



SIR GODFREY ROLLES DRIVER, C.B.E., M.C.

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1892-1975

THE first thing to be said about G. R. Driver is that he was the son of a great Hebrew and Old Testament scholar. Samuel Rolles Driver, Regius Professor of Hebrew and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, formerly Scholar and then Fellow of New College, was the most distinguished British Hebraist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and played an influential part in winning acceptance in this country for the use of critical methods in the study of the Old Testament.

Godfrey Rolles Driver was born on 20 August 1892 as his parents' eldest child in the house in Christ Church that his father occupied as a canon. His mother, born Mabel Burr, was a niece of the wife of T. K. Cheyne, the Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, another distinguished Old Testament scholar, although his work became intellectually unbalanced in his later years. Mrs. Driver was not only the wife of an eminent scholar: she was a character in her own right, who was able, among other things, to insist that a parrot should be placed in her husband's study contrary, it is said, to his own wishes. Their son began his formal education at an excellent school in Bradmore Road, North Oxford, run by a certain Miss Owen whose pupils included a number who were to rise to bishoprics and other prominent positions. The young Driver's knowledge of the Old Testament was already sufficient to stand him in good stead, for he was able effectively to challenge his teacher's assertion that there was no book of Obadiah in the Bible. From Miss Owen's school he moved to Summerfields, also in North Oxford, where one of his contemporaries was Harold Macmillan, the future Prime Minister and Chancellor of Oxford University. Driver did not much like Summerfields, he said, because he was kept too clean, but it was from there that he won a scholarship to Winchester College where his father had been. Now, for the first time, he lived away from Oxford, and Winchester became, like his native city, an object of his loyalty and devotion for the rest of his life. In later years, the only tie he wore, except when in evening dress, was a Wykehamist one.

Even in those days, the foundations of Driver's future work

as a Hebraist were being laid. His father taught him Hebrew and would ask him to read to him from an unpointed text. A. E. Cowley's preface (dated in September 1910) to the second edition of his translation of *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar as edited and enlarged by the late E. Kautzsch* expresses thanks to 'my young friend, Mr. Godfrey R. Driver, of Winchester College, for some welcome help in correcting proofs of the Hebrew index and the index of passages'.

In 1911 Driver followed his father's example by going up to New College as a Scholar to read for Classical Moderations. Although he was placed in the second class (his failure to get into the first class may have been because he had been driven, and had driven himself, too hard), his distinction as a classic was shown by his winning the Gaisford Prize for Greek Prose in 1913 and for Verse in 1916. He also showed evidence of his promise as a student of Hebrew by winning in 1912 both the Junior Hall-Houghton Septuagint Prize and (like his father) the Pusey and Ellerton Hebrew Scholarship at the same time that he was studying classics.

S. R. Driver died in February 1914, and the war broke out a few months later. G. R. Driver joined the army in the following year. His military service was distinguished by the award of the Military Cross and by his being mentioned in dispatches, and he attained the rank of Major. He was wounded in the thigh by shrapnel in Serbia. The next part of the world to which he was sent was to have an influence on his future work, for he was moved to the Near East and began to gain the first-hand acquaintance with Palestine to which he was always to attach so much importance. He became acquainted with colloquial Arabic, and a report on Kurdistan and the Kurds was prepared in 1919 (and he later published several articles about the Kurds).

In 1919 Driver returned to Oxford, and was offered a Fellowship at Magdalen College while he was considering a similar invitation from another college. He accepted the offer at Magdalen, and he was a Fellow and, after his retirement, an Honorary Fellow for the rest of his life. He served the college in various ways—as Pro-Proctor in 1923, as Librarian from 1923 to 1940, and as Vice-President in 1931–2, and he was from the time of his election a Classical Tutor; he always stressed to his pupils in later years the value of a training in classics for anyone who wished to study the Old Testament. Although Driver taught classics for his college, Semitic languages were his own chief interest, and from 1920 onward he published numerous articles

on Hebrew and related languages, and he was elected in 1921 to the Senior Kennicott Hebrew Scholarship (his father had been a Scholar in 1870). In 1924 he married Madeleine Mary Goulding and so began an extremely happy marriage. The following year he taught as a Visiting Professor at a summer course at Chicago University. His first books appeared in 1925. *A Grammar of the Colloquial Arabic of Syria and Palestine* made use of what he had learned while serving in the Near East. *The Bazaar of Heracleides* was edited jointly by Driver and Leonard Hodgson, who was then also a Fellow of Magdalen and was later to become the Regius Professor of Divinity. Driver was responsible for the translation from Syriac of this work attributed to the heresiarch Nestorius, and Hodgson contributed the patristic learning. A different branch of Semitic scholarship appeared in *Letters of the First Babylonian Dynasty*, which established Driver's reputation as a promising Accadian scholar. Thus, in one year three books showed Driver's ability in no fewer than three Semitic languages other than Hebrew. The University appointed him a Lecturer in Comparative Semitic Philology in 1927, and a Reader in the following year, and he then gave up his Classical Tutorship.

Driver was now able to concentrate his energies on Semitic languages, though he was, in addition, an editor of the *Journal of Theological Studies* from 1933 to 1940. His learning in both Greek and Hebrew made him a suitable holder of the Grinfield Lectureship on the Septuagint, which he occupied from 1934 until 1939. He served as Deputy Professor of Hebrew in 1934, during a vacancy in the Professorship. His scholarship would have made him an obvious person to be appointed to the Regius Chair of Hebrew, which his father had occupied, but it was annexed to a canonry at Christ Church and G. R. Driver was not in Holy Orders. He was a practising lay member of the Church of England, but it would have been completely contrary to his principles to seek ordination merely to qualify himself for the Chair. A few years later, S. A. Cook was about to retire from the Regius Professorship of Hebrew at Cambridge, and Driver was invited to become his successor. He refused, primarily because the Chair was not attached to a Fellowship at any Cambridge College and Driver valued his Fellowship at Magdalen—though it would, in any case, be difficult to imagine Driver at home in any university but his own. Instead, he had the satisfaction of seeing one of his first pupils, D. Winton Thomas, going to the Chair in Cambridge in 1938.

Throughout these years, articles and reviews by Driver

continued to appear. His edition of *The Assyrian Laws*, which was written jointly with Sir John Miles, was published in 1935, and *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System* a year later. The University of Oxford recognized his attainments in 1938 by conferring on him the title of Professor of Semitic Philology. In the same year he was the President of the Society for Old Testament Study, whose meetings he attended regularly throughout his academic career until poor health made it impossible for him to be present, and he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy (of which his father had been a Fellow since its foundation) in 1939. He was also awarded in 1939 a Leverhulme Fellowship, which he hoped to use for travel abroad, but the outbreak of war compelled him to resign the award.

The Second World War again took Driver to Palestine, and he later served at the Ministry of Information in London. During the war, he had to go for a time to hospital on account of low blood pressure, but he later delighted to tell how he was envied by the other patients because he was told that he must take whisky. Despite his commitments, he was the Schweich Lecturer of the British Academy in 1944, and his lectures were published as *Semitic Writing from Pictograph to Alphabet* in 1948.

The years between the end of the war and Driver's retirement in 1962 were full of activity. Numerous articles continued to appear. Together with Sir John Miles he edited *The Babylonian Laws*, of which the two volumes were published in 1952 and 1955 respectively. Another book of the same period was an edition of texts in a different Semitic language—*Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1954). He was also working on an edition of texts in yet another Semitic language, Ugaritic, which was published as *Canaanite Myths and Legends* in 1956. Hebrew, however, was not neglected: he had been interested from the beginning in the Qumran scrolls. His brief work *The Hebrew Scrolls* (1951) gave his first impressions, and his later theories were worked out at length in *The Judaean Scrolls* (1965). He was the President of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament from 1953 to 1959, and their Congress was held in Oxford in the latter year. He was a member of the Advisory Committee of *Vetus Testamentum*, the Organization's quarterly journal, for the rest of his life. He also devoted much time to the preparation of the New English Bible (as his father had helped to prepare the Revised Version), and he became the Convener of the Old Testament Panel in 1957, and Joint Director (with Professor C. H. Dodd) in 1965. Nor did he neglect his university duties,

for he played a leading part in planning the building of the Oriental Institute, and he was a conscientious and enthusiastic teacher: he lectured regularly and frequently to small but keenly interested audiences on various books of the Hebrew Bible, the Qumran scrolls, Ugaritic texts, and Semitic philology, and he supervised research students. When, in 1959, Dr. C. A. Simpson, the Regius Professor of Hebrew, was appointed Dean of Christ Church, Driver was again appointed Deputy Professor of Hebrew, and he carried a very heavy teaching load during the interregnum. He had long believed that it was wrong for the Chair to be restricted to men in priest's orders, and he led a campaign to detach the professorship from the canonry. The campaign was successful, and Dr. W. D. McHardy, one of Driver's pupils, became in 1960 the first non-Anglican to hold the Chair. Driver, who had been allowed to retain his own post beyond the normal retiring age because of the changes to the statutes of the Regius Chair, eventually retired in 1962 at the age of 70.

The academic year that began in 1962, when Driver became Emeritus Professor of Semitic Philology, was what he described as his *annus mirabilis*. Magdalen elected him to an Honorary Fellowship, and two collections of essays were published in his honour: volume vii, part 2, of the *Journal of Semitic Studies* (1962), edited by Edward Ullendorff, a former pupil; and *Hebrew and Semitic Studies presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver* (1963), edited by two other pupils, D. Winton Thomas and W. D. McHardy. Driver received various honours both before and after his retirement. The British Academy awarded him the Burkitt Medal for Biblical Studies in 1953. The School of Oriental and African Studies of London University made him an Honorary Fellow in 1963. He received several honorary doctorates: a D.D. from Aberdeen University (who had similarly honoured his father forty years before) in 1946, and from Manchester University in 1956; a D.Litt. from Durham University in 1948, and from his own University of Oxford in 1970; Cambridge University, which had given his father an honorary Litt.D. in 1905, conferred the same honour on him in 1964. He was made a C.B.E. in 1958, and received a knighthood in 1968. Shortly before his death, he was glad to learn that he had been elected to an Honorary Fellowship by New College, where he had been an undergraduate.

Driver's retirement was far from inactive. Most of his time was devoted to the New English Bible and to writing articles,

but he was pleased to lecture again in Oxford for a few weeks when Professor McHardy was unwell. Early in 1967, he had a heart attack and, although he was soon able to return to work and would not have been happy if he had been unable to do so, the rest of his life was dogged by ill health. Happily, he was able to attend the service in Westminster Abbey that marked the publication of the complete New English Bible in 1970, to walk in the procession, and to read the first lesson in a way that earned much praise but had been made possible only by taking a double dose of pills. He continued to work afterwards, and the flow of articles did not cease, although his writings showed some signs of his poor health. In January 1971, when the Society for Old Testament Study met in Oxford under the Presidency of Professor Edward Ullendorff, his former pupil, he was able to read a paper. Despite his poor health, he seemed full of vigour and held the attention of his audience—much to the delight of all, particularly his pupils for whom the lecture brought back inspiring memories of the past. He died on 22 April 1975, and the funeral was held in Magdalen College Chapel, where he had so often worshipped.

In character, Driver was an honest and straightforward person, who spoke his mind plainly. Although some were opposed to him, he was not a man to take pleasure in nursing malice, and he would never descend to anything underhand or mean. His honesty was accompanied by a genuine humility: he did not pretend to be a lesser scholar than he was, but he put on no airs, and he was always willing to learn and to change his mind if there was a good reason for doing so. He did not claim to be infallible,¹ and he was the more respected for his good sense in being willing to learn as well as teach. His mind was always open to new ideas.

Driver's married life was stable and happy, and he was devoted to his wife and three daughters. Yet, for all his love of his family and home, he was never in the least domesticated. He had never lived in an ordinary house until he married at the age

¹ I once wrote an essay for him on the Semitic verbal system and ventured to criticize his theory on the ground that it did not account for the origin of *yaqtul* in West Semitic. He replied that he could not at once remember what his own theory was but that he would look into the question. At the following week's tutorial, he admitted that there was a weakness in his theory. Such frankness, without any attempt to cover up the difficulty, left no doubt in a young man's mind that his teacher was a true scholar.

of 32, and his wife's efficient management of the home relieved him of many domestic cares which often fall to husbands and for which his upbringing in a Victorian canon's home at Christ Church had not prepared him. It was not that he was unwilling to help. When, for example, Lady Driver once asked him if he would open the door of a garden shed that had stuck, he said he would be glad to do so provided she told him where it was. To the end of his days he continued to refer to 'the servants', even when the words bore little relation to the realities of the second half of the twentieth century. Similarly, he would ask his wife what time dinner would be served, and the answer would be simply that his poached egg would be on the table at 7 o'clock. Only once, in the severe winter of 1962-3, did he ever eat a meal in the kitchen, and he said he found it a very uncomfortable place.

One of Driver's characteristics was the possession of a boisterous sense of humour. As a small boy he loved practical jokes and was known to put dates in the gloves of old ladies who were visiting his home. Even in later years he enjoyed hiding in wardrobes and jumping out at people, or lowering children's teddy bears on strings from windows. It is not surprising that he got on well with children—at least, once they were no longer babies. Adults too found him good company. When he was sitting next to ladies at dinner parties or attended by nurses in hospital, his conversation was always entertaining, and a male guest invited to dine with him in college was sure of a good evening. One was often reminded of the spontaneous enthusiasm of a schoolboy, and it was quite in keeping with his personality for him to point to the decanter of claret that was set before a guest in Hall at Magdalen and say, 'There's your booze'.

Driver drove himself hard, and he was not happy unless he could devote long hours to his work. Yet his interests were not restricted to Semitic languages. He was interested in flowers, and it was one of the lasting disappointments of his life that, when he found a new orchid while he was still at Winchester and sent it to Kew, he was told that someone else had reported the same discovery just a few days before. Another long-standing interest was birds, and this interest impinged on his scholarly work, and he published several articles in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* for 1955, and in the revised edition of Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible* in 1963. He read a paper on 'Owls and Ostriches' in Cambridge in 1953 at a meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study, while his pupil D. Winton Thomas was the President,

and he sought to show that the Hebrew names for some birds were attempts to represent the sounds they made. Much to the delight of the audience, a small bird flew to the window-sill behind him and perched there, apparently to listen to the bird-like sounds that were being made by the lecturer. Not only did Driver's interests sometimes influence his choice of subjects for papers: his attempts to determine the meaning of biblical passages would also arouse his interest in various subjects. He would, for example, inquire about astronomical matters in order to understand biblical references to constellations, and the help of a medical colleague would be enlisted to identify the disease from which the Philistines in 1 Samuel 5 suffered or the skin diseases in the Old Testament that were traditionally, but inaccurately, known as 'leprosy' (and he claimed that he himself had 'true leprosy'). Similarly, despite his professed ignorance and lack of interest in scientific matters, he learned how alcohol can rise up the side of a glass by capillary attraction—a phenomenon to which he believed there was a reference in Proverbs 23: 31.

His interests did not include sport or organized games. Happily, Winchester was reasonably enlightened, and he did not have to go to the gymnasium more than once. When he went for a cross-country run, he would regularly start with the other boys but leave them near a railway bridge and sit under a bush with a text of Xenophon or Homer, and then rejoin the party on the way back. The same attitude remained in later years. 'The one good thing the scientists have done', he once said in a lecture, 'is to teach us to work in the afternoon.' That was high praise from one who had been to the school chemistry laboratory only twice. Driver's regular exercise was walking from his home to college or, in later years, to the Oriental Institute. He gave up riding a bicycle when he was young, and it is inconceivable that he should ever have driven a car. Lord Wolfenden, who was a Fellow of Magdalen for some years, reports that Driver 'maintained that the only exercise he ever took was following to their graves the coffins of people he knew who played games'.¹

Another subject in which Driver had no interest was music. Yet he regularly attended services in Magdalen College Chapel, which were renowned for the excellence of the organist and the choir. In that chapel, he used to try out draft passages of the Old Testament for the New English Bible by reading them at

¹ J. H. Wolfenden, *Turning Points. The Memoirs of Lord Wolfenden* (1976), p. 55.

the first lesson at Evensong. Driver was a faithful lay member of the Church of England, and he worshipped in his parish church, St. Andrew's, when there were no services at Magdalen. He also served on the Council of Wycliffe Hall, a theological college in Oxford. His opinions were decidedly low church, and he professed a suspicion of bishops, although a number of them were, in fact, among his friends, and he was pleased that he had once examined F. D. Coggan, the future Archbishop of York and then of Canterbury, for a Hebrew scholarship—and awarded it to him. His religious convictions were firmly held, but he was not a man to talk about them. The one religious principle of which he was prepared to speak was *laborare est orare*, and it is interesting that, when he read J. A. T. Robinson's controversial book *Honest to God*, he said that the only part of which he approved was the chapter on prayer.

When it came to assessing a man's academic ability and character, Driver was a shrewd judge. Though he sometimes made mistakes, he was usually right both in perceiving scholarly promise and in seeing through sham and pretension. If he believed a pupil was worthy of support, he would do all he could to help him, and his recommendations for vacant academic posts carried considerable weight. The late Sir James Duff, for example, the Warden of the Durham Colleges and Driver's former fag at Winchester, consulted him on several occasions about appointments in Hebrew or Old Testament studies. Nor did Driver's help for his pupils stop then. If they—or, indeed, other scholars—wrote to ask his opinion about the meaning of a Hebrew word or about the draft of an article, they would receive a letter or a postcard written in a hand that was regarded by some as pleasing to the eye, or even beautiful, but was found by all to be difficult to read.¹ The contents, which were invariably helpful, usually drew on the resources of his filing cabinet with its many thousands of slips containing lexicographical information.

Driver was primarily a philologist, and much of his work was concerned with the light shed by Semitic languages on one another. He became a general Semitic scholar at a time when it was still possible for one person to make a substantial contri-

¹ When Driver wrote to me to tell me my marks in the Final Honour School of Oriental Studies, he commented—with every justification—that what had counted most against me was my bad handwriting. It was some time before I could decipher his card.

bution to the study of several Semitic languages. During his life, scholarship grew more and more specialized, and it became increasingly difficult for one man to master the problems of several languages. There were limits even to Driver's work, for he wrote primarily about East and North-west Semitic languages. His first published article was, indeed, on 'The linguistic affinities of Syrian Arabic' in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for 1920, but he made little contribution to the study of South Semitic languages after his *Grammar of the Colloquial Arabic of Syria and Palestine* in 1925, although he made extensive use of Arabic in his publications on other Semitic languages.

His work as an Assyriologist began early, and he showed his ability in 1925 in *Letters of the First Babylonian Dynasty*. The following year, he contributed an appendix on 'Problems in the book of Genesis in the light of recent Babylonian, Assyrian and Egyptian research' to the twelfth edition of his father's commentary, *The Book of Genesis*; and he was also the author of an article on 'The [Old Testament] Psalms in the Light of Babylonian Research' in *The Psalmists*, edited by D. C. Simpson, whose pupil he had been.¹ He continued to be interested in Accadian studies until the end of his life, and his books on the Assyrian and Babylonian laws were important works. Nevertheless, it was beyond the powers of a scholar with interests as wide as those of Driver to keep in touch with all the most recent developments in Assyriology in later years.

An interest in Aramaic was also shown early. A review in the *Oxford Magazine*, xli (1922) of C. F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel*, was followed by two articles on the same subject in the *Jewish Guardian* for 1923. Of the three books of his that were published in 1925, one was, as we have seen, the translation of a Syriac work, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*. A number of articles on Aramaic appeared in later years, but his major work was *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.*, which was published in 1954, and in a revised and abridged form in 1957. It is an edition of thirteen letters in the Bodleian Library concerned with the Persian administration of Egypt. The most substantial part of the book is the philological commentary, which displays Driver's usual erudition although he acknowledges the help received from other scholars.

¹ The continuing interest of Driver's article for Old Testament scholars half a century later is shown by the fact that a German translation was recently published in P. H. A. Neumann (ed.), *Zur neueren Psalmenforschung* (1976).

The year after Driver was appointed to his Readership in 1928, texts in a hitherto unknown script and language were discovered at Ras Shamra, the site of the ancient city of Ugarit, on the coast of Syria. Driver played no part in the decipherment of the tablets and early stages of the study of the Ugaritic language, but he followed with characteristic interest developments in this new branch of Semitic studies. His *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (1956) combines in a single volume of moderate size an introduction, bibliography, transliteration of poetic texts, translation, grammatical notes, and glossary. This inexpensive work of reference has helped large numbers of Hebraists to acquaint themselves with the religious poetry of Ugarit and its language, and to see something of their great importance for the study of the Hebrew Bible. Driver's lexicographical suggestions and translations are often tentative, as he would have been the first to admit, but unlike some translators he offers readers the evidence for his renderings so that they may be able to form their own judgements. The book is undoubtedly a major contribution to the understanding of Ugaritic. Driver's work on the subject continued, and he wrote several further articles. He hoped to publish a revised edition of his book, but he eventually committed the revision to Dr. J. C. L. Gibson, a former pupil, and it was published in 1978.

Driver's publications on texts and problems in particular Semitic languages make use of the comparative method, and two of his books are devoted to general Semitic subjects. *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System* (1936) deals, not only with the problems of the language named in the title, but also with the evolution of the Semitic verbal system in general, and with other, related subjects such as the 'Basis of Semitic Roots' (chap. 2). The principal question discussed is one 'in which I confess a hereditary interest', as Driver says in the preface (p. v), for his father had published *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* in 1874 (3rd edn., 1892). S. R. Driver had understood the difference between the imperfect and perfect as a difference of aspect, and had sought to explain the so-called consecutive tenses, in which the usual meanings appear to be reversed, on the basis of that understanding. His son offers an entirely different explanation, partly because he is able to use Accadian evidence¹ not available to his father, and partly because of

¹ He was also aware of the Ugaritic evidence, and said in the preface (p. vi) that it was 'likely to support what is here said in several respects', but he did 'not think it prudent to use a language which is in course of being

publications since the appearance of his father's book. In particular, he is indebted to Hans Bauer, although he rejects a major part of Bauer's theory. Driver argues—if I may present his theory in an oversimplified form—that the original Semitic verb was *qátíl, a primarily stative and intransitive form which could be used of past, present, or future. The second form to be developed was *yaqátíl, an active and transitive verb which was used of the present and the future. The third was the preterite *yáqtul. In Hebrew, *qátíl has developed into the perfect qātdl, an active and transitive form which is normally used of the past; and *yáqtul has become the imperfect yiqtdl with a meaning not unlike that of *yaqátíl. However, traces of earlier meanings survive in the consecutive tenses, in certain other idioms, and in poetry. Hebrew is a mixed language: its consecutive tenses exhibit an affinity with East Semitic and an earlier stage of development, and the ordinary tenses represent the later, West Semitic stage. There are difficulties and inconsistencies in Driver's theory, and it is scarcely surprising that it cannot be accepted in its entirety forty years later. Indeed, one of Driver's pupils, T. W. Thacker, has suggested in *The Relationship of the Semitic and Egyptian Verbal Systems* (1954) some ways in which it needs to be modified. Nevertheless, Driver's book has an important place in the history of the subject, and it cannot be neglected by any scholar interested in the problem. The other general Semitic work is *Semitic Writing from Pictograph to Alphabet* (1948, revised editions in 1954 and 1976), the Schweich Lectures for 1944. The three chapters discuss in turn cuneiform scripts, alphabetic writing, and the origin of the alphabet, and the work contains a mass of information and is well illustrated by diagrams, drawings, and plates. It is an essential book for anyone interested in the origin of the alphabet. Driver also planned a book on Semitic philology, on which he used to lecture, but he did not manage to complete it in a form suitable for publication.

While Driver published books and articles on several Semitic languages, classical Hebrew stood at the centre of his interests. Before we look at his work on the Hebrew Bible, it will be convenient to consider his writings on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

As soon as the discovery of the first scrolls at Qumran in 1947 was made public, Driver took an interest in these important new documents. After writing several letters to *The Times* and deciphered largely with the help of Hebrew to throw light on unsolved problems in Hebrew itself'.

articles for journals, he delivered the fourth of the Dr. Williams Lectures in October 1950, and it was published (in a form that made use of more recent information) as *The Hebrew Scrolls from the Neighbourhood of Jericho and the Dead Sea* in the following year. He gave a summary of the information available at the time of writing, and then discussed the date. His independence of most scholars was shown by his arguing for a date between A.D. 200 and 500, much later than the pre-Christian date favoured by some. So late a dating was abandoned by him a few years afterwards, but it was not an unreasonable hypothesis at the time, and he advanced carefully reasoned arguments against a date before the Christian era. The palaeographical argument for an early date seemed to him unconvincing in view of the paucity of comparable material, and he rightly questioned the claim that the jars in which the scrolls were found came from the Hellenistic, not the Roman, period and the further argument that the scrolls must, therefore, have been written before the Roman conquest of Palestine—and R. de Vaux was soon to admit that his early dating of the jars had been mistaken. Driver's arguments were concerned chiefly with the paragraph division in the biblical manuscripts, the biblical text, and the orthography and the light it shed on the contemporary language. He believed that the scrolls had been written at a time when the text of the Hebrew Bible had begun to be standardized, and when Hebrew was no longer, in any sense, a living language, and that the evidence favoured a date in the Christian era, and not too near its beginning. In particular, he noted the spelling of the second person masculine singular pronominal suffix and the perfect with a final *-āh*, and the argument of E. Sievers and P. E. Kahle that it was a late phenomenon in Biblical Hebrew, though he did not date its origin as late as in Kahle's theory. It is now plain that the theories of Sievers and Kahle must be revised, and Driver later modified his own argument, but it, like the other arguments that he first advanced for the dating of the scrolls, seemed much more plausible in 1951 than it did in the light of further discussion. When the evidence showed that Driver's date for the scrolls was in need of revision, he was prepared to modify his first, provisional theory.

Within the next few years, Driver advanced a theory about the origin of the scrolls which was essentially the same as the one advocated by Dr. C. Roth, the Reader in Jewish Studies at Oxford. Driver read papers on the subject on various occasions, and worked out his theory at length in the Cadbury Lectures

in Birmingham University in 1958, which were published in an expanded form in 1965 as *The Judaean Scrolls*. He argued that the Qumran sect was, not the Essenes as the majority of scholars held, but the Zealots, and that the Teacher of Righteousness (or rather, in his opinion, the Rightful Teacher) was a messianic pretender named Menahem who was killed in A.D. 66 by his enemy Eleazar, whom Driver identified with the Wicked Priest (cf. Josephus, *Jewish War*, II, xvii. 8, 9 [§§ 433-40, 448]). While he dated the Manual of Discipline c. A.D. 44-66, before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, Driver believed that some documents at Qumran were written later: the Habakkuk Commentary about A.D. 70-3, the Thanksgiving Hymns soon after 73, the War Scroll between then and 115-17, and the Zadokite Document some time before 132-5. The caves at Qumran served, he maintained, as a *genizah*, in which heterodox writings and biblical texts that did not conform to the newly established standards were concealed by orthodox Jews in the first part of the second century A.D. Such opinions continued to be defended by Driver in a number of articles.

The Judaean Scrolls differs from most of Driver's publications in that it is concerned with historical questions, although it also shows his more usual linguistic interests. It contains much detailed information and discussion about Jewish sects, the historical background, contemporary beliefs and practices, different calendrical systems, ciphers and cryptograms, the bearing of the scrolls on the study of the New Testament, and a variety of other subjects. The main theses for which the book argues have not won wide acceptance among scholars, but there are two reasons why it is of great value even for those who do not share all the author's opinions. First, the detailed information relevant to the scrolls remains useful whether or not the inferences drawn from it by Driver are accepted. Secondly, it is healthy for a widely accepted theory, like the view that the Qumran sectarians were Essenes, to be challenged by a competent scholar, and for attention to be drawn to its difficulties and weaknesses. Driver argues his case forcibly with a wealth of relevant knowledge. The closing paragraph shows his modest awareness that his own conclusions might 'be disproved by subsequent discovery and research'. Many scholars believe that those conclusions are improbable, but they have no right to put forward different theories unless they have faced and answered Driver's arguments.

The grammar, the text, and above all the lexicography of the

Hebrew Bible were probably of greater interest to Driver than anything else. He published numerous articles on the subject of Hebrew lexicography, and he amassed many thousands of slips recording material of lexicographical interest for the Hebrew dictionary that he hoped to prepare in collaboration with Professor D. Winton Thomas. His influence is clearly to be seen in the translation of the Old Testament in the New English Bible, which has reached millions of readers outside the world of Semitic scholarship. In these parts of his work, he was conscious of the example set by his father, for S. R. Driver had shared in the preparation of the Revised Version of the Old Testament, and was, with F. Brown and C. A. Briggs, an editor of *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1907).

There can be no doubt that the vocabulary of Hebrew was far more extensive when it was a living language than the entries in any standard lexicon of the Old Testament. Driver believed that many lost meanings could be recovered by comparison with other Semitic languages. In particular, he believed that a large number of problems that had led scholars to emend the text could be more satisfactorily solved by postulating that the text was sound (at least, the consonantal text, for the later vocalization was less reliable), and that the word, or words, in question had a meaning that had been forgotten in later times. Sometimes, too, it was necessary to distinguish between two different Hebrew roots, although they appear as a single root in the dictionaries. Brown, S. R. Driver, and Briggs, for example, regarded the Hebrew verb *'ābar*, 'pass over, through, by, pass on', as cognate with Arabic *'abara* with a similar meaning, and derive from the same root *'abrāh*, 'overflow, arrogance, fury'. G. R. Driver, however, believed that the noun has nothing to do with 'overflow' and with the Hebrew verb, but that it is related to Arabic *ġabira*, 'to bear rancour'; the roots are distinguished in Arabic, but the two Arabic consonants *'ain* and *ghain* correspond to the one Hebrew consonant *'ayin*, and most lexicographers have confused the roots in Hebrew. Such a use of Arabic, or some other cognate language, as an aid to the understanding of Hebrew was not, of course, invented by Driver. It has a long history behind it, and the example given above goes back to J. D. Michaelis in the eighteenth century. Driver developed the method in the light of the extensive modern knowledge of Semitic languages and the principles of comparative Semitic philology. Further, he argued, many meanings that were lost in later times are preserved in the ancient versions of

the Old Testament, whose renderings are often confirmed by a comparison with words in languages cognate with Hebrew. The use of Driver's comparative method to discover a lost meaning of a Hebrew word involves: first, the existence of a difficult word in the Hebrew Bible that does not make sense if it is given its usual meaning; secondly, a suitable meaning in a cognate language or, preferably, languages; thirdly, if possible, a similar translation of the same word somewhere in one or more of the ancient versions. Thus use of this method has had the result that the New English Bible contains many translations not found in older English versions.

Driver's method needs to be used with caution. First, it is necessary to make sure that the difficulties of a passage cannot be solved by ascribing to the words meanings that are well attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; and it cannot be assumed that the derivation of a meaning from a cognate language is always a superior solution of a problem to emendation of the text. Secondly, the meanings of apparent cognates need to be scrutinized very carefully. There are a vast number of words in the various Semitic languages, particularly in the massive vocabulary of Arabic, and it is necessary to check the exact meanings under consideration and to allow for the possibility that they are developments peculiar to a particular language. Thirdly, it is hazardous to use a particular word in an ancient version as evidence for a tradition about the meaning of a Hebrew word without considering the technique used by the translator elsewhere in the same book, and the textual history of the version. The handling of the ancient versions requires specialist skills of its own. There is a whole range of degrees of probability, and it is often difficult to be sure how probable a particular suggestion is. Moreover, while it is legitimate to register theories and suggestions in scholarly journals, it is arguable that greater caution should be exercised before a lexicographical theory is used in an official Church translation of the Old Testament. It is not surprising that there has been a reaction in recent years against the use of the comparative method. The criticisms made by James Barr in *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (1968) have been influential, although it must be stressed that Barr is not opposed to the use of the method provided proper safeguards are observed. It is generally recognized that Driver was sometimes carried away by his enthusiasm, and that a number of translations suggested by him and incorporated in the New English Bible need to be reconsidered. There are even

places where resort is had to the questionable expedient of emending the text to produce a *hapax legomenon*.

Nevertheless, the fact that a number of Driver's suggestions are open to question should not lead scholars to lose a sense of proportion and to overlook his convincing contributions to the understanding of the Hebrew Bible. A comparison with cognate languages is undoubtedly helpful in determining the meaning of many Hebrew words, and the Ugaritic texts were translated largely with the help of other Semitic languages. If Driver went too far on occasions, it was usually because the excitement of discovery led him to overlook the principles that he himself advocated, not because comparison of Hebrew with cognate languages is of little value to a lexicographer. Further, he had the art of looking afresh at passages of the Hebrew Bible and seeing problems to which most scholars had been blinded by familiarity. Those who do not accept his solutions have not always offered satisfactory alternative explanations or even shown that they have recognized the problems.

Anyone who read Hebrew at Oxford while Driver was teaching and the late Canon H. Danby was the Regius Professor of Hebrew was fortunate in having the opportunity to learn two different approaches to the textual problems of the Hebrew Bible. Danby was not sympathetic to attempts to discover lost meanings of Hebrew words. Nor did he emend the text very often, not because he believed it to be sacrosanct and free from error, but because he was aware of the uncertain nature of emendations. His first aim was always to make sense, if possible, of the traditional Hebrew text by employing standard grammars and dictionaries, in which well-established meanings of words are recorded—and also, though not all undergraduates who heard him recognized this side of Danby's work, by studying medieval Jewish commentaries. His approach contrasted sharply with Driver's more ingenious method. Both methods are needed for Hebrew studies. Driver's method needs to be checked by Danby's caution. If, however, Danby's method were to be followed to the exclusion of more venturesome ideas, the door would be closed to the progress that can be made by new attempts to solve problems. Any Oxford undergraduate or graduate in the years when the two professors were teaching who was willing and able to learn from them both was well equipped to face the problems of the Hebrew Bible. Driver was undoubtedly the greater scholar of Biblical Hebrew, but it was good that Danby's voice was heard as well.

A most important part of Driver's contribution to the study of Hebrew was his teaching. He was a most stimulating lecturer. It was not that he had mastered the technique of lecturing. Indeed, he often broke the rules by, for example, writing words from various Semitic languages on the blackboard at high speed and then rubbing them out again before his pupils had had time to decipher and copy them. What made his lectures so exciting was his infectious enthusiasm. No lecture of his that I attended was ever dull: every one was a stimulating experience in which those present learned something new and shared something of Driver's excitement and interest. I was fortunate in hearing a number of good lecturers in the years I studied at Oxford, but none was as inspiring as Driver.

No attempt was made by Driver to fit his pupils into a mould. He valued independence of judgement and scorned any idea of founding a 'school' of pupils who would regularly follow the master; that would have seemed to him academical egotism unworthy of a scholar. He did his best to help his pupils, and he presented to them what he believed to be the truth, but he respected them if they made up their own minds and did not follow slavishly what he taught. He wanted them to think for themselves and to have a good knowledge of the relevant texts in the original language, and what mattered above all to him was, as he said, 'to do good work'.

A number of Driver's pupils and friends subscribed to the cost of a drawing of him by William Dring. It hangs on the wall of the top floor of the Oriental Institute,¹ which is itself a memorial to his enterprise and energy. Near it hangs a picture of his father.

J. A. EMERTON

Note. A list of Driver's publications up to 1962 can be found in D. Winton Thomas and W. D. McHardy (eds.), *Hebrew and Semitic Studies presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver* (Oxford, 1963). It is hoped to publish a supplementary list in a future issue of *Vetus Testamentum*. I am indebted to Lady Driver, and to Professors W. G. Lambert and Edward Ullendorff for help in preparing this obituary.

¹ There is another drawing of him by the same artist in Magdalen College.