

REVIEWS AND NOTICES OF PUBLICATIONS.

In the *Expository Times* for November, 1915, Dr. Buchanan Gray discusses the Hebrew names mentioned on the *ostraka* discovered by the Harvard University expedition in the course of their excavation of the site of the city of Samaria in 1908-10. Unfortunately, no complete account has yet been published of these *ostraka*: no facsimiles, no Hebrew text of the inscriptions, not even all the inscriptions have been made known. On the other hand, the evidence, such as it is, is most welcome, and Prof. Gray's investigation leads to interesting results. The remarks of the late Prof. Driver, in an article on the discoveries in the *Q.S.*, April, 1911, will already be familiar to our readers. The *ostraka* are ascribed to the ninth century B.C., perhaps to the reign of Ahab: the story that there was also found "an Assyrian cuneiform inscription mentioning the name of Ahab and the contemporary king of Assyria," proved to be unfounded. The potsherds were actually discovered at the same level as a vase inscribed with the name of Osorkon II of Egypt, whose reign (874-833) makes him a contemporary of Ahab. The script is said to be "practically identical with that of the Siloam Tunnel Inscriptions," and also to be the same as that of the Moabite stone; but in the absence of facsimiles, this statement can with difficulty be grasped, because, although the two scripts have very much in common—as contrasted with later alphabets—they are not by any means identical. Thus the epigraphical arguments are at present uncertain, and we must await the publication of facsimiles. In the meanwhile, Dr. Gray turns to the data supplied by the proper names. His conclusion is that the names favour a date between David and Jeremiah, *i.e.*, between the tenth and seventh centuries, and nearer the earlier than the later term. As an illustration of the general style of the inscriptions we may quote No. 12: "In the tenth year. From Yasat. A jar of fine oil. For Ahinoam." It should be observed that we have both place-names and names of persons, and that our vocalization of the Hebrew consonants is conjectural, and will usually be influenced by Biblical parallels or analogues. Some of the names

are familiar, *e.g.*, Abiezer, Shemida, Shechem, Elmathan (apparently for El-nathan), Elisha and Sheba.

Taking all the names as a whole, Dr. Gray finds that they resemble the group of names of David's contemporaries in 2 Sam. ix-xx, with certain differences which may be associated with the features we find in the groups of the contemporaries of Jeremiah and Ezra. An interesting circumstance is the number of compounds of Baal—four, if not six, in all. It has been suggested (by Prof. Lyon, of Harvard University) that this fact may be connected with "the great development of Baal-worship in Israel during the reign of Ahab, whose queen, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, was specially devoted to this cult." Dr. Gray observes, on the other hand, that Ahab does not give his children names compounded with Baal. Moreover, if the inscriptions, dated in the ninth to the eleventh years, really belong to the reign of Ahab, the bearers of the names, who can hardly have been mere children, must have been born some while before the great development of Baal-worship which took place in his reign. Finally, the Baal-names are not relatively much more numerous than they are in the documents pertaining to the Davidic Age. No doubt, as we know from other sources, Yahweh (Jehovah) was regarded as a Baal, just as he was regarded as an El. But, if so, why do the Baal-names disappear? It can hardly be due to a definite reaction against the Baal of Tyre, "for the popular identification of Yahweh with the local Baals still seems to have been current in the days of Hosea, *i.e.*, towards the end of the eighth century, and the names of the Baals were still in the people's mouths" (Hosea ii, 17). An important fact is the retention of Baal in some cases in Chronicles, the less familiar book, whereas, in the more popular book of Samuel, names in Baal have been altered or mutilated. Consequently, it is tempting to suppose that in some instances "Baal has been corrected out of the text without leaving trace of its existence anywhere in our existing material." But if so, surely we should expect to find a much larger proportion of Baal-names in such contemporary "finds" as the *ostraka* than actually occurs. Later, in both the post-Exilic portions of the Old Testament and in the fifth century Elephantine papyri, there are no compounds of Baal. The inference, therefore, is that the Baal-names in the *ostraka* are due to the same causes as those in the early literature; and, similarly, the disappearance in literature and epigraphy will have the same causes. The fact that the external

evidence thus independently agrees with the Biblical evidence suggests to Dr. Gray that, "in this respect, as in others, though the text of the Old Testament has suffered from scribal activity, it has not suffered to anything like the extent that some scholars have suggested." The result, therefore, is a solid gain: for, though we do not happen to get any striking or brilliant conclusions, what can be safely inferred is of very great importance for our general ideas of the state of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

1. In the *Journal Asiatique*, tome III (1914), p. 501, M. Sidersky claims that the ordinary translation of Job xxvi, 7, does not do justice to the Hebrew. "He stretcheth out the north over empty space" is meaningless, seeing that the "North Pole" is a *mathematical point*, and, consequently, is incapable of extension over any given surface. It is true that Ps. civ, 2, uses the verb *natah* (נָטָה) to express "he stretches out the heavens like a curtain," but the same word also signifies "to incline like a bowing wall," Ps. lxii, 4; or to bend, or decline, "the shadow to decline ten steps," 2 Kings xx, 10. Consequently, we should understand the patriarch to say "he inclines the north": a perfectly correct astronomical observation. In other words, the author of the Book of Job was well aware of the inclination of the Ecliptic, which is the cause of the different seasons, and this knowledge is not surprising. Some modern critics put the date of Job in the fifth century B.C., when Babylonian astronomy had sufficiently advanced to recognize this cosmogonic fact; and many passages in the Hebrew poet demonstrate his interest in the heavenly bodies, and his full acquaintance with the astronomical knowledge of his time.

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2. In the *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* (tome XII), Prof. Henri Gauthier has published a Greek inscription which is worthy of note as a contribution to our knowledge of