

EDITORIAL

Perhaps the first year of a baby's life is the one that gives most cause for concern. So it is with relief that we see baby AJBA enter his second year. We are grateful for the encouraging notices and useful tips which greeted the first issue. One obvious omission, which was pointed out by a reviewer of the first number, can be rectified immediately: a word about our contributors.

The first contribution comes from JOHN MacDONALD, Professor of Semitic Languages at Glasgow University. A Palestinian tradition about Muhammed may be thought to lie outside the interests of biblical studies, yet it does show up interesting parallels with the gospel account of the Epiphany. Granted the possibility of direct borrowing from the earlier account, it points to the oriental tendency of telling stories about the charismatic leader according to certain stereotype patterns, so raising the whole question of *midrash* and of the formation of traditions. One constantly meets biblical patterns in Arabian traditions, both written and oral, and this field might well throw more light on the formation of biblical traditions.

Egyptology and biblical archaeology are not unrelated areas of study, particularly as Egyptian texts have provided important source material for the history of the Holy Land. So we are grateful to be able to play host to an original study on points of Late Egyptian syntax by the renowned Russian Egyptologist, Professor M. KOROSTOVTSEV, of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, Moscow.

Mrs. BARBARA THIERING lectures in the Department of Semitic Studies, University of Sydney, specialising in Qumran studies. In this issue she makes available in English the important article on the Targum of Job by A. S. van der Woude, which appeared in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. IX. We thank E. J. Brill, the publishers, for permission to publish this translation. Mrs. Thiering also puts forward original ideas on Qumran chronology, which has a bearing not only on the history of the sect but also on their messianic consciousness.

WILLIAM CULICAN of the Department of History, University of Melbourne, returns to AJBA with a close look at another aspect of Phoenician culture, in which field he needs no introduction. More than for any aesthetic interest, these studies are

important in revealing the religious thinking and practices which tended to infest Yahwism in the outbreaks of syncretism before Exile. "Ashtaroth" are frequently mentioned in the bible as a pagan perversion among the Israelites of this time and so it is interesting to study a form of this fertility cult which was current precisely towards the end of the Monarchy.

Dr. ANSON RAINEY of Tel Aviv University is an authority on Ugaritic and a collaborator in several Israeli excavations. It is frequently noted that our knowledge of the Persian period is meagre and so his work in assembling and interpreting the materials for an understanding of that period is a valuable contribution. Y. Aharoni acknowledged his indebtedness to this (then) unpublished paper in his *The Land of the Bible* (p. 357, f. 65).

Finally, to Dr BASIL HENNESSY, Director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, there is due a special note of thanks for his practical help in encouraging interest in Middle Eastern archaeology among his fellow-Australians. Through him the Society was able to acquire a collection of Palestinian pottery, the beginnings of what we hope will become a valuable study tool for students of biblical archaeology in Australia. His publication of the collection, particularly justified for some of its unusual components, makes the material available to a wider audience.

I am happy at the variety offered in this issue, as it illustrates the diversity of scientific disciplines, conveniently brought under the heading of biblical archaeology, which can be made to cast light on the history of bible times and on the interpretation of the text itself. It shows how the scope can include both the internal problems of these auxiliary subjects and the use of their data for elucidating biblical problems. As to the future, we welcome contributions in this general area, since AJBA is meant to be of service not only in supplying information on recent research but also in providing an opening for researchers. Articles need not be long. Perhaps it is the influence of the commercial, but in these days editors, like readers, are happy with a message delivered in short, succinct form. English is preferred, but other modern languages are acceptable. Welcome, too, will be correspondence disagreeing with or commenting on matters raised in these pages, as well as requests for information.

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