

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jtvi-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php)

JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute,  
OR  
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

---

EDITED BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY

---

VOL. I.



LONDON:

(Published for the Institute)

ROBERT HARDWICKE, 192, PICCADILLY, W.

1867.

---

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

*Omphalos : An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot.* By Philip Henry Gosse, Esq., F.R.S., Vice-President V.I. *From the Author.*

*Man : His true Nature and Ministry.* From the French of De Saint-Martin. Translated by E. B. Penney, Esq., M.V.I. *From the Translator.*

*Theosophic Correspondence of St. Martin and the Baron de Liebestorf.*  
*From the same.*

*The Conformation of the Material by the Spiritual, and Holiness of Beauty.*  
By W. Cave Thomas, Esq., M.V.I. *From the Author.*

*The Biblical Antiquity of Man ; or, Man not older than the Adamic Creation.*  
By the Rev. S. Lucas, F.G.S. *From Alexander McArthur, Esq., M.V.I.*

The Rev. Dr. THORNTON then read the following Paper :—

ON COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY, WITH REFERENCE  
TO THE THEORIES OF MAN'S ORIGIN. By the  
REV. ROBINSON THORNTON, D.D., Head Master of Epsom  
College.

IT may seem presumptuous to commence my task with a criticism of a term which is universally employed by scholars ; but I cannot help expressing some regret at the title I am compelled to use. The word *philology* is, to my mind, inexpressive, and therefore unfortunate. According to analogy, it must signify “*the science of friends,*” not “*the science of human speech.*” Nor, if we look to the ordinary classical meaning of the Greek, shall we find it more appropriate. The word *φιλόλογος* is used by Plato to signify “*fond of learned discussion ;*” Isocrates employs *φιλολογία* in the abstract sense of fondness for such discussion ; while in Plutarch and Athenæus the word sometimes means “*talkative,*” sometimes “*fond of historical and scholastic pursuits*” —in short, what we should express by “*a literary man.*” The ancient Greeks, with whom it was not common to know any language but their own—who seem to have been, in fact, slaves to their own rich and varied tongue—had no idea of a science of speech. Cratylus is by no means an anticipator of Rask and Bopp, of Grimm and Müller. The science is one of modern days : it is not a century old. Linguists there may have been, like Charles V., or Mithridates, who could converse with most of their subjects in their own tongue ; linguists like Hickes, who drew up regular grammars, in

the old Priscianic form, of old and little-known dialects. But all these, with a vast amount of linguistic and grammatical lore, were scarcely scientific. A good many of them were rather inclined to believe Greek and Hebrew to be the parents of languages, and to consider Latin to be a derivative from Greek, Arabic an impure form of Hebrew, and Turkish and Persian both barbarous corruptions of Arabic. The comparative science of language, the methodical classification of dialects, is one of our own days: the name we require for it is *Glossology*, or *Dialectology*, the science of tongues or dialects: and one regrets that a word so inappropriate as *Philology* should have received the sanction of usage. No philosopher would dare, of course, to violate the rule of Bacon (de Aug. Sc., iii. 4): "Nobis decretum manet, antiquitatem comitari usque ad aras, atque vocabula antiqua retinere, quanquam sensum eorum et definitiones sæpius immutemus." But let us hope the "vocabulum" is not yet so "antiquum" as to be unchangeable. The German "*Sprachkunde*" is excellent, but "*speech-cunning*" would be uncouth to our ears, might perhaps mean *Rhetoric*, or the *art of eloquence*, and would be at variance with our rule (the rule of Linnæus) to employ no scientific names but those derived from the Greek. Perhaps "Dialectology" may eventually obtain favour. It will have the virtue (which "Philology" has not) of really meaning what it stands for. Though "verba notionum tesserae sunt," Bacon did not mean that the counter was to be stamped with the externals of another *notio* than the one it represented.

If we picture to ourselves a man with a keen ear and an observant mind, standing in some open spot in the great fair of Nijni Novgorod, we can imagine what a host of subjects for thought must be aroused and enter that mind, from the varied sounds which would strike that ear. The soft but sibilant Russ, the softer and less sibilant Servian, the harsher Bulgarian, the easy-flowing Osmanli, the rougher and more diversified Turkoman, Bashkir, and Mongol; the grunting Chinese, the guttural Arabic, the elegant and stately Persian, perhaps the strange Circassian, Georgian, Ossetic, the ear-breaking Pushtoo, mingled possibly with some sonorous tongue from the south of the Himalaya, and with the strongly accentuated dialects of Latins or Germans from the West, would meet in his sensorium with an apparently unmeaning tumult. And yet it would be clear, on reflection, that this was no *tumult*, nor yet *unmeaning*. Those varying sounds might all be observed to vary according to some law, and to recur at certain intervals; each set

of sounds would be found to have its peculiar character, distinguishing it from other sets of sounds; and the character and laws of variation of one set would be found to approximate more or less to those of some of the other sets, and to differ more or less notably from those of others. And it would soon occur to a thoughtful mind that those various sets of sounds might be grouped, and the groups subdivided with reference to the greater or less similarity of their character and laws. Such grouping would be a "Philology," or Dialectology. What we have fancied as presenting itself to the mind of our thinker at Novgorod, has occurred to the minds of men who have observed the similarities and differences of the various modes of communication by articulate sounds in use among mankind; and the result has been that science of classification of languages which we term Comparative Philology.

Philologers have as yet definitely pointed out only certain great families of languages, which they distinguish from one another mainly by their grammatical characteristics.

1. The simply monosyllabic, in which one word of one syllable stands for one idea, and these words are never altered, but relation is expressed by their arrangement in order in the sentence. The type of these is the Chinese.

2. Those in which relation is expressed by attaching to the original root a number of monosyllabic or dissyllabic suffixes, the root remaining almost or entirely unchanged. These are termed agglutinative, and the family is usually named Turanian. The type of them is the Turkish.

3. Those which express relation by a system of prefixes and suffixes, joined to a root mostly monosyllabic, but variable in form. These are termed Hamitic, and their type is the Coptic. The family seems to extend through the whole of Africa; but as the great majority of these modern African tongues are entirely without literature, and none are written, their classification is by no means easy, nor has the task yet been carried very far.

4. Those which express relation by a system of suffixes almost entirely monosyllabic, and a very few prefixes, joined to a root normally dissyllabic, and very slightly variable. These are termed Shemitic, and their type is Arabic or Hebrew.

5. Those in which relation is expressed by variations in the middle or ending of a root primarily monosyllabic, but derivatively polysyllabic. These are called Aryan, and the type of the family, a very large and varied one, is Sanskrit.

6. To these we may add the family of languages spoken in the islands of the Pacific. They have not yet been regularly

classified; and some are of opinion that they may be considered as offshoots of the Malay, which is itself (they imagine) to be referred to the Aryan family. The peculiarity of these languages is that the words and their inflective particles are **simple syllables**, consisting of a consonant and vowel, or in some cases of a single vowel. They might be termed polysyllabic.

7. The languages of Northern America are characterized by the same colligation of syllables; but as the syllables are compound, and the whole system of colligation more complicated, some incline to group them with the Turanian or agglutinative, some to consider them a special family, the polysynthetic.

We have here, then, seven families of human speech; or, to reduce them to the very lowest number, by classing the Polynesian with Aryan, the Shemitic with Hamitic, and the American with Turanian—at least four different forms of language.

But the clear statement of Scripture is that there was a time when “all the earth was one lip, one set-of-words” (I translate Gen. xi. 1, literally). Their vocabulary and their pronunciation were the same.

Here the opponents of Scripture join issue. They tell us that, do what we will, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the various families of languages, be they seven or four, or any ultimate number, exhibit such specific differences that they cannot have been developed from one original; that, in fact, the diversity of human speech is as good and convincing an argument in favour of the polygenist hypothesis as the diversity of human physiology.

But this is rather a violent assumption. What proof is there that the differences in human languages, great as they are now, are so essential that they may not be explained by the disturbing and disorganizing causes which are at work even amongst ourselves, and are productive of speedy effects where there is no written literature to give fixity to the vocabulary and grammatical forms? Granted that Chinese and Sanskrit, Siamese and Gaelic, Finnish and Kafir, are so utterly and entirely dissimilar now, that we can scarcely imagine the human being who has learnt the one acquiring the power of using the other, that dissimilarity is not other in *kind*, it is only greater in *degree*, than the difference between a page of the Saxon Chronicle and a page of the *Times*; or to use a still better illustration, than that between an upnekhat of the Zend-Avesta and a division of the Shah-Nameh, or a proclamation by the present Shah of Persia, between the Dutch Bible and Ulfilas.

The disturbing forces which act upon language are in the main the following;—I postpone, of course designedly, that supernatural disturbing force which *we* of this Institute believe to have been injected into humanity in the plain of Babel; and to have been, temporarily and in part, lulled in the early days of Christianity after the great day of Pentecost:—

1. National or tribal peculiarities. Those anatomical or physiological peculiarities which constitute the differences between races of men are not without effect upon their speech. The inhabitants of a southern climate, and of a richly fertile territory, naturally fall, after a generation or two, into slothful unenergetic habits. They speak lazily; they shrink from the difficulty of hard consonantal pronunciation, and complicated inflexion. Compare the Polynesian tongues with every other family; or, to come to differences in the same family, contrast the soft Italian with the harder Rumonsch of the mountains; Servian with Polish; Bengali with Mahratta,—nay, the English of Aberdeen with the English of Exeter. Again, a peculiar conformation of the organs of speech, produced by some external cause, climatic or otherwise, would soon eliminate some sounds, and introduce others; and thus, if I may so express it, the tuning of the national ear would take a particular direction, and the pronunciation and vocalization of the language would have a tendency to alter towards one class of sounds, and away from another class. As an instance of this “tuning” as I have called it, I may allege the aversion of the Italian ear to a number of consonants in juxtaposition. Such a sentence as “*with great strength and speed*” is positively terrible to a nation which cannot say *il* but *lo sbaglio*, and turns *Xerxes* into *Serse*. Another example is the rigid rule of harmonizing sounds in Turkish, according to which a flat suffix must follow a flat root, and a sharp suffix a sharp

root: *e. g.* *يَمَك* (*ye-mec*, to eat); but *يُمَك* (*yu-mak*, to wash). Another perhaps is the rejection, as offensive and barbarous, of the *clicks* which are so prominent in the language of the Bosjesmans and some few other African tribes; not only are they found in no other family of tongues, but the higher Kafirs, as the Sechuana, never employ them.

Further, habits of mutilation or distortion, not uncommon among barbarous tribes, must exercise a great influence in modifying language. Dental sounds and sibilants must be considerably altered, if not utterly lost, among those who file away or strike out the front teeth. Distortion of the lips, too, must interfere with the articulation of labials. So also among the imperfectly civilized, the habits of mutual suspicion and

dread lead to a plan of speaking with as little apparent movement of the face as possible; hence labials and fine distinctions in vowels disappear, and gutturals, with slight modifications of the "ur-vocale" (Sanskrit अ) take their place in the development.

2. Not only national peculiarities, but those of individuals, influence the language of a tribe. A natural defect in the articulation of a powerful chieftain would lead his followers, out of respect, to imitate that very defect, or at least to conceal their possession of superior powers of speech. Even amongst ourselves we can often observe a tendency to affect some peculiarity in the enunciation or mode of expression of a leading man; his very phrases are caught up and incorporated into the language of his admirers. In the days of unwritten language such imitation must have had a very decided and permanent effect upon the speech of a tribe.

3. A fertile source of variations in dialect is the tendency to imitate the imperfect pronunciation of children, and to clip and alter words in order to adapt them to their untrained organs. Cases of this kind are familiar to ourselves. There is scarcely a family in whose domestic language some eccentric phrase or mis-pronunciation has not become current, derived from the prattle of some one of its youthful members. Such disturbances as these are of course counteracted by the comparative fixedness of a written language: the family *argot* is confined within the circle in which it was produced. But in earlier days, without this impediment to change, as in illiterate tribes at this day, the mimicry of children was doubtless a powerful disturbing force, affecting not only the forms, but the grammatical inflexions of words, and their collocation in sentences.

4. Superstition in less civilized tribes, and, to a slight extent, social rules in more civilized communities, affect the language. Many words and phrases which were usual in this country two centuries ago have become offensive, quaint or ridiculous, and as such are practically banished from our normal literary tongue, though they linger in our provincial dialects. The verbal inflexion in *th* (hath, goeth, &c.) is now quite lost in classical English, though it was current a century ago, and common at double that distance of time. Now, if an inflexion can be lost in this manner out of a written language in whose literary remains it is of continual occurrence, it is plain that under circumstances of less restraint the process of alteration would go on more rapidly; and two portions of the same tribe, separated from one another by a range of mountains or an arid plain, might find, after half a century without



intercourse, that their inflexions were different, and their very vocabulary so altered that they were no longer mutually intelligible. That this process is now going on in many places we learn from travellers. The Indians on the Amazon, we are told, speak languages differing in an extraordinary manner, and varying so much that a person who has learnt to express himself with tolerable fluency in conversation with a certain tribe will with difficulty understand or be understood on revisiting them after the lapse of twenty or twenty-five years. Superstition, too (as I have said), exercises a great influence on the vocabulary, if not on the grammar. In some nations the king takes the name of some animal or object, which name is forthwith banished from the language, since any one using it would be immediately suspected of trying to bewitch the chief. A new noun has to be invented and thenceforward employed to designate the object. In others the *fetish* of the community, or the instrument of some good or evil to them, must no longer be called by the name it bore up to that period. So the greatest ingenuity has to be exercised in the formation of new words which shall be as different as possible from the old ones. It does not always happen that two branches of the same tribe invent the same new appellative; and hence a variation which a very few years suffice to convert into an actual breach of continuity.

5. To these disturbing forces we may add the *occasional* intermixture of foreign individuals. These intermixtures were rarer in early times; but still there is no reason to doubt that, when they did occur, the presence of a few influential strangers had a tendency to introduce new words into the vocabulary, and perhaps to affect in a perceptible degree the use of prefixes, suffixes, and medial changes; or that conquerors or slaves would compel their subjects or masters to accept some of their language, and (in Juvenal's words) make Orontes flow into Tiber.

Such are the principal causes of the alteration, development, and decay of the forms of human speech. Nor will it be correct to argue that they affect vocabulary only, and not grammatical character; that they quite account for the evolution of Persian out of Pehlvi, or of Hindi out of Sanskrit, but cannot be adequate to explain how from one origin there could spring tongues so radically different as Manchú and German. True, the grammar of a written language is invariable in every direction but one. No philological circumstances could ever make Italians form the plural with *s*, or Spaniards without it. But that is owing to the fixity given by written, or at all events traditional, literature. To an early tribe, using a simple

monosyllabic language, the adoption and development of inflexional forms is a matter of ease. It is by no means philologically impossible that out of the Chinese of the present day should be formed languages possessing inflexions, some of them assimilating themselves to the Aryan "umlaut" (change of vowel) and varied termination, others to the Hamitic prefix and suffix system, others to the Shemitic disyllabic root and varied suffix, others to the Turanian agglutination. In fact (according to Müller), those Turanian languages which have hitherto been considered almost on a par with the uninflected Chinese, I mean the Tungusian or Manchú branches, are actually beginning to adopt inflexions and develop verbal forms. What Manchú can do in the nineteenth century A.D., I suppose it might have done in the nineteenth (or twenty-third) B.C. There were adequate causes then, as there are adequate causes now, for throwing out from an uninflected and monosyllabic original a set of inflected polysyllabic and variable offshoots.

But it must not be forgotten, as I said in the outset, that holy Scripture adds another disturbing force, supernatural, or at least exceptional in its character, communicating (to use mechanical language) an initial velocity. The Deity Himself willed to "confound their language"—to mingle with the gift of speech an element of repulsion which it did not formerly possess, or at least not in so eminent a degree. "We will go down" (I translate literally from the Hebrew) "and confuse there their lips, so that they shall not hear each man the lip of his neighbour . . . Therefore He called its name confusion, for there Jehovah confused the lip of all the earth; and from thence Jehovah made them disperse upon the face of all the earth." Such is the simple statement of the will of the Most High and its execution. The bold critic sees in these words a mere legend, engrafted on the original Elohist document by some Jehovistic fabricator; but more reverent minds will accept them as a Divine record of the chastisement of rebellious man by the timely withdrawal of that gift of unity which had been enjoyed and abused. And a sublime chastisement it was too—sublime in its simplicity and its perfectness. The mythology of man's invention told of the consternation in Olympus, the battle of the celestials, the fallen giants weltering in a sea of sulphurous flame; or of the wailing over Baldur, the howls of Fenris, the yawning gulf of Nifheim, the crashing blows of Mjölner; but the Divine record bears the stamp of truth: Jehovah willed to restrain men, and restrained them by the effectual means of destroying the community of their speech.

There are then sufficient reasons (without taking into consideration the Scriptural statement) for us to consider the doctrine of the original unity of language quite as tenable as the polygenist hypothesis—or at least *not untenable*, for that is amply sufficient for our purpose: we are quite satisfied if it be allowed that, however many reasons there may appear for holding to another theory, there are not sufficient scientific grounds for considering the Scriptural statement as at variance with the conclusions of philology; and that, if the truth of the Scriptural record be granted, the whole matter is clear.

But there are also certain affirmative arguments,—arguments, I mean, which make in favour of the monogenist doctrine of language. To prove constructively and actually the oneness of all existing languages,—to show in them all marks of unity which could be explained satisfactorily only on the supposition of identity of origin, would be a superhuman task. It would require that a man should be able to overcome the fiat of Babel, and to learn all languages more or less perfectly; and that he should be further able to exert upon this mass of knowledge a stupendous analysis: to do, in short, for *all* tongues of *every* family, what it was the labour of half of Grimm's life to do for *one* division of *one* family, in his great *Deutsche Grammatik*. Yet it is possible, in a cursory manner, to show that there are similarities between the great families, which seem to be consistent rather with the idea of unity than of plurality of origin.

I. The readiness with which words are assimilated from one family to another. A very deep acquaintance with grammatical and inflexional forms,—deeper perhaps than has been yet attained,—would, I am convinced, show a unity of principle in all, from which a unity of origin might be justly inferred. But, as I have already hinted, grammar is a constant quantity in languages such as we are able to deal with, viz., those which have a written literature. Though the grammar even of a written language still has a tendency to change in its own direction, it can never retrograde; every change must tend to remove it farther from others, and to diminish the argument for identity of origin; or rather to remove all marks from which arguments on either side can be brought. We must be content with drawing our proofs from vocabularies. Within the same family there is no wonder at words being easily borrowed and assimilated; but this operation is not restrained within this limit. We can borrow and incorporate into our own language such words as *sofa* from Turanian, *coffee* from Shemitic (قهوة), *taboo* from Polynesian. The Modern

Greek helps itself to plenty of Turanian words: *τουφέκι*, gun, (طوبغي), *ἀφέντι*, master, (افندم), from Turkish, are examples. So the Shemitic Syriac has no difficulty in borrowing and adopting from Aryan Greek not only such words as *σύνγκλητος*, *ἡλωσσόκομον*, but even such a particle as *ἰγάρ*; and the Hamite Coptic can assimilate not only words from Shemitic Hebrew, but also Aryan Greek—*σωμα* *σώμα*, *ψυχη* *ψυχή*, *στολη* *στολή*, *χωρα* *χώρα*. In the same way the Aryan Persian has introduced and appropriated a large vocabulary of pure Shemitic (Arabic) words; and the Turanian Turkish has done the same to such an extent, that the Osmanli of the capital is scarcely intelligible to the Turkish peasant from the country. This easy adoption of foreign and unfamiliar words seems to prove that there is not that difficulty of blending which would be sure to characterize languages specifically and radically different. Were the difference such between the Aryan and Shemitic, the Modern Persian would be no more possible than a breed between a trilobite and a batrachian.

II. Further, we are often startled at finding in the vocabularies of extremely different languages traces of similar roots, and remarkable coincidences of words. A great many of these may be allowed to be mere coincidences; a great many more may be really borrowed either by one from the other, or by both from the same source. But still the phenomenon remains; there will still be a residuum of similarities which can be best explained by the doctrine of a common origin. Thus the Coptic verb *τακο* 'to perish, corrupt,' is perhaps borrowed from the Greek *τήκω*, but it looks very like a derivative from an earlier common origin. *χορ* 'a serpent,' is exactly like the Greek *ὄφης*; but if a borrowed word it would be spelt with the *φ phi*: its having the non-Greek letter *ϥ fei*, and the *ϣ hori* prefixed for the *spiritus lenis*, seems to prove, that (unless we suppose it came from Egyptian into Greek) the two words are derivatives from a common root, prior to the distinction between Hamitic and Aryan. (The Shemitic has a fuller form from the same root; Arab. *افعى*, Heb. *אָפֵץ*). So, comparing Coptic with Hebrew, the word *ιομα* for *יָם*, 'sea,' may be a borrowed one; but *μοοϣ*, 'water,' is a word as old as the time of Moses, whose name is derived (probably) from *μοοϣ οϣσε*, 'water-saved,' and can scarcely be the Hebrew *מַיִם*. It must be a growth from a prior

root, from which מַיִם was also formed. The same must be said, I think, of the following coincidences, taken at random :

צוּאֵי שְׁנַיִם (two).                      צְפוֹדוֹץ שְׁפָתַיִם (lips).

שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר (eight).                      מוֹת מוֹדֵד (to die).

חַיָּה חַיָּה (to live, to be).

Such a coincidence as that of **שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר**, 'to be done' or 'born,' with the Aryan Teutonic '*scippan*,' '*schaffen*,' our '*shape*' (originally 'to create'), is perhaps fortuitous,—that is, I mean, does not spring from any identity of root. But as instances of a number of singular similarities between Turanian and Hamitic we may compare the Coptic **HI** with Turkish **ا** (a house), **ΑΛΟΥ** with **اغلان** (a youth), **ἄθρο** with **ات** (a horse).

The similarities of Shemitic and Aryan are innumerable: the most remarkable are pointed out in every good Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, or Æthiopic Lexicon. I select at random half a dozen :

נָעַר 'to roar' (of bulls) . . . . . גֹּי our *cow*.

הַר 'mountain' . . . . . גִּיר, ὄρος.

מָרַף (hif'il) 'to nourish' . . . . . מָרַף, τρέφ-ω.

כָּנַע (nif'al), Syr. ܟܢܥ, 'to bend, kneel,' ܝܚܢ, γόνυ, our *knee*.

פָּרַד 'to divide' . . . . . pars, part-is.

פָּתַח (فتح) 'to open' . . . . . πετ-άνυμι, pat-eo.

Again, the two negatives in Turkish are **يوق** and **م**. The **م** is perhaps the Arabic **ما**; but is it a mere coincidence that the Greek words are **οὐκ** and **μή**? or that the Turkish for 'well' is **أيو** (pronounced *aié*, but written *ái, o*) when the Greek is **εὖ**? Do not such similarities point to a time and a tongue anterior to the separation of Aryan and Turanian? But we may go a step further. On comparing other languages with Chinese, we find some strange similarities. A proportion of these may be, as I have said, mere chance resemblances in sound; but some it will not be fanciful to consider as arising, in part at least, from unity of derivation. I take at random a few from the 214 radical forms (Grundsetzen) of the Chinese.

人 *jin*, 'a man,' resembles Sanskrit **ज्ञा**, 'to know,' and **जन**, 'to produce;' as if "the rational," and "the animal," were to be

expressed by the same word. From the latter Sanskrit root came the Greek *γίνομαι* and *γυνή*; thence Saxon *acenned*, 'born,' *cynn*, 'race,' *cwen*, 'a woman;' our *kin*, and *queen* (originally the same as *quean*), Danish *köne*. It is curious that the Australian blacks use the word *jin* for wife.

𠂇 *wu*, 'not.' Greek *οὐ*. Turkish *یوق*, as above.

父 *fu*, 'father.' Sanskrit *प*, 'to be:;' whence Greek *φύω*, Lat. *fui*, our word 'be.' Or perhaps, *पा*, 'to protect,' which is the root in Sanskrit of the word *पितृ*, 'a father.'

犬 *k'iuan*. Greek *κύων*. Sanskrit *श्वन्*, our *hound*.

豕 *shí*. Greek *σῦς*, our *swine*, *sow*.

鼻 *pi*, 'nose.' Hebrew *פִּי*, 'nose,' *פֶּה*, 'mouth;' halves probably of the *onomatopæic* *פִּי-פֶּה*, *הִי-פֶּה*.

齒 *tsh'i*. Hebrew *שֵׁן*, 'teeth' (sing. *שֵׁן*).

彡 *san*. Hebrew *שֵׁעַר*, 'hair.'

Here, then, are samples of a large class of similitudes in words between the Aryan, Turanian, Hamitic, Shemitic, and monosyllabic families. I repeat what I have said before, that a few of such similitudes might be explained consistently with the polygenist theory, by suggesting fortuitous coincidences or borrowing of words or roots; but I contend that on the whole they point to a time when there was one and but one primeval language, from which the roots of all languages—whether of their vocabulary or their inflexional forms—are taken, and to which they may, *conceivably*, be ultimately traced back, though it is scarcely probable that man will ever be able to complete the work.

What, then, was this primeval tongue? It is not the task of our Institute to originate theories: our business is to show that Scripture—I mean the very letter of the written Word, as we have it,—is not untenable; and that those who deny it and reject it, because of its alleged discrepancy with the results of science, eventually find themselves involved in difficulties equal to, if not greater than, those which they escaped when they severed the consecrated cord that bound the humble believer to his scientific but not less believing brother. Still I hope I may be pardoned if I throw out an attempt at a theory, or rather a hypothesis, for which, of course, the Institute is not responsible.

“ All that the man, the living soul, calls it, that is its name.” (I translate literally from the Hebrew. The LXX and our version prefer “ all that Adam called it, the living soul”—“ whatsoever Adam called any living creature.”) Man, with the gift of reason, had appended to it, either as a property or an inseparable accident (to speak in logical fashion), the gift of speech,—the gift of producing various articulate sounds as representatives of the various objects and actions coming before his notice, and cognizable by his reason. The primary language, then, must have been formed by *onomatopœia* (the applying names taken from sounds or peculiarity of external appearance). I cannot hold with Goropius Becanus, that this language was German or Flemish; nor with the Welshman I have read of, who claimed the honour of primevalism for his own native tongue; nor yet can I accept the argument of Bishop Patrick and others (borrowed from or suggested by St. Augustin, de Civ. Dei, xvi. 11), that as Adam conversed with Methuselah, Methuselah with Shem, Shem with Jacob, the language of Jacob and his people must have been the same with that of Adam. The long lives of the patriarchs must have contributed to a regular and orderly development of the first articulate utterances of the first man into a real language capable of expressing the relations of time and mutual action. It is not to be conceived that men endued with the gift of speech, and all that that gift comprises, went on from year to year of an extended life without finding some means to express not only the varied objects which were presented to them, but the varied relations in which those objects stood to one another. The *Scripture* account favours the view that poetry was rapidly evolved in the elder branch of the Adamite race. The address of Lamech, sixth from Adam, to his wives is given in a poetical form in Hebrew. There can be little doubt that it is a metrical translation of an antediluvian poem preserved by direct tradition in the younger Adamite house, though originating in the elder, and rendered into the poetry of the age from generation to generation, as time went on and the language altered. The book of Genesis gives us, of course, the current Hebrew version at the time of Moses of this remarkable composition.

The centuries (nearly seventeen according to the ordinary reckoning) which intervened between the Creation and the Flood afforded time for the organization and solidification of the primeval speech. And as there was then no element of mutual repulsion, the development was all in one direction, and each man and set of men contributed something to the *improvement* of the language, not to increasing the width of

the gulf between it and some other. On the plain of Babel the impetus was given which has resulted in the evolution of all the marvellous number of dialects in which men think and hold converse at the present day.

The earliest variations of the one language were probably—1st, the uninflected, or nearly uninflected, represented by the Chinese and Tungusian; 2nd, the inartificial, though inflected by prefix and suffix, now styled Hamitic; spoken in various form by Menes the Egyptian and Uruk the Babylonian, and the early Canaanites, and represented to us in the Coptic. The relics of the ancient Egyptian preserved to us in this language, and in the little that is decipherable and intelligible of the earlier tongue, show us that the vocabulary was inartificial to a degree, preserving much of the presumed onomatopœia of its primeval original.

ΤΕΛΤΕΛ ‘to drop,’

ΛΕΟΤΙ ‘lion,’

ΠΕΤΕΠΕΠ the ‘hoopoe,’

ΟΥΖΟΟΡ ‘dog,’

are specimens of the evidently ancient appellatives used by the Hamites. The Shemite speech of Terah’s tribe was probably evolved from an earlier Hamite modification of Noah’s tongue, rather than started as an independent branch. And thus, though Abraham and the Canaanites had little difficulty in understanding one another, Jacob and Laban used two different names (apparently mutually intelligible) for “the heap of witness,” and the children of Jacob at the court of a Pharaoh—that Pharaoh *perhaps* a Philistine shepherd-king—found it more convenient to employ the services of an interpreter.

Relics of the Noachid speech exist, no doubt, in every tongue, modern and ancient, living and dead. Yet they should be sought for, it may well be imagined, and would be most likely to be detected in greatest number and earliest condition,—1. in those tongues which have to all appearance altered so little from their primitive form, the dialects of China and the Tungusian division of the Turanian family; 2. in the Coptic, and in those offshoots of the great Hamitic Egyptian language which exist, in more or less degraded form, in various parts of Africa; 3. in the language in which the sacred books are written, the Biblical Hebrew, which, though it bears marks of cultivated development, must needs (if our sacred records are to be listened to) contain much that has really directly descended from primeval times.



I cannot close this paper without apologizing for the apparently dogmatic tone which may to some appear to pervade it. But I have designedly abstained from quotations, and from alleging the opinions of eminent writers on either side. Our object is not to collect what men *have* said, but to induce men to think, and think deeply. I have therefore ventured to place before you my own thoughts and reflections on the matter, and leave to profounder learning and deeper reflection the task of going farther. Sure I am, that the profounder the thought and learning, the more clearly will be displayed the simple sublimity of the dealings of the Creator with His creatures, and the unity of the great creation called into being by that Deity who in His wisdom has willed to leave us written records of Himself and of His providence, truer and more certain than the deductions even of the highest of finite minds from the steadiest of finite senses. And as a deep mathematic brings us nearer to the source of all number—the Infinite yet One; as a deep astronomy carries us closer to the Lord of Heaven, a profound geology to the Creator of earth; so will an extended and profound philology raise us nearer to the Author of the tongues of men and angels—to Him who has not disdained to be called the Alpha and Omega, the *Word* of God.

The CHAIRMAN.—I think I may call upon you to give with acclamation a vote of thanks to the Rev. Dr. Thornton for the exceedingly valuable paper he has read. I am sure every one will feel that this Institute is doing a great work, by calling forth such papers as that we have heard this evening—a paper displaying the most profound learning, and yet marked by the deepest modesty. (Hear.) I am sure you will all agree that the author of it is entitled to our most cordial thanks; and I have only to add, that as we are anxious to encourage discussion, I shall be glad to hear any gentleman who has any remarks to make; but I would request that, as our discussions are reported very fully, every one should confine himself as much as possible to the subject of the paper. It has also been intimated to me that the distinguished biblical scholar Dr. Tregelles is present with us this evening, with a suggestion that perhaps he would favour us with his views on the subject. I can only say that I feel certain we shall all be extremely gratified if he will kindly do so. (Hear, hear.)

\* Dr. TREGELLES.—As you have invited me to speak on this paper, I shall avail myself of the privilege which you have granted, to make a few remarks upon it. I think it is a very valuable paper, and I listened to it with much pleasure, and followed the arguments which Dr. Thornton brought forward in support of his views with a peculiar degree of interest. I think he has dealt with a very difficult subject in a very masterly manner; and though there are many things which are stated in that paper, for which the writer

has not quoted authorities, I believe it will be found, upon examination, that his statements are quite consistent with the views of some of the highest authorities who have written on the subject. There is one point upon which I presume all are agreed, who hold the Scriptures to be the word of God ; and that is, that there can be no real contradiction between it and the facts of Nature: there can be no contradiction between the word and the works of God. In the pursuit of philological studies, there is one thing which often occurred to me :—the history which is given in Genesis of the origin of language, must either be a well-founded statement, or it must have been invented afterwards to account for the different tongues which are spoken. If it were the latter, I think it would have been far more precise ; if it had been invented in order to account for the different languages in the world, it would have been far more elaborate than the simple narrative which is given in the Bible. With regard to the general question relating to what is commonly called “ philology,” I should feel myself exceedingly incompetent to discuss it ; but I might remark that upon this question, as well as a great many others, I have observed that some persons have gone out of their way to raise difficulties against the Scriptures, where no difficulties really exist. (Hear, hear.) I have observed the manner in which Scripture has been objected to, and have seen many persons straining at the merest trifles in order to raise difficulties, which in any other matter they would have felt to be no difficulty at all. And in consequence of the determination which has been shown to do this, the believers in Revelation have often been called upon to defend and explain things which, if it were not for the way in which their meaning has been distorted, would have required no explanation whatever. Now I think we have reason to complain of this. It is very unfair. Let the readers of Scripture, and men of science, and observers of facts, wait until facts are fully ascertained before they raise objections. It is quite possible that upon a closer examination they might find that many things turned out in a different manner from what they had at first supposed. We all find that, as children, we formed opinions upon those things that came under our notice, which we have since discovered to be altogether erroneous. It is thus with science. Men form their opinions with too much haste, and they subsequently find that they were wrong. I say that science ought to be the observer of facts. Let men of science wait a sufficient time for facts, and let them thoroughly test every theory which is put before them, before they come forward and say, “ Here is something infallible,—here is something which cannot be disproved.” We often hear it said that “ science teaches ” this or that. Something is wrapped up in this mysterious language, which we are supposed to be bound to accept as absolutely dogmatic. Now in such cases there is room for considerable doubt as to what science does teach. It may be true that our present knowledge of science teaches us so and so ; but our present knowledge is quite imperfect. We are only just beginning to know what is the meaning of some things which are called science ; and therefore the phrase “ science teaches ” has no real meaning. It is an expression commonly used, not by those who are most competent to

discuss questions, but by those who endeavour by phrases of that kind to conceal their own ignorance, and who really know nothing about what science teaches or what it does not teach. I did not, however, come here with the view of taking any part in the discussion. I would far rather have heard the remarks of others; and it was only because I was called upon that I have ventured at all to say a word. I have only one more observation to make, and it is this: It is a strange fact that a person who has the greatest powers to acquire languages has often the least comprehension of the relations of one language to another. We have an instance of this in the late Cardinal Mezzofanti. He was perfectly accustomed to read and write in very many different languages; but if you asked him a question upon any point with respect to philology as a science, he had no conception of the matter whatever, and was unable to give you any information. It is also a remarkable circumstance in connection with this subject, that if you are listening to several different languages spoken at the same time, the effect is such as to produce a sensation almost like absolute deafness. With regard to the observations in the paper as to the way in which habit and temperament affect language and the pronunciation of speech, it is a thing which all of us must have observed; it is a thing which is doing its work at present, and will continue to do its work after our generation has passed away. I have nothing further to say with respect to the paper, except to state how heartily I join in the vote of thanks which has been proposed to Dr. Thornton, and to express the sincere desire that I have to see men who deal in science confining themselves strictly to facts. The moment we find science taking primary ground of opposition to Scripture, we ought to ask whether it is science or *inscience*; and I do not think we need have any doubt as to the answer which we should get to that question.

Professor OLIVER BYRNE. — There is one argument which I think Dr. Thornton might have used in support of his theory as to the common origin of the languages now in use in the world. It might be possible to select twelve words in one language similar to those in another; but for that language to be able to return the compliment, unless they were of common origin, is not within the range of mathematical probability.

Mr. WARINGTON. — I have just two remarks to make with reference to the paper. I have listened to it with great interest; but it struck me that there is one objection to the conclusions drawn, which I think can be very easily disposed of, and which has not been touched upon in the arguments of Dr. Thornton. It is this: — We have to account for more than a mere difference in the names applied to things; we have to account for a difference of grammar. It appeared to me that Dr. Thornton gave us no hint in his paper as to how he would account for one nation having suffixes and another affixes, in their grammar. Is it not to be accounted for in this way? If you take a language with suffixes, you will find that these appendages consist of other words shortened so habitually that they lose their apparent meaning. You can trace them, upon the examination of several words; and you will find that what appears to be a suffix is really

another word tacked on to the root in such a way that it has lost part of its sound. I think that is a very important point. It clears up matters of grammar as well as matters of vocabulary. Both differ very much; but I believe if we examined the question, we should find that the differences of grammar are the greater and the more important of the two. There is one other point to which I wish to call attention. I think Dr. Thornton showed great wisdom in not pressing his argument for the unity of language as necessarily destructive to the polygenous theory. It is plainly possible, *à priori*, that the different races of men may have descended from different original stocks, and yet possess similar and apparently related languages. For, whether from one stock or from many, it is certain that there is a very close resemblance between human beings of different races. All are formed in the same way; all are possessed of similar organs of speech. It is therefore a moral certainty that, however originated, their languages would also be similar. Scripture, indeed, tells us that the polygenous theory is incorrect, and so leads us to adopt another explanation of these phenomena, but if we had no revelation to tell us, we could not arrive at that conclusion from the similarity discovered between one language and another. Again, with regard to the monogenous theory, it is no disproof of that theory, that differences in language exist; but it is no proof of it, that similarities exist; because they can be accounted for on other grounds. Take the instance quoted by Dr. Thornton, the great resemblance of the word *father* in all languages. I do not know whether he quoted also the word *mother*, but I believe it would be found that nearly all the words which represent father and mother in different languages, possess one or two sounds which are closely related to the sounds of Pa and Ma. This might seem a proof that all languages came from the same source; but there is another explanation of it, which is this—that those are likely to be just the sort of sounds that children would first make in addressing their father or mother. It is therefore only natural that they should be nearly alike in all languages. The only case in which similarity affords really a good argument is when you can show a *number* of words which are similar; but it is rather a hazardous argument to contend that races are identical because languages are similar. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. W. NIVEN.—I should highly value the lecturer's opinion with respect to the following passage in the third chapter of the book of Zephaniah, v. 9:—“For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent.”

Capt. FISHBOURNE.—It occurred to me, taking the language as we find it in Scripture,—from the speech of God with Adam, as well as the speech of the devil with Eve—that language must have been in a much more perfect condition than the arguments of the polygenists would admit of. I would go a little further, and say that if Dr. Thornton had enlarged in that direction he must have told us that language is more than a means of communication. I think we must consider language as something more than a mere philological science; it is the instrument of thought. Without language I do not think we could excogitate. I think that the fact of the devil speaking to

Eve and reasoning with her implies that there was a current language with which he made himself acquainted. And the facts which I think go far to prove the unity of speech are the remarkable traditions we have, and their palpable identity. We must deny history altogether if we deny tradition. We have a tradition of the Flood and of the dispersion of mankind prevailing amongst the Chinese and amongst the Mexicans. It is not, perhaps, so remarkable to find it amongst the Chinese, who had a written language; but it is very remarkable to find it existing amongst nations which had no written language. With respect to the remarks in the paper, as to the facility with which people slide out of the original language of their ancestors, it might be supposed that in China, where they have a written language, these modifications would be the least likely to occur. Yet it is a most extraordinary thing that in that country there is the greatest difference between the dialects spoken in the various and even in adjacent provinces. I remember on one occasion being at Nankin, and, wishing to communicate with certain individuals, we were only able to reach them through a chain of four or five interpreters, in consequence of the amazing difference in the dialects. I never yet saw two Chinese persons, even belonging to the same district, and speaking the same language, who yet spoke with perfect intelligence one to the other. So nice are the inflections, that two persons in China cannot converse for five minutes together, without having recourse to the employment of the signs or characters, which they make on their hands, to explain what they mean. If you observe them conversing, you can see at once that there is a great diversity in their dialects. And this diversity is becoming greater every day, so that, in the course of time, instead of having nine hundred languages, we shall have a thousand, or perhaps more.

Mr. INCE.—I rise for the purpose of making one remark. An expression was introduced into the paper implying that man had improved upon the language which he originally possessed. Now, I cannot agree with Dr. Thornton in that matter. I think that, as God Almighty created Adam, He created him a perfect being with perfect speech, and He did not leave His work for man to mend. Man might have increased the number of words, but I do not think it was possible for him to improve upon what God had imparted to him.

Mr. REDDIE.—With reference to the observations of Mr. Ince, I quite hold with him that language must of necessity have been a gift to man from his Creator; and, if so, that it would be a "perfect gift." I was glad to find it plainly advanced in the admirable paper we have all listened to with so much pleasure, that language was a gift from God, and not a human invention. I think I may also venture to say that it was not Mr. Ince's intention to attribute to Dr. Thornton anything contrary—

Mr. INCE.—My objection was only to the word "improve."

Mr. REDDIE.—So I understood. I was about to point out, that if man, as created by God, was endowed with the highest wisdom and capacity for knowledge, he must also have been endowed with the power of speech; for without speech, as Capt. Fishbourne has very properly observed, he could

not really have thought : he would not have been man. Mr. Max Müller appears to be of the same opinion ; for he calls thinking “ speaking low.” In saying this, of course he does not mean, that, in thinking, there is an absolute articulation of words, but that there is necessarily the idea of words, or what words mean. But although man was so created in this perfect state, —with every capacity for knowledge, with the power of speech, and with wisdom and intelligent instincts, all of the highest order,—he must still have been ignorant of that kind of knowledge which can only be gained by experience. For instance, he could have no knowledge or experience of the sensation of fear, till he disobeyed God and fell from his original state of innocence. Therefore, his ideas, and correspondingly his language, would have to be increased, as of necessity ; and by being thus increased, his language would also be “ improved,” without implying any imperfection in his original gift of speech, but rather the contrary. If we bear in mind that the gift of speech was a faculty, a power intended to be exercised and developed by man, rather than a mere vocabulary or complete set of words, it will be seen that its capability of thus improving in development is really the best proof of its perfection. Touching this question of the improvement of a language, I was somewhat surprised at one remark of Dr. Thornton with reference to the language of the Greeks. Philologists, I believe, consider the Sanskrit to be the most perfect language. But, at least, after the Sanskrit, I suppose the Greek will be acknowledged to be the most perfect and polished language with which we are acquainted. Now, I am inclined to think that it chiefly owes that perfection to what I thought Dr. Thornton was almost inclined to sneer at (though I do not like to use the expression), namely to their exclusive devotion and attention to the study and development of their own language, without much regarding the other languages spoken around them. I believe, as a consequence of this, that in Athens you would not have heard Greek spoken with such constant variation as we hear English spoken, even at our chief seats of learning, in the present day. At Oxford and Cambridge, more attention is certainly given to the pronunciation and composition of Greek and Latin, than to English. At present, too, we make a point of knowing something of so many other living languages besides our own, that it does not improve, as no doubt it otherwise would. I do not say we are wrong in being so cosmopolitan. To a certain extent we may be forced to be so. But this certainly does not conduce to the improvement of our own language, which some even disparage and despise. In that respect, the French are now more like what the Greeks were : they are devoted to their own language especially, and pride themselves upon it ; and it is correspondingly improved. With reference to Mr. Warington’s criticism of Dr. Thornton’s argument, I must say I do not think he has quite done justice to it. It appeared to me that Dr. Thornton put the case upon the very lowest ground, and claimed to have proved much less than he was entitled to claim. He did not say that there was any strong positive argument in favour of the monogenist theory to be derived from comparative philology ; but only that there is a balance in its favour. He argued, that if

we start with believing the Scriptures, and then find, upon a scientific examination of man's speech, that there is an undercurrent of similarity running through all languages, this is a ground for holding to the truth of what the Scriptures tell us. Now I think that that is a perfectly sound argument. And if you do not limit your consideration of the subject merely to language, —but if you will also take into account all human traditions ; if you will take the whole of man's history, and all the facts connected with his past and present condition, so far as we can discover them, then you will find that what might be but a weak argument by itself, and if it rested upon philology alone, becomes, with the addition of these other arguments, a very strong and completely built-up proof of the original unity of the human race. We have the statement of the Bible to begin with—which surely must go for something ; and when we find it is supported by all the other evidence we can collect, does not that afford good ground for holding to what the Scriptures narrate ? (Hear, hear.) For my own part, I do not hesitate to say that I do not believe that man could ever have invented language, if originally without speech. But, at the best, if he really did so, it must have been by a very slow process indeed. For we must remember that those who reject the Scriptures and adopt the polygenist theory, must start with mankind in the very lowest condition. Except to account for the existence of savages in that abject condition, with their low mental capacity and imperfect language, there would be no need for a polygenist hypothesis at all. But if you adopt that hypothesis, then the question is limited very nearly to this: What rational ground have you for believing that civilized man with his perfect language has been developed out of the savage with his almost unintelligible gibberish ? Now I venture to say, Mr. Warrington has not given us any reason, nor a single fact, for believing in that. (Hear, hear.) As regards the somewhat ingenious argument he has advanced (whether he has adopted it *bonâ fide* as his own view, I do not know), namely, that as human nature is everywhere much alike, and as men have all the same organs of speech, they would therefore naturally hit upon the same sounds to express their ideas ; and hence the similarities in all languages might be accounted for. I can scarcely imagine a more thoroughly perverted view of the whole question than this. The admission of such similarities is important. But it is surely notorious that it is because of the physical differences and the philological differences between one race and another of mankind, and between one language and another, that the polygenous theory of man's origin has ever been thought of. It is surely a fact within our own experience also, that, starting with the same parents, we find diversities in their children, and that every living language of which we know anything is gradually changing and modifying before our eyes, and tending to diverge away from its original ; while it is not a fact that from diversity of origin we have any experience of this assumed tendency towards unity. The differences between languages are patent ; but those traces of unity in various languages which Dr. Thornton has called attention to, are found lying hid in the original roots and the oldest germs of words, and not in their present forms or last developments. Then, as to the notion that the

radical sounds in father and mother come from some primary root to be found in *Pa* and *Ma*, it would prove nothing for the one theory more than the other, even if true. It is akin to what Max Müller calls the "bow-wow theory" of language, in which I have no faith whatever. Children are taught to say *Pa* and *Ma* in the nursery, and it is natural that they should imitate the *Baa* of the sheep, when they can do little else as babies. But, if that is a true theory for language beyond the nursery, how is it that in no language whatever, so far as I am aware, the sheep is, after all, called a *Baa*? It is not so in Latin, where we have *ovis* and *agnus* for what in English we call a *sheep* and a *lamb*. It is not so in Greek or in French, and perhaps not in any other tongue; and therefore the theory requires no other refutation: it is not founded on any facts. As regards the monogenist theory, on the other hand, you have not only the Holy Scriptures which give you the hypothesis, but you have those extraordinary coincidences of similarity in language which Dr. Thornton has so ably brought before us, in support of it. You have, also, the high perfection of the Sanskrit language, though one of the oldest; and that is in accordance with the idea that God created man not only a perfect being, but with a perfect faculty of speech, or perfect instrument of thought. And, indeed, it could not have been otherwise, if you once admit the theory that God created man in a state of perfection. It will be my duty a fortnight hence to bring forward some arguments against the contrary notion that God might have created man imperfect. If, however, you adopt the Scriptural account, and admit that speech was a gift of God, there is still a question which perhaps may be raised, as to whether that gift was not at first limited to the power of giving things names. Dr. Thornton appears to lean to this view. To give names to objects would no doubt be naturally one of the first exercises of that power; but I can see no reason for believing that it had any such limitation. The idea of action or of motion is inseparable from the observance of living beings, and is as definite as the idea of the existence of things themselves; and therefore verbs to express such ideas are as essential to intelligent thought and intelligible speech as substantives. If there is any part of Dr. Thornton's valuable paper with which I did not go, it is what relates to this. But I do not agree with Mr. Warrington that the learned Doctor overlooked the grammatical differences or agreements in language, to which Mr. Warrington has called special attention. Mr. Crawford and other ethnologists I know are of opinion that grammatical inflection is a matter of the greatest importance in determining the family of a dialect. Granting that man was created a perfect being, he must have been endowed with the capacity of speaking what he was obliged to think. He would at the very first have to think of the power of God as his Creator, and of his own relative position upon earth. According to Revelation, he had to think, in his communications with the Deity himself; but that is beyond our present range of conception, as it relates to what is supernatural. But at all events, after the creation there is nothing in the Scriptural account to lead us to the conclusion that man had to invent his language. And, in point of fact, now, we never invent words: we either borrow them, or we modify them, to suit new ideas. And if we



were to attempt to describe any object by some inherent quality which it possessed, we should find it the most difficult thing imaginable. We fancy sometimes that words are thus expressive of ideas by their sound ; but that is mostly imaginative. If we take, for instance, the words "rush" and "crush,"—the one signifying rapid motion, and the other arrested motion—which are almost quite opposite in idea ; yet they both appear perfectly expressive, merely because, through the association of ideas, we are accustomed to connect the meanings of the words with their sound, and so we think that they are expressive. Again, bearing upon the question of change of dialect, we must all have observed what a difference exists amongst ourselves with regard to the pronunciation of the English language. If you go down to Whitechapel, you will not find the same dialect there as you will find in Belgrave Square. Language, as it were, develops and grows naturally, and as it grows it sometimes also tends to corrupt in its growth. The only thing which preserves it from more rapid alterations now, as formerly, is that it is written. In former days, when men had not the facilities for writing which they now so commonly possess, and when they wrote on stones or on tablets of wax, and when a still greater majority of the people than now were necessarily illiterate, language must have degenerated or altered very rapidly ; and thus would be originated that great diversity of speech among mankind which we are now trying to account for. But, if anything is clear from the numerous philological differences and theories of language that exist, it is this,—namely, that there has been a "confusion of tongues" in the world. I do not think we can want any more absolute proof than we already have to be convinced of this.

Professor BYRNE.—There is one principle in the law of Confucius which ought to be mentioned. He taught the Chinese that they should give attention to things and not to words. It is a part of their religious duty to carry out this principle.

Mr. REDDIE.—I fancy they must have been very unsuccessful in doing so, for they have more words than any other nation in the world. (Laughter.)

Mr. WARINGTON.—I wish to state that in the observations which I made I was not criticising the paper ; I was rather praising the author for *not* using an argument which he might have used.

The CHAIRMAN.—I may say that I did not understand the observations of Mr. Warington as criticisms upon the paper. I rather thought that he was calling attention to an argument which might have been used, but was not used by Dr. Thornton. I think the arguments in the paper have been very ably sustained in the discussion ; and the views advanced by the author have been supported by the very interesting fact which has been mentioned by Captain Fishbourne with respect to the Chinese language. The variety of language spoken in China affords a remarkable confirmation of what Dr. Thornton has been maintaining in his paper. There is this remarkable distinction between the Chinese and every other language,—it is a language of ideographic symbols ; all other languages are phonetic. The symbols used by the Chinese do not represent sounds ; they represent things, as was stated by Professor Byrne. It is a very remarkable fact, that in a

nation like China, which is a very exclusive nation, and a nation possessing the power of writing, you need not travel out of it to look for an illustration of all the arguments which have been maintained in Dr. Thornton's paper. If you take one of the northern provinces in China, and compare the dialect spoken there with that spoken in one of the southern provinces—

**Captain FISHBOURNE.**—You might take the adjoining provinces.

**The CHAIRMAN.**—You will find that if, as Captain Fishbourne states, you compare the dialects even of the adjoining provinces, the diversity between them is so great that the inhabitants cannot understand each other; yet they have no difficulty in communicating their thoughts in writing. It is also to be remembered that we possess exactly the same kind of thing in the language of our arithmetical calculations. If we write down an arithmetical calculation, or an equation in algebra, it can be read by a man in France or Germany who knows nothing about our language; and thus mathematicians write down their symbols, and can communicate their ideas, though they may not be able to speak the same language. With regard to the observations of Mr. Warington, I differ from him in thinking that Dr. Thornton has neglected the comparison of the different grammars as well as the words of languages, though I don't think so much can be made out of the argument from grammar. Nothing can be more unsettled than the grammar of our own language, I know some who state that we have no grammar at all; such is the delightful position in which we are placed. It must have been observed by every one, that our language has degenerated from the complex grammar of its supposed parent language. At any rate we have lost almost all our inflexions, and have nearly arrived again at what some might think the more primitive style of language.

**Rev. Dr. THORNTON.**—Allow me to say, before I allude to the remarks which have been made on my paper, that I thank you most heartily for the vote of thanks which you have passed to me. I can assure you that I had great pleasure in preparing the paper, and that pleasure has been very much enhanced by hearing the many valuable observations which it has called forth. With reference to the observations of Dr. Tregelles, they were so favourable, that any remark upon them would be presumptuous on my part; nor was there anything in those of Mr. Warington which calls for any particular remark; I think he appreciated my arguments very fairly. I argued that, putting Scripture entirely out of the question, there is no reason to believe, from the study of man's speech, that what we find stated historically in the Scripture is not true, or that it disagrees with the conclusions which we fairly derive from the facts obtained from other sources. Of course it is impossible to invent a theory which will square with facts in every particular, and my argument was that the apparent probability inclined in favour of Scripture. It is perfectly true that suffixes and prefixes are originally separate words attached to the inflected word, as, for instance, the verb "have" may be clearly traced as a suffix in the futures and conditionals of Romance verbs; and the use of these attachments in so many different families of languages is a proof of their common origin. The choice of prefix by one family and of

suffix by another, is the result of that tendency to divergence which I hold to have been inflicted on mankind at Babel: the primæval tongue of the Noachidæ probably used both. With regard to the observations of Mr. Warrington, as to the similarity, in all languages, of the words used for father and mother, there are certain radical sounds which are accepted as word-roots in nearly all tongues. One of the first of these is "P;" and "M" is a modification of it,—both implying "that which is near." We might add that the harder "P" is probably used to distinguish the sterner, and the softer "M" the gentler parent. "Ma" is used in the Sanskrit in the sense of bringing into the world, and "Pa" in that of preserving or maintaining. It is certain that the radicals Pa and Ma exist in every language, however it may be accounted for. I come now to the question as to the probable meaning of a passage in Scripture. Of course my explanation is given, off-hand, with the greatest diffidence. But the way in which I understand it is that in a future state the curse of Babel is to be done away. Man then being unwilling to speak that which is wrong, will be privileged to communicate in "pure language" with his Father. That language will not be the tongue of man, but what I will call the tongue of angels, which he shall use for glorifying God. (Hear.) As to the communications in Paradise, between the woman and the devil, and between man and the Deity, we cannot argue or deduce much from the little we know of what went on in the Garden of Eden. Man, in a state of innocence, which he lost by his fall, had very simple ideas, which did not require any extensive knowledge of language to express. The devil, in his conversation with Eve, had only to use a little persuasion in addition to the negative reasons which he gave to her; but to enlarge on this topic would lead us into metaphysical theology, which is beyond the range of our present debate. Captain Fishbourne said that without speech we cannot think; but I should modify this statement by saying that, granting that we think in words, we do not think in grammar. If you contrast a conversation which you hold with any one with a debate carried on in your own mind, you will find that the relations expressed by grammatical means in the former case are, in the latter, necessities of thought rather than mentally-conceived inflexions. Here, again, however, we are getting into metaphysics. A farther objection was started with which I cannot agree, that language came from God perfect—that it was given as a gift to man, and was not given imperfect. I think that argument cannot be sustained. "Whatever Adam called every living thing, that was the name thereof." There was a work which was left to man to do. His power to articulate was absolutely perfect, but it was given to him that he should develop it, and use it for something higher. I do not suppose that the power of speech can be called an imperfect gift, any more than a grain of wheat which has not been put into the ground is imperfect; but language, till developed, was so. I will only now refer to the observation of Mr. Reddie as to what I stated about the Greek language. As an Oxford man and a schoolmaster, I am not one who is likely to undervalue that language; and when I stated that the Greeks were slavish in their devotion to their own language, I did not mean to sneer at this, as Mr. Reddie appears to think, but to express an

opinion that they cultivated their own language so deeply and exclusively that it almost amounted to a fault. There is, for instance, in the Rhetoric of Aristotle an amusing passage, in which a person is introduced as contending, half in earnest, that if you predicate non-existence, you predicate a species of existence; as if not-being were a peculiar way of being. That is a confusion which would never occur to a man who had learned another language. I do not think I need now make any further observations upon the question, and I will conclude by again thanking you for the kind way in which you have heard me.

The Chairman then adjourned the meeting.