

BREVIA.

Schrader's Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament.¹—It has been a matter of great surprise to us for some years past, that no English publisher has thought it worth while to produce an English version of Dr. Schrader's *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*. When the first German edition appeared in 1872, a rush was made for it from all quarters, and the result was that in a very short time the copies were all sold and quite unobtainable. About ten years elapsed before Dr. Schrader saw his way to giving a second and enlarged edition to the world; when this actually appeared in 1882, the scholar was delighted to see that the book had become almost doubled in thickness. And no wonder need be felt that the book had become so large; for during those ten years the science of Assyriology had consolidated itself, had expanded its range of action, and had made its importance felt in every branch of Semitic and Biblical learning. Only a few years ago the results announced by the Assyriologists were received with positive unbelief by the greater portion of the literary and religious world; and even those who felt disposed to give every branch of learning a chance in the struggle for existence, looked askance at the helpless infant Assyriology in its cradle. When Dr. Schrader published his first edition of the *Keilinschriften*, he was one of the six or seven men in Europe who had given any real attention to the subject of the cuneiform inscriptions, or who perceived their true value. Sir Henry Rawlinson, Prof. A. H. Sayce, Mr. George Smith, Dr. Hincks and Mr. Edwin Norris represented the students of England; Dr. Oppert and M. Lenormant those of France; while in Germany Dr. Schrader stood alone. The literature of Assyriology in those days was very scanty, and students were entirely dependent upon the three volumes of *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, published by Sir Henry Rawlinson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Norris for the Trustees of the British Museum. Very few texts had been translated, and the translators openly avowed that their work was only tentative. The longest texts that had been done into English

¹ *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, by E. Schrader. Translated from the second enlarged German edition, by O. C. Whitehouse. Vol. i. Williams & Norgate.

were those of Tiglath-Pileser I., B.C. 1120, and Assurbanipal, B.C. 668; the former containing eleven hundred short lines of Assyrian text. Mr. Norris had commenced to make an Assyrian Dictionary; but this latter work was begun on too large a scale, and only three volumes of it were published; these, however, form a marvellous monument of the industry and ability of their writer, for the student may consult these volumes with advantage to this day. In this dark and very early dawn of the day of Assyriology, Dr. Schrader conceived the idea of collecting from the cuneiform inscriptions all the evidence that could be made of use in explaining, supporting, or proving the statements of the books of the Bible. It was a grand idea, and one, which to work out, required incessant labour, a knowledge of the collateral languages of the Assyrian group, and an acquaintance with the history of their peoples. Nothing daunted by the paucity of material, Dr. Schrader made the best use of what he had, and published his little book. It was at once apparent how great was the importance of the newly discovered reading of the Assyrian language to the historian, antiquary and theologian, but more particularly to the last. From that time forward books on Assyrian multiplied. The Society of Biblical Archæology published copies of important Assyrian texts with translations; Mr. Smith published his *Eponym Canon*, a book of the greatest importance for Assyrian chronology; *Assyrian Discoveries*; and the *Chaldean Genesis*; and in 1875 an era was marked in Assyrian studies by the publication of an *Assyrian Grammar*, with a full syllabary in Assyrian type, by Rev. A. H. Sayce. It must not be imagined that the French students were idle; on the contrary, MM. Oppert, Menant, and Lenormant, with the greatest diligence, published several works, each adding some new fact to those already known. Each year saw some new and important publication; and each year saw the domain of Assyrian knowledge extending more and more. Amid all this activity, Dr. Schrader was comparing, making notes, and ripening his conclusions on Assyrian and Biblical matters; gleaning ideas and information that would be of use in a new edition of his *Keilinschriften*. Those who are in any way acquainted with the labour such work entails, will readily appreciate Dr. Schrader's industry and perseverance. In addition to this he was preparing for publication his masterly work, *Keilinschriften und Geschichtsforschung*, a book dedicated to the elucidation of Assyrian geography, and the

scholarly treatise on Assyrian grammar which was published in the *Zeitschrift* of the German Oriental Society.

In 1882, then, the second edition of the *Keilinschriften* appeared. On studying this work one found that every book, "paper," and publication on Assyrian matters of importance had been consulted, and in many cases used; and that the work had really been brought up to the level of Assyrian scholarship of that time. The book appealed more to the specialist and scholar than to the general reader, and the fact that there was no English translation excluded its beneficial and learned influence from the library of many an English student and seeker after truth. Dr. Schrader's plan is to begin at the beginning of the Bible, and taking verse by verse to add all the proofs, or confirmations of it, that he has been able to gather from the cuneiform inscriptions. His authorities he gives at the foot of the page, hence the reader or student is able to control the statements made. The earlier part of the work, containing the elucidations and explanatory notes on Genesis, is that which will appear of the most importance to the reader. Almost every line of the simple but majestic account of the creation as recorded in Genesis has its counterpart in the Assyrian legends. The awful chaos waiting for the Divine mandate which would give light and order, the creation of light and the luminaries, the establishment of the brute creation and the trees, all these things are described in a manner that makes us feel that we are only reading a different version of the account of the creation of the world which was the common property of the Semitic race. When Abraham migrated from his fatherland, he carried all these traditions with him. His God, El-Shaddai, led and directed him, and it has long since been pointed out that this name for the Deity is of Babylonian origin. The stories of the fall, of the cherubim who guarded Paradise, and many others, have, it appears to us, been based upon the ideas of the ancient dwellers of Mesopotamia, from whom Abraham sprung. The account of the wickedness of man, of the determination of the gods to destroy him from off the face of the earth, of the ark, of the saving of the "chosen few," of the total destruction of all other living creatures, and of Noah's sacrifice to God on the damp soil of the "new earth," have all faithful counterparts in the narratives read upon the clay tablets of Assurbanipal's library. In future days, when other Babylonian and Assyrian libraries have been found and their contents studied,

we shall be able to fix a date for the composition of these works, but at present it is impossible. Dr. Schrader's book, apart from its special information, is full of excellent suggestions and thoughtful theories in respect of Bible difficulties. His learning enables him to state these with authority; and his sober sense entitles them to serious consideration, and much deference. His readers will also much appreciate the map by Dr. Kiepert at the beginning of the volume, for it is based on the authority of the cuneiform inscriptions. So far as we have seen, the English translation has been well and carefully done: the sense of the original has been well preserved and Dr. Schrader is very fortunate in that his book has fallen into the hands of a translator so learned and sympathetic. The "prefatory remarks" which the Rev. O. C. Whitehouse has added to his translation, are excellent; and we congratulate him on the successful completion of the first part of a difficult task. It is to be hoped that in its English guise, Dr. Schrader's careful and learned book may find its way into the hands of Bible students of all denominations. And we trust that the example of this German scholar and divine may emulate others to follow in his footsteps, and continue the good work which he has so ably begun.

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