

Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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The Exploration of Arabia Petræa.

ONE of the most important works that have appeared for many years past on the geography and anthropology of the nearer East has just been published by the Imperial Academy of Science at Vienna.¹ It embodies the geographical and ethnological discoveries of Dr. Alois Musil, and is a continuation of the account of his exploration of Moab contained in the first volume of the work. Thanks to Dr. Musil's indefatigable labours, not only the topography of Petra and the surrounding district, but also the geography of the whole desert between Gaza and Aqaba has been thoroughly examined and surveyed. In spite of innumerable difficulties—murderous Beduin, hostile Turkish officials, fractious Kurdish guards, and malarial fever—he has travelled year after year through the old land of Edom, visiting places previously left unexplored, verifying or correcting earlier observations, and collecting the songs and folklore of the desert tribes. Year after year he has returned with fresh spoils—Nabathean and Greek inscriptions, photographs of ruined cities and rock-cut tombs of which nothing had been previously known, as well as trigometrical surveys. Petra and its neighbourhood have now been as fully mapped as any of the ancient sites of Egypt, and it is questionable whether the desert to whose exploration Dr. Musil has thus devoted himself has any discoveries left for a future traveller to make. The volumes have been brought out in a manner worthy of their contents. Paper and type are alike sumptuous, and the numerous photographs with which they are enriched are exceptionally good.

The most striking fact which Dr. Musil's discoveries have emphasized is that in the Roman age Arabia Petræa was one of the richest and most flourishing regions of the world. The waterless desert of to-day, with its scanty population of savage Beduin, was filled with well-built cities, was intersected by roads, and was protected by a series of forts. Stately public and private buildings rose

¹ *Arabia Petraea*; vol. ii. *Edom*; vol. iii. *Ethnologischer Reisebericht*. By Alois Musil. Vienna: Hölder, 1908.

within the city walls, and the dead were buried in costly tombs. The trade between the far East and Europe passed through Arabia Petræa, and this it was which led to the rise of Nabathean Petra and the wealth of the merchant princes who inhabited it. Where there is now only the Beduin robber, the trader once carried the silks of China and the sandalwood and gold of India to the wealthy patricians of Rome. When Petra lost its independence the trade still continued; Roman garrisons kept the 'Saracen' or Arab at bay, and the population of the 'Arabian province' showed no signs of diminishing. The number of cities and fortresses, the ruins of which have been discovered or examined by Dr. Musil, is really astonishing, and makes one realize more than ever what an utter destruction of culture and civilization the fall of the Roman Empire involved.

None of the ruins, it must be remembered, can be assigned to an earlier date than the Roman or Græco-Roman age. The history of Petra itself cannot be traced back beyond the time of Alexander. Doubtless, however, excavation will yet bring to light remains of an earlier period. The trade from the East already passed through Edom in the time of David and Solomon; it was this which made the possession of Edom a matter of importance to David, and which caused Jehoshaphat, like Solomon before him, to build 'ships of Tarshish' on the Gulf of Aqaba. But the Amalekites or Beduin were already troublesome to their more civilized neighbours in the days of Saul, and, as we learn from the Book of Genesis, formed an integral part of the population of Edom. The geographical table of Shishak, at Karnak, records little else than Beduin settlements in Arabia Petræa, and at an earlier epoch we hear only of a few wells as existing there. It is true that the Nabathean Ishmaelites were established in the district, but their fortified 'enclosures' (Gn 25¹⁶) would have been erected beside the highroads of trade and war. That there was such a highroad as far back as the age of Khammu-rabi we know from the fact that Chedor-laomer and his vassals marched to Kadesh-barnea and 'smote all the country of the Amalekites,' thereby opening it out to trade.

The site of Kadesh seems to have been so definitely fixed at 'Ain Qadis by Dr. Clay Trumbull's masterly work on the subject, that it is somewhat disturbing to find Dr. Musil throwing doubt on the identification. The result of his third visit to the Wady, he tells us, was to make him less inclined than ever to accept the identification, since the place is unsuitable for an encampment, being too stony and narrow, and in winter liable to sudden floods. Most of the Wadys, however, where there is water are subject to the latter inconvenience, and, geographically, it is difficult to discover any other site for the ancient Spring of Judgment. It will be interesting to hear what are the results of Professor Robinson's recent examination of the spot.

Let me take this opportunity of suggesting to motorists that they could not employ themselves better than in exploring the deserts between Egypt and Palestine. Dr. Ruffer tells me that the desert of the Tih offers admirable travelling-ground for a motor, and could be traversed in a few hours, and the greater portion of the desert to the north-east could be traversed almost as easily. With a motor the difficulties of exploration in this inhospitable corner of the world would practically vanish; Beduin, want of water, and fatigue could alike be set at defiance.

Not the least valuable part of Dr. Musil's two volumes on Edom are the indices of geographical names which are given both in Arabic and in transcription. Dr. Musil has a thorough knowledge of colloquial as well as of literary Arabic, and for the first time, therefore, we have a list of the names which is at once complete and trustworthy. The itineraries which he also gives, with a statement of the number of hours he occupied in going from one place to another, will be found extremely useful.

I have left myself but little space for speaking of the third volume on ethnology and folklore. In it Dr. Musil has collected a most interesting mass of material bearing on the beliefs, habits, and customs of the people whom Balaam described as 'the earliest of nations.' The Beduin are usually supposed to be as free from religious beliefs as the gypsies of Europe; this, however, is shown not to be altogether the case. Some glimmerings of a belief in a life to come exist among them; the soul is regarded as separate from the body, and believed to flit after death round the bones of the

corpse. A certain school of anthropologists will welcome the statement that 'according to the opinion of the 'Amârin the dead appear especially in dreams.' Traces of the worship of ancestors may be detected, as in Egypt, in the annual pilgrimages to the graves of the forefathers of a tribe, each family bringing a goat 'without blemish,' a sheep, or a camel, which it offers upon the grave. The grave itself possesses a special sanctity, and for a grave to be desecrated is an unheard-of crime. In this respect the Beduin differ from the fellahin of Egypt, whose ideas as to the sanctity of the grave have been modified by Mohammedanism.

No detail in the life of the Beduin has been neglected by Dr. Musil; birth, death, and marriage, clothing and habitation, superstitions and food, are all alike passed in review, and a formidable list of tribes is enumerated which alone must have required much patient labour to compile. In short, the student of the modern representatives of the Amalekites of the Old Testament will find here everything relating to them which he can desire to learn.

The Babylonian Christ.

Dr. Hugo Radau has just published a very interesting little book on *Bel, the Christ of Ancient Times* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1908), which ought to attract others besides Assyriologists. The first part of it is intended for the Assyriologist only; the second part, however, appeals to the theologian and the general public. In it he seeks to show that the primitive Babylonian regarded the world as the product of a marriage between heaven and earth, considered as husband and wife, which made them 'one flesh,' so that either of the two was at once 'heaven and earth' or 'husband and wife.' The wedding festival took place at the beginning of spring, and typified a resurrection of nature, the New Year's festival being in its origin a festival of rising from the dead. This is an important fact, and I think that Dr. Radau has gone far to prove it. The texts he quotes are quite sufficient to show that the Semitic Babylonians inherited a doctrine of the resurrection from their Sumerian predecessors, and that this doctrine was closely related to a belief in the resurrection of a god of vegetation, whose marriage with the earth brought about the renewal of nature. The god of vegeta-

tion was Nin-Girsu (called Ingurisa by the Semites), who was identified with Nin-ip, the 'messenger' or angel of En-lil, into whom he was afterwards absorbed, as 'the angel of Yahveh' was absorbed into Yahveh. In one of the texts quoted by Dr. Radau, it is said of Nin-ip: 'He who has been brought down into the nether world (*arallu*), his body thou bringest back again.'

After the rise of the Khammu-rabi dynasty, Merodach took the place of En-lil, and, Dr. Radau argues, was himself displaced by Christ in Christian dogma. The resurrection at Easter-tide, and the entrance thereby of the divine 'Lord' into his kingdom, were no new ideas; the resurrection of Christ found a world already prepared to understand and believe it. Perhaps Dr. Radau is right in seeing references to old Babylonian conceptions in some of the words used about the resurrection of Christ by the New Testament writers. When St. Paul says that Christ received 'a name which is above every name,' or when we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew that the bodies of the saints arose from their graves 'after his resurrection,' we are irresistibly reminded of the early Babylonian hymns. Dr. Radau, however, can hardly be right in his interpretation of 1 P 3¹⁸, where he would make *ζωοποιήσις* equivalent to being 'quickened'

or 'raised from the dead' on the third day, when spirit and body were again united. We should have to change the reading of the verse before we could reconcile such an explanation with the rules of Greek grammar; as it stands, the passage can only be rendered: 'Christ suffered, in order to bring us to God, being carnally done to death, but spiritually vivified' at the moment of death. It was the death of the flesh which brought about the vivification of the spirit.

Dr. Radau's division of the history of Babylonian religion, and therewith of Babylonia itself, into three periods—Sumerian, Canaanite, and Assyrian—is very suggestive. I would only add to it a 'Babylonian' epoch which intervened between the Sumerian and the Canaanite; and I hope that the early religious texts from the temple library of Nippur which he has been engaged in copying will soon be made public. He tells us that they show that the Babylonian religion was 'a purely monotheistic religion, more particularly a monotheistic trinitarian religion, patterned after the Nippurian prototype En-lil ("Father"), Errish (or Nin-ib, "Son"), Nin-lil ("Mother"), which Trinity is represented in the Old Testament by Yahveh (or Elohim, "Father"), Mal'ak Yahveh (or Angel of the Lord, "Son"), and Ruach ("Spirit").'

Contributions and Comments.

Ancient Babylonian Astrology.

A PAMPHLET which has just been issued at the Oriental Congress at Copenhagen (A. Jeremias und Hugo Winckler, 'Im Kampf um den alten Orient,' No. 3; Alfr. Jeremias, *Das Alter der babylonischen Astronomie*. Leipzig: Hinrichs) comes as a bomb-shell, the so-called Astral-System of Hugo Winckler having recently appeared to many to have been completely disposed of by Pater Kugler, Franz Boll, Eduard Meyer, Pater Wilh. Schmidt, and others.¹ The paper, though short, contains much matter. It derives its importance from the fact that it contains several new cuneiform documents, which quash every contradiction. Two of them are from the Temple Library of Nippur, which will yet be the cause of many surprises, and one is from the inscriptions discovered at

Boghazkiöi (c. 1300 B.C.). My arrangement of an Assyrian list of planets according to their distance from the earth, which has been accepted by Professor Winckler, is now proved by inscriptions to be very ancient. And how advanced Chaldaic Astronomy was even 2000 years B.C. is now shown by the small tablet of Hilprecht, cited by Jeremias on p. 14, and there commented on by me. Unfortunately, a few printer's errors have been allowed to stand: We should read $\times 7$ (instead of 'mul, i.e. star, 7'), and in the sixth line from the end 6×60 (instead of 6×50). Again, on p. 25 the last line but one of the note should read Archer and Scorpion (instead of Archer and Crab). These mistakes make the doubts of A. Jeremias which are expressed there quite unnecessary. It is to be hoped that others, perhaps Professor Sayce, will have something to say on this highly interesting paper.

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¹ With regard to the Astral-Myths in the Old Testament, Professor Winckler seems to me also to go much too far.