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incorporating The Kingsman

- 9 To Von Hugel, 21st April 1903. BM Add Mss 44,928  
 10 *The Church and the Future*, p 62.  
 11 Ibid. p 63.  
 12 To Maude Petre 21st June 1903. BM Add Mss 52,367.  
 13 *Memories and Opinions*. London 1926 p 266. Tyrrell would not have been surprised: he said of Barry that he knew "the man to be indiscreet and unbalanced and not really a liberal in any sense." to von Hugel 27th June 1903. BM Add Mss 44,928.  
 14 *The Point at Issue* p 12.  
 15 Ibid. p 11.  
 16 To von Hugel. 8th April 1903. BM Add Mss Von Hugel enthusiastically accepted this concept of "(innocent) concupiscence". Tyrrell developed the point in *Essays on Faith and Immortality* p 43 ff.  
 17 E.T. by Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland. London 1971.  
 18 *The Church and the Future* p 26.  
 19 To von Hugel. 21st April 1903. BM Add Mss 44,928.  
 20 B.M. Add Mss 52,369. Cf Heythrop Journal April, 1971, where it is published.  
 21 *The Church and the Future* pp 61-2.  
 22 Ibid. p 64.  
 23 Ibid. p 78.  
 24 My emphasis.  
 25 *External Religion*. London, 1899 p 119.  
 26 *Through Scylla and Charybdis* London, 1907 p 178.  
 27 *Lex Orandi*, London, 1904 p 3.  
 28 *Lex Orandi* p 168.  
 29 To Bremond. Sept. 20th 1899. See *Autobiography and Life*, Vol 2 p 73. This is Matthew Arnold's Christology, almost in Matthew Arnold's phraseology.  
 30 *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church*, Cambridge, 1934, pp 161-2.  
 31 *The Civilizing of the Matafanus*. London, 1902 p 33.  
 32 Ibid. p 36.  
 33 To von Hugel 3rd January, 1902. BM Add Mss 44,928.  
 34 *The Civilizing of the Matafanus*, p 46.  
 35 *The Church and the Future* p 20.  
 36 *The Civilizing of the Matafanus* p 40.  
 37 Ibid. p 57.  
 38 Ibid. pp 61-2.  
 39 Ibid. p 58.  
 40 *Lex Orandi* p 9.  
 41 Ibid. p 61.  
 42 *External Religion* p 32.  
 43 *Christianity at the Crossroads*, Ed A.R. Vidler. London 1963, p 177.  
 44 *Lex Orandi* pp 150-151.  
 45 To von Hugel, 9th April 1909. BM Add Mss 44,930.  
 46 *Christianity at the Crossroads* p 50.  
 47 Ibid. p 81.  
 48 Ibid. p 126.  
 49 Ibid. p 51.  
 50 *Essays on Faith and Immortality* pp 58-59.  
 51 *Christianity at the Crossroads* p 69.  
 52 *Autobiography and Life* p 388f.  
 53 See M.D. Petre. *Von Hugel and Tyrrell*, London 1937 p 117 ff.

## SEMANTICS AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

Martin Kitchen

It is surprising that Biblical Studies took such a long time to take note of linguistic science; that they should do so is a presupposition for the rest of what follows. The information here is available elsewhere[1], but readers of this *Review* might find an introduction to the subject of some value.

### *I Philology and Linguistics*

Philology is rather an old-fashioned term, referring to a rather old-fashioned approach to language; the field it covered is now more commonly known as that of historical and comparative linguistics. Philological study in Europe in the modern era arose with the discovery by Sir William Jones in 1786 of the similarity between Sanskrit, on the one hand, and Greek, Latin and German, on the other. It was he who first conjectured the existence of a parent language for all of them, along with Gothic, Celtic and Old

Persian. Franz Bopp systematised Jones's work early in the nineteenth century, and subsequent work led to the establishment of the hypothesis of Indo-European as a family of twelve groups of languages[2]. This has become the lasting monument to philological studies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the approach of philology to language is based almost entirely upon its written form, and this leaves untouched a whole range of questions about the nature of language which require an altogether new science of language. The rise of linguistics as one of the human sciences has met this need. Writing, of course, is secondary to speech, it is the adding of a further set of symbols—visual symbols—to a prior set of symbols which are sounds. The science of linguistics sets out to study language primarily in this prior sense; naturally, however, it has wide

implications, as we shall see, for the study of written texts.

We may posit three reasons—and there may be more—for the rise of linguistics. The first was the need to widen the field established with philology. By the turn of the century, the limitations of the discipline as it had developed were beginning to be felt, and a much broader approach was needed. The second was the growth of philosophical interest in language; philosophers were beginning to turn their attention to language at about the same time as Saussure was lecturing in the University of Geneva. Thirdly, linguistics arose as a distinct discipline along with the human sciences of psychology and sociology; Saussure, the “father” of modern linguistics, was born in 1857, one year after Sigmund Freud and one year before Emile Durkheim. The development was, therefore, particularly rooted in an historical context. What is perhaps surprising is that theology, and Biblical studies in particular, took so long to come to terms with all these factors.

Linguistics is the study of language, as distinct from the study of languages, which are its data. It aims at a general theory of the nature of language itself; and it can be pursued by those who are not necessarily polyglots. The subject divides conveniently into distinct, though related, branches. Firstly, phonology, which is concerned with the sound system of language. The human vocal organs are capable of producing about five hundred different sounds, and, naturally, no language makes use of all of them. Moreover, the sounds a language does use are often related in such a way that they do not need to be represented in the alphabet by separate symbols. For example, the final “s” sound at the end of the English word “cats” is quite different from that at the end of “cads”, but speakers of the language are aware that the pronunciation of that “s” depends upon whether or not the preceding consonant is voiced. By these and other methods a workable alphabet can be chosen. Secondly, linguistics is concerned with grammar. For a long time, language studies in Europe were dominated by the influence of classical languages, so that, for instance, one heard of reference being made to “cases” in English, which it does not possess. The aim of a grammatical theory should be to describe the particular language in terms demanded by that language, and not foisted upon it from elsewhere.

Methods have been elaborated within the field of linguistics during this century to enable this to be done. Thirdly, linguistics includes semantics. In fact, it took some time for linguists to interest themselves in the question of meaning, being convinced that this only obscured their proper preoccupation with the form of language. However, it became clear that the study of language would have to include also the study of meaning, and the analysis of it in appropriate linguistic categories.

A look at the work of Ferdinand de Saussure is essential for any understanding of the development of linguistic science. Born in 1857, as has been said, he was educated in Geneva, the place of his birth, studied for a while in Leipzig and taught in Paris before being appointed to a post at the University of Geneva in 1891, where he became Professor of Indo-European Linguistics and Sanskrit ten years later. From 1907 he was also Professor of General Linguistics, until he died in 1913. His *Course in General Linguistics* [3] was ‘reconstructed’ by his students after his death and first published in 1915. Saussure’s work is of prime importance for at least four reasons. In the first place he drew a distinction between what he called the “synchronic” and “diachronic” study of language. Most language study until his day had been “diachronic”, that is to say, it had concentrated on tracing the development of language through its different stages, with the emphasis on historical comparison. This is one valid approach to language, as we have seen, for it is the ground covered by philological studies, but in view of its limitations, Saussure contrasted with it a “synchronic” approach, that is, an approach which aimed at a description of the language at a specific stage of the language’s history, regardless of its earlier or later development. The second main feature of Saussure’s work is the concept of structuralism. Now this, of course, has been taken up in other areas of the human sciences, and in literary criticism, but in the linguistic context what is important is that the parts of an utterance may be seen in two different kinds of relations: (a) they are related to the other parts of the utterance, and this is called the *syntagmatic* relation. To give an example, in the sentence, *the king is coming*, each of the words is in syntagmatic relation with the other words in the sentence, and the individual sounds of each of the words are each in syntagmatic relation with

the other sounds in the word. But there is also another relation (b), and that is with units of language which are not found in the sentence, or word (or paragraph, or discourse), but which could be found there. This is known as the *paradigmatic* relation. In the sentence which we have just used, then, the word *king* is in paradigmatic relation with, for instance, *queen*, or *spring*, and the word *coming* is in paradigmatic relation with *dead*, or *leaving*. In order to illustrate both the synchronic/diachronic distinction and what he meant by structuralism, Saussure used the analogy of a chessboard. At any given stage of the game, the players are obliged to regard the board as it stands at that particular moment, regardless of the moves that brought about that present state. Further, it is clear that each of the pieces on the board has a value which depends on its position with regard both to the other remaining pieces and to those which have been removed from play. It is the same with units of language.

The third important feature of Saussure's work is the distinction he drew between *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* is the sum total of the rules which govern the language; these are internalised by the native speaker at a very early age and give rise to *parole*, which consists of actual utterances. Thus any utterance is an example of *parole*, which is as limitless as the number of possible utterances in a given language and which reflects the rules of the *langue*. *Parole* therefore refers to the event of speaking, while *langue* is, to use Saussure's analogy, a kind of storehouse of the total language. The fourth reason why Saussure's work is of such importance is his drawing attention to the principle of *conventionality* in language. By this he refers to the fact that the link between a concept and the word used for it in any language is not one of essence or logic, but simply that speakers of the language are aware of and abide by certain conventions; there is nothing about the sound sequence /t/, /a/, /b/, /l/ which makes it intrinsically proper as a word to refer to the thing on which my typewriter is resting, but all of us who speak and read English agree that this word is appropriate for this and similar items of furniture.

The work of Saussure remains of vital significance to this day, especially, as we shall see, in the application of linguistic insights to Biblical studies, particularly from the field of semantics. Semantics is the science of meaning, and the semantic system of a language is a system, no

less than the grammar and phonology. At the outset, it is essential to get away from models of "representation" in semantics, that is, the view that a word *represents* something in the extralinguistic world. This model breaks down simply because it can cover only a limited area of language; it works quite well with nouns, for example, "table", "unicorn", "teapot", and even with abstract nouns, such as "love", "beauty", "fascination", and so on, since it is possible to explain what these words "refer" to, and this is the case also with verbs. But what about all those other important words which go to make up the utterances we produce? What does "what" mean? What does "about" mean? What does "all" mean? And so on. These words can only be given any meaning in the context of the total utterance; that is to say, their meaning has to be defined in terms of their *syntagmatic* relations. What is required is a semantic model which will take these things into account, and that involves two things, firstly, it must take into account what Saussure said about structuralism, that is, the significance of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, and here the analogy of the chessboard is useful. The significance of the units differs according to their position, for meaning is a structure, a system, just as are sounds and syntax; it must therefore be approached with this in mind. Secondly, it must be borne in mind that *the word is not the primary bearer of meaning* in language. Take, for example, the word "door". Now this can be used in place of a sentence, such that when a schoolteacher or parent says "Door!", it is quite plain that he or she means "Shut the door!" Or one may use the word with a questioning inflection, "Door?", to mean "Shall I shut the door?" But the word on its own conveys little or no meaning; in order to interpret a one-word utterance, a large amount of knowledge of the context is required, so that a sentence can be substituted, at least unconsciously.

## *II Semantics and New Testament Interpretation*

The man who introduced linguistics to Biblical studies was Professor James Barr, now of Oxford. His book, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* [4] arose out of his annoyance with the assumptions underlying much of the linguistic work done in the name of "Biblical Theology", but its significance goes further than its intention, in that it is probably the first work of Christian theology to take seriously the science of

linguistics.

One of the aims of "Biblical Theology" was to re-establish the unity of the Bible after some decades of critical work on both the Old and New Testaments that appeared to be destructive of it; it was not an anti-critical movement (if "movement" is the right word), but it did aim to push critical studies in a more "positive" direction. Biblical theologians claimed to have discovered the unity of the Bible in the background of Hebrew thought which was said to be set out clearly in the Old Testament and to underlie the Greek of the New. Several assumptions were made about the alleged contrast between Hebrew and Greek ways of thinking, and these were said to be reflected in the respective language systems. These may be summarised as follows:

1. Greek is said to be static, whereas Hebrew is dynamic; the Hebrew world-view sees time as the scene of meaningful action, while Greek is concerned with the static, inner essence of things.
2. Greek thought is thus abstract, while Hebrew is concrete.
3. The Greek view of man is dualistic, unlike Hebrew, in which the soul and the flesh are inseparable. This is said to explain how the Greeks had a doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as opposed to the Hebrew concept of the resurrection of the body.

It is not so much these conclusions with which Barr wishes to argue as the method by which they are reached; that is, by an alleged parallelism between thought and language. This is the important point, biblical theology entertained the tacit assumption that a contrast in thought structure was reflected in a contrast in language structure, so it was possible to speak of "Semitic" and "Indo-European" ways of thinking. Clearly, for this hypothesis to be tested, at least five requirements would need to be met:

1. a proper study of the structure of the two languages would have to be carried out,
2. a similar study of the respective "thought structures"—ethno-psychologies—would have to be made,
- 3.—and this would involve working out a viable model for ethnopsychology, something about which anthropologists are very hesitant,
4. a valid procedure for testing the relationship between the two structures would then be required,
5. followed by a study of the status of any such

theory within the two disciplines.

According to Barr, none of these areas have been sufficiently studied by any of the theologians whose work he criticises; in fact he goes so far as to say that the most characteristic feature of the attempt to relate thought with language is its unsystematic and haphazard nature. This is particularly so, he continues, in the work of the Norwegian scholar, Thorleif Boman, whose study, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* [5], was translated from the German in 1960. Boman both exaggerates the contrast and misuses linguistic data to support his case. In particular, Barr draws attention to several areas of study in which these false assumptions are made.

(a) Verbs and the Hebrew view of time

According to Boman—and the point was also made by J. Marsh in *The Fulness of Time*[6]—the Hebrew view of time is dynamic; time is "the scene of meaningful action", and this "dynamic" concept is present even in verbs which denote immobile states such as standing, sitting or lying. The "stative" aspect of the verb is said not really to exist in the Hebrew mind; "only a being which stands in inner connection with something active is a reality".

As Barr points out, this is simply not true. There are many stative verbs in Hebrew, and there is no reason to suppose that they are less significant than any other verb. In fact, the English language uses the verb "to stand" in both active and stative senses; either "to stand up"—active, or "to be standing"—stative. It is not possible to say which of the two meanings is dominant; they differ in differing contexts.

In his study of the Hebrew view of time, Boman relied mainly on the verbal system of the language; Indo-European verbs have tenses, he said, whereas Semitic verbs have aspects. To the objection that the Hebrews seemed to be strangely interested in history for a people with little concern for past, present and future in time, he asserts that it is "more correct" to speak of actions in terms of their completeness than their precise timing. Clearly, this will not do; many Indo-European languages have "aspect" systems—some, for example, Russian, in addition to tenses. As regards "ways of thinking", it is said that the Japanese are very time-conscious, yet the Japanese verbal system is very similar to that of Hebrew; on the other hand, some African languages have more tenses than

any Indo-European language, yet it is said that Africans have very little sense of time.

In fact, to say that the Hebrews had little sense of time because their verbal system had no tenses is as good as saying that English people are not interested in sex because the language does not distinguish between gender in nouns and adjectives. It is essential here to bear in mind what Saussure said about structuralism and conventionality: structuralism, because the units of language must be viewed in relation to their context, and conventionality, in that it is impossible to say what is "more correct" in language; linguistic rules are descriptive, not prescriptive, and they change as the language community assents to change.

(b) Roots and ideas.

Any student of Hebrew knows that words are recognised by their roots, that is, the characteristic three letters (usually) which remain throughout the tenses and in the associated nouns, adjectives and participles. So, for instance, *qatal* means "he killed", *qotel* means "killing", *qetel* means "slaughter", *huatil* means "he caused to kill" and so on. The way to remember the verb is to learn the third person singular masculine perfect active form, then to change vowels, or add prefixes, suffixes or infixes, as the case may be, to form other parts of the verb. The consonants thus remain constant in the memory, and all the more so, since the vowels are written below, or sometimes above, the line of consonants. But this focus on consonants can be misleading, for it can lead to the kind of conclusion that J. Pedersen set out in *Israel, its Life and Culture*[7]; "There is no distinction between the various classes of words; this is one of the fundamental characteristics of the Semitic languages. To the root m-l-k the signification of 'kinghood' attaches itself, and according to the modification of the word, it may mean 'king', 'kingdom' and 'the fact of acting as king' ". Of this statement Barr says, "This is simply not true. The great word classes known as 'parts of speech' are very distinct in Semitic, though there may be fewer than in many Indo-European languages, depending on how the classification is made . . . The root m-l-k is an abstraction, and all extant forms are readily distinguishable as 'king', 'kingdom' or 'ruling', in the various classes."

Other writers take this obsession with roots

still further, for example, W.C. van Unnik has said[8], ". . . radicals of a root often have many meanings *simultaneously* which in our eyes seem to have little or nothing to do with one another". We shall deal with this problem in a moment under the heading of 'the adding of significances', but it is worth pointing out now that it goes back to the 'root' fallacy. It ignores, of course, the concept of homonymy--when two words sound the same but in fact mean different things, e.g. "principal" and "principle" "led" and "lead", "red" and "read"; "heir" and "air", and so on; it is only the oddness of our alphabet that explains why these pairs are not spelt the same way, too. In Hebrew, the word *lechem*, "bread", appears to be related to the word *milchamah*, "war". Now, if there is some relationship between the meanings of these words, is it that wars are fought largely over bread, or that they cannot be fought without it? Again, we are brought back to Saussure's principles of structuralism and the synchronic/diachronic distinction.

(c) Etymology

Barr is concerned to make the point that etymology, the study of the origins and derivations of words, is no guide to the present meaning of a word. The Hebrew word *dabar* is a useful example, and Barr quotes from *Royal Priesthood* by Prof. T.F. Torrance[9], who says, "This (word) appears to derive from a Semitic root *abr* meaning 'backside' or 'hinterground', which is apparent in the expression for the Holy of Holies just mentioned, the *debir*, which was lodged at the very back of the Tabernacle or Temple. This term *dabar* has a dual significance. On the one hand it refers to the hinterground of meaning, the inner reality of the word, but on the other hand, it refers to the dynamic event in which that inner reality becomes manifest. Thus every event has its *dabar* or word, so that he who understands the *dabar* of an event understands its real meaning . . . This is one of the dominant conceptions behind the Old Testament understanding of the cult, and indeed it looks as if the whole Tabernacle or Temple were constructed around the significance of *dabar*. In the very back of the Tabernacle or the Holy of Holies, the *debir*, there were lodged the ten Words, or *debarim*. Those Ten Words form the innermost secret of Israel's history. It is therefore highly significant that in the Old Testament's interpretation of its own history and its ancient

cult, they were lodged in the hinterground of a moveable tent which formed the centre of Israel's historical pilgrimage . . . All through Israel's history the Word enshrined in the form of *debarim* was hidden in the *debir*, but was again and again made manifest when God made bare his mighty arm and showed his glory."

There are three problems with this kind of statement. In the first place, it is based on etymology rather than usage. Secondly, the idea of a "hinterground of meaning" is quite irreconcilable with any Hebrew usage of *dabar*. Thirdly, the idea of a "dynamic event" in which a reality "becomes manifest" is exaggerated and far-fetched. Barr illustrates these objections by looking at the statement, "The thing happened at Waterloo in 1815". Now, the "thing" here is an historical and, presumably, dynamic event, but "dynamic, historical event" is not therefore a possible meaning of "thing". In fact, then, to say that *dabar* means "event" is misleading; in the expression, *debar yahweh*, it is clear that what is intended is "word of the Lord", and not "event of the Lord" or "Act of the Lord".

The misuse of etymology can be demonstrated quite effectively from English. Our word "thing" derives, in fact, from a Germanic word which meant "tribal law court". This came, in time, to mean the case before the court, then any matter, whether legal or not, and subsequently, its meaning in modern English. No one would think of saying that the word "thing" really means a "law-court".

(d) The adding of significances

By this expression Barr means the establishment of the meaning by the use of the "root" fallacy and etymology, and adding these various ideas together to form a "concept". An example of this is to be found in E. Jacob's *Theology of the Old Testament* [10], where he takes the four Hebrew words for "man", *adam*, *ish*, *enosh* and *geber*, examines their etymology and concludes, "From these terms some conclusions can be extracted about the nature of man and his vocation. If it is true that *adam* insists on the human kind, *enosh* on his feebleness, *ish* on his power, *geber* on his strength, then we can say that added together they indicate that man according to the Old Testament is a perishable creature, who lives only as a member of a group, but that he is also a powerful being capable of choice and dominion. So the semantic survey

confirms the general teaching of the Bible on the insignificance and greatness of man." As we have already said, it is not necessarily the conclusions with which Barr takes issue, but the method by which these are reached, and this is a case in point; the linguistic argument is weak, and this may undermine the exegetical point, which is valid in its own terms. As Barr says, "While I do not say therefore that Jacob has led us far astray in the treatment of the Hebrew idea of man, I do think he has used a very dubious method of working from linguistic realities and has failed to protect it against a misuse which could be very harmful."

(e) Kittel's *Theological Dictionary*

Barr's criticisms of linguistic method come to a head in his assessment of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*; he begins in this instance by stating what a dictionary ought to be—a reference work which lists the possible alternatives in one language for the word in the other, in order to provide an indication of the contribution made by any particular word to the meaning of the sentence in which it functions, by giving an indication of the range of meanings which it can bear. The *Theological Dictionary* tends to provide idea-histories; for example, under the word *agapaō*, there is a section entitled "the words for 'to love' in pre-biblical Greek", which is not really relevant for the understanding of the word in the New Testament. Barr also criticises the frequent use of the word "concept" instead of "word" in the Dictionary, since it is supposed to be "words" with which a dictionary is primarily concerned. Of course, the history of an idea or concept is of some value, but it is not, according to Barr, the preserve of the lexicographer. "An object or event may be signified by word *a* or word *b*. This does not mean that *a* means *b*. We have already seen that *dabar* means 'event' or 'history' or the like. The identity of the object to which these different designations are given does not imply that these designations have the same semantic value. The mistake of supposing that it does we may call 'illegitimate totality transfer'."

This mistake arises from the false distinction between "external lexicography" and "inner meaning", and is akin, of course, to the "root" fallacy. It is compounded in Kittel by the fact that the Dictionary tends to ignore those contexts where the meaning of a word does not fit

into the general "concept" presupposed. Moreover, the concentration on religious and philosophical usage encourages a tendency not to look outside these fields. It should be noted, however, that the later volumes of Kittel are not as guilty of these false assumptions about language as the earlier.

Prof. Barr's great contribution to biblical studies has been to introduce the science of linguistics to theology; in a sense, it is surprising that this introduction was not made much earlier. However, now that it has been made, the inevitable "catching-up" process may begin. But is Barr right? Certainly, his application of Saussure's work has to be taken seriously, and his views on the function of dictionaries provide a welcome cautionary note to the user of such articles in the *Theological Dictionary* which pay scant regard to proper linguistic procedure. Also, with regard to his views on the relationship between language and culture, that is, on "ways of thinking" as expressed in a particular language, we are obliged to recognize that "only in the matter of actual vocabulary, as against phonetic composition, phonological systems, and grammatical systems, do languages directly reflect the cultural environment of their speakers."

However, Barr has been accused by Professor T.F. Torrance of an extreme kind of formalism in his disjunction of language from culture[11]. For Torrance, the relation between these two is important "if only because of the enjoyment we derive from the great artistic and symbolic creations in literature." This is an important point, and it has to be held in tension with the need for a rigorous, scientific approach to the study of language. The problem is that the Bible's language is religious language, and the artistry, symbolism and creativity that we discover in good literature are all the more prominent in writing that purports to speak of God. Linguists are becoming aware of the impossibility of *precision* in linguistic description, an impossibility which is also being recognized in other fields of scientific work[12]. Dr Stephen Prickett has drawn attention to this with particular reference to translating the Bible in his review of the *Good News Bible*[13]. Clearly, more work needs to be done in this area.

### III Biblical Studies and Linguistics

Just like any other discipline, linguistic

science does not stand still. Barr's work of 1961 reflected that of Saussure before 1913. Other linguists, such as Bloomfield[14] and Chomsky[15] have made immensely important contributions to the development of linguistic theory since then, and there are theologians who have worked at bringing these insights to bear on the study of the Bible. Among these is Dr Eugene Nida of the United Bible Societies. In an article in 1972[16] he pointed out six areas in which linguistics and Biblical studies may usefully be brought together. Firstly, he underlines the validity, from the point of view of information theory, of the textual critic's guiding principle, *difficilior lectio potior*, drawing an analogy with the second law of thermodynamics. Secondly, he points to the possibility that what Saussure referred to as *langue*, which is akin to Chomsky's concept of "deep structure", might throw interesting light on questions of authorship. Thirdly, he makes some observations about exegesis in the light of linguistic theory, basing what he says on an analysis of Rom. 1.5. Fourthly, he comments on the importance of linguistics for lexicography--and we have already discussed this with reference to the work of James Barr. He makes the point that what is required in word studies is not so much the study of the various possible meanings of one word, but of the very closely related meanings of different words. For example, a study of the word group "run, walk, hop, skip, crawl" is of more value than a study of the various meanings that the word "run" can bear.

Nida's fifth area of interest is the question of language teaching. The teaching of Hebrew and Greek is a recurrent problem in faculties and departments of theology. What is required is a method which takes account of the fact that the language is not going to be spoken; that translation into the language is not necessary; but that a thorough knowledge of the original texts is essential for serious work on the Bible. Richard Coggins[17] drew attention to the problems underlying language teaching to theological students in his review of J.F.A. Sawyer's *A Modern Introduction to Classical Hebrew*[18] while commending that book in its intentions; he pointed out not only that great strides had been made in linguistic theory but also that, in view of the technological revolution which has introduced language laboratories and audio-

visual aids to language teaching and the fact that much less grammatical information is required than was formerly thought before a student may begin working on a text in a foreign language, our whole approach to language teaching might be due for review.

Finally, Nida remarks that modern linguistics has great relevance for the business of Bible translation; this, of course, is his primary concern. Translation, however, can hardly be done independently of exegesis, and this is where linguistics is of such importance. The intention of any translator should be to render in the "target" language the substance of what was written in the original, with as much of the associative meaning preserved as possible. This approach, known as "dynamic equivalence" translation, allows for the primacy of the sentence as the bearer of meaning and concentrates on the total message conveyed by a complete utterance, of whatever length, style or level of writing. Since this aim entails more than word equivalence, it would seem appropriate that knowledge of some linguistic insights be required of any student of foreign texts.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that the foregoing article has at least shed a little light on the field of linguistic science. The writer certainly hopes that he has set out the grounds for the autonomy of linguistics, and the necessity for it to develop its own proper procedures, just as theology and, more particularly, Biblical studies must. This is absolutely essential for interdisciplinary work to be carried on at a valid level, for only then can it become, as it should, a necessary prelude to hermeneutics and, which is probably of greater significance to readers of this *Review*, to teaching and preaching.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *EXPLORATORY WILES: OR HOW TO BEAT ABOUT THE BURNING BUSH.*

*Stuart Hall*

"The earlier part of my career as a theologian", writes Professor Wiles, "was spent in studying and teaching the early history of Christian doctrine. My approach to that early patristic tradition, including the creeds, was the same as that of any serious biblical scholar to the biblical texts. One treated them as the writings of fallible human beings seeking as best they could

## NOTES

- 1 For example, in an excellent article by A.C. Thiselton, 'Semantics and New Testament Interpretation', in I.H. Marshall (ed) *New Testament Interpretation*, Exeter, 1977.
- 2 The twelve being: Hittite and Toccharian (no longer represented by any spoken language), along with Indian, Iranian, Slavonic, Baltic, Germanic, Celtic, Italic, Illyrian, Thracio-Phrygian and Greek.
- 3 F de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Glasgow, 1974.
- 4 J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, Oxford, 1961.
- 5 T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, London, 1960.
- 6 J. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, London, 1960.
- 7 J. Pedersen, *Israel; Its Life and Culture*, London, 1926.
- 8 W.C. van Unnik, 'Reisepläne und Amensagen', in *Studia Paulina* (Festschrift for J. de Zwaan), ed J.N. Sevenster, Haarlem, 1953.
- 9 T.F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, Edinburgh, 1955.
- 10 E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, London, 1958.
- 11 In *God and Rationality*, Oxford, 1970.
- 12 Cf. the work of Karl Popper in the philosophy of science and, for a convenient introduction, Bryan Magee, *Popper*, Fontana Modern Masters, Glasgow, 1975.
- 13 Stephen Prickett, 'What Do the Translators Think They are Up To?', *Theology*, November 1977.
- 14 L. Bloomfield's major work, *Language*, was published in New York in 1935.
- 15 N. Chomsky's work still continues across a wide field. His seminal linguistic works are *Syntactic Structures*, The Hague, 1957, and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge, Mass., 1965.
- 16 E.A. Nida, 'Implications of Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical Scholarship', *JBL* 1972.
- 17 R.J. Coggins, 'Hebrew?—It's All Greek to Me!', in *The Kingsman*, No. 19 (1976-77).
- 18 J.F.A. Sawyer, *A Modern Introduction to Classical Hebrew*, Oriol Press, 1976.

to record, to interpret and to make sense of their experience in terms of the knowledge and culture of their day. In the case of the Fathers that involved understanding the Bible very differently from the way in which it is understood by Christians today and working out their convictions in terms of a philosophy very different from our own. How could such an approach,