms must be found to express their new ideas. Their limited vocabulary calls for the invention of words Their improved and improving taste requires that euphony and polish should characterize their language; and, while its original foundation remains broad enough for its later superstructure, this receives proportion and ornament corresponding with the advanced condition of the people who employ it.

A vast variety of circumstances combined to secure the perfection which obviously belonged to some of the ancient languages, and which characterizes the modern tongues of most highly civilized nations. To them it is a vehicle by which the most delicate and refined emotions of the human heart are mutually conveyed; by which the most abstract notions and conceptions are rendered intelligible; and by which all the ideas created by science, or evoked by imagination, are accurately described. To a highly cultivated people it is not the mere instrument of necessity, but an auxiliary to the most exalted refinement and luxurious mental enjoyment. We are not

always satisfied with having the conceptions of others made known to us in simple and unadorned phraseology, but we require that they should be conveyed to our minds with all the ornament and attraction of a classic rhetoric—with the grace and beauty of the most perfect style.

The literature of any country cannot fail deeply and constantly to influence its structure as a spoken tongue. It is highly probable that the commencement of literature, in all those countries in which it has subsequently attained its greatest development, was prior to the commencement of writing. The want of writing-materials, in such a state of society, compels to the adoption of metre; and hence the first composition in any language is poetry. There appears to be something in the nature of early man, surrounded with the wonders of earth and sky, that leads him to cultivate poetry. Greece possessed a Hesiod and a Homer before she could boast of a prose historian. It is probable that, in primitive times, there was scarcely in any desert a wandering people which had not its lays. By most nations poetry was employed, in the earliest ages of their history, to communicate the lessons of wisdom, to celebrate the achievements of valour, to promulgate laws, and to embody impressions of religion. Some of its noblest productions are the offspring of a transition state of society from comparative barbarism or rudeness to high refinement; possessing much of the strength of the former, and anticipating

the superior polish of the latter. Extensive prose compositions are produced only after a long period of civilisation, when writing has become tolerably easy, and writing-materials are sufficiently abundant. The verses of the bard may be sung to the harp which he attunes, but the lessons of the sage are to be inscribed on the tablet, in intelligible characters. Prose keeps pace with the logical development of a language, but early epic poems and lyrical hymns are inadequately provided with syntax. Writing, therefore, can produce no great effect in the way of improvement on the forms of a language, while it exercises a most important influence on the construction and connexion of its sentences.

The Greeks and Romans are the two nations in Europe amongst whom we trace the use of letters at an early period. The similarity of the ancient Latin characters to those of the early Greek alphabet convinces us that the former were derived from the latter. We are then led to inquire from whom the Greeks received a knowledge of the art of writing? The Ionians were the first people in Greece who possessed letters, and the characters they used were Phœnician. That they were taught the use of them by Cadmus and his followers, was affirmed by Plutarch, Herodotus, and Plato, and was the general belief of the Greek nation.

It is a well-known fact that the letters called Phœnician belonged, with some slight variations, to several eastern nations. They are

shown, by Scaliger and others, to have been identical with the Samaritan or the old Hebrew character. The close resemblance of the one to the other may be seen by a glance at the comparative table of ancient alphabets formed by Gesenius. We have no notice of an older alphabet than the ancient Hebrew; and the question presents itself to us, Whence, and how did the Jews obtain their knowledge of letters?

While many writers have contended for the Divine origin of alphabetic writing, several others have adopted the opinion that it arose naturally, out of hieroglyphical, or picture-writing, by the construction of the symbols into alphabetical letters. In support of this theory, it is said that the letters of the primitive alphabets were originally intended for the symbols of the things whose names they bear; as aleph, an ox; beth, a house; gimel, a camel; and daleth, a door. This, however, may be doubted; for it is probable that the names given to these letters were designed as artificial helps of the memory, by means of the alliteration—just as our spelling-books for children frequently contain wood-cuts, in which A is connected with an ass; B with a bear; C with a cat; and D with a dog;—without any likeness between the letters and the objects being either intended or conveyed.

So radically different are hieroglyphical symbols from alphabetical letters, that they appear incapable of transmutation into each other. The former are imperfect outlines of figures represented, which, in process of time,

were transferred from sensible to intellectual objects, and thus became a metaphorical language; whereas letters are arbitrary marks of a few simple elementary sounds, of the easiest and readiest pronunciation, to which they bear no manner of resemblance. While it may be readily admitted that symbols and figures were used to represent some of the objects of sense, before a regular written language was necessary, it may well be concluded that these could not originate alphabetical characters.

The varieties of alphabetic characters led to the opinion that each particular people invented their own alphabet. This notion, so favourable to national vanity, induced several ancient nations to deify the parties from whom they learned the art, or to attribute its origin to their local gods. Thoth, or Mercury, is said to have invented and taught the Egyptians the use of letters. The Jewish rabbins say God created them on the evening of the first sabbath. Pliny seems to have thought them eternal. Amidst the darkness and uncertainty of these and other traditions, we fail to reach any sound conclusions on the subject, and, therefore, feel the advantage of viewing it in the light of revelation. The fact is undoubted, that writing was known to Moses, and practised by him. It is an opinion, rendered very probable by what we know of the circumstances of the case, that a knowledge of alphabetical characters was Divinely communicated, in connexion with the promulgation of the law on Mount Sinai.

Previously to the period when preparation

was made for the giving of the law, we have no notice of the use of writing. Amongst all the references to the civilized institutions of the patriarchs, there is no allusion to this. It is very improbable that no reference should ever have been made to it, had it been known in these early times. To this must be added the fact that, after the promulgation of the law, reference is made in the books of Moses to the exercise of writing, upon all occasions on which it would be natural and reasonable to make such allusions. All the great events which occurred in the history of the Jews were to be written in a book, and to be rehearsed in the hearing of the people, and to be taught by them to their children. Nothing of this sort was done by Noah, or inculcated on him or his sons, though most remarkable transactions had occurred in their history. From these considerations, the inference is most reasonable, that the art of writing was then unknown. And this is the more probable from the fact that in the antediluvian world, when the life of man was very protracted, there was comparatively little need for writing of any kind, as the record of transactions had to pass through very few hands; and tradition answered most purposes to which writing could have been subservient in that early age.

That writing by alphabetical characters originated with the giving of the law appears probable from the terms in which that wonderful event is described. The two tables, on which the ten commandments were inscribed,

were Divinely prepared, and delivered into the hands of Moses perfect and complete. This was promised to him by Jehovah, who called him up into the mount, and said, "I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." Accordingly, "he gave unto Moses two tables of testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God*," Exod. xxiv. 12; xxxi. 18. From this it appears that these tablets were written, not by the command of God, but by his own hand. Thus it is added, "The writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables," Exod. xxxii. 15, 16. When the first tables were broken, though Moses was directed to prepare other tablets like those destroyed, the similitude of which he might easily remember, the precepts were again miraculously inscribed. It is not at all probable that this miracle would have been repeated if Moses had then known how to write. He appears to have learned the art thus Divinely taught him, so that after he came down from the mount the second time, he was prepared to write in a book all the precepts of the ceremonial law.

It is no real objection to this account that Moses was commanded to write the narrative of the war with Amalek in a book; to engrave the names of the twelve tribes on the breastplate of judgment; and to inscribe on the mitre of Aaron the memorable label, "Holiness to the Lord;" as, from a close examination of the context in which these things are enjoined, they

appear to have been done after the writing of the law. And, if Moses were unacquainted with the art of writing before he ascended the mount, his return with the mysterious and living characters inscribed on the tablets, must have conveyed the deepest conviction to the multitudes of his Divine legation. With one exception, all the Hebrew letters are found in the decalogue. Every guttural, labial, lingual, and dental sound is there disclosed. This truly wonderful art thus appears to have been perfect from the beginning, and, as the origin of speech was Divine, it appears worthy of the condescension of God to reveal to his favoured people, and through them to the world, this method of embodying fleeting sounds and perishable ideas in various clusters of cabalistic characters, with which they have no natural connexion.

From the Jews the art of writing passed to the Syrians and Phœnicians, though we are unable to determine, with precise certainty, the period of its transmission. It was not till the days of Samuel that any considerable additions to the Jewish literature, as left by Joshua, began to be made. This was greatly augmented in the reign of David, and principally by the compositions of that royal bard and prophet. During the government of Solomon, the Hebrew state became remarkable alike for wisdom and splendour, and about that time, it is probable, the knowledge of alphabetical characters was extended from Judæa to the heathen world. There were peculiar facilities for this in

the commerce which Solomon maintained with foreign nations. The central position of Judæa fitted it to be the depository of knowledge, and, by its diffusion, to become "the joy of the whole earth." Her priests were learned men, and some of her cities were so many universities. Her prophets, historians, and poets, extensively aided in advancing the civilisation of the world.

In the early times of which we speak, the art of writing, and even of reading, was available only to a favoured few. In many nations they were confined to the sacerdotal and royal lines. Even in our advanced period of the world's history, these advantages are mournfully circumscribed amongst the most intelligent communities. There is a melancholy proportion of our own population now unable to read, and a still greater number unable to write: so slow is the career of social improvement, with all the facilities we have for acquiring and diffusing knowledge. It would, of course, be still more tardy in ages of comparative darkness.

The most ancient remains of writing are upon hard substances, such as wood, stones, and metals, which were used for edicts and matters of public notoriety. Writing on lead is referred to in the book of Job. It was usually effected with a graver, or stile of iron, on leaden plates. Books were even made entirely of lead. Montfaucon purchased, at Rome, in 1669, an ancient volume of this description, in Egyptian gnostic figures. The covers and leaves, six in number, the rings which held the leaves together,

the hinges, and the nails, were all of lead. It is said that the "Works and Days" of Hesiod were inscribed on a leaden table. Thin plates of lead, reduced to a very great degree of tenuity by the mallet, were occasionally used for epistolary correspondence.* Pliny says that books of wood were in use before the time of Homer. In later times, tables coated with wax were employed for writing, and they continued in use long after more portable materials became common, because they were convenient for correcting extemporary compositions. The Egyptians made use of the reed called papyrus, their far-famed paper.

The Persians, Ionians, and other ancients, made use of parchment—the skins of sheep and goats suitably prepared; and most existing ancient manuscripts are on such materials. The Romans wrote their books principally on parchment, and the monks of the dark ages were sometimes tempted, by the dearness of skins, to erase an old manuscript from a parchment in order to substitute a new writing. This may account, in part, for the scarcity of ancient manuscripts. Masterpieces of genius have been and may yet be found beneath the legendary life of a saint or a martyr, or the theological speculations of an early father. The value of parchment compelled our ancestors to observe a singular economy of words. In the rolls of fines, preserved in our national archives, each contract for sale of lands is comprised in a single line!

* Townley's Biblical Literature, vol. i. p. 27.

Our present method of writing on paper is an invention of no greater antiquity than the fourteenth century. Previously to this period, the cost of materials and the labour of transcribing works must have been enormous; and, consequently, the luxury of reading, and the possession of books, must have been limited to a few persons. There are many curious facts on record which show the extreme scarcity of books during the dark ages. In A.D. 690, the king of Northumberland gave eight hundred acres of land for one book, containing the history of the world. A countess of Anjou parted with two hundred sheep for a volume of homilies; and a hundred and twenty crowns of gold were given for a single book of Livy! In Hungary, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the rich abbey of Pechverad could produce not more than three glossaries, and one book of homilies, and this at a time when a hundred and twenty horses stood in its stalls. In A.D. 1270, a Latin Bible was valued at £30; at a time when two arches of London bridge were built for less money, and when the wages of a labourer were only three-halfpence a day, when of course it would have cost such a man fifteen years of labour to buy a Bible.

The form of ancient manuscripts is various. The Hebrew ones are written in columns and are unrolled, and read from the right hand to the left. They are usually attached to a cylinder at each end. Many other oriental manuscripts are unrolled perpendicularly. Some of the very fine Persian and Arabic manuscripts are written upon a kind of thin pasteboard, and,

being joined at the back and front, fold up like pattern cards. The use of some kind of ink was known at an early period, for Jeremiah speaks of writing with it, chap. xxxvi. 18. Reeds and canes were used for writing on soft materials. Isidore, a writer of the seventh century, describes a pen made of a quill, as used in his time. The invention of printing has superseded the slow and laborious task of copying manuscripts, and tends to give permanence to the structure of the languages in which it is extensively employed. We recognise in the printing-press one of the most important agents which this age of wonders is privileged to enjoy, and may appropriately finish this chapter by an allusion to its history.

The art of printing by metallic movable types, now generally ascribed to John Guttenburg, was successfully practised in Germany, in the year 1450. It soon passed into Bohemia, and thence into Italy. Not many years elapsed before it was practised in Holland, whence it was brought to England. By the close of the fifteenth century it had travelled to most of the states of Europe, and was known at Constantinople. In the following century it was introduced to a new world in Mexico, and winged its way even to India and Japan. In 1639, it was introduced to the British settlements of North America; and is now, with its improved methods of working, overspreading the civilized world.

CHAPTER X.

Historical sketch of European languages—The formation of modern languages—The English language--Its grammatical superiority—Its verbal strength and beauty—Elements which enter largely into its composition—History of its progress and completion—Question of a universal language—Prospects of the extension of the English tongue—Comparative advantages of written and spoken language—Conclusion.

In attempting such a sketch of the progress of language, as may be compatible with the brief limits of this essay, we shall principally fix attention on the history of modern languages in general, and of the English language in particular. While the language in which Aristotle and Plato, and other men of mighty intellect, wrote, has for two thousand years exerted a commanding influence on the character of the human mind, both in Europe and Asia, its power was more directly brought to bear upon the Roman language and literature than on that of any other people. "The later literature of the Romans is such as to keep us perpetually in mind of its origin; and few are now disposed to question the truth of the common assertion, that the Roman writers are in general mere imitators of the Greeks."* There is, nevertheless, a character peculiar to the Roman language, belonging not so much to the litera-

* F. Schlegel's Lectures, iii.

ture as to the nation. Rome is the great point of union between the ancient and the modern world in language and literature, as in many other things.

The formation of the modern languages of Europe is intimately connected with the decline of the Latin language. This tongue, which had long before reached its meridian, began to be corrupted in the fifth century, as soon as the Goths and Lombards, who derived their origin from Germany, had gained possession of Italy. The Italian language gradually assumed its present form and character, and its deviation from the Latin was particularly marked by the use of articles, instead of the variations of cases, and of auxiliary verbs, instead of many changes of tenses. As the Goths extended their conquests, they blended their own coarse phraseology with the language of their captives, and the rude dialects of Provence and Sicily contributed many ingredients to the composition of the Italian tongue, which, while destitute of the strength and majesty of the Latin, inherits a delicacy and melodious flow, which its parent stock never possessed.* Indeed, from one end of Europe to the other, the mixture of the Latin with the Teutonic confounded all the dialects, and gave rise to new ones in their place. The barbarous nations which overthrew the Roman empire subverted its language. The grammars of the modern continental nations were formed, by mutual concessions, from the conquerors and the conquered. Each of these

* Ketts' Elements of Knowledge, vol. i.

tongues of the south of Europe is founded upon the Latin, but their forms are much altered.

As an illustration of the principle on which other modern languages were formed, and of the way by which they reached their present shape, we may select as an example the French tongue. In the fifth century, the Franks, a people of Germany, invaded France, and conquered its ancient inhabitants—the Celts and Romans. By a mixture of the dialects of these people the French language was formed. Five centuries rolled away before it possessed any portion of literature. Long after this, and very gradually, the rude expressions and uncouth phraseology observable in its earliest writers yielded to more appropriate forms of speech. In later times it has acquired a great degree of precision, delicacy, and elegance; and, by many, it is esteemed as one of the most graceful of existing tongues.

A more extended illustration may be offered in the history of the English language. The tribe to which it belongs is the Indo-European, to which, as a family, all philologers agree in awarding superiority over either of the other large groups. And the characteristics of our tongue place it high amongst the spoken languages of the world. On all hands it is allowed to be remarkable for its grammatical simplicity. In this respect it bears a close resemblance to the Hebrew language. In the substantives there is but one variation of case; and it is only by different degrees of comparison that changes are made in the adjectives. There is

only one conjugation of the verbs. Nearly all their modifications are expressed by auxiliary verbs, which are of great use in describing the different moods. The article possesses a striking peculiarity, as it is indeclinable, and common to all genders. The distinctions in the gender of nouns are agreeable to the nature of things, and are not applied with that caprice which prevails in many other languages. This comparative simplicity of structure, it may be imagined, would render it much easier to a learner than some other languages, as Italian or French, in which the grammatical forms are much more complex. The testimony of experience, however, leads to another conclusion, as we find that it presents very great difficulties to foreigners; and one of the principal of these is found in its accent, which to us is not an uncompensated evil, as it adds considerably to its poetic powers. Great as this inconvenience is to a stranger, it would be trifling, but for the greatest blemish in our tongue, its defective orthography. This evil cannot fail to perplex any one attempting to master the language.

While the grammatical peculiarities of the language give it a philosophical character, its terms are strong and expressive. In common with most Teutonic tongues, it is remarkable for its energy. From the care bestowed on its culture by writers of commanding intellect, it is now very copious and elegant. It comes behind none in variety, possessing as it does so many classical synonymes for our Saxon words

and phrases. No Englishman has reason to complain that his ideas cannot be properly expressed, or clothed in a suitable garb ; no English author is under the necessity of writing in a foreign language on account of its superiority to our own ; and no well-educated person amongst us needs to interlard his ordinary conversation with scraps of Latin, injudiciously selected ; or with French phrases, badly pronounced, in order to give utterance to his sentiments.

By slow degrees, our language has arrived at its present state. A people of Celtic origin laid its foundation. The Celtic element in it is, however, now very small, having no part in its grammatical structure, while the words it supplies are, at most, exclusively used to denote some of the great physical objects of land and water. The Roman conquest engrafted on the original stock a variety of Latin branches, which disappeared as readily as they sprang up, when the more enduring conquest, effected by the Saxons, began to be felt. Their conquerors introduced their language into Britain, and, from the fragments of their laws, history, and poetry, yet extant, we know that it was capable of expressing, with much copiousness and energy, the sentiments of a people in the state of civilisation which prevailed at that period, even in the more refined parts of Europe.

Of all the languages from which the English is derived, the Anglo-Saxon holds by far the most important place, whether we regard the

number of its contributions, or the sort of words with which it has furnished us. The English language consists of about thirty-eight thousand words: of these, about twenty-three thousand, or nearly five-eighths, are of Anglo-Saxon origin. Of this language, as written in the time of Alfred, only a fifth part has become obsolete to us.

But the importance of its contributions to our language is seen even more in their quality than in their quantity. Our grammar is almost exclusively occupied with what is of Anglo-Saxon origin. Our chief peculiarities of structure and of idiom belong to it; while most of the classes of words, which it is the office of grammar to investigate, are derived from that language. Thus our few inflexions are all Anglo-Saxon. Our genitive, the general mode of forming the plural of nouns, the terminations of adjectives in *er* and *est*, and of adverbs in *ly*, are all from the same source. Our more important parts of speech—such as articles and definitives generally, adjectives, pronouns, irregular verbs, and adverbs—are of Anglo-Saxon origin.

And not only is the skeleton of our language thus derived from the Anglo-Saxon, but a considerable part of its body and clothing may boast of the same origin. From this language we derive the words which occur most frequently in discourse. It has given names to the heavenly bodies, as *sun*, *moon*, and *stars*. It has fixed the names of three out of the four elements, namely, *earth*, *fire*, and *water*. Out of the four seasons of

the year it supplies the names of three—*spring*, *summer*, and *winter*. Other words which note divisions of time are derived from it, and some of them are amongst the most poetical terms we have, as *day*, *twilight*, *sunrise*, and *sunset*. To this language we are indebted for words which describe the component parts of the beautiful in external scenery, and most of the productions of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. From this tongue we derive words descriptive of the earliest and dearest communions of life. It is the language of daily familiar converse, and embodies nearly all our national proverbs. Many of our invective, satirical, and humorous phrases, are derived from this language, which has survived the Danish and the Norman conquests, and the invasion of hostile forces of Greek and Latin words, which threatened to overwhelm its indigenous terms.

We may congratulate ourselves that the Saxon thus retains its ascendency in the English tongue, as it gives to it much of its raciness and force. The orator and the poet can never cultivate it without advantage. The sounds of many of its words are often a spell which they may use with wonderful effect. The common people understand it more readily than they do words of classic origin. It appeals most powerfully to the sensibilities of our common nature, as may be seen in those Scripture narratives or statements, the words of which are, almost without exception, Anglo-Saxon. The history of Joseph, the parable of the

prodigal son, and the plaintive declaration of the psalmist, "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread," may be cited as illustrations of its beauty and adaptation to move the strongest and most powerful feelings of our nature.

Our obligations to the classical elements incorporated with our language are neither few nor unimportant. They have not only polished and refined its general outline, but have made most valuable contributions to our vocabulary. We are not only indebted to them for the greater part of the language of philosophy and science, but for duplicates of many common words, which add much to the variety of harmony and expression. To the Latin we are especially indebted for these advantages. It was introduced effectually by Augustine, and was not extirpated by the Danes from any considerable part of the country. The Saxon churchmen were amongst the best scholars of their day. Latin was the language of their religion, and they set an example which was followed till after the Reformation, of giving to the world their choicest productions in this classic tongue. Greek began to be cultivated extensively in the reign of Henry VIII.; and this language has enriched ours with many scientific and ecclesiastical words, but beyond this it has not much affected our tongue.

On the conquest of England by William the Norman, French was introduced into his court, and to the halls of justice. This, however,

never became the language of the people, though it prevailed amongst the higher classes. The intercourse between the French and English for several centuries led to the adoption of many French words, with little deviation from their original, as also many words of Latin derivation. The limited influence of the French language on ours is very remarkable. Still we should remember that we are indebted to France, and to other countries, for an influx of phrases descriptive of substantial improvements, which we have received from them. Music, sculpture, and painting, have borrowed many of their terms from Italy; several nautical phrases were brought from Flanders and Holland; the French language has supplied us with military and gastronomic terms; while mathematics and philosophy are indebted to Greek and Latin compounds. Such are the chief sources of the English language, which, if variegated in its materials, is at once compact and beautiful.

The fourteenth century may be referred to as the time when the modern English was properly commenced. The Saxon chronicles do not come down quite so low as this, showing that their language was on the wane. About the time we have named, a great change was effected in the phraseology of the laws, and the pleadings in court, by the abolition of French, and the introduction of the vernacular language. Soon after this period our earliest prose writers began to flourish; and now, after the lapse of five centuries, it is gratifying to find our old

English writers so intelligible as they are. With the exception of a few obsolete terms, Wycliffe and even Chaucer may easily be read by an English student.

From this period the language advanced in refinement and copiousness, till the days of Elizabeth, in which we incline to think it assumed its most perfect form. The writers of the next generation are found to have declined in purity, when compared with Hooker and Raleigh. The prose, even of Milton and Bacon, though very excellent, is in some degree pedantic. The received version of the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular tongue has done much to preserve the language from deterioration, by rendering the Bible a standard of appeal, which is all but universally recognised.

The pure and beautiful style of Dryden served to exalt and dignify the English language. Addison's grace and ease must be admired, even when his strength is doubted. Dr. Johnson conferred numerous advantages on the language, while, by his pedantic style, and introduction of Latin words, he inflicted an injury upon it, from which it has but recently recovered. The present age, so prolific of writers, has, perhaps, furnished several who would suffer nothing from comparison, in purity of style, with any class of authors in any bygone period. Our language is not now a fluctuating one; yet it is in some danger of being corrupted by the introduction of American words, many of which have been long current with the illiterate, and are now working

their way to notoriety, as they are occasionally used by respectable journalists, and even in the legislature of our country.

This language of ours stands pre-eminent, even among the languages of the west. "It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence; with historical compositions which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled; with just and lively representations of human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science, which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to enlarge the intellect of man."

It was proposed, in the seventeenth century, to invent a philosophical language for universal adoption, with a view to facilitate communication amongst learned men of all nations. This project engaged some attention, but it was soon felt to be impracticable, and the thought was consequently abandoned. The present age has witnessed the efforts of a few ardent spirits to break down the existing barriers to national intercommunication by the formation of a universal written language. This ingenious attempt is likely to prove a failure. Christian and philanthropic men look, however, with hope to the wider diffusion of the English language as the ordained means, in the hand of God, of extending the blessings of civilisation and of Christianity with

unparalleled rapidity amongst the nations of the earth.

Never, perhaps, were the prospects of a rapid extension of our language so hopeful as at the present eventful period of time. The competitors for the extension of any one language are now greatly diminished. There is no longer a conflict between the living and the dead tongues. Latin and Greek have been superseded by English, German, and French. Sanscrit and Arabic are supplanted by oriental vernaculars. The Spanish and Portuguese are gradually retreating to the provinces of their own peninsula. The German language has acquired no permanent usage in the new world; and in Europe its extension is limited to scholars and to men of science, though it is studied to some extent by commercial men as a spoken language. The Italian has never been an imperial tongue. The only European languages now extensively propagating themselves in the world are the French and the English; and the latter is rapidly outstretching the former.

In politics, philosophy, and religion, England has now the pre-eminence. The overthrow of the French empire checked the progress of its language, and the consolidation of the Anglo-Saxon power on the American continent is extending ours. In trade, dominion, and international ascendency, France cannot cope with Britain. The literary treasures of England surpass those of France. The English press is free, the French press till recently was under

the manipulations of a censor. The colonies of France have annually been decreasing; the colonial possessions of England are rapidly extending themselves over the face of the earth.

The population which is daily increasing in the United States of America is the Anglo-Saxon race, speaking English. In South Africa, and in New Holland—with its cloud of islands in the surrounding ocean—in the isles of the west, and in Canada, to the arctic circle, this language is advancing, not by the imperial authority of princes, but by its own nature, in the hands of the most enterprising and intelligent colonists of the earth. Even in India it is spoken by the higher classes of natives at the seats of government, and is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the east. In proportion as it obtains access to the markets and the schools of those regions, it will conduct, in its train, that knowledge and truth, which alone can dignify and bless the nations of the earth.

Comparisons have frequently been instituted between written and spoken language. While they have much in common, there are peculiar advantages belonging to each; and it would be difficult to determine their relative value by the application of any one general rule. We have in an early part of this essay descanted on the valuable characteristics of articulation in language, and it will be in harmony with our design to advert briefly to some of the peculiar advantages of writing, which do not belong to speech. It is not confined, like oral language,

within the narrow circle of a listening auditory, but conveys our thoughts to absent friends, and propagates our sentiments to the most distant regions of the earth. By its means our opinions and principles are more likely to be understood than by speech. The reader can pause, and revolve, and compare, at his leisure, the sentences of a written communication, till he fully comprehends its meaning, and has its import imprinted on the tablet of memory. And writing is more permanent in its effects than vocal utterances. These are fugitive and passing, and must be caught at the moment of their birth, or be lost for ever; but writing embodies our sentiments for the benefit of the existing race of readers, and hands them down to succeeding ages. The most valuable thoughts of the human mind, in former generations, are thus familiar to us. The treasures of the ancients yield themselves up at our bidding. By means of books, their authors, though dead, continue to speak. Without the art of writing, the histories of ancient times had never reached us, and the necessary intercourse of friendship and business must have been greatly retarded, and in many cases wholly obstructed. Without it, the living oracles, which teach the science of salvation and reveal the God of truth, could not have existed. We are most extensively benefited by the use of alphabetical characters.

The luxury and general advantage of reading valuable works are unquestionably great. No entertainment is now so cheap as reading, nor is any earthly pleasure so lasting. Nothing

can supply the place of books, as cheering and soothing companions in solitude or affliction. The wealth of an hemisphere would not compensate for the benefits they impart. A wise discrimination in the selection of authors who are read is most important, especially to the young and inexperienced, whose characters will be moulded, and whose destinies will be influenced, by their habits of reading. And it may be admitted, as an unquestionable fact, that one single book, carefully perused, and thoroughly understood, will be of more service to the mind, than fifty which are hastily skimmed over, and forgotten even sooner than they were read. St. Paul enjoined Timothy to "give attendance to reading." The wise love of this employment will prove to the young a great preservative from evil, and to the aged and infirm will yield the highest satisfaction. It was Fénélon who said, "If the crowns of all the kingdoms of Europe were laid down at my feet in exchange for my love of reading, I would spurn them all."

No invidious comparisons need, however, be attempted between the benefits resulting to mankind from written or articulated language. They each have their separate and influential spheres of action. If speech be essential to the very existence of society, writing is indispensable to the full development of all the blessings of a social state. The extension of education in this country is rapidly conveying these benefits, not only to the rich and middle classes, but to the lower orders of the com-

munity. The cottages of our land are now richer in books and in the means of fully comprehending them, than were the castles of barons, and the palaces of princes, a few centuries ago. It cannot be doubted that our heavenly Father wills the communication of these advantages to all his children. The fact, that the revelation of his mercy to our race is committed to writing, impressively teaches us that all to whom it is addressed should at least be so instructed as to be able to read its contents, and by these be made wise to salvation, so as to offer to him "the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of their lips."

We have sought in this disquisition on language, while tracing its history and unfolding its structure and manifold benefits, to prove our great obligation to the Creator for having conferred this boon on the human race. We deem our proofs as to the Divinity of its origin conclusive and unassailable. Scarcely less demonstrative to us are the evidences adduced of the fact, that when God condescended to give a written revelation of himself to mankind, he graciously taught them the use of alphabetical characters, that the Divine and interesting records of his will might be handed down from one generation to another, till "time shall be no longer." The entire dependence of the creature upon God and the bounty of the Most High, in thus richly providing for the ever-growing wants of mankind, are thus manifested. For man, God has done everything that was requisite for a being who at first had no other

instructor. He taught him how to use his powers of speech, conversed with him, communicated knowledge to his mind ; and when, in a subsequent period of his history, he needed the means of preserving the stores of information he had acquired by history, experience, and observation, he taught him the wondrous art of permanently guarding the accumulated treasures of his species for the advantage of each succeeding age.

The conclusions to which this subject has conducted us serve to deepen our conviction of the truth and authority of the sacred Scriptures: and to exhibit the worthlessness and unfounded character of those systems of speculative unbelief which originate in intellectual pride or moral pravity, and which aim at changing the truth of God into a lie. The Bible passes through every ordeal uninjured by the searching scrutiny to which it is exposed. The evidences of its Divinity are accumulating with the flight of time and the disclosures of centuries. Every fresh research in human history confirms its statements, so far as they are capable of receiving confirmation from such a source. No science arrays itself against the Bible. Adverse testimony, drawn from partial facts or hastily constructed theories, gives place to confirmation on a more intelligent acquaintance with the things presented. All history and philosophy does homage to the book of God. Our subject is thus in harmony with the thousand voices of earth, for we are bold to affirm that no candid inquiry can be instituted into the origin and progress of language which

will not end in illustrating the harmony of its ascertained facts with the records of the books written by Moses.

Allowing our conclusions to be correct, there falls to perish, amidst the ruins of its own absurdities, that pile of human folly which represents man as emerging from a brutal and brute condition, by his own unaided powers, to a state of civilized existence, in the progress of which transformation he invented language to assist his advancement to the dignity of a rational being. The theory was reared, on a worthless foundation, by parties who attempted, with vast labour and ingenuity, to cover its defects by the addition of meretricious ornaments. It was dignified by its builders with the title of the temple of historic truth, and designed by them as a tower of strength, from which to assail the outworks of Christianity, and eventually to undermine its citadel. The fragments that survive attest at once its design and its complete failure. But there rises by the side of its mouldering ruins a structure of fair proportions, whose base is the rock of unchanging authority, whose type is in the volume of infallible truth, whose perfection of beauty reflects the Divine glory, and the entablature of whose portico bears upon it the imperishable inscription—GOD MADE MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, INTELLIGENT, HOLY, AND HAPPY!

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