Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

ARTICLE IX.

ASSYRIAN STUDIES — TEXT-BOOKS.[1]

BY REV. WILLIAM HAYES WARD.

IT is a remarkable fact that Germany, which so generally leads the scholarship of the age, should in the investigation of the Cuneiform texts be considerably behind both England and France. It is true that Grotefend in 1802 made some shrewd guesses, and Rask and Lassen thirty years later conjectured the meaning of a few more words in the Persian column of the Trilingual Inscriptions; but it is due to Sir Henry Rawlinson, Dr. Hincks, Edward Norris, and Fox Talbot in England, and to Burnouf, De Saulcy, Oppert, and Menant in France, that we can record such substantial advance in deciphering these remarkable relics of antiquity.

The first stage in the investigation of an unknown tongue has been passed. We have mainly recovered the alphabet of these three languages of the Behistun Inscriptions, so far as their characters can be called an alphabet, and two of them are translated with grammatical precision, though it is perhaps too much to say this of the second column, called by writers the Median, or Scythic, or Accad. When we pass from these Behistun Inscriptions to others, we find an immense mass of epigraphic remains, for the most part in the language of the third column, the Assyrian and Babylonian. We use both terms as the inscriptions are subdivided into two classes varying to some extent in grammar and alphabet, according as they are found in the region of Nineveh or of Babylon. As these remains have been discovered mainly by English and French explorers, and have been deposited in the museums of London and Paris, it is not strange that these countries have taken the lead in their translation. In this country so little has been done, that the slabs covered with inscriptions have for years attracted ignorantly curious eyes in the rooms of Amherst and Williams Colleges, and of the New York Historical Society, and other cabinets. Not one has had a wedge translated as yet.

---

[1] Duppe Lisan Assur. Éléments de la Grammaire Assyrienne par Jules Oppert. Seconde édition considérablement augmentée. 16mo. pp. 150. Paris: A. Franck. 1868.

Exposé des Éléments de la Grammaire Assyrienne, par M. Joachim Menant. 8vo. pp. 392. Imprimé par ordre de S. M. l'Empereur, a l'Imprimiere Impériale. 1868.

Assyrian Dictionary, intended to further the study of the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia. By Edward Norris, Hon. Ph.D., Bonn, Honorary Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Part I. Quarto. pp. 382. London: Williams and Norgate. 1868.

It is not our purpose to detail the steps of progress in conquering the details of the Assyrian grammar and vocabulary. Of course in the early stages each investigator was obliged to make and publish his own alphabet and dictionary as he went along. In 1851 Rawlinson published a list of two hundred and forty-six characters in connection with his translation of the Behistun inscription; and four years later De Saulcy published a lexicon of the language, so far as it had then been deciphered. The first complete grammar was the work of Oppert, and published in 1860. Five years before, Dr. Hincks of Dublin had published a paper on Assyrian Verbs; and six years later he published some specimen chapters of an Assyrian grammar. Dr. Hincks's work was partly controversial, attempting to defend against Oppert the occurrence in Assyrian of a preterite or, as he called it, a " permansive " tense, and also of a present or " mutative " tense of the simplest conjugation, besides the more common imperfect or future of other Semitic languages. Hincks's scheme of these tenses (changing the order of the persons) was as follows :

	Permansive.	Aorist.	Present.
Singular.			
3 *m.*	pagil	ipgul	ipaggil
3 *f.*	paglat	tapgul	tapaggil
2 *m.*	pagilta	tapgul	tapaggil
2 *f.*	pagilti	tapguli	tapaggili
1 *c.*	paglaku	apgul	apaggil
Plural.			
3 *m.*	paglu	ipgulu	ipaggilu
3 *f.*	pagla	ipgula	ipaggila
2 *m.*	pagiltunu	tapgulu	tapaggilu
2 *f.*	pagiltina	tapgula	tapaggila
1 *c.*	pagilnu	napgul	napaggil.

This aorist form is admitted by all scholars to be correct,[1] and it will be seen how similar it is to the Hebrew imperfect, though it is yet nearer to the Chaldee and Syriac, and, if we overlook some variations in the first vowel, is precisely the same as in Ethiopic. But the " Permansive " and " Mutative " tenses of Hincks the French grammarians reject altogether. Oppert says they are " *une pure fantaisie.*" Dr. Hincks was confident that he had found a first person singular permansive form *paglaku* corresponding to the Ethiopic, but the single word *us-bak-ku*, on which he founded this form, was differently read by Oppert.

Oppert's Grammar is a compact little volume, printed throughout with the Assyrian forms in Hebrew letters instead of cuneiform characters. Not only is this easier printing, but the language is better adapted to this method than to the syllabic style, which was borrowed from a non-Semitic

---

[1] Except that Oppert says in the last edition of his Grammar that the first person, pl. should be *nipgul*. Menant retains *napgul* in his Grammar.

language. This plan also brings out very clearly the correspondence of Assyrian with cognate tongues, and makes the volume valuable for reference to scholars who do not care to master the fearful Assyrian alphabet.

Menant's Grammar, " printed by order of the Emperor at the Imperial Press " is much more magnificent in style, being a large octavo volume, and with every Assyrian word or syllable expressed in its native wedges. It opens with twenty-six pages of " syllabary " or alphabet, and we are then told in a closing note that " this list is not complete." We are sorry to see that he arranges the second table, consisting of syllables with two consonant sounds, in the order of the Hebrew letters, as this would make it very tedious for a student beginning the language to discover any unfamiliar sign in this vast labyrinth. Norris has done better in his dictionary in arranging both compound syllables and ideograms in arbitrary order, depending on the style of the wedge with which they begin. On the other hand, Menant's plan of putting throughout his syllabary the Ninevitic and Babylonian forms in distinct columns has a decided advantage. In the second part of Menant's Grammar he gives us a valuable chrestomathy. Eleven specimens of Assyrian texts are given, some of them of considerable length, and embracing Behistun, Ninevitic, and Babylonian forms, accompanied by an interlinear translation into Latin letters, and also an interlinear Latin translation, and followed by a transliteration into Hebrew letters, and a French translation. Following this is a grammatical analysis. This seems to leave nothing for the student to ask.

Crossing the channel, we meet the first elementary dictionary of any completeness yet published; though this volume finishes but the first seven letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And we are instantly struck by its moral difference of tone, and charmed by its modesty. The two French writers are pretentious and dogmatic. They assert too often as facts what are little more than conjectures. They generalize faster than their inductions will warrant. But the constant confessions of ignorance in Mr. Norris's volume prejudice us in his favor. In his remarkably modest preface he gives to Sir Henry Rawlinson the credit of having taught him all that he knows of Assyrian, and this first instalment of the dictionary shows that, though he began the study of the language at a late period of life, and with an inadequate knowledge of the other Semitic tongues, he has proved himself no dull scholar. Before publishing this book he was known to scholars from his connection with Rawlinson in the preparation of Rawlinson and Norris's Historical Inscriptions of Assyria, of which one volume was issued in 1861, and a second in 1866, and also by some independent investigations of the Median or Accad, the second in order of the trilingual inscriptions.

One of the most difficult tasks in beginning the study of Assyrian is to learn the alphabet. The Ethiopic has a syllabic alphabet, but it is an easy one, consisting merely of slight variations of the Semitic letters as

they are connected with the several vowel sounds. But here we have no normal consonant letter to form the basis of the syllables, but they are denoted by the most arbitrary signs. Very seldom do two syllables closely related have similar characters to represent them. Thus the characters for *pa* and *pu* are utterly diverse, and *pa* and *ka* would not end with the same sign. The cases are very few where a connection can be traced, as, for example, in the character for *ya* which combines those for *i* and *a*, or in those for ךֹ , ס , and שׁ , which are remarkably similar.

Mr. Norris gives one hundred and twenty-eight different characters in his "ordinary alphabet" for simple syllables consisting of a single consonant and vowel, one hundred and forty-two characters which represent syllables (like *kal*) with two consonants, and then a third table of one hundred and thirteen "ideograms," that is, characters which represent a word. But let not the student imagine that when he has mastered these three hundred and eighty-three characters, and scores of others given by Menant, he is all ready to transliterate an Assyrian text into English or Hebrew letters. These tables do not pretend to be complete, and he will find many of the forms so variously given in the monuments according to their age, or the caprice of the scribe, that these tables will be but a partial guide. Besides, imagine his confusion when he finds that a single character is at times used for half a dozen different syllables ! Nothing else could so discourage a student, or seem to throw doubt on the whole results thus far obtained. Thus the regular form for *ab*, according to Norris, may also represent *ap*, *be*, *ne*, *ta*, *ku*, or *bil*, while that for *ud* may also be read *ut*, *pa*, *ta*, *tam*, *yom*, (יוֹם , a day) or *samas* (שֶׁמֶשׁ , the sun). The polyphony of this last character is yet more bewildering as given by Menant, thus : "*ut, ud, ut, tam, tav, par, sap, lih, bus, bus', pus, pus', samas, yum*"! The cause of this curious complication is found mainly in a fact which sadly disguises the Assyrian language as written. The arrow-head syllabary, which was originally contrived to represent words, as was also the Egyptian and the Chinese, was contrived to meet the wants, not of the Assyrian, a Semitic language, but of a Turanian language, a sort of Tartar or Turkish tongue, and which we call indifferently Scythic or Median or Accad. Its alphabet is not adapted to spell Semitic words. Its phonology is quite diverse. An Accad dental or palatal might correspond to a whole class of Semitic letters, while no Accad form would be adequate to express a Semitic א or ע . It is not strange then, if we find, especially in the earlier inscriptions, character twelve of Norris's "ordinary alphabet" representing either גַ or קַ or פַ . For the same reason a character which had a definite meaning and pronunciation in Accad would retain its meaning, but change its sound when used in writing Assyrian, just as we write *e.g.*, but pronounce it, "for example," and no longer *exempli gratia*. Thus one combination which in Accad reads *adda*, father, may in Assyrian read *abu*, אָב , father. Another may read

either Accad *han*, or Assyrian *nun*, both meaning "fish." Scores of such cases could be given. Thus among compound syllables, character forty-six may be *dan*, *kal*, or *lib*; forty-seven may be *rid*, *sid*, *lak*, or *mis*; and sixty-five is given as representing *ban*, *kal*, or *qaq*; while in other places Mr. Norris transliterates it by *epus*, a stem of the same meaning as *ban*, בָּנָה, בֵּן, and meaning "to make."

Of course it is very difficult to collect a complete list of characters, and Mr. Norris does not pretend that this is complete. We notice a few variations or omissions collated from the body of his dictionary, and which could easily be greatly increased by comparison with the original printed texts. For we notice that he generally gives in his examples quite different forms from those which we find in the texts to which he refers. On p. 32, l. 4, a character is given for *gu* differing from either of those in the table. On p. 28, l. 12, is a character for *va* not in the table. Character thirty-three for *ha*, Hebrew ה, is quite as often given with the angle and wedges transposed. A very common form for *lu* is omitted, cf. p. 10, l. 1. The single perpendicular wedge is frequently used for *an*, especially when a preposition, but is nowhere found in the tables, though it is also in very frequent use as a determinative, meaning "a man"; and is regularly put before names of men. Character sixty-nine denoting *sa*, Hebrew ס, is given differently p. 37, l. 15, and character seventy-nine for *qi*, Hebrew, ק, has one less wedge in several places where it occurs; and the first of the two characters for *ru*, varies from what it is ever given in the body of the dictionary. Of course we do not expect that every little variation of the monuments should be given in the alphabet, though this is desirable, but when it is the rule to modify the epigraphic form to accommodate the printing, the young student does want to find in his alphabet the same forms as given in the other parts of his dictionary.

In the second table, that of compound syllables, we notice that a form for *nun* is omitted, which we find employed p. 4, l. 4; also the character for *mil* which is identical with one given for *is*. Number fifty-eight varies from what is meant for the same p. 39, l. 8; and a form for *ḥad*, *pa*, should have been given after number sixty-five. Number eighty-five, pronounced *gabl*, we find p. 28, l. 13, without the angle; and after number ninety-one we miss the character generally pronounced *me*, but sometimes *sib*. Number ninety-eight is given as pronounced *mat*, *kur*, *lat*, or *sat*, but on p. 35, it twice represents *din*. So number one hundred and three is given as *sah*, but on p. 38, l. 9, and in many other places, it is *tir*. The character for *lu* which we mentioned as omitted from the first table is also lacking in the second, where it should appear as corresponding to *lim*, cf. p. 11, l. 5.

We notice the omission of several ideograms from the third table, as that for *Assur*, cf. p. 40, l. 14; the determinative for "man," already mentioned, that for *bit*, a house; that for *rab*, great; that for the God, *Yav*; that for *eli*, upon; that for *kima*, like; that for *ahu*, brother, and that for *Babel*.

The character for "evening" (no. 20), transliterated in the table by *nilrut* and *aibi* is given as *aḥ*, p. 24, meaning "side." Number sixty-three given as *mas*, male (though we know of no authority for giving this suspiciously Latin sound to the character), is also made on p. 39 to represent *susi*, sixty. Number one hundred and seven is given somewhat differently in every place in which we have noticed it in the dictionary, as also by Menant. We have noticed scores of such cases.

Turning to the body of the dictionary we have noticed some minor errata, such as *abunanis*, p. 8, l. 25, where the arrow-heads read *abubanis ;* *munnaptu* for *munaptu*, p. 36, l. 19, and *Muraziru* for *Muzaziru*, p. 47, l. 28; but there are many more cases where the inscriptions are correctly enough transliterated into English letters, but the tables do not allow the transliteration. Thus, in the last line but one of p. 20 we find *tukmate*, but all the help a student could get from the tables would make it plainly *iz-lal*. So on p. 81 we find "Elam" according to the transliteration, which is really a translation into Assyrian ; as the wedge can be made to read nothing but *Numma*, the Accad equivalent. A student needs to look to his tables for such words which are written in the Anarian Accad language, but which are pronounced in the Semitic Assyrian. Besides this, there is not a page but contains instances of characters used which are not in the tables, or which differ, more or less, from those there given. And yet if these so flexible letters puzzle the student, how much more would they have puzzled him if Mr. Norris had printed his Assyrian texts just as they are given in Rawlinson's published inscriptions ? In comparing the two we notice a great many cases where not merely the slight variations of scribes are corrected, who often added small wedges in complex forms, but other characters are often substituted where they are supposed to have the same power. This strikes us as ill judged.

But the greatest deficiency is one which was to be expected in the author, and the foundation for which he frankly confesses. We constantly feel the lack of the aid which might be drawn from foreign languages. Mr. Norris tells us in his preface that his knowledge of the Semitic languages is confined to a superficial acquaintance with Hebrew, and, though we are thankful enough to get this volume even with this drawback, it would have been much more valuable if Rabbinic, Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic, as well as Hebrew, had been searched for corresponding roots. A newly discovered language like this, depends for its illustration almost wholly on these correspondences; and not a few errors have been made from ignorance of other Semitic tongues. We recall a case of this in one of Mr. Talbot's papers in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, in which he translates an Assyrian word by "small," comparing the Hebrew צָעִיר , but says that the final *r* has been dropped as in "Zacchaeus" which was no doubt from the same root. The slightest available knowledge of Hebrew would have prevented this blunder, and if he had taken the trouble to turn to the kin-

dred Syriac version he would have found Zacchaeus represented by ܘܟܰܝ,
while for צָעִיר we have the entirely different forms ܙܥܰܪ and ܐܟܟܘܪ.
Zaccheus received his name in his "pure" infancy, and did not wait for it till
he had reached his "small" stature. As a striking example of this failure to
adduce cognate forms in other languages, the reader will notice the word
gimir, all, the whole, which Mr. Norris illustrates simply by the words,
" Hebrew גּוּר , to gather." Not only is this meaning at least rare in the
Hebrew word, but we actually have a Hebrew גָּמַר , to complete, Chaldee
גְּמַר, and Syriac ܓܡܰܪ of the same meaning, besides other languages,
and such common Rabbinic forms as גְּמִיר and לְגַמְרֵי meaning " wholly,"
"entirely." So Norris tells us under *gini*, enemies, p. 185, that he knows
no similar word in any cognate tongue, but Syriac ܩܛܰܢ to accuse, is
not far out of the way. Under *tamsil*, p. 276, he cites the Ethiopic
itmasal, it is like, but quite ignores the Hebrew and the Rabbinic מָשַׁל,
to be similar, of which *itmasal* is an inflectional form.

The most difficult stumbling-block for an Assyrian scholar is the con-
fusion between Assyrian and Accad words. It is discouraging and de-
ceptive to look for Semitic analogues, when the word may not be Semitic
at all, but Accad. No doubt there are scores of such errors in this volume;
but this Accad is but poorly understood as yet, and scarce any living
man, unless it be Sir Henry Rawlinson, is very competent to distinguish
between words of the two languages as they occur together; and it is a
sad loss to this study that he has given so much of his time to political
labor, that he has not been able to publish what he has learned, and much
of his knowledge will die with him. No man in this country is competent
to pronounce a judgment on these distinctions, and it is with diffidence
that we suggest that *dannu*, strong, notwithstanding its Assyrian termina-
tion, is connected with the Accad *dan*, which has a similar meaning as
shown by the expression *ha dan*, meaning "water great," i.e. a flood; and
also by the noun *dan*, used in the Syllabary as Accad equivalent for the
Assyrian *idlu*, a warrior, just as we translate גִּבּוֹר , a mighty man. With
the word *dannu*, Mr. Norris compares very doubtfully the theme דִּין,
which, however, seems to be used in Semitic languages only of judgments
and laws, and never of " strong," walls or towers. Were we required to
compare some Semitic word, we should suggest whether the א of אָדוֹן,
lord, אֶרֶךְ , foundation, is not prosthetic, leaving a root *dan* which could
have no more probable meaning than " strong."

These volumes suggest as fruitful themes the discussion of the entire
development of Assyrian studies, of the character of the language as com-
pared with other Semitic tongues, of the additions made by Rawlinson,

Hincks, Oppert, Menant, and others to our knowledge of ancient history, and of the bearings of all these investigations on scripture. These important topics we can only indicate. It is sufficient now to say that these grammars and this dictionary, with all their guesses and inevitable mistakes, have put the next generation of Assyriologers under deep obligations.

ARTICLE X.

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF JERUSALEM.

BY REV. JOHN FORBES, LL.D., EDINBURGH.

The reperusal, in the third Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund, of the views of Lieut. Warren on the site of Mount Zion, which I had only cursorily glanced over in the Athenaeum, when on the continent this autumn, and away from my books, has set me to re-examine the Topography of Jerusalem. This subject cannot but be interesting to the countrymen of Professor Robinson, whose "Researches in Palestine," gave the impulse to all the investigations of recent times; and I beg a little space in the Bibliotheca Sacra to assist in dispelling an error now become almost inveterate, and which, by placing Mount Zion on the southwest, instead of the northwest mountain, as advocated by Lieut. Warren, has introduced inextricable confusion into all our inquiries. The correctness of his view seems demonstrated by the happy reconciliation which it effects of all the statements in the Bible, the First Book of Maccabees, and Josephus.

Josephus's general description of Jerusalem is as follows (Wars, v. 4. 1) : " The city was built, one part facing another, upon two hills, separated by an intervening valley, at which, over against each other, the houses ended. Of these hills the one bearing the upper city was much the higher, and in length more straight. The other hill, called Akra [the Citadel], and sustaining the lower city, was crescent-shaped. Over against this was a third hill [Mount Moriah], by nature lower than Akra, and formerly separated by another broad valley. But afterwards in the times when the Maccabees ruled, they filled up the valley with earth, with the view of connecting the city with the Temple; and working down the height of Akra, they made it lower, so that the Temple might appear above it."

I would humbly submit the following inferences as strictly deducible from this description, and from our other sources of information; numbering them for the sake of distinction and ease of reference, should any of them be called in question: