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

VOL. LXXIV

1942



LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY
THE INSTITUTE, 1, CENTRAL BUILDINGS, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

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850TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

HELD IN ROOM 19, LIVINGSTONE HOUSE, BROADWAY, S.W.1,
ON MONDAY, JUNE 1ST, 1942, AT 6 P.M.

SIR FREDERIC KENYON, K.C.B., D.LITT., LL.D., IN THE
CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The CHAIRMAN then called on Dr. W. J. Martin to read his paper entitled
"The Genius of the Language of the Old Testament."

The meeting was then thrown open to discussion, in which Group-Captain Wiseman took part.

Written communications were received from Prof. Edward Robertson, Rev. Principal H. S. Curr, Mr. E. B. W. Chappelow, and Dr. Barcroft Anderson.

THE GENIUS OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

By W. J. MARTIN, Esq., M.A., Ph.D.

LANGUAGE, of all man's achievements at once the most familiar and the most mysterious, has been an object of age-long interest to thoughtful men. There is abundant evidence of this in the literary remains of the ancient world, but nowhere is it more strikingly exhibited than in the constant readiness of the Hebrew to furnish a host of proper names with etymological explanations, necessitated in his view either by the context or by the subtlety of the form. His interest in language and linguistic phenomena did not end here. The casual observation on linguistic development so familiar to us now in 1 Samuel ix, 9, "Beforetime in Israel when a man came to enquire of God, thus he spoke, Come and let us go to the seer (אִיִּר): for he that is now called a prophet (נָבִיא) was formerly called a seer" was a remarkable observation to make at that time, and indeed the significance of such a statement was not fully grasped until the days of Grimm. It was left, as is well known, to the writers of the 19th century to realise and to show that there was a history of customs and languages as well as of kings and

dynasties. The full realisation of the fact that language was not divinely created, immutable in form, brought about a revolution in the world of philological thought and introduced the era of comparative grammar. From what foolish inferences and whimsical inventions would an inkling of the implication of the note in Samuel have saved generations of worthy but tradition-trammelled scholars, to whom Hebrew was the *lingua sacra*, if not indeed the *lingua divina*, the language of paradise, the progenitor of all tongues, the first and only preference of God, and like Him changeless. To-day we take a more sober and a more scientific view of this human but none the less noble language. Semantic change, that endemic linguistic phenomenon noticed by the writer of the above passage, was not the sole instance of change and development in Hebrew. In it we find (and our findings are verified by a concatenation of documentary data unparalleled in the history of any other language family) an instance, far from universal, of an inflected language losing its case-endings. Persian and English are the other well-known instances; and the concomitant circumstances are no less familiar: imposition of a foreign tongue, the correlative of a foreign yoke: subsequent re-assertion of liberty and with it of the mother tongue, but in a modified form. But the circumstances that brought about this momentous change in Hebrew are shrouded in mystery, and Semitic philologists seem never to have made the question of the historical *milieu*, or even the *terminus ad quem*, and the contributory causes subjects of serious inquiry. Whether or how far an answer can be given is a matter that cannot be conveniently discussed within the limits of this paper.

To venture to discuss the genius of language may well seem a presumptuous undertaking. It might not be out of place to take as our phylactery the words used by Jenisch in what seemed to some his misguided attempt to answer the question asked by the Berlin Academy, What would an ideal language be like? "In language the whole intellectual and moral essence of a man is to some extent revealed. 'Speak, and you are' is rightly said by the Oriental. The language of the natural man is savage and rude, that of the cultured man is elegant and polished. As the Greek was subtle in thought and sensuously refined in feeling—as the Roman was serious and practical rather than speculative—as the Frenchman is popular and sociable—as the Briton is profound and the German philosophic—so are

also the languages of each of these nations.”* If this statement be accepted, then our study should prove not without profit.

Before we embark on an investigation of the Hebrew language let us glance for a moment at the nature of the extant text of the Old Testament. It was not until well into the present era that a school of scribes, known as the Masoretes, undertook the task of adding vowels to what had hitherto been a consonantal text. Hebrew scholars have so often expatiated on the disadvantages of such a system and the difficulties that ensued once Hebrew ceased to be spoken that we have overlooked the fact that for a living language in a primitive community it had doubtless its compensations. We know of no instance of a new language arising from a change of vowels only. Such a change—even considerable divergence—produces at most only dialects, and in Palestine, small as it was, restricted movement must inevitably have nurtured the growth of dialects. The advantage of a consonantal text was twofold: it was intelligible not only to those who were separated geographically, with consequent divergences in speech, but also to those whose language had undergone diachronistic change. A Northern scribe read to his hearers from his text a dialect differing widely from that read by his Southern counterpart from the selfsame script. Diachronistic change is attested by those etymological spellings found in Hebrew: the spelling **רֶשֶׁת** shows that what was later pronounced *rōš* was at an earlier stage pronounced *rāš*. A consonant-cum-vowel script would have necessitated periodic revisions involving us in even greater embarrassments than the Masoretic punctuation. For our purpose we shall treat the Masoretic readings (excluding those instances where the sense is obviously violated) as one of many possible co-ordinate dialects.

THE VOCABULARY OF HEBREW.

The Semitic root consists usually, as is well known, of three elements. By the use of internal inflexion many various meanings could be brought out. For instance, by doubling the middle radical the notion of repetition or habit could be expressed. To take a few examples at random: **אִכָּר** (*'ikkar*) farmer, **צַדִּיק** (*sajjad*) hunter, **רֶשֶׁת** (*qaššat*) archer, **גַּנָּב** (*gannab*) professional

* Quoted by O. Jesperson, "Language, its Nature, Development and Origin" (1922), p. 30.

thief. Simple and sufficient as this method was it served only to bring out different aspects of a primary idea. Hebrew had, however, like all languages, the problem of extension of vocabulary. It resorted seldom, however, to the expedient of borrowing from another language. It seems, in some instances, to have achieved its end by ringing the changes on the final radical of the root, as in the group of words נגש (nagaš) to approach, נגע (naga') to touch, נגף (nagap) to smite, נגן (nagan) to strike (the strings of an instrument). Or again, in נשף (našak) to bite, נשם (našam) to breathe heavily, נשף (našap) to blow, נשק (našaq) to kiss. Or again, פגש (pagaš) to meet, פגע (paga') to run against. A comparison of this group with the first would seem to indicate that certain consonants had specific functions, but with the limited material at our disposal it would be unwise to attempt to draw conclusions.

In the field of vocabulary Hebrew showed a flexibility and a dexterity to which the conceptual loans in all European languages bear eloquent tribute.* Such conceptual loans first appear in the *κοινή* of the New Testament, where one is struck by the fact that Greek, despite its rich vocabulary both in philosophy and ethics, had no equivalents for many terms, and was compelled to use existing words giving them an enhanced connotation hitherto undiscovered. Examples of such conceptual loans in the New Testament (the medium, moreover, through which those found in European languages passed) are: צדק (sadaq) to be righteous, and especially in its causative form הצדיק (hisdiq) "to declare righteous," Greek *δικαιώω*, Latin *justificare*; אהב ('ahab) Greek *ἀγαπάω*, Latin *amare* to love (with God both as subject and object), ברך (barak) to bless, Greek *εὐλογέω*, Latin *benedicere*; חטא (hata') to sin, Greek *ἁμαρτάνω* Latin *peccare*; האמין (he'min) to believe, to trust, Greek *πιστεύω*, Latin *credo*; our word "amen" comes from this root. Some conceptual loans doubtless never passed beyond the New Testament, e.g., שמע (šama') to hear, which denotes in Hebrew: to perceive, to apprehend, and to respond. Among substantives the best known are נביא (nabi') prophet, Greek *προφήτης*, Latin *propheta*; חסד (hesed) favour, grace, Greek *χάρις*, Latin *gratia*; מלאך (mal'ak) messenger, denoting usually a messenger from God, Greek *ἄγγελος*, Latin, *angelus*. Of the history of the

* See chapter by A. Meillet, "Influence of the Hebrew Bible on European Languages" in "The Legacy of Israel" (1927).

development of many of these denominations no lucid explanation can be given ; that of others is obvious. **נביא** (*nabī'*) a prophet, is derived from a root whose primary meaning was to be in ecstasy ; later it was applied to those men in Israel whose vocation was to warn the nation of the consequences of the worship of materialism and of the neglect of truth. It is unfortunate that we have come to look on foretelling as the prophet's chief rôle : to the Hebrew it was only a small part of his work.

The antecedents of **הלל** (*hillel*) to praise, from which comes our hallelujah, appear to be traceable. It seems to be very probable that it is connected with a root meaning " new moon " (Arabic *سلايل*) and so provided a deverbative " to celebrate festivals at the new moon." (The new moon setting the time, not furnishing the object of the celebrations.) From this it came to convey the idea of celebration *κατ'ἑξοχήν*.

It is clear from these two instances, and a host of others that could be produced, that Hebrew had the facility to as great an extent as say a language like our own for adapting concrete terms to express abstract ideas. We adopt the expedient of borrowing the concrete term from another language and using it in the required figurative sense. The Hebrew applied the adaptation principle to the creation of terms for mental and spiritual moods, and the vocabulary it thus accumulated is a commendable achievement. These coinages or transferences are to be met most frequently in the book of Psalms. In any list the term **לב** (*leb*) must occupy a prominent place. It is so pregnant that it is impossible to translate it by any one word in the English language. True the common translation " heart " is a conceptual loan, but the borrowing has by no means exhausted the capital. It denotes (*a*) heart, in the literal sense ; (*b*) the centre of the intellectual life ; (*c*) as seat of all the inner emotions ; (*d*) of thoughts and imaginations (Song of Songs v, 2) ; (*e*) of the desires and determinations ; (*f*) of the understanding and wisdom ; (*g*) as the centre and source of the moral life. A cognate term is **כליות** literally " kidneys." It was used of the seat of the feelings. One of the most original and the most expressive is **נפש** (*nepeš*) soul (Greek *ψυχή*), the primary meaning of the word was breath. It came to denote that mysterious something that imparts life to a body, human or animal. In man it was the seat of the feelings and affections. Similar in some respects to **נפש** (*nepeš*) is **רוח** (*ruah*) " spirit," but this stresses more the spiritual side of man. In Greek it

appears as the conceptual loan “*πνεῦμα*.” רצון (*raṣōn*) in the sense “acceptable will” is a notable creation, as a moment’s reflection on the respective motives of the Hebrew and Greek in offering up sacrifices will show: in the one instance to please the Deity, in the other to avoid his displeasure.

Hebrew, too, uses physical gestures and attitudes to describe psychological states. שים פנים ל (*sīm panīm l*) to expect that (literally, to set the fact to), נפל פנים (*napāl panīm*) to be morose (sullen) (literally, the face falls), הקשה ערף (*hiqṣah ‘oreṗ*) to be stiff-necked (literally, to harden the neck); נלה און (*galah ‘ozen*) to uncover the ear (of someone), to communicate. Or an organ: אפים (*‘appajim*) “nostrils” for anger, רחם (*reḥem*) “womb” for “mercy,” יד הטה יד (*hittah jad*) to stretch out the hand for “to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards,” מעינים (*me ‘ēnajim*) from the eyes = behind the back, without someone’s knowledge עינים רמות (*‘ēnajim ramōt*) “lofty eyes” for “pride.” Some of the foregoing examples remind one forcibly that in method, we have not advanced a great deal further than the ancient Hebrews along the linguistic path. Not all terms for psychological states may have arisen in this way: some may have had their origin in a vanished pictographic script.

HEBREW AS A LITERARY MEDIUM.

Let us hesitate for a moment to examine our terminology before proceeding to discuss Hebrew as a medium of literary expression. We are all familiar with the use of the word literature in two main senses: literary productions as a whole, prose and poetry, irrespective of their merits; and in the narrow sense writings esteemed for beauty of form or emotional effect and possessing permanent value. But such a definition is not exhaustive: we are here using terms which in their turn demand elucidation. What constitutes beauty of form? Does it include that mysterious and elusive thing called style?

Those of us who have not mastered the mysteries of metaphysics and æsthetics, with their attendant philosophic problems, demand a simpler and less abstract definition. Literature distinguishes itself from other writings in that it may be read and re-read showing on each fresh perusal new facets and forms. As when we look on one of our great cathedrals we find the lines so ingeniously arranged that they present not one but numberless patterns. What Coleridge said of poetic style is valid here:

“Not the poem we read with the greatest pleasure but that to which we return with the greatest pleasure possesses the genuine power.” Writing is to literature what homeliness is to beauty, building to architecture, drawing to painting. Theoretically it would be possible in many a non-literary composition to replace the words by numbers of a pre-arranged code without detracting from its value; they are mere ciphers. Not so in literature: here words are organic units—the interdependent parts of an organism—every one of which is essential to the existence of the organism. Or again words in literature are as seeds, what they stand for is the plant, the soil determines the growth and the ultimate form. When we consider that words are the only denizens of the mind, “the only and exclusive subjects of the understanding,” and when we bear in mind that by far and away the greatest and most precious portion of the heritage of the past consists of written records, we shall not fail to value aright the place and rôle of the literary composition. We owe it not to papyrus or vellum, not to copper or stone that the literary compositions of Greece and Rome have proved imperishable; the literary form alone—the ointment and spice of the winding sheet—has saved from the ravages of age and decay the masterpieces that have come down to us.

If we turn now to an analysis of Hebrew style we shall find that the tangible characteristics, namely the figures of speech employed, throw some light on the secret of the beauty and power of these writings. Many of the figures with which we are familiar from our own literature are rare or even absent. Alliteration plays but a small part and rhyme, it would seem, is never used deliberately. This is not the time nor have we the space to set out a detailed discussion of the many figures of speech employed in Hebrew. It will be sufficient to make a closer scrutiny of the use of metaphor. For it is here, if at all, we shall find the key to the secret of the power of Hebrew literature.

Middleton Murry in his book on “Style” has said: “Metaphor is not an ornament. It is the result of the search for a precise epithet.” The origin of metaphor is probably to be sought in the simile. Simile and metaphor are often described as the expanded and contracted form of one and the same figure of speech. “Words that burn” would seem to have arisen from a condensing or short-circuiting of the simile “words that are like the burning of fire.” The Arab grammarians define metaphor as a simile without “like,” in other words an abbreviated form

of the simile. It consists of comparing, perhaps unconsciously, a phenomenon in the ideal sphere with one in the physical, possibly even an identification of the two phenomena. The metaphor consists of two parts, which have been called the vehicle and the tenor—the physical symbol and the ideal phenomenon.

The necessity for metaphor arises from our inability to describe an abstract idea. The relation of the vehicle, the physical phenomenon, and the tenor, the ideal phenomenon, is very much that of the actor to the *dramatis personae*. It is impossible to put the original character on the stage and so another is employed to represent him. It is the deputy, the delegate for the absent and unseen participant in the case. The histrionic comparison brings out the main points: there the actor is chosen because of his fitness for the part, or his ability to copy his prototype.

You will have noticed the difficulty that faces anyone taking on himself to define metaphor. In attempting to depict the brush used in producing the effects, he is of necessity compelled to use one and the same brush. And in the last analysis of course the question arises, is not the very texture of language metaphorical? There is a distinction between the name of the thing and the thing meant, the window and the view; a spade is not a spade any more than the Hamlet we see on the stage is Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. But this takes us far beyond our present destination. I have dwelt on it, for one charge brought against the Old Testament is that its language is metaphorical. But so is all language.

Let us confine ourselves to so-called living metaphors, of which the Hebrew of the Old Testament can show many striking examples. Phenomena of the inanimate world used for those of the inanimate: light for joy, darkness for death, sun for fortune, fire for destruction; the inanimate for those of the animate: the star for hero, rock for protector, lamp for giver of victory, floods for hostile hosts; animate and animate: lion for hero, wild ass for lawless one, sheep for peaceful people; the animate and inanimate—under this head can be grouped those expressions commonly referred to as anthropomorphic. The study of linguistics has taught us that anthropomorphic expressions are not peculiar to Hebrew. Symbolism of language has naturally an anthropomorphic character. Without the transference of human conditions to the external world we could

not make it comprehensible. A multitude of characteristics of inanimate objects are still named after parts of the human body: the legs of a chair, the foot of a mountain, the head of a bridge; a lever has arms, a ship a waist, a cave a mouth, a needle an eye; we may speak of the blood of the grape without being accused of Manichaeism. We even ascribe human actions to inanimate objects: the house faces the valley, the stone strikes the man, the grain promises to be good. We treat diseases as active beings: the fever attacks the patient, death snatches him away.

The original and existing was invariably the concrete, the physical, the perceptible. Symbolization and comparison are indispensable to human thinking. The similarity is not always found in the outward form. Sometimes it is in the function. Hebrew speaks of the mouth of the sword—that which bites. With us the form is usually decisive; pearl is a diminutive of pear; the cock has a comb; the flower has a cup. In fact everything is expressed in metaphors, even scientific language. When psychology states that the stimuli of the external world are conducted by the afferent nerves to the organ of the brain and there changed to impressions, it employs exclusively metaphors. Stimulus is the Latin for goad, nerve and organ Greek words for string and tool, impression nothing more than imprint.

Speech is a means of expression and feeling, and the unloosing of passions as well as an implement to make ourselves intelligible. The choice of similes and metaphors is influenced by national psychology and customs. Those of the Romans were taken largely from the state, the army, and agriculture; those of the Germans from war and the weapons of war, also from the chase; those of the Hebrews from the field, from the sheep-fold, the pottery and the forge. In the use of figures either by nature or by ingenuity the Hebrews selected symbols which were and have remained universal, and thus a symbolism that could be transferred without loss or diminution of effect into any language in any land.

In the time left to us we must speak, however briefly, of the beauty and characteristics of Hebrew prosody. Herder, the German philosopher, who spent a great deal of time on its study and who was the author of the statement that the Hebrew language was itself a poem, has some extravagant claims to make on its behalf. It has little in common with the classical models. Its chief characteristics are rhythm and parallelism.

A great deal of ink, mostly German ink, has been spilt on the subject of the origin of rhythm and the so-called *Arbeitsleid*, some of the scholars treating its appearance as a remarkable phenomenon to be explained. When we think of man and his environment, the rhythm in and around him, the waves of the sea, the ripples of the lake, the rhythmical nature of his primary occupations : the sowing of seed, the reaping of grain, the hammer blows on the anvil, the potter's wheel, the tramp of marching feet ; and in him : the beat of the heart and the varied rhythm of breathing, a great deal more ink would have flowed if rhythm had failed to appear in his literary composition. It was to breathing, probably, that the Hebrew, more anthropomorphic in his expression than other men, found the progenitor of rhythm. There is nothing fast and fixed in Hebrew rhythm, none of the mechanical measures so familiar to us. Its lines are as variable as the breath we draw. To the Hebrew poet the speaking of his work was as much his concern as the writing of it. For in his days writer and reader were often one, a fact we would know, even apart from the historical evidence, from the etymology of the Hebrew word for read, the primary meaning of which was "to call" later used for proclaiming and preaching, then as literacy was the prerogative of the professional scribes, reading was largely a public exercise, in little differing from that of preaching, and so to the already existing meanings of the word, "call" and "proclaim," was added another, namely "read." We are often enjoined by our teachers of style to read aloud what we write. The Hebrew writer had need of no such advice ; it was incumbent upon him to do so in the discharge of his professional duties. And thus for him ease of delivery, accommodation of his writing to breathing, must have been one of his primary considerations.

One of the most successful attempts to analyse the peculiarities of and to formulate a theory about Hebrew poetry was that of Bishop Lowth. His main thesis is that its predominant characteristic is parallelism. He enumerates three species : (1) synonymous parallelism—when the same sentiment is repeated in different but equivalent terms ; (2) antithetic parallelism, where sentiments are opposed to sentiments, words to words ; (3) synthetic or constructive parallelism in which the sentences by the form of construction answer to each other. The opening verse of the first Psalm is a good example of synthetic parallelism "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel

of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Here there is no eddying but progression, admittedly downwards, of the idea. Walking becomes standing and standing ends in sitting. The contact at first is that of the fellow traveller, then that of the friend, then finally that of the associate. The company, too, deteriorates, the ungodly, that is the amoral; the sinners, that is the immoral; the scornful, that is the avowed enemies of morality—threefold and three-membered parallelism.

Some of the devices employed in Hebrew poetry may seem to modern minds primitive and inartistic. For instance, the 119th Psalm is in the form of an elaborate acrostic, the 22 stanzas consist of eight verses, each of which begins with the same letter of the alphabet and proceeds in this way right through the alphabet. To them it was a mnemonic aid justifiable as such and possibly no more distasteful to us than rhyme—primarily a mnemonic aid—would have been to them. Let us not forget that rhyme is comparatively young in our literature, Milton disapproved of it: "rhyme, the invention of a barbarous age to set off wretched matter, as the jingling sound of like endings, trivial to all judicious ears and no true musical delight."

The language of the Old Testament, whether considered in its ethnographic associations or in its geographic distribution, can lay but slender claim to the epithet "great." Language *qua* language it would seem destined to obscurity by its severe simplicity, and yet withal it has exerted and still exerts an influence, unrivalled linguistically and geographically by a Semitic, and for that matter by any language.

Not in Arabia, not in Athens, not even in Rome did Europe seek and find models in the most formative years of her literary development. But the literature of the petty state of Palestine became the guide and the ideal. If albeit the medium was Latin, the original of that Latin was Hebrew.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Sir Frederic Kenyon) regretted that his place was not occupied by some Hebrew scholar who would have been able to discuss Dr. Martin's paper with adequate knowledge. For the ordinary English reader of the Bible the differences in Hebrew style and language in different books were disguised by the uniform

quality of the Authorised Version. The high literary quality of the A.V. had been of immeasurable advantage to the English-speaking nations, and had greatly contributed towards making Great Britain a Bible-reading country—a character now in serious danger. But the English reader would like to know how far the excellencies which he feels in the literary style of Isaiah and Job, for instance, truly reflected qualities in the original Hebrew.

He was unable to comment on Dr. Martin's paper, but on behalf of the meeting he desired to express their thanks for the instruction conveyed in it.

Group-Captain WISEMAN said : Dr. Martin's paper is that of an accomplished scholar. It contains suggestions which merit the attention of Old Testament scholars.

That the literature of the Old Testament has the quality of genius no one can reasonably doubt. There is, however, a difference of opinion as to the essential nature of that genius. I take it that Dr. Martin assigns it firstly to the language employed, then to the writers, and by no mean excludes a third answer. I suggest that while the language and the personality of the writers have contributed much to the genius of the Old Testament that which has contributed most, are the ideas and message that these men had to express. This is not to underrate the ability of the writers, as for instance in the superb hopefulness of Isaiah or the refined melancholy of Jeremiah. To-day, few imagine that the inspiration of the Old Testament necessitated the obliteration of the individuality of the writers. In moving men of old to write, the Spirit of God used the abilities these men possessed. Neither can we doubt that the Hebrew language was an instrument peculiarly suited for their purpose ; Dr. Martin's paper is a most valuable illustration of this. But neither the genius of the writers nor the language nor both combined could, I suggest, possibly produce the result we find in the Old Testament. There were probably men of greater literary ability who lived during the long period covered by this literature, and, as Dr. Martin has so well pointed out, Hebrew in itself is not an outstanding literary language. The essential nature of this genius must therefore be sought in something other than the writers and the language. Coleridge said that when words become peculiarly beautiful or sublime the thought which they express will be found

to be deep and original. I suggest that the depth and originality of the thought creates the essential genius of the Old Testament.

From a literary point of view, one of the outstanding elements of this genius is a parallelism in which the Hebrews repeated in the second line in somewhat similar words the thought which had been expressed in the first line. Psalm 8, vv. 3-6 is an illustration of this.

When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained ;

What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ?

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all things under his feet.

Sometimes the reverse idea is expressed in the second line as in Proverbs 10, vv. 1-3.

A wise son maketh a glad father : but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing : but righteousness delivereth from death.

The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish : but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

There is a swing like a pendulum, an ebb and flow in thought like a wave. The poetic element of the Old Testament is in the metre, not in the rhyme as it is in Greek and Latin literature. Lines commencing with each of the letters of the alphabet are not infrequent as may be seen in Psalms 25, 34, 91, 92, 145, and eight fold in Psalm 119.

In passing it is worth noticing that modern physiological science has attested the use of the kidneys (see page 200) as having a connection with the emotions. The adrenal gland on the kidneys constricts certain blood vessels and is the cause of paleness during some emotions. It is the gland associated with indignation, fear and fright.

The genius of the Old Testament writing is never that of mere embroidery or prettiness of words, it is to be found in its elevated thought. It is the *theme* that creates the essential genius of these

writings. These Hebrew writers were always conscious of God, and they wrote about God's revelation of Himself to man.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Professor EDWARD ROBERTSON wrote : Dr. Martin's paper is full of interest and stimulates thought on the nature of the Hebrew language. It is a very worthy contribution to a full understanding of the subject. If I venture to comment on a point or two it is with no desire to detract from it, but must be taken rather as an earnest of the interest it awakens.

I do not feel quite sure that Dr. Martin has phrased the title of his paper rigidly enough to cover its implications. The paper is concerned more with the genius of the Hebrew mind in the use of a language, far from adequate for its full expression, than with the genius of the language *quâ* language. There is much to admire in the Hebrew language, but it must be admitted that it has serious defects. Amongst these are its defective time-sense, shown in the limitation of tenses to two, the limited number of adjectives, the inadequate stock of particles. Whilst the overworking of the conjunction (*waw*) may give to Hebrew an old-world dignity of phrasing, the dignity is offset by the lack of precision in thought expression. The consequent ambiguities in interpretation are often irritating, and are sometimes serious.

There is one other point. Dr. Martin draws attention to Hebrew as an example of a language losing its case endings, and cites Persian and English as other instances. In both the latter the imposition of a foreign tongue is suggested as a possible explanation, hinting at a similar explanation for Hebrew. This seems to me most likely. The belief is gaining ground that the Hebrews were an Armenoid people and Hebrew was probably the result of their impact on Semitic-speaking Canaan. Hebrew gives the impression that it was far developed as a spoken language before it was employed as a literary. An analogous case would be if classical Arabic literature had not been, and modern colloquial Arabic was suddenly called on to become, the language of literature.

Mr. E. B. W. CHAPPELOW, F.R.A.S., F.R.S.A., wrote : Having no claims whatever to Hebrew scholarship, I cannot comment on

Dr. Martin's paper beyond saying how much it interested me. All I can do is to suggest a possible line of enquiry which those interested may pursue, and that is the similarity in style and in some cases in diction between the Biblical record and the historical inscriptions of the great Kings of Assyria.

Unfortunately, the war situation has largely divorced me from my books, so that I can only quote a very few examples and some of those only from memory, but those who desire to pursue the matter further will find ample material in Luckenbill's "Annals of the Kings of Assyria" and Leroy Waterman's "Assyrian Royal Letters," an annotated transliteration and translation of Harper's great edition of Babylonian Letters, both of which should be obtainable from Dr. Williams' Library or through any local Public Library from the Central Library for Students. Waterman's volumes will furnish evidence from Babylonian and Assyrian proper names and Luckenbill's from architectural and military phrases.

Thus to parallel the Biblical account of the Tower of Babel, which is now known to be the Zikkurat or stage-tower, E-temen-an-ki, "The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth," of Ê-Sagila, the great temple of Bêl-Marduk at Babylon, which Herodotus described, Tiglathpileser I. (c. B.C. 1110) in the Prism Inscription, Col. VII, in describing his restoration of the Anu-Adad temple at Aššur says that he "reared its temple towers to heaven." Sennacherib, describing his work at Nineveh, says that he erected "a palace of ivory" (*ekal šin piri* lit "a palace of elephant tooth"), coinciding exactly with the "ivory palaces" of Scripture. This does not imply a palace constructed in ivory but one adorned with carved ivory plaques, such as Layard found at Nineveh, and such as have since been discovered in the ruins of Ahab's palace at Samaria.

"Thou shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel" is exactly paralleled by the Assyrian kings who say that they "broke (so and so) in pieces like a potter's vessel." "Smote with the sword" is the common Assyrian phrase, *ina kakki ušamkit*, "with my sword (lit. "weapon") I laid (so and so) low," often followed by *ultu âlu* or *mâtu X ana âlu* or *mâtu Y*, i.e. "from the city or land of X even unto the city or land of Y," (cf. "from Dan to Beersheba").

The kings also invariably "go up" to a hostile city, which is understandable from the fact that the "fenced" or "strong cities"

(*alāni dannāti*) were on a natural eminence or artificial fortified mound or at least the citadels, which were all that mattered, were. The pastoral simile also appears. Thus Sargon states (campaign of 720 B.C.) that Šabi, Biblical So, King of Egypt, or general of Pharaoh, fled into the desert "like a shepherd whose sheep have been taken."

Finally there is the oriental custom of tearing the clothes under the stress of great emotion. Thus Esarhaddon in the 1927 Prism says that when he heard of the evil doings of his brothers (the war for the succession in Nineveh after Sennacherib's murder), "'Alas,' I cried, 'and my princely robe I tore.'"

I have only, for the reasons stated above, been able to throw out a few suggestions and point out the way to a promising field of enquiry.

Rev. Principal H. S. CURR wrote: Dr. Martin is to be congratulated on his exposition of a subject which presupposes a measure of specialised knowledge. To one who is totally unacquainted with Hebrew the points which he makes must be quite intelligible, although some degree of familiarity with that language would invest them with a greater range of meaning and significance. I am sure that every reader of the paper will be impressed with the unique character of the tongue which is associated with the name of a unique people.

The greatness of Hebrew lies in the fact that it is the supreme vehicle for the expressions of religious experience. Greek may be more suitable for religious theory as its use in the New Testament proves, but there is only one vehicle of expression in which the Psalter could have been written and that was Hebrew. Languages have their peculiar genius. To illustrate the point from the three used for the inscription on Our Saviour's Cross, Greek is the finest instrument for the conveyance of abstract thought. Latin is supreme in the realm of law and government, while Hebrew, as has just been observed, is pre-eminently the mother-tongue of religion. In that connection, it is of interest to recall that Our Lord spoke and taught in Aramaic, as the brief quotations in the Four Gospels prove (Mark 5, 41; 7, 34). As a literary medium, Aramaic is far inferior to Hebrew, and yet Our Lord did not disdain to use it. He is always doing His perfect work with imperfect instruments, and providing treasures in earthen vessels.

There is one characteristic of Hebrew which is always worthy of special mention. I refer to the fact that it is predominantly a language of verbs. The verb is the basis of its vocabulary. As the paper reminds us, the Hebrew verb is rich in modifications whereby different shades of meaning can be conveyed. That statement can easily be tested by opening the Old Testament at random, even in the English Versions, and reading a few verses with this thought in mind. The attention will at once be arrested by the abundance of verbs, and the absence of adjectives. That harmonizes well with the practical genius of the Jew. He is first and foremost a man who does things himself, and gets them done, as his success in business proves. Dr. Martin quotes the Oriental proverb "Speak, and you are," and it is exemplified by the Hebrew tongue, the language of a nation who have ever excelled rather as doers than thinkers, or dreamers.

A brief reference may be made to the amazing conciseness of Hebrew, as a comparison of Psalm 119, or the Book of Proverbs in the original with the English rendering, will show. What we need a dozen words to express in English, Hebrew can convey in half that number.

Dr. J. B. ANDERSON wrote: The author of this paper makes it certain that he regards the first 23 verses of the book, of which Moses was amanuensis (Ezra vii, 6), as romance or fiction. I understand Moses to have had a similar disbelief in them—when Abraham was told to slay his only son, he was interrupted in the very act of doing so. For, as stated in Hebrews xi, 19, "he calculated that God could raise him out of the dead," even though God had not specifically said he would do so. Moses took no similar risk, when ordered to speak to the rock. Yet he was specifically informed that by doing so he would bring water out of the rock. Num. xx, 8—see verse 12.

I understand I Samuel xi, 9, to have been inserted for the definite purpose of making it certain, that the change by the people, of one word for another, was of human, not divine origin.

The Hebrew vowel points I have no use for. Because I incline to the belief, that up to the obliteration of the Temple, that language was there pronounced as it was by Abraham in his youth; a pronunciation now known. But if there was a change, that change must have been of human origin. (See King's work on the Assyrian Cuneiform language.)