this one thing was missing in such a great genius, I have had in view whilst writing these pages, the actual use which St. Thomas made of these versions. This explains why I have omitted other versions of other books written by other non-latin authors, with which the Middle Ages might well have been familiar, but which contributed nothing or very little to the developing of the newly born method of explaining the “Dogma”, that is to scholasticism. There is no need to say, that I have also omitted those versions which were made after the time of St. Thomas, except for one or two instances in which I had to mention later versions because of some particular connection with previous ones. I have thus equipped St. Thomas with sufficient tools for the completion of his job. These tools he must use in such a way that he may give us still another proof of how his theological system is perfect not only in its speculative but also in its documentary aspect.

But, as with the soldier, the best handling of arms reflects credit on his capacity, so also with the theologian, the best use of the best argument or documentary evidence reflects credit on his theological science.

How far can St. Thomas claim such a credit in his positive (as opposed to speculative) Theology? This will be seen in a coming article.

THE MALTESE LANGUAGE
Aryan or Semitic?

by the V. REV. SERAPHIM M. ZAHR, O.P., S.T.M., S.S.D. (Vat.)

In a previous paper I demonstrated that the origin and growth of a language is strictly related (a) to the national history of the country where it is spoken, (b) to its kindred languages; and concluded that “the Maltese language was planted in Malta by the Phoenicians, increased by the Carthaginians (Punic), and strengthened by the Arabs ... although today it bears signs of Latin influences which derive either from the Roman domination or from the relations which Malta has had continuously from the beginning of the second millennium A.D. until our own days with the European nations” (1). Maltese is, therefore, essentially Semitic, but it has in its growth great influences of other Aryan languages. In order to understand more fully these basic truths about the Maltese tongue, I deem it necessary to explain more in detail the nature of Semitic languages and their differences when compared to Aryan tongues.

I. The vocabulary. — It is characteristic of Semitic words that they are generally formed of consonants and not of vowels. So much so that the alphabet in Semitic languages has no vowels, and the oldest inscriptions as well as ordinary books, even to our own days, are written without vowels. This would be simply impossible in Aryan tongues, in which the vowels are included in the alphabet as well as in writing.

Moreover, words in Semitic languages are generally formed of three consonants, triliteralism. Originally, primitive language seem to have consisted of monosyllables, either in the form of one open syllable, formed of a single consonant letter accompanied by a vowel sound; or in the form of a closed

(1) See Scientia, VIII (1942) p. 90-93.
syllable, consisting of two consonant letters blended together by a vowel sound. In fact, both in Semitic and Aryan languages the most primitive words (either nouns or verbs) are monosyllables; see especially the imperative verbs, which most probably constitute the first and original form of the verb. In the course of time, as all other things, adapted itself to progressive needs of man. The few monosyllabic words were found insufficient, and consequently they acquired new forms. In Semitic tongues an auxiliary vowel was added to the original monosyllable, which formed roots either of two or three radical consonant letters. Triliteral roots are the most common, biliteral are more seldom, quadriliterals are very rare.

It is, therefore, characteristic of Semitic languages to have a vocabulary formed exclusively of words, commonly consisting of three consonant letters, in which the vowel sounds have no importance. In Aryan languages the vowels have a great roll; thus, in Latin the root delere, to suffer, and delere, to cancel, have the same consonant letters, and differ only in the vowel sounds. This is not possible in Semitic languages, in which the consonants form the root, and the vowels serve only to form its various declensions, as declensions and conjugations according to various forms required by the number and gender of the form.

This great difference between Semitic and Aryan languages is clearly perceived in the dictionaries of the two languages when compared to one another. A good scientific dictionary of a Semitic tongue is based on the three consonants of the root without any vowel sound, and not indifferently on all kind of words as it is the case in dictionaries of Aryan languages.

It is also worth while noting before we pass to the differences between Semitic and Aryan languages in their grammar, that Semitic words are based on a system of letters quite different from those of the Aryan languages. The number of guttural letters is very abundant in the Semitic tongues, some of which are not even found in Aryan languages. Even with regard to the remaining letters of the alphabet, Semitic languages are much more richer in the number of letters, especially in the sibilant letters. In one word there is also a physiological difference in the pronunciation of Semitic and Aryan tongues, which difference is clearly shown by the difference of the system of the alphabet used in Semitic and in Aryan languages. I am quite convinced that Semitic languages can be written even in the system of the Latin alphabet, especially if for some peculiar consonant letters conventional signs or letters, such as $h$, $gh$, $c$, $g$, $z$, are used, and I do not think it advisable to return to a Semitic alphabet, be it Hebrew or Arabic, in order to write Maltese in a perfect scientific way (2). Of course, I do not deny that a real scholar of Maltese should at least be able to write Maltese in a Semitic alphabet, and I am sure that many grammatical rules and other orthographic peculiarities of Maltese can only be explained by transliterating them into a Semitic system of writing. I would, therefore, suggest, at least for the higher courses of Maltese, that the practice should be introduced of transliterating Maltese into a Semitic system of writing, in which case, I would prefer Arabic, which is better known than Hebrew, and is the richest in letters among all the other Semitic tongues.

(2) Among the scholars of Maltese there are some who advocate the return of writing Maltese in Arabic letters. Thus, very recently Mr. L. Cutajar, wrote to the writer of this paper urging this particular point. He proposes to reform the study of Maltese by using Arabic grammar. He prefers English grammar, and says: "Such a reform may be very easily effected. The best and easiest way is to start writing Maltese directly in Arabic characters. That is surprisingly easy as there will be nothing else to do but learn the Arabic alphabet. It should be written, and with the same meaning, as the same also with the Arabic words. Non-Arabic words should be understood as in English. The Maltese may continue to be written in Latin characters, but the non-Arabic words should be expressed in the words of the alphabet, so far as possible. The result of the reform concludes: "If any objection be found to this kind of reform, it is that the few and corrupt words for the writing of such they serve, may be eliminated from the written language."
II. The Grammar. — The differences between Semitic and Aryan languages is still more visible in the grammatical rules.

A preliminary difference could at once be noted here. In the grammar of Aryan languages the words are classified according to the various parts of speech, namely: Noun, Adjective, Pronoun, Verb, Adverb, Prepositions, Conjunctions and Interjections. This division is also applied to Semitic tongues by Aryan writers of Semitic grammars. But Semitic writers, especially Arabs, adopt another system, which seems more suitable to the nature of Semitic tongues. They divide the grammar into three parts: namely Noun, which comprehends the Adjective, the Article and the Pronouns; Verb, which comprises the various forms of verbs; and finally the Particles, be they Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions or Interjections.

A more striking difference is found in the morphology, that is to say in the rules, according to which the root of words is inflected. It is commonly believed that Aryan languages are richer in words; but Semitic languages are certainly richer in forms. The same root in the Aryan languages can express various meanings by the addition of prefixes and suffixes, but rarely by the internal change of the root itself. In the Semitic languages not only is the root inflected by prefixes and suffixes, but principally by the internal modification of the root. The three radical letters of the root remaining fixed or even reduplicated, by changing the vowels one can obtain an infinite number of forms, which you look in vain to find in the Aryan tongues. Take for example a Semitic root, such as R-K-B. From these three consonants one can derive:

(a) The verb in its simple or first form: Indicative mood, Present Tense: rikkeb, rikket etc.; Perfect Tense: jirkeb, jirket etc.; Imperative mood: irkeb, irkeba; the Infinitive mood: rikib; the Participle: rikeb, rikeba, rikkin.

(b) The verb in its derivative forms. Thus if we double the second radical letter k, we obtain another full suit of forms:

Indicative mood. Perfect Tense: rikkeb, rikket etc.; Imperfect Tense: irkeb, irrkeba etc.; Imperative mood, rikkeb, rikkeba; Infinitive mood: rikkeb; Active Participle: rikkeb, rikkeba, rikkin; Past Participle: rikeb, rikeba, rikkin. Derivative forms are various for the various roots, and for the various Semitic languages. In Arabic there are ten common forms, in other Semitic languages there are less. Besides, many a form, especially in Arabic, is doubled by the simple change of the vowels, and so one obtains a form for the active voice of the verb and a form for the passive voice; thus kataba is the first form in the active voice meaning he wrote; kataba is similarly the first form in its passive voice, meaning it is written. The passive voice, although less frequently used, has with few exceptions the same forms as the active.

(c) From the primitive and the derivative forms of the verb derive the other parts of speech. The infinitive mood as well as the participle correspond to the nouns of the action and of the agent with their various forms according to the different gender, number and in some languages also case. Some nouns have even various forms with different meaning, such as the name of action rikib, ride; and the name of unity or single action: rikba, a ride. Other nouns of place, instruments, time can easily be derived, such as mirkeb.

Another striking difference between Semitic and Aryan languages is the verbal conjugation. In Aryan languages the time of the action is first and foremost taken into consideration; hence the various moods and tenses, which are not found in Semitic tongues. In these the first consideration is paid to the quality of the action, whether it is conceived as completely fulfilled, hence the form of Perfect, or as being in progress but still unfinished, whence the form of the Imperfect. Hence an action conceived as perfectly accomplished, whether in the past, or in the present, or in the future, is described by the Perfect form of the verb; whereas the action which is not complete, independently of time, is invariably expressed by
the verb in its Imperfect form. It is true that an action in progress corresponds to the Present tense in Aryan languages, whereas an action completed in itself can easily be described by the Past tense; but the psychological conception of the action in Semitic and in Aryan tongues is fundamentally different. This is evident when we consider the certainty and the completeness of an action in the future, which is expressed by the Future tense in Aryan languages, but it takes the Perfect form in Semitic tongues. Aryan grammarians would call this kind of Perfect of Semitic writers Futurum Propheticum. We do not think that the Prophets had a grammar of their own, it is simply the Semitic genius, which instead of stressing time in the action, prefers quality, that is to say whether the action is considered as complete or as incomplete and still in progress: Perfect and Imperfect form; whereas in Aryan languages time is carefully designated by the various forms of tenses, and not by the degree of completeness of the action.

III. The Syntax. The differences between Semitic and Aryan languages in their morphology and grammar have also their influence in the syntax of the two sets of languages. In Aryan languages the various forms of tenses and moods of the verb allow the speaker or the writer to express his thoughts in long periods, divisible in propositions coordinate and subordinate, harmoniously balanced and well constructed. In fact, syntax in Aryan languages is difficult and artful. The Semitic tongues lack this variety of moods and tenses, and are bound to express their thoughts in simple propositions, blended together in a period by means of particles (adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions). By this I do not mean that Semitic languages lack a syntax; they do not; but their syntax is more simple, although not less artful than that of Aryan languages.

The difference between the two kinds of languages is best seen in poetry. It has certainly been a great credit to Robert Lowth (1710-1787), who in his lectures on Hebrew poetry first discovered the various kinds of parallelism as a fundamental rule of Hebrew songs (3). We know today that parallelism is not peculiar to Hebrews, but to all the Semitic poetical compositions. We venture to suggest that parallelism is intimately bound to the simplicity of Semitic syntax. As in prose it is not possible to a Semitic writer to construct his thought in an Aryan period of subordinate propositions: so in poetry he cannot express himself in a metric and rhythmic strophe, containing in verses the same constructed period found in prose; but he is bound to describe his thoughts in simple coordinate propositions, which he artfully arranges in symmetric parallel propositions, now similar to each other, synonymous parallelism, now opposed to one another, antithetic parallelism, now merely consecutive and inter-balanced, analytic parallelism (4).

We do not think it necessary to discuss more minutely and in detail other differences which can easily be found between Semitic and Aryan tongues. Those I have mentioned above will, I hope, be found sufficient to give at least a faint idea of the radical and fundamental diversity which exists between these two sets of languages from which Maltese is derived. These differences, as I hope I have made it clear, are not mere degrees of a more or less development of a language compared to another language of the same family; for example the differences between Spanish, Italian and French; or Dutch, Flemish, English and German; or Slav, Bohemian, Polish and Russian; but they are essential differences flowing naturally from the diverse genius of each language, which have an original train of thought, a peculiar frame of expression absolutely different from that of other languages, which do not belong to the same stem.

A superficial knowledge of Maltese vocabulary, grammar

(3) R. Lowth, De sacra Poesi Hebraeorum, Praelectiones Academicae Oxoni insitae, n. 1753.
(4) For a more detailed explanation of parallelism, see my article: Literary beauty of the Psalms, published in Scientia, VIII (1911), pp. 27-31.
and syntax will easily discover to the scholar that Maltese is essentially Semitic, although in its vocabulary, grammar and syntax, in its prose and most especially in its poetic frame, it has received a great influence from the Latin languages with which it has been for long centuries in continuous and close contact (5). This fact may appear a great setback in the study of Maltese, because it may seem impossible to many a student to give to Maltese that uniformity of philological rules in its morphology, grammar and syntax, which he may find in other languages, such as in Arabic. Hence Maltese scholars are divided, some lean to a purist system and would like to exclude from Maltese all foreign, in case Aryan, elements; whereas others, more tolerant, do not disdain to receive those foreign elements and try to form special rules for the purpose (6). This controversy is certainly one of the hardest which scholars of Maltese must face.

Let us say a few words on this vital problem. Can we admit foreign words into the Maltese language?

Among the various differences which exist between Semitic and Aryan languages there are two which call for a special attention in the present controversy. We have seen that Semitic words are commonly formed of three consonant letters, and these roots are inflected not only by external additions of prefixes and suffixes, but also by internal changes, which consist either in the changing of vowels or by the addition of other consonant letters or by the reduplication of one of the three consonant letters of the root. These inflections cannot be applied to non-Semitic roots. In the Aryan languages this difficulty is hardly noticed. In English words of Saxon origin are inflected in the same manner as those of Latin origin, and for this reason foreign words are more easily accepted, because they conform themselves more easily to the common grammatical rules of that language. This is not the rule in Semitic languages. Take for example the verb irriça, to receive, very common in ordinary Maltese. Although the verb is apparently formed of three consonant letters RCV it can only receive one of the various forms of conjugation, and no derivative forms can be formed from the first original root RCV. Besides, the vowels required by this foreign verb are different from those required in the conjugation of a Semitic root. Consequently there cannot be uniformity in morphology for Semitic words and for those of Aryan origin.

On the other hand it is a fact that today there are many foreign words in Maltese, which cannot be replaced by Semitic roots, either because there are no Maltese equivalents to them, or because such words are no longer used, and have been replaced by Aryan equivalents. For these reasons it does not seem possible to exclude altogether all the foreign Aryan roots from the Maltese language. Although these foreign words are rather numerous today, they do not change the nature of the language. Maltese is definitely and essentially a Semitic language. In fact, whenever a foreign word is accepted into the Maltese tongue, it is generally transformed as far as it could be possible into a Semitic form. This however is not always possible. Let us take for example the words bocca from Italian boccia, English flagon or tazza, from Italian tazza, English glass. Although these words are definitely foreign words they have a form similar to that of the Maltese qofda, basket, habba, grain respectively. In their plural forms they follow the broken plural bocci, and tazzë, like qofes. When the foreign word cannot be resembled to a Semitic form it becomes nearly a word without flection. Take for example the word Sinjura, from Italian signora, dame: you look in vain for its plural form in Maltese. Sometimes these foreign words take even in the plural the Aryan flection: thus sinjur makes sinjuri in the plural, from Italian signore, pl. signori. It must be carefully noted that there is no plural ending in i in Maltese, but the
plural form *sinjuri* is taken from Italian in the same way as the singular *sinjur*. Maltese, therefore, borrows the words or the vocabulary, but the morphological rules for the inflection of the roots remains Semitic.

This is still more evident with the verbs of Aryan origin. In fact Maltese verbs of Aryan origin are conjugated on a Semitic pattern. Take for example the verb *irēva*; it is conjugated like the Semitic-Maltese verb *gatel*.

Perfect Qaṭel Irēva Imperfect Joqtol Jirēvi;
Qaṭlet Irēveit Toqtol Tirēvi
Qqilt Irēvejet Toqtol Tirēvi
Qqilt Irēvejt Noqtol Nirēvi
Qqilt Irēvejew Joqtol Jirēvi
Qqilta Irēvejetu Toqtol Tirēvi
Qqilna Irēvejna Noqtul Nirēvi

From all this it clearly follows that although Aryan verbs are conjugated in a Semitic way, they do not properly fit in with the rules of Semitic morphology, and it is very difficult to form proper grammatical rules for these foreign words. We must, therefore, either renounce to a scientific and uniform grammar, or exclude foreign words, as far as possible, from Maltese.

To conclude: I do not ignore that a great number of foreign words has acquired a right of citizenship in the Maltese vocabulary; and I am convinced that we cannot do without it; but it seems to me that every writer of Maltese must do his utmost to use Semitic-Maltese roots with preference to foreign words of non-Semitic origin, even if it will be necessary to have recourse to paraphrase and use several Maltese words for the one foreign word which we would like to use. If the use of foreign words is reduced to the least possible, the Maltese tongue will preserve better its Semitic character not only in the vocabulary, but most especially in its grammatical rules. If, on the contrary, great number of non-Semitic words are accepted into the Maltese tongue, grammar becomes more difficult and confuse, and no uniformity in grammatical rules will be possible.

BOOK REVIEWS

Prof. J. Aquilina, B.A., LL.D., Ph.D. (Lond.), *The Struggle*, Poems, Malta Empire Press, pp. 28.

Professor Joseph Aquilina, the distinguished scholar of the Maltese language, has issued a small volume of English poems, mostly reprinted from *The Sundial*.

In the Foreword he writes: “I have called this small collection of verse THE STRUGGLE because it reveals what I might describe as my soul’s drama, a fierce dynamic conflict producing an alternation of spiritual ecstasy and despondency.” This fairly describes the content. With regard to the form or manner (as opposed to the matter), he uses free verse, because “it has given the rush of my thoughts and feelings an unhampered aesthetic freedom from the shackles of traditional scansion”.

The good and the striking qualities of Dr. Aquilina verse are: a great vitality, often galvanised by spleen, anger and indignation, which makes his poems always alive and rapid in movement; a rich vocabulary; and a fine use of line-division and pause.

The fault of his verse is insufficient control. Meaning is smothered in a plethora of words; artistic unity is broken by over accrualion of non-essential images; and force lessened by too much insistence.

The hand that squeezes the tear out of the battered heart,
Has stopped me on the face and paralysed my thighs,
And I go limping about now, frightened to death,
Out of breath,
Sick to the bones that crackle within the withered flesh,
Nerves laid bare to the violence of touch,
And muscles pain-twitching the pressure of death,
The blood-veins poured out of the heart,
Into my mouth,
Like one outspitting one’s lung through the teeth,
With tubercular prostration, etc.