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**THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE**

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**Introduction**

"Tot fallaciis obrutum, tot hallucinationibus demersum, tot adhuc tenebris circumfusum studium hocce mihi visum est, ut nihil satis tuto in hac materia praestari posse arbitratus sim, nisi nova quadam arte critica praemissa."-SCIPIO MAFFEIUS: \_Cassiod. Complexiones\_, p. xxx.

The origin of things is, for many reasons, a peculiarly interesting point in their history. Among those who have thought fit to inquire into the prime origin of speech, it has been matter of dispute, whether we ought to consider it a special gift from Heaven, or an acquisition of industry- a natural endowment, or an artificial invention. Nor is any thing that has ever yet been said upon it, sufficient to set the question permanently at rest. That there is in some words, and perhaps in some of every language, a natural connexion between the sounds uttered and the things signified, cannot be denied; yet, on the other hand, there is, in the use of words in general, so much to which nature affords no clew or index, that this whole process of communicating thought by speech, seems to be artificial. Under an other head, I have already cited from Sanctius some opinions of the ancient grammarians and philosophers on this point. With the reasoning of that zealous instructor, the following sentence from Dr. Blair very obviously accords: "To suppose words invented, or names given to things, in a manner purely arbitrary, without any ground or reason, is to suppose an effect without a cause. There must have always been some motive which led to the assignation of one name rather than an other."-\_Rhet.\_, Lect. vi, p. 55.

But, in their endeavours to explain the origin and early progress of language, several learned men, among whom is this celebrated lecturer, have needlessly perplexed both themselves and their readers, with sundry questions, assumptions, and reasonings, which are manifestly contrary to what has been made known to us on the best of all authority. What signifies it[18] for a man to tell us how nations rude and barbarous invented interjections first,[19] and then nouns, and then verbs,[20] and finally the other parts of speech; when he himself confesses that he does not know whether language "can be considered a human invention at all;" and when he believed, or ought to have believed, that the speech of the first man, though probably augmented by those who afterwards used it, was, essentially, the one language of the earth for more than eighteen centuries? The task of inventing a language *de novo,* could surely have fallen upon no man but Adam; and he, in the garden of Paradise, had doubtless some aids and facilities not common to every wild man of the woods.

The learned Doctor was equally puzzled to conceive, "either how society could form itself, previously to language, or how words could rise into a language, previously to society formed."-\_Blair's Rhet.\_, Lect. vi, p. 54. This too was but an idle perplexity, though thousands have gravely pored over it since, as a part of the study of rhetoric; for, if neither could be previous to the other, they must have sprung up simultaneously. And it is a sort of slander upon our prime ancestor, to suggest, that, because he was "the *first,"* he must have been "\_the rudest\_" of his race; and that, "consequently, those first rudiments of speech," which alone the supposition allows to him or to his family, "must have been poor and narrow."-\_Blair's Rhet.\_, p. 54. It is far more reasonable to think, with a later author, that, "Adam had an insight into natural things far beyond the acutest philosopher, as may be gathered from his giving of names to all creatures, according to their different constitutions."-\_Robinson's Scripture Characters\_, p. 4.

But Dr. Blair is not alone in the view which he here takes. The same thing has bean suggested by other learned men. Thus Dr. James P. Wilson, of Philadelphia, in an octavo published in 1817, says: "It is difficultto discern how communities could have existed without language, and equally so to discover how language could have obtained, in a peopled world, prior to society."-\_Wilson's Essay on Gram.\_, p. 1. I know not how so many professed Christians, and some of them teachers of religion too, with the Bible in their hands, can reason upon this subject as they do. We find them, in their speculations, conspiring to represent primeval man, to use their own words, as a *"savage,* whose 'howl at the appearance of danger, and whose exclamations of joy at the sight of his prey, reiterated, or varied with the change of objects, were probably the origin of language.'-\_Booth's Analytical Dictionary\_. In the dawn of society, ages may have passed away, with little more converse than what these efforts would produce."-\_Gardiner's Music of Nature\_, p. 31. Here Gardiner quotes Booth with approbation, and the latter, like Wilson, may have borrowed his ideas from Blair. Thus are we taught by a multitude of guessers, grave, learned, and oracular, that the last of the ten parts of speech was in fact the first: *"Interjections* are exceedingly interesting in one respect. They are, there can be little doubt, *the oldest words* in all languages; and may be considered the elements of speech."-\_Bucke's Classical Gram.\_, p. 78. On this point, however, Dr. Blair seems not to be quite consistent with himself: "Those exclamations, therefore, which by grammarians are called *interjections,* uttered in a strong and passionate manner, were, *beyond doubt,* the first elements or beginnings of speech."-\_Rhet.\_, Lect. vi, p. 55. "The *names* of sensible objects were, *in all languages,* the words most early introduced."-\_Rhet.\_, Lect. xiv, p. 135. "The *names of sensible objects,"* says Murray too, "were the words most early introduced."-\_Octavo Gram.\_, p. 336. Bat what says the Bible?

**Origin of language**

Revelation informs us that our first progenitor was not only endowed with the faculty of speech, but, as it would appear, actually incited by the Deity to exert that faculty in giving *names* to the objects by which he was surrounded. "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam, to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowls of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him."-\_Gen.\_, ii, 19, 20. This account of the first naming of the other creatures by man, is apparently a parenthesis in the story of the creation of woman, with which the second chapter of Genesis concludes. But, in the preceding chapter, the Deity is represented not only as calling all things into existence \_by his Word\_; but as *speaking to the first human pair,* with reference to their increase in the earth, and to their dominion over it, and over all the living creatures formed to inhabit it. So that the order of the events cannot be clearly inferred from the order of the narration. The manner of this communication to man, may also be a subject of doubt. Whether it was, or was not, made by a voice of words, may be questioned. But, surely, that Being who, in creating the world and its inhabitants, manifested his own infinite wisdom, eternal power, and godhead, does not lack words, or any other means of signification, if he will use them. And, in the inspired record of his work in the beginning, he is certainly represented, not only as naming all things imperatively, when he spoke them into being, but as expressly calling the light *Day,* the darkness *Night,* the firmament *Heaven,* the dry land *Earth,* and the gatherings of the mighty waters *Seas.*

Dr. Thomas Hartwell Horne, in commending a work by Dr. Ellis, concerning the origin of human wisdom and understanding, says: "It shows satisfactorily, that religion *and language* entered the world by divine revelation, without the aid of which, man had not been a rational or religious creature."-Study *of the Scriptures,* Vol. i, p. 4. "Plato attributes the primitive words of the *first language* to a divine origin;" and Dr. Wilson remarks, "The transition from silence to speech, implies an effort of the understanding too great for man."-\_Essay on Gram.\_, p. 1. Dr. Beattie says, "Mankind must have spoken in all ages, the young constantly learning to speak by imitating those who were older; and, if so, our first parents must have received this art, as well as some others, by inspiration."-Moral *Science,* p. 27. Horne Tooke says, "I imagine that it is, *in some measure,* with the vehicle of our thoughts, as with the vehicles for our bodies. Necessity produced both."-Diversions *of Purley,* Vol. i, p. 20. Again: "Language, it is true, *is an art,* and a glorious one; whose influence extends over all the others, and in which finally all science whatever must centre: but an art *springing from necessity,* and originally invented by artless men, who did not sit down like philosophers to invent it."-\_Ib.\_, Vol. i, p. 259.

Milton imagines Adam's first knowledge of speech, to have sprung from the hearing of his own voice; and that voice to have been raised, instinctively, or spontaneously, in an animated inquiry concerning his own origin-an inquiry in which he addresses to unintelligent objects, and inferior creatures, such questions as the Deity alone could answer:

"Myself I then perused, and limb by limb Surveyed, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran With supple joints, as lively vigor led: But who I was, or where, or from what cause, Knew not; \_to speak I tried, and forthwith spake; My tongue obeyed, and readily could name Whatever I saw\_. 'Thou Sun,' said I, 'fair light, And thou enlightened Earth, so fresh and gay, Ye Hills and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods, and Plains; And ye that live and move, fair Creatures! tell, Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here? Not of myself; by some great Maker then, In goodness and in power preeminent: Tell me how I may know him, how adore, From whom I have that thus I move and live, And feel that I am happier than I know.'" *Paradise Lost,* Book viii, l. 267.

But, to the imagination of a poet, a freedom is allowed, which belongs not to philosophy. We have not always the means of knowing how far he *literally* believes what he states.

My own opinion is, that language is partly natural and partly artificial. And, as the following quotation from the Greek of Ammonius will serve in some degree to illustrate it, I present the passage in English for the consideration of those who may prefer ancient to modern speculations: "In the same manner, therefore, as mere motion is from nature, but dancing is something positive; and as wood exists in nature, but a door is something positive; so is the mere utterance of vocal sound founded in nature, but the signification of ideas bynouns or verbs is something positive. And hence it is, that, as to the simple power of producing vocal sound-which is as it were the organ or instrument of the soul's faculties of knowledge or volition-as to this vocal power, I say, man seems to possess it from nature, in like manner as irrational animals; but as to the power of using significantly nouns or verbs, or sentences combining these, (which are not natural but positive,) this he possesses by way of peculiar eminence; because he alone of all mortal beings partakes of a soul which can move itself, and operate to the production of arts. So that, even in the utterance of sounds, the inventive power of the mind is discerned; as the various elegant compositions, both in metre, and without metre, abundantly prove."-\_Ammon. de Interpr.\_, p. 51.[21]

Man was made for society; and from the first period of human existence the race were social. Monkish seclusion is manifestly unnatural; and the wild independence of the savage, is properly denominated a state of nature, only in contradistinction to that state in which the arts are cultivated. But to civilized life, or even to that which is in any degree social, language is absolutely necessary. There is therefore no danger that thelanguage of any nation shall fall into disuse, till the people by whom it is spoken, shall either adopt some other, or become themselves extinct. When the latter event occurs, as is the case with the ancient Hebrew,Greek, and Latin, the language, if preserved at all from oblivion, becomes the more permanent; because the causes which are constantly tending to improve or deteriorate every living language, have ceased to operate upon those which are learned only from ancient books. The inflections which now compose the declensions and conjugations of the dead languages, and which indeed have ever constituted the peculiar characteristics of those forms of speech, must remain forever as they are.

When a nation changes, its language, as did our forefathers in Britain, producing by a gradual amalgamation of materials drawn from various tongues a new one differing from all, the first stages of itsgrammar will of course be chaotic and rude. Uniformity springs from the steady application of rules; and polish is the work of taste and refinement. We may easily err by following the example of our early writerswith more reverence than judgement; nor is it possible for us to do justice to the grammarians, whether earlyor late, without a knowledge both of the history and of the present state of the science which they profess toteach. I therefore think it proper rapidly to glance at many things remote indeed in time, yet nearer to mypresent purpose, and abundantly more worthy of the student's consideration, than a thousand matters which are taught for grammar by the authors of treatises professedly elementary.

As we have already seen, some have supposed that the formation of the first language must have been very slow and gradual. But of this they offer no proof, and from the pen of inspiration we seem to have testimony against it. Did Adam give names to all the creatures about him, and then allow those names to be immediately forgotten? Did not both he and his family continually use his original nouns in their social intercourse? and how could they use them, without other parts of speech to form them into sentences? Nay, do we not know from the Bible, that on several occasions our prime ancestor expressed himself like an intelligent man, and used all the parts of speech which are now considered \_necessary\_? What did he say, when his fit partner, the fairest and loveliest work of God, was presented to him? "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." And again: Had he not other words than nouns, when he made answer concerning his transgression: "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself?" What is it, then, but a groundless assumption, to make him and his immediate descendants ignorant savages, and to affirm, with Dr. Blair, that "their speech must have been poor and narrow?" It is not possible now to ascertain what degree of perfection the oral communication of the first age exhibited. But, as languages are now known to improve in proportion to the improvement of society in civilization and intelligence, and as we cannot reasonably suppose the first inhabitants of the earth to have been savages, it seems, I think, a plausible conjecture, that the primeval tongue was at least sufficient for all the ordinary intercourse of civilized men, living in the simple manner ascribed to our early ancestors in Scripture; and that, in many instances, human speech subsequently declined far below its original standard.

At any rate, let it be remembered that the first language spoken on earth, whatever it was, originated in Eden before the fall; that this "one language," which all men understood until the dispersion, is to be traced, not to the cries of savage hunters, echoed through the wilds and glades where Nimrod planted Babel, but to that eastern garden of God's own planting, wherein grew "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food;" to that paradise into which the Lord God put the new-created man, "to dress it and to keep it." It was here that Adam and his partner learned to speak, while yet they stood blameless and blessed, entire and wanting nothing; free in the exercise of perfect faculties of body and mind, capable of acquiring knowledge through observation and experience, and also favoured with immediate communications with their Maker. Yet Adam, having nothing which he did not receive, could not originally bring any real knowledge into the world with him, any more than men do now: this, in whatever degree attained, must be, and must always have been, either an acquisition of reason, or a revelation from God. And, according to the understanding of some, even in the beginning, "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."-\_1 Cor., xv, 46\_. That is, the spirit of Christ, the second Adam, was bestowed on the first Adam, after his creation, as the life and the light of the immortal soul. For, "In *Him* was life, and the life was the light of men," a life which our first parents forfeited and lost on the day of their transgression. "It was undoubtedly in the light of this pure influence that Adam had such an intuitive discerning of the creation, as enabled him to give names to all creatures according to their several natures."-\_Phipps, on Man\_, p. 4. A lapse from all this favour, into conscious guilt and misery; a knowledge of good withdrawn, and of evil made too sure; followed the first transgression. Abandoned then in great measure by superhuman aid, and left to contend with foes without and foes within, mankind became what history and observation prove them to have been; and henceforth, by painful experience, and careful research, and cautious faith, and humble docility, must they gather the fruits of \_knowledge\_; by a vain desire and false conceit of which, they had forfeited the tree of life. So runs the story

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste Brought death into the world, and all our wo, With loss of Eden, till one greater Man Restore us, and regain the blissful seat."

The analogy of words in the different languages now known, has been thought by many to be sufficiently frequent and clear to suggest the idea of their common origin. Their differences are indeed great; but perhaps not greater, than the differences in the several races of men, all of whom, as revelation teaches, sprung from one common stock. From the same source we learn, that, till the year of the world 1844, "The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech."-\_Gen.\_, xi, 1.[22] At that period, the whole world of mankind consisted only of the descendants of the eight souls who had been saved in the ark, and so many of the eight as had survived the flood one hundred and eighty-eight years. Then occurred that remarkable intervention of the Deity, in which he was pleased to confound their language; so that they could not understand one an other's speech, and were consequently scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. This, however, in the opinion of many learned men, does not prove the immediate formation of any new languages.

But, whether new languages were thus immediately formed or not, the event, in all probability, laid the foundation for that diversity which subsequently obtained among the languages of the different nations which sprung from the dispersion; and hence it may be regarded as the remote cause of the differences which now exist. But for the immediate origin of the peculiar characteristical differences which distinguish the various languages now known, we are not able with much certainty to account. Nor is there even much plausibility in the speculations of those grammarians who have attempted to explain the order and manner in which the declensions, the moods, the tenses, or other leading features of the languages, were first introduced. They came into use before they could be generally known, and the partial introduction of them could seldom with propriety be made a subject of instruction or record, even if there were letters and learning at hand to do them this honour. And it is better to be content with ignorance, than to form such conjectures as imply any thing that is absurd or impossible. For instance: Neilson's Theory of the Moods, published in the Classical Journal of 1819, though it exhibits ingenuity and learning, is liable to this strong objection; that it proceeds on the supposition, that the moods of English verbs, and of several other derivative tongues, were invented in a certain order by persons, not speaking a language learned chiefly from their fathers, but uttering a new one as necessity prompted. But when or where, since the building of Babel, has this ever happened? That no dates are given, or places mentioned, the reader regrets, but he cannot marvel.

By what successive changes, our words in general, and especially the minor parts of speech, have become what we now find them, and what is their original and proper signification according to their derivation, the etymologist may often show to our entire satisfaction. Every word must have had its particular origin and history; and he who in such things can explain with certainty what is not commonly known, may do some service to science. But even here the utility of his curious inquiries may be overrated; and whenever, for the sake of some favourite theory, he ventures into the regions of conjecture, or allows himself to be seduced from the path of practical instruction, his errors are obstinate, and his guidance is peculiarly deceptive. Men fond of such speculations, and able to support them with some show of learning, have done more to unsettle the science of grammar, and to divert ingenious teachers from the best methods of instruction, than all other visionaries put together. Etymological inquiries are important, and I do not mean to censure or discourage them, merely as such; but the folly of supposing that in our language words must needs be of the same class, or part of speech, as that to which they may be traced in an other, deserves to be rebuked. The words *the* and *an* may be articles in English, though obviously traceable to something else in Saxon; and a learned man may, in my opinion, be better employed, than in contending that \_if, though\_, and *although,* are not conjunctions, but verbs!

Language is either oral or written; the question of its origin has consequently two parts. Having suggested what seemed necessary respecting the origin of *speech,* I now proceed to that of *writing.* Sheridan says, "We have in use *two kinds of language,* the spoken and the written: the one, the gift of God; the other, the invention of man."-Elocution, p. xiv. If this ascription of the two things to their sources, were as just as it is clear and emphatical, both parts of our question would seem to be resolved. But this great rhetorician either forgot his own doctrine, or did not mean what he here says. For he afterwards makes the former kind of language as much a work of art, as any one will suppose the latter to have been. In his sixth lecture, he comments on the gift of speech thus: "But still we are to observe, that nature did no more than furnish the power and means; *she did not give the language,* as in the case of the passions, but left it to the industry of men, to find out and agree upon such articulate sounds, as they should choose to make the symbols of their ideas."-\_Ib.\_, p. 147. He even goes farther, and supposes certain *tones of the voice* to be things invented by man: "Accordingly, as she did not furnish the *words,* which were to be the symbols of his ideas; neither did she furnish the *tones,* which were to manifest, and communicate by their own virtue, the internal exertions and emotions, of such of his nobler faculties, as chiefly distinguish him from the brute species; but left them also, like words, to the care and invention of man."-Ibidem. On this branch of the subject, enough has already been presented.

By most authors, alphabetic writing is not only considered an artificial invention, but supposed to have been wholly unknown in the early ages of the world. Its antiquity, however, is great. Of this art, in which the science of grammar originated, we are not able to trace the commencement. Different nations have claimed the honour of the invention; and it is not decided, among the learned, to whom, or to what country, it belongs. It probably originated in Egypt. For, "The Egyptians," it is said, "paid divine honours to the Inventor of Letters, whom they called \_Theuth\_: and Socrates, when he speaks of him, considers him as a god, or agod-like man."-\_British Gram.\_, p. 32. Charles Bucke has it, "That the first inventor of letters is supposed to have been \_Memnon\_; who was, in consequence, fabled to be the son of Aurora, goddess of the morning."-\_Bucke's Classical Gram.\_, p. 5. The ancients in general seem to have thought Phoenicia the birthplace of Letters:

"Phoenicians first, if ancient fame be true, The sacred mystery of letters knew; They first, by sound, in various lines design'd, Express'd the meaning of the thinking mind; The power of words by figures rude conveyed, And useful science everlasting made." \_Rowe's Lucan\_, B. iii, l. 334.

Some, however, seem willing to think writing coeval with speech. Thus Bicknell, from Martin's Physico-Grammatical Essay: "We are told by Moses, that Adam \_gave names to every living creature\_;[23] but how those names were written, or what sort of characters he made use of, is not known to us; nor indeed whether Adam ever made use of a written language at all; since we find no mention made of any in the sacred history."-\_Bicknell's Gram.\_, Part ii, p. 5. A certain late writer on English grammar, with admirable flippancy, cuts this matter short, as follows,-satisfying himself with pronouncing all speech to be natural, and all writing artificial: "Of how many primary kinds is language? It is of two kinds; natural or spoken, and artificial or written."-\_Oliver B. Peirce's Gram.\_, p. 15. "Natural language is, to a limited extent, (the representation of the passions,) common to brutes as well as man; but artificial language, being the work of invention, is peculiar to man."-\_Ib.\_, p. 16.[24]

The writings delivered to the Israelites by Moses, are more ancient than any others now known. In the thirty-first chapter of Exodus, it is said, that God "gave unto Moses, upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God."* And again, in the thirty-second: "The tables were the work of God, and the writing was *the writing of God,* graven upon the tables." But these divine testimonies, thus miraculously written, do not appear to have been the first writing; for Moses had been previously commanded to write an account of the victory over Amalek, "for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua."-\_Exod.\_, xvii, 14. This first battle of the Israelites occurred in Rephidim, a place on the east side of the western gulf of the Red Sea, at or near Horeb, but before they came to Sinai, upon the top of which, (on the fiftieth day after their departure from Egypt,) Moses received the ten commandments of the law.

Some authors, however, among whom is Dr. Adam Clarke, suppose that in this instance the order of the events is not to be inferred from the order of the record, or that there is room to doubt whether the use of letters was here intended; and that there consequently remains a strong probability, that the sacred Decalogue, which God himself delivered to Moses on Sinai, A. M. 2513, B. C. 1491, was "the first writing *in alphabetical characters* ever exhibited to the world." See \_Clarke's Succession of Sacred Literature\_, Vol. i, p. 24. Dr. Scott, in his General Preface to the Bible, seems likewise to favour the same opinion. "Indeed," says he, "there is some probability in the opinion, that the art of writing was first communicated by revelation, to Moses, in order to perpetuate, with certainty, those facts, truths, and laws, which he was employed to deliver to Israel. Learned men find no traces of *literary,* or alphabetical, writing, in the history of the nations, till long after the days of Moses; unless the book of Job may be regarded as an exception. The art of expressing almost an infinite variety of sounds, by the interchanges of a few letters, or marks, seems more like a discovery to manfrom heaven, than a human invention; and its beneficial effects, and almost absolute necessity, for the preservation and communication of true religion, favour the conjecture."-\_Scott's Preface\_, p. xiv.

The time at which Cadmus, the Phoenician, introduced this art into Greece, cannot be precisely ascertained. There is no reason to believe it was antecedent to the time of Moses; some chronologists make it between two and three centuries later. Nor is it very probable, that Cadmus invented the sixteen letters of which he is said to have made use. His whole story is so wild a fable, that nothing certain can be inferred from it. Searching in vain for his stolen sister-his sister Europa, carried off by Jupiter-he found a wife in the daughter of Venus! Sowing the teeth of a dragon, which had devoured his companions, he saw them spring up to his aid a squadron of armed soldiers! In short, after a series of wonderful achievements and bitter misfortunes, loaded with grief and infirm with age, he prayed the gods to release him from the burden of such a life; and, in pity from above, both he and his beloved Hermione were changed into serpents! History, however, has made him generous amends, by ascribing to him the invention of letters, and accounting him the worthy benefactor to whom the world owes all the benefits derived from literature. I would not willingly rob him of this honour. But I must confess, there is no feature of the story, which I can conceive to give any countenance to his claim; except that as the great progenitor of the race of authors, his sufferings correspond well with the calamities of which that unfortunate generation have always so largely partaken.

**Conclusion**

The benefits of this invention, if it may be considered an invention, are certainly very great. In oral discourse the graces of elegance are more lively and attractive, but well-written books are the grand instructors of mankind, the most enduring monuments of human greatness, and the proudest achievements of human intellect. "The chief glory of a nation," says Dr. Johnson, "arises from its authors." Literature is important, because it is subservient to all objects, even those of the very highest concern. Religion and morality, liberty and government, fame and happiness, are alike interested in the cause of letters. It was a saying of Pope Pius the Second, that, "Common men should esteem learning as silver, noblemen value it as gold, and princes prize it as jewels." The uses of learning are seen in every thing that is not itself useless.[25] It cannot be overrated, but where it is perverted; and whenever that occurs, the remedy is to be sought by opposing learning to learning, till the truth is manifest, and that which is reprehensible, is made to appear so.

I have said, learning cannot be overrated, but where it is perverted. But men may differ in their notions of what learning is; and, consequently, of what is, or is not, a perversion of it. And so far as this point may have reference to theology, and the things of God, it would seem that the Spirit of God alone can fully show us its bearings. If the illumination of the Spirit is necessary to an understanding and a reception of scriptural truth, is it not by an inference more erudite than reasonable, that some great men have presumed to limit to a verbal medium the communications of Him who is everywhere His own witness, and who still gives to His own holy oracles all their peculiar significance and authority? Some seem to think the Almighty has never given to men any notion of Himself, except by words. "Many ideas," says the celebrated Edmund Burke, "have never been at all presented to the senses of any men *but by words,* as God,[26] angels, devils, heaven, and hell, all of which have however a great influence over the passions."-\_On the Sublime and [the] Beautiful\_, p. 97. That God can never reveal facts or truths except by words, is a position with which I am by no means satisfied. Of the great truths of Christianity, Dr. Wayland, in his Elements of Moral Science, repeatedly avers, "All these being *facts,* can never be known, except *by language,* that is, by revelation."-First *Edition,* p. 132. Again: "All of them being of the *nature of facts,* they could be made known to man *in no other way than by* language."-\_Ib.\_, p. 136. But it should be remembered, that these same facts were otherwise made known to the prophets; (1 Pet., i, 11;) and that which has been done, is not impossible, whether there is reason to expect it again or not. So of the Bible, Calvin says, "No man can have the least knowledge of true and sound doctrine, without having been a disciple of the Scripture."- *Institutes,* B. i, Ch. 6. Had Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, then, no such knowledge? And if such they had, what Scripture taught them? We ought to value the Scriptures too highly to say of them any thing that is *unscriptural.* I am, however, very far from supposing there is any *other doctrine* which can be safely substituted for the truths revealed of old, the truths contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

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