

ARTICLE V.

RELATIONS OF THE ARYAN AND SEMITIC LANGUAGES.

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I.—HISTORY AND PRESENT STATE OF THE INQUIRY.

OF the many unsolved problems that lie perpetually in the way of the student of language, there are two which are specially beguiling and distracting on account of their intrinsic interest and profound obscurity. The questions as to the original *source* of language itself, and as to the original *relations* of the various families of speech, have assumed this prominence in the more speculative regions of the science, because the opinions of leading theorists have been so conflicting, and because the methods of proof in each case are so various and uncertain. Each of these questions opens up a field of inquiry practically unlimited; and it is safe to say that, however firmly certain theories or principles may be maintained by the representatives of different schools, we have not yet seen the beginning of the end in the effort to reach scientific certainty upon the basis of established facts. Under these conditions, it is not to be wondered at that extravagant notions have been advanced during the whole history of the investigation. It is, however, natural to suppose that this tendency would be manifested the more strongly in the consideration of the former of the two problems; because when the conditions of the earliest expression of human thought or feeling are brought before the mind, the subject is seen to be so exceedingly complex and obscure—extending at once into the regions of philology, psychology, and physiology, with all their delicate and mysterious correlations—that a certain measure of ingenious theorizing, in default of scientific demonstration, would seem to have a right to indulgence, at least, if not to encourage-

ment. When, however, we regard language not in its nature, but in its manifestations, not in its origin, but in its development, we are shut up almost entirely to a single region of observation, whose limits are well-defined, though its phenomena are perplexing; and here there can be no justification for the exercise of fancy, where it is not called upon simply to furnish illustrations, but intrudes to present the world with a theory or a system. In this investigation we have presented to us a certain number of languages, differing to a greater or less degree in their verbal forms and in their modes of expression; and the object of inquiry is to determine their relations by a comparison of their respective idioms of grammar and vocabulary. This, we mean to say, is the only method whose principles are in accord with the science of language, and whose well-grounded conclusions will be fearlessly accepted by scholars of every sect or party. Side-light may indeed be thrown upon the question through the study of comparative religion, and opinions as to the original identity or multiplicity of languages may be based upon convictions with regard to the original unity or diversity of the race; but these external sources of evidence are either too remote or too indirect in their bearing to satisfy all classes of investigators; while even those who appeal to scripture or to the science of anthropology for the general solution of the question, are as much interested as any in the result of those gradual philological processes by which they admit that its clearest demonstration must be achieved.

But even in this legitimate and restricted sphere, where *a priori* reasoning and philosophical speculation have no proper place, fancy has had greater sway than fact. While this is specially true of the attempts that have been made to exhibit the fundamental relations of all, or of many divergent, languages, it is also manifest in the comparative treatment of the two great inflectional families, the Semitic and the Indo-European. Even since the establishment of comparative philology as a science, and even among men of extensive linguistic knowledge, the abounding temptations to forsake the slow and tedious

methods of rigid comparison have often prevailed. In the course of the present Essay, it will be necessary to take a rapid survey of the various theories that have been propounded as to the relations between these two dominant families, and of the various kinds of evidence by which they are supported; and it will be instructive, as well as interesting, to note the errors of fact and inference into which so many students have been led through hasty examination and the seductive influence of fanciful analogies. Those of us, moreover, who believe in the primal identity of all forms of human speech, would do well to guard against the danger of bringing our dogma into disrepute among more sceptical thinkers by adducing in its defence evidence at all suspicious or easily disproved. We must not forget that the attempt to demonstrate by a strict examination and comparison of all families of language, that they have proceeded from a common source, is an immense, possibly a vain, undertaking. But if entered upon at all, it must be begun by investigating, as profoundly and justly as possible, the relations of those idioms that are best understood and have the greatest mutual resemblance. When an affinity is once established, then, and only then, will the first sure step be taken towards the solution of the wider and final question. Hence the need of soberness and caution in every stage of the inquiry.

Our more immediate concern, however, is with the narrower and more manageable problem, the relations of those two great families of speech that have been most highly developed and cultivated, and have apparently preserved in manifold forms much of their original stock of idioms, and are therefore most amenable to the processes of analysis and comparison. In approaching this question, it will be proper first to glance at some of the many attempts that have been made at its solution, and to examine the various theories that have been propounded with regard to it. This will be our object in the present introductory Article.

Before the establishment of the science of language, it was impossible that any intelligent view of the subject could

be reached. Even the very conditions of the investigation could not be apprehended. Theories the most vague and unsupported were held as to the relations of the various dialects of human speech. Previously to the close of the last century, the comparative treatment of languages was usually only a sort of philological alchemy, in which Hebrew roots played the part of the philosopher's stone. Instead of regarding the several idioms of the world as developed from decayed and germinal forms, one language, accessible only in the literary and cultivated periods of its history, was venerated as the common source of all the rest, and languages the most diverse in structure and in typical character were believed to have been developed naturally and gradually from one of the least flexible and versatile of all forms of speech. This notion was based upon the persuasion that the oldest records of the race must have been composed in the earliest language, and that the most sacred of all tongues in its history and varied associations must have been the form of speech bestowed upon man at his creation by the gift of his Creator. Originating among the teachers of the synagogue, we know not how early, it was embraced by the Fathers of the Christian church,¹ and held almost undisputed sway until the comparison of languages became a subject of sober inquiry.² During the Middle Ages, when the rabbins engrossed the study of the sacred languages, and continued to illustrate the congenial theory of the antiquity and originality of the Hebrew tongue, there was not the interest or the knowledge in the Christian church that would have been necessary for its intelligent criticism. In the period between the revival of learning and the development of the science of comparative philology, there was, indeed, occasional objection to this venerable doctrine; but it was based rather

¹ Gregory of Nyssa, however, surmised that the Hebrew was one of the languages that arose out of the confusion at Babel. *Orat. contra Eunom.*, xii. Quoted by Franz Delitzsch, *Jesurun*, p. 48.

² Theodoret, Philo Judæus, and some of the rabbins regarded the Aramaic as the more ancient idiom. This, however, is only a sort of collateral theory. Theodoret supposed that the Hebrew was a special divine revelation to Moses.

upon its general improbability, than upon definite scientific evidence. During this period, also, a modification of the old opinion grew into some favor; according to which the Hebrew was held to be, if not the source of all other languages, at least the most ancient, and the one which preserved with the least degree of change the original stock of roots, and therefore the standard with which the verbal forms of all other tongues should be directly compared. The doctrine, in the one or the other of its general forms, was held very tenaciously; and, etymology being rather an art than a science, or rather an art founded upon no science, the task of comparison and assimilation was a very simple affair. For, as the expounders of the theory could not be refuted by an appeal to established laws of relationship between the various forms of speech, they were free to cite at pleasure mere coincidences and fanciful analogies as proofs of true affinity, and thus to vindicate the supposed sacred prerogatives of the Hebrew tongue; being opposed only by the smiles of an incredulous few, which they could afford to ignore, as having the support of nearly all who were interested in the subject. This dogma, so long and widely and firmly held, has now no more than a historical significance, and needs no labored or formal disproof. It is sufficient to remark that the Hebrew has no claim to consideration, in this connection, above its Semitic sisters or reputed Indo-European cousins, and that its long ascendancy has been due, under the conditions of erroneous linguistic principles, simply to its high antiquity and the circumstance that it is the best known and the most highly venerated of its ancient family, by reason of its sacred associations. The Highlander and the Welshman, who affirm that their respective dialects have also a claim to be considered the primitive languages, have much of the same kind of evidence to adduce as that which has always been advanced in behalf of the Hebrew; and they, in their turn, might be met by a strong array of striking analogies, presented with equal confidence, as proof that the idiom of the Sandwich Islanders should not be left out of sight in any candid examination of the question.

It will perhaps be proper to illustrate the methods of this system of comparison by a few instances selected from the works of writers in recent times, and even in the present century. They will forcibly suggest the great advance made in linguistic science within the last sixty or seventy years, and may also serve as a warning to any who may still insist on a radical affinity between verbal forms on the evidence of mere external resemblance.

We find the acute and learned Moses Mendelssohn¹ among the later serious advocates of the doctrine that the Hebrew is the parent of all other idioms. Matthias Norberg,² a respected scholar of the early part of this century, after close scrutiny, detected in the Greek language the inherited lineaments of the same venerable and prolific parent. According to him, ἔθνος arose from נַצ, through the insertion of θ; λόγ(ος) was a transposition of לִיָּק; μυθέω, a slight modification of לִשָּׁק. But the most frank and hearty exposition of the theory that we have seen is a little book by the Rev. Alexander Pirie,³ a man of considerable linguistic attainments, but of still greater ingenuity. We cite some of his numerous derivations. He supposes that our word *bog* comes from בּוֹחַ,⁴ as abounding with springs; that *boggle* (*bogle*) is connected with בּוֹחַל, as inspiring terror; and that *tar* is derived from תָּאָר, because it is so much used for marking sheeps, sacks, etc. From רָגַם he would deduce the Latin *rego*, because stoning was an exercise of the supreme authority as a judicial punishment. In his opinion, גָּמַל, "to retribute," gave rise among the Hebrews to the word *camel*, on account of the revengeful disposition of that animal.⁵

¹ In prolegomena to his edition of the Pentateuch, cited by Delitzsch, Jesurun, p. 46.

² Opuscula, ii. Dissert. xv., xvi.

³ A Dissertation on the Hebrew Roots, intended to point out their extensive influence on all known languages. Edinburgh, 1807.

⁴ The use of the Hebrew without the points doubtless gave such writers an opportunity to indulge in the greater liberties. They thus did not fail to verify Voltaire's well-known definition of Etymology as a science in which vowels counted nothing, and consonants very little.

⁵ This derivation, however, it should be remarked, was once quite common.

He finds in נָנ the origin of our word *knave*, which "at present is used in a bad sense, the same in which the Hebrews used it." Comparing Solomon's description of his spouse as "a garden inclosed," he imagines that נָן includes the idea of beauty, which is guarded with peculiar care, and that hence arises the Greek γυνή; while "the cognate Latin *genita*, a daughter, is plainly the source of our *Janet*." רִין or רִין, in his view, gave birth to a numerous progeny. δέον, what is just, and δεινός, skilled (in judging), do not surprise us very much; but we are further asked to accept δίνη, whirlpool, or whirlwind, "from the idea of vehemence in pleading." And, as the judgment-seats of antiquity were often groves, δένδρον is added to the family, which is next increased by the accession of our English *den*, because oracular judgments were frequently delivered from caverns. For a similar reason any hollow vessel came to be called a *tun*, "the *d* being changed into *t*, as usual." As a judge held a distinguished station, the Spanish *Don* is next admitted to the domestic circle; and since רִין also means to dispute, and "as people in angry dispute are still said to be teathy, or to show their teeth," it was thought inhospitable to leave the Latin *dens* chattering outside in the cold. גָּזַח, with other meanings, has the sense of carrying away captive. "Now the * prefixed forms a noun; before ג it sounds *ang*, hence the Teutonic *angel*, with its cognates." The confusion of tongues at Babel arose, he says, from a defect of labial utterance. When one would have said *Bel* (בַּעַל), he said *Babel*. Hence also our word *babble*: He is very sparing of onomatopoeic affinities; but he would probably concede to that class of analogies the relation he holds to exist between the Hebrew בַּבְּלַי and the Irish *och hone*!

These instances, though perhaps more whimsical, are not more unreasonable, than many of the combinations that have long been held, and are still to be met with in current literature. We find a writer so recent and influential as the late Albert Barnes stating, in his popular commentary on Job, that our word *evil* comes from the Hebrew אָוִיל. It

is surely necessary, in view of such facts, that the general principles of the science of language should be made an essential part of a liberal education, at least to such an extent that one will not need to be a specialist to be able to detect and disprove such inaccuracies as these.

But we must now consider the more safe and sober attempts that have been made to compare the two great families before us. The study of the Sanskrit, which afforded a clew to the mazes of the varied forms of Indo-European speech, was also the occasion of a more just appreciation of the conditions of the problem we are considering. In that ancient language, so perfect and intelligible in structure, large numbers of Aryan words were detected in their most elementary accessible form, revealing to the acute and delicate perception of such men as W. von Humboldt, Grimm, and Bopp the laws which determined their modification into other varieties of expression. Science having thus vindicated her claim to this vast province of speech, it was felt that other districts — nay, the whole realm of human language — must also be subject to her of right. Henceforth the reign of fancy and caprice in these affairs was at an end; and their intrusions would always be unwelcome to the new *régime*, though they could not always be repelled. In the treatment of the relations between the two great families of speech, now clearly established and defined, as well as between the several languages in each, it was felt that laws regulating the changes of form must be sought and assumed to exist, and hence also that the utmost caution must be used in the comparison. This, we mean to say, was the tendency of the method of inquiry, and the professed aim of the several investigators. Some, however, while recognizing the necessity of this principle, have failed, unconsciously, to act upon it, being frequently led to violent and capricious assumptions through their eagerness to attain the final theory of solution. Others, again, influenced either by dogmatic prejudices or by a conservative temper, have refused to indulge in any speculations upon the subject, or go so far as to assert

that the languages themselves, as well as the races they typically represent, can never be proved to have been originally identical.

With regard to the earliest portions of the present period, we have chiefly to remark a tendency to bring Semitic words into close connection with the widely-related and hospitable Sanskrit. Adelung's *Mithridates*, the monumental boundary-mark between the old and the new regions of philological research, holds also a certain dividing-place in the history of the present question. Its learned author was the first to compare, to any extent, the Sanskrit with the Semitic vocabulary. As to his method, however, he is to be placed wholly within the old unscientific period. Not being himself a Sanskrit scholar, he was the more inclined to the prevalent error of comparing full-grown words, and not roots, or even stems, in the languages discussed. He connects, for example, the Sanskrit *ādima*, first, with the Hebrew עֵרָא.

Some of the greatest pioneers of philological science, also, with all their sagacity and penetration, were carried beyond the limits of probability in their theories, or rather conjectures, upon this subject. Being not, in general, Semitic scholars, and their survey being necessarily rapid and superficial, their analysis was not sufficiently profound to deter them from assuming close relations to exist between forms which had only a casual and external resemblance. The tendency to assimilate the two idioms, excited by the magnificent results of the comparison of the several Aryan languages, may be inferred from the fact that even W. von Humboldt accepted a multitude of the most superficial combinations as proving an essential affinity between the forms compared. Bopp, also, attempted to establish a number of analogies which must be called forced and arbitrary; though that great philologist was unwilling to guarantee the absolute correctness of all his conclusions on this subject.

As we are now approaching the latest period of the investigation, and shall have to speak of the comparative value of theories largely influential at the present time, we may

remark, by the way, that, other things being equal, a philologist who has made a special study of the Semitic languages is likely to have a juster view of this particular question than one who is only at home in the languages of the Aryan family. The reason is obvious. The science of comparative philology has been founded chiefly upon the study of the Indo-European tongues, and its principles cannot be well understood without an acquaintance with the idioms of the leading members of that family. These attainments in Aryan scholars are usually accompanied by only a general notion of the phenomena of the Semitic group; while philologists who are specialists in the latter department are necessarily familiar with the genius of both families, and can therefore gain a more just conception of their original conditions and possible affinities. This circumstance, together with the fact that many of the most eminent students have not sought to elaborate any special theory of the problem before us, but have confined themselves to general statements, will justify us in giving only a bare mention to the names of some of the greatest lights of linguistic science. We therefore only remark, in passing, that, with Bopp and Humboldt, whose relations to the question we have already alluded to, many scholars, such as Lassen, Burnouf, Pott, Steinthal, Bunsen, and Max Müller, have favored, with greater or less strength of conviction, the opinion that both families have sprung from a common idiom containing a stock of the most necessary expressions, which were as yet undeveloped, through the rise of grammatical distinctions, into those divergent and complex systems which have taken its place and remained fixed in typical character through all their history. This proposition is a general statement of what is perhaps the preponderating sentiment of modern philologists. As its discussion would open up the whole broad question of the relations of the two families of language, we shall have necessarily to consider it in a subsequent portion of our Essay. In this retrospect of the history of opinion we can, of course, only criticise special theories.

Among those who have not been specially Semitic students, Lepsius, Bunsen, and Benfey should be mentioned as representatives of a cognate theory deserving of attention. These illustrious scholars have claimed for the Coptic or ancient Egyptian language, which has been with them a favorite study, an intermediate position between the two families, and have attempted to show that its peculiarities reconcile the estranged elements of the primitive Aryo-Semitic speech. They have discovered what they consider organic analogies between the Coptic and the primitive Indo-European vocabulary; while in the important grammatical elements of the conjugational systems there is an undeniable resemblance between the Coptic and the Semitic languages; the pronouns and the numerals being also similar in their idioms. This theory has been discussed unfavorably by Renan,¹ as well as by others, who will not concede the correctness of even the more powerfully defended of the propositions, that there is an affinity between certain of the African and the Semitic languages. We are not competent to pass an opinion on the merits of this controversy upon an examination of the ancient Egyptian and other North-African dialects; and we can only judge of them from the nature and extent of the evidence offered. The theory of Renan is, that the various analogous expressions were simply borrowed by the cruder Coptic from the more highly organized Semitic. This, as an individual instance of contact between strange tribes, might be argued with some plausibility, as the Egyptian idiom seems strangely to have been partly monosyllabic and partly inflectional in its character. But (it is alleged) similar analogies are found to pervade the whole group of North-African dialects; and, in view of this evidence, the presumption of a mere external resemblance between the so-called families becomes much less probable. Further, it might be conceded that many significant terms may have

¹ *Histoire générale des langues Sémitiques*. 4^{me} édition. Paris, 1863. pp. 80 ff., 456 f. Compare *Mémoire de l'Institut de l'Égypte*, pp. 24 ff., as cited by the same author.

been borrowed by the Coptic from the richer Semitic vocabulary; but when it is shown that grammatical phenomena, such as methods of conjugation and syntactical peculiarities, are strikingly alike in both forms of speech, the theory of a mere external augmentation of the poorer idiom is seen to be less suitable to the conditions. With regard, then, to the question of the relations between the Semitic dialects and the Coptic, there seems to us, from the nature of the evidence furnished, to be some reason to believe that the resemblances are not merely external—that they can hardly be due to the contact of the races in early times, and still less to any assumed analogies of their intellectual constitution.

After the settlement of this question, it would still remain to be decided how nearly the Coptic is related to the Aryan tongues. To the consideration of this branch of the inquiry should be directed the main efforts of those who are interested in the general problem of linguistic affinities, and have at the same time given special attention to the little-known group of North-African dialects. Success in such an enterprise is, however, less certainly to be counted on than that which has apparently attended the attempt to compare the Semitic and African languages; for it depends upon the analysis and criticism of mere verbal resemblances. The grammar of a language being the surest token of its genius or special character, grammatical analogy between two forms of speech, when radical and undeniable, is a certain evidence of organic affinity. Hence the confidence with which many profound philologists maintain that a close relationship exists between the two families last named. But the task of comparing the Indo-European and African families is confessedly unaided by the presence of such conditions, in this respect resembling our problem of the connection between the Indo-European and the Semitic idioms. It is burdened, too, with this additional disadvantage, that, as the African dialects have not received so wide a literary cultivation as the Semitic, their vocabularies have become marked by greater variations, and therefore afford a more precarious basis of comparison.

The investigation, however, has not been without significance. The detection of so many points of analogy between these three groups of languages has rendered less probable than ever the theory that they are connected merely by a fortuitous and external similarity. Encouragement has also been afforded to those who believe that all languages, as well as all races, have descended from one common stock; while their materials for illustration in these preliminary discussions have been greatly amplified.

If, now, it could be proved that the Coptic is the reconciling bond between the Indo-European and Semitic languages, it would follow, from what has been said as to the apparent relations of the several groups, that the Aryans parted first, and very early, from the original stock; and that the Semites and Hamites, having remained long enough together for their common speech to acquire the rudiments of a grammar, separated also in their turn; the language of the former developing into a complete inflectional system, as did that of their Aryan brethren, and that of the latter advancing but little from its primitive simplicity. This would imply that the later pre-historic relations of the races were analogous to those of historic times.

The opinions of Gesenius as to the problem before us are naturally entitled to the very highest consideration. With his unsurpassed judgment and penetration as a student of verbal forms, both in their original force and in their historical usage, he would be likely to deal most successfully with this question in those of its aspects which require the greatest caution and delicacy of treatment. The wide and lasting influence, also, exercised by him, gives to his views peculiar significance. He paid, moreover, considerable attention to the subject, as the most superficial glance at his lexicographical works can satisfy us. The attitude which he maintained towards the problem, however, was in general one of neutrality. True to the empirical principles of his philosophy of language, he refrained from generalizing, without the most broad and careful induction and the most

certain progress towards fixed underlying principles of unity. It is true that both in his *Manual-Lexicon* and in his *Thesaurus* he has instituted a vast number of verbal comparisons with Indo-European forms, which have helped more than all else written upon the subject to bring the question before the minds of ordinary students, and to affect their opinions regarding it. But he refrained from presenting dogmatically a theory of these analogies, being inclined to believe, until further light should be thrown upon the problem, that they were the result either of an early contact of the races leading to an exchange of vocables, or of onomatopoeia, or of mere accident. It should be remembered, however, that his sentiments on this subject were formed before modern science had reached those of its grandest conclusions which might well justify still broader assumptions. Yet he adopted and amply illustrated a theory whose establishment would tend towards the solution of the problem — the doctrine, namely, that the triliteral Semitic stems were reducible to significant and fundamental biliteral roots contained in the first two consonants; the last letter exerting the special modifying influence that determines the meaning of the word. In large numbers of these ultimate roots he discovered close correspondences with Indo-European forms, which, however, he declined to accept as conclusive proof of internal relationship.

We come now to consider the opinions of two authors whose opinions have been so fully elaborated as to entitle them to be considered the founders of a special school¹ of Semitic philology. We mean Julius Fuerst² and Franz

¹ The "Analytico-historical," so-called, because, on the one hand, according to its principles, the various elements of language and of individual words are held to be endowed with inherent significance which is to be determined by a profound analysis, and because, on the other hand, they call to the aid of their investigations a body of Jewish tradition, such as the Targums, the Talmud, the *Masora*, and the later Rabbinical writings. The name serves to distinguish their system from the so-called "empirical" school of Gesenius, and the "critical" or philosophical school of Ewald. These terms have now little significance, as they serve to designate tendencies or principles rather than well-defined sects or parties.

² *Lehrgebäude der aramäischen Idiome mit Bezug auf die indo-germanischen*

Delitzsch,¹ theorists whose vast learning and patient industry it is impossible not to admire, but whose philological system it is equally impossible to accept. In it the process of verbal analysis for the purposes of comparison with analogous forms is carried to its greatest extreme. The chief monuments of this system are the *Jesurun* of Delitzsch and the *Woerterbuch* of Fuerst; the former an exposition and defence of its principles; the latter, the repository of its practical results. Their leading positions may be summarized as follows: (1) That all languages have been developed from one common stock of elements, all of which, in every part of speech and in every word, have a significance, definite and divinely imparted. (2) That this innate idea is to be educes through a minute analysis of each form, and the widest comparison with the forms of other dialects of the language of mankind. (3) That the Sanskrit is the master-key to unlock the secrets of all Aryo-Semitic speech, there having been originally one "Sanskrito-Semitic" idiom, from which proceeded six families of speech — the Sanskrit, the Medo-Persian, Semitic, Graeco-Latin, Germanic, and Slavonic. They thus annul the ordinary classification, and make all the Semitic dialects together a sister idiom to each member of the great Aryan division. (4) That, accordingly, the chief resort for purposes of comparison is the Sanskrit, while the other related languages should also be consulted as supplementary and illustrative. (5) That all Semitic trilateral forms can be traced to original bilaterals, parallel to the most numerous class of Sanskrit roots, and being the significant element in each form, as containing the original and typical idea. (6) That the remaining portion, the determinative modifying element, consists of a suffix, or, far more frequently, a prefix, corresponding in meaning, and as nearly as possible in form, to the Sanskrit prepositions. In the elucidation of this system they have subjected a vast number of forms to examination,

Sprachen. Leipzig, 1835. *Librorum Sacrorum Concordantiae*. Leipzig, 1840. *Hebräisches und chaldäisches Woerterbuch*. Leipzig, 1851-57.

¹ *Jesurun*; sive *Isagoge in grammaticam et lexicographiam linguae Hebraicae*, contra G. Gesenium et H. Ewaldum. Grimmae, 1838.

and have illustrated their conclusions by citations from numerous authors, chiefly of the rabbinical school, the products of whose whimsical fancy they elevate to the dignity of scientific demonstration. The leading objection which Renan¹ makes to the system, in alleging the apparent permanence and inviolability of the Semitic roots, we do not think conclusive; because it merely negatives the question at issue, namely, whether these trilateral forms are really ultimate roots, ignoring all the evidence that led such acute and judicious philologists as Gesenius and Hupfeld² to favor the biliteral theory. This question, whose special consideration we must remit to a subsequent portion of our Essay, should not thus be set down as finally settled. The methods, however, on which any special theory of this question is sustained are more easily criticised. On this view, it must be confessed that the whole system is plainly untenable, and that most of the objections of the scholar just named, and of other critics, are well-founded. Indeed, it is clear at first sight that the theory is altogether too artificial and mechanical for the management of such subtle and delicate things as language and its elements. On more minute examination, it appears that the combinations attempted between the assumed roots and those of the so-called sister-tongues are, as a rule, exceedingly forced and unnatural, as may be seen in many consecutive instances found at random in the symbolical books of these philological sectaries. We cite, for example the following comparisons: ³ קָרַח with the Sanskrit *'srā* and *cremare*; קָרַח with *μένειν* and *manere*; קָרַח with *pad* and *πάτεω*. The prepositional additions, also, to the biliteral roots, which are supposed to determine the special modifications of the radical idea, do not preserve any certain and

¹ *Histoire générale*, p. 450. The theory is also rather unfavorably criticised by Pott in the Article *Indogermanischer Sprachstamm*, in Ersch and Gruber's *Encyclopædie*. A letter of partial approval was written by Eugene Burnouf to M. Delitzsch. It is published with the preface to Fuerst's *Concordantiae*.

² He advocated the doctrine of biliteral roots in his *De emendanda ratione lexicographiæ Semitiæ commentatio*. Marburg, 1827.

³ *Jesurun*, p. 177.

invariable meaning in the various instances cited as illustrations; each consonant adduced being apparently capable of an unlimited range of signification. These, as well as other obvious and radical defects in the system have precluded the possibility of its general acceptance, though its thorough-going doctrines and the eminence of its advocates have secured for it a good deal of attention. One result which we cannot but think unfortunate has followed from its publication, namely, that the theory of biliteral roots has met with less favor than it would probably have otherwise received by reason of the self-destructive arguments advanced in its behalf. It is one thing to illustrate the general probability of a doctrine, and another to defend it by insecure and hasty assumptions. A great philological discovery does not break upon the world at once and unprepared, but reaches its full revelation through gradual accessions of light, and by slow degrees. A sudden blaze of bewildering theories may well be distrusted as an *ignis fatuus*.¹

The theory of Ewald comes next under consideration. This distinguished scholar — unequalled in some respects among Semitic students, and perhaps among all his contemporaries — holds a somewhat similar position with regard to this question. After placing the ideas of Fuerst and Delitzsch entirely outside the pale of science, and condemning with the utmost severity the theories of Benfey and Lepsius with

¹ The advocacy by such profound and accomplished scholars, of a system so radical and precarious, is worthy of attention as illustrating the influence of early-formed ideas and pre-conceptions on the most vigorous minds. The theory, no doubt, largely owed its origin to the tincture of Rabbinical philosophy which these authors received through their Jewish education. Their philological doctrines are avowedly founded upon the notion that words and their ultimate constituents possess an inherent actuality and potency imparted by God simultaneously with the creation of the soul itself, with which they exist in mysterious correlation; and that it is the mission of true science to evoke this mysterious significance. The minute analysis they undertake of so many "Sanskrito-Semitic" roots is intended as a step in the progress of this enterprise. See Jesurun, pp. 34 and 43 ff. But what they took for science was only an extravagant philosophy. A similar kind of realism, almost cabalistic in its tendency, appears sometimes in the admirable exegetical writings of Delitzsch, and pervades his philosophical and theological works.

regard to the analogies of the Coptic and Semitic idioms, he himself devised a scheme of linguistic affinities more comprehensive and radical than either of theirs. Its methods of demonstration, however, are more cautious and scientific. Employing his special gift of insight into the nature and relations of grammatical principles, he has endeavored to prove by research into these phenomena in the Turanian, Indo-European, Semitic, and North-African families of speech that all of these are outgrowths of a common stock;¹ that the Indo-European represents best the primitive idiom; that from this the Turanian family separated first, followed by another offshoot, which again divided itself into the Semitic and the African. These relations are argued in the interest of the general doctrine which he holds of a radical connection between all languages. His present theory is defended by the citation of some striking analogies, in whose production his original and penetrating genius is signally displayed. As the doctrine is amenable to criticism on general philological principles, it has fallen under the judgment of Pott, the very Rhadamanthus of linguistic theorists, who has pronounced with apparent justice against its pretensions. Ewald achieved in this a splendid failure, by exaggerating the extent of the applicability of grammatical comparison in determining the original relations between any two inflectional languages — a prejudice natural to one of his favorite modes of thought and investigation.

Without arguing the question at present, it is sufficient to say that, while a prevailing grammatical analogy would be decisive of a common origin, the peculiarities of inflection and syntax in the two great families before us are so widely and profoundly

¹ The views of Ewald referred to were developed in two *Sprachwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen*, contributed to the *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Bde. ix. x. 1861, 1862, and afterwards published separately. They are summarized in his *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache des alten Bundes*. 8^{te} Ausgabe. Göttingen, 1870. pp. 26 ff. His nomenclature of the several families of speech is: Nordisch (Turanian, or Finno-Tartarian); Mittelländisch (Indo-European, or Indo-Germanic); Semitisch und Afrikanisch (Coptic, Berber, and other dialects).

divergent that the comparison of vocabularies seems the only available test of relationship. With regard to the special method of Ewald in this inquiry, it would appear to have only illustrated the natural presumption that there should be some points of agreement between the grammatical systems of the various forms of human speech. To many minds these resemblances alone are not sufficient to demonstrate the original identity of the families so compared. It could be claimed that they might be accounted for on the ground of the similar intellectual tendencies of the race. At any rate, it would be strange and out of harmony with the teachings of experience in philological studies, if the original unity of these widely-sundered groups of language could be proved upon the precarious evidence of a few grammatical coincidences, while the bond of union between vast multitudes of verbal forms which must then, *a fortiori*, be related, is pronounced to be still a mystery. The attempt to compare these families on the basis of an examination of their vocabularies, Ewald regarded as unpromising. He opposed, moreover, the theory that the triliteral Semitic stems could be reduced to more elementary biliteral roots.

Another eminent Semitic scholar, Ernest Renan,¹ attempts to prove that there is no radical connection between the two families, and, in strange contrast to the principles of Ewald, bases this opinion upon the essential *difference* between their respective grammatical systems. We shall hereafter have to traverse this and other arguments relating to the general question. At present it will suffice to state the general principles of Renan's position. He thinks that the grammatical features of a language furnish the proper basis of its classification. This is perfectly true; and it would be decisive in this controversy, if the question concerned the relations of the two families in their present state, and not as they were in earliest times. Now, as to any theory of "ante-grammatical affinity," he thinks it improbable, because

¹ He discusses the relations of the Semitic to other languages, especially the Indo-European, in his *Histoire générale*, already cited, pp. 444-505.

languages, so far as we know them, undergo no change of typical character; inflectional languages appearing in their organized form back to the earliest period, and monosyllabic idioms never becoming inflected. This, however, may not be so certain, when claimed for the primitive forms of speech. And Renan himself, in another part of his work on the Semitic languages¹ has remarked the progress made by the ancient Egyptian from the monosyllabic towards the inflectional stage. As to the resemblances between verbal forms in the two groups he admits their abundance and the naturalness of an interpretation in favor of the doctrine of an original affinity, but considers such an inference ill-founded, because no law of phonetic change has been established, and because many circumstances may have concurred to bring about such analogies — mere chance, onomatopoeia, or that mysterious adaptation of the name to the thing, achieved by the primitive races of the world through their lively, acute, and profound perceptions. It is to be remarked here, that his general ethnological prejudices may possibly have some influence in determining him to this conclusion. While admitting that there is a *quasi* unity of the race, intellectual and spiritual, he hesitates to accept the dogma of a material unity.² On philological grounds alone, however, he thinks it cannot be proved that the Aryans and the Semites had a common origin; while on examination of the various traditions of the two races, which have been held to evince a primitive unity, he finds that they also fail to bridge over the chasm of separation. Yet when he comes to consider the mental and spiritual analogies of the two divisions of mankind, he is impressed by a sense of their extent and variety, and concludes that, as both families constitute the fair-skinned, cultured, reflective, dominant tribes of men, they may perhaps have issued very early from a common home, and separated before their respective idioms were formulated out of their original speech.³ But, to be self-consis-

¹ *Histoire générale*, p. 87.² *Ibid.* p. 469.³ *Ibid.* pp. 492 f.

tent, he should reject the theory of any communication whatever between the races before the development of their varieties of expression, since, as we have seen, he maintains that no language undergoes change in essential character after its formation. He maintains, moreover, that if linguistic evidence is to be adduced it can tell in favor of the doctrine of primitive identity, only as the two idioms betray the impress of a certain analogy of intellectual operation, reposing, so to speak, upon the same psychology, in the categories of human speech.¹ Yet, however uncertain his position may be with regard to the fact of the early relations of the races, he is plainly opposed to the theory that their unity can be demonstrated through philological comparison.

Friedrich Delitzsch, son of the illustrious scholar before noticed, in an Essay² which we trust is only preliminary to further investigations, has also made a contribution towards the solution of the problem. He has brought to his task linguistic accomplishments of a high order, and betrays both acuteness and judgment in their use. He seems also to have the true conception of the method by which the solution is to be reached. He dissents rightly, as we think, from the doctrine of Renan, that the grammatical divergence between the two families is an impossible barrier to any attempt at their successful comparison, and holds that if affinities can be demonstrated from an examination of their respective vocabularies, their inflectional systems do not preclude an admission of their close relationship. In his search after roots suspected to be common to the two families, he accepts, as applying to both, the theory of the formation of composite forms from primordial elements through the addition or repetition of a letter or syllable, though he is unwilling to extend its application to all classes of the Semitic trilaterals. A large part of his Essay is devoted to an examination of Semitic stems containing weak or repeated letters, through

¹ See pp. 469 ff.

² Studien über indogermanisch-semitische Wurzelverwandschaft. Leipzig, 1873.

whose elimination he seeks to effect a combination with Indo-European roots having a similar phonetic constitution. In the general result we judge him to have been quite successful. When he comes to consider the Semitic stems of strong radicals, he still endeavors to establish numerous correspondences with Aryan forms, and that virtually on the same principle of comparison. For, though he states it to be "eine unbestreitbare Thatsache" that the strong Semitic stems are based upon triliteral roots,¹ yet he accepts as probable the opinion that, in very many cases at least, the elements of the words do not possess equal degrees of inherent significance; or, more definitely, that in such forms the third radical possesses a determinative force, its function being to express a special modification of the radical idea contained in the first two. He then takes the fundamental element, and compares it with roots supposed to be related in the Indo-European family. Here we think, that, however it may be with his comparisons, his analysis is not sufficiently thorough. It is surely not in accordance with the true notion of a root, that it should be reducible to simpler significant elements.² Nor is it in accordance with his own definition.³ This inconsistency, however, does not affect the value of his comparisons, of which many are plausible and suggestive. In order to facilitate the collection of "Indo-Germanico-Semitic" roots, through the establishment of laws of phonetic change, he has prepared a table,⁴ in which Indo-European (Sanskrit) letters are exhibited as corresponding with certain sounds in Arabic, Ethiopic, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac. The correctness of this list as a basis of philological com-

¹ p. 68.

² We can illustrate our general meaning by comparing such forms as KDP and YDP , the radical idea of which is, to draw together. Ought it to be maintained that in the former case the root is to be represented by the symbol KP , while in the latter the whole triliteral is required to embody it, there being no doubt that the fundamental notion is expressed in the first two letters of each combination, an additional one being employed in each for its special modification?

³ p. 30.

⁴ pp. 82, 83.

parison he seeks to establish by the citation of a large array of analogies. The limits of our rapid survey of opinion forbid us to enter upon an analysis of these combinations, or, for the present, to offer more than a passing observation upon his assumed laws of phonetic change. We shall therefore only say here that his table is not necessarily an exhibit of phonetic *representatives*, but only a list of approximate phonetic *equivalents*, which might be drawn up on a mere external acquaintance with the alphabets of the several idioms, and that wider and more profound inductions are necessary before such hypotheses can be rightly accepted as establishing fixed phonetic laws, with whose dignity our ingenious author invests his serviceable theory.

In this brief historical survey we have endeavored, so far as our sources of information avail, to notice every theory of the relations between the two great families of speech, and every systematic effort to reconcile their peculiarities, that may be worthy of attention, on account either of their intrinsic value, or of their significance in the progress of opinion. We trust that no important doctrine or hypothesis has been omitted. Other attempts at the solution of the question, made in late years, might have been referred to, but they are either lawless speculations,¹ or new forms of theories that have already been considered.

It may be proper before closing this portion of our Essay to state in brief the leading sentiments at present entertained with regard to the subject before us. A party, small in numbers, but eminently respectable, decline to admit that there is any radical affinity between the two groups of languages, regarding the philological evidence, at least, as indecisive, and assuming that the numerous verbal analogies between

¹ We have before us a recent production: *Gemeinschaftliche Grammatik der arischen und der semitischen Sprachen*, von Andreas Raabe, Leipzig, 1874, which is equally remarkable for the great learning and the great recklessness it displays. The author has this advantage chiefly over the ancient theorists, that he has access to the storehouse of the forms of the Sanskrit, — a language which has been resorted to by almost as many adventurers as have preyed upon its Indian home.

the families may be explained upon other hypotheses. On the other hand, the majority of philologists, with various degrees of confidence, favor the doctrine of organic relationship. A few of them assign but little importance to the comparison of roots, but claim that the problem may be solved on the evidence of grammatical analogies. The majority, however, prefer to examine the vocabularies, being persuaded that they can detect traces of a kindred origin in the faded features of many venerable forms. All agree that the parent language has passed away (having found a grave in some part of Central Asia); but some, with confidence, identify the Sanskrit as the oldest sister, remaining near the old homestead, while the rest have roamed over the whole world, vagrants, but not aliens. Others claim, that through the mediation of the ancient Egyptian all family differences might be adjusted. Others still, are more cautious, though none the less deeply interested, and think that nothing will be lost in the end by a close scrutiny of every claimant to ancient kinship, and hesitate long before admitting any.

In the remaining portion of this Essay we shall endeavor to present as clearly as possible what seems to be the true view of the problem, and of the conditions of its investigation. And, in deference to the eminent authorities who will not accept any theory of internal relationship between the two families of speech, we shall need to show the probability of such affinity, as well as to inquire into its closeness and extent.