

containing a new type of alphabetic cuneiform writing. These tablets tell us much about ancient Canaanite religion, and throw light on the development of the Hebrew language.

While the great bulk of archaeological discoveries relating to the Bible have come from the three regions we have listed, it should also be mentioned that Asia Minor has furnished material relating to the Hittite Empire in early times, and to the journeys of Paul in the Christian era.⁸ Discoveries have also been made in Persia relating to the book of Esther.⁹

II. ASPECTS OF THE RELATION BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

General Corroboration

There are four ways in which archaeological material proves of special importance and interest to the student of the Bible. The first of these may be designated as general corroboration. Many parts of the Bible describe a life that is very different from that to which we are accustomed today. It refers to customs which are utterly unfamiliar to us. We read in it of places whose names we otherwise would not know and of people who seem very outlandish and strange to us. It is easy, therefore, for one to get the impression that the whole thing is simply a series of legends or that it is an artificial story constructed in order to present certain ideas.

In 1800, there was little external evidence available to counteract such an impression. Today the situation is entirely different. During the past century there has been dug from the ground a tremendous amount of material throwing light upon conditions in ancient times in Bible lands. From it we are able to reconstruct the history not

⁸Sir. Wm. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul, the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, (New York: 1896). For a more recent popular work, relying however on good sources, see H. V. Morton, *In the Steps of St. Paul*, (New York: 1937).

⁹For a good popular account of this material, see I. M. Price, *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, (Philadelphia: 1925), pp. 408-411.

only of the political events but also of the life and culture of those areas during long periods. A new world has risen from the dust and it is interesting to see how this world makes vivid and real the world described in the pages of the Bible.

For a brief idea of this particular type of approach to the Bible we might look at a few of the outstanding features of the general background of the Old Testament. Thus we find that most of the history in the Old Testament centers around the descendants of one man, Abraham. Abraham is described as living in a city called Ur of the Chaldees and as being called by the Lord to leave his environment and go out into a distant country which the Lord would show him.

How much more living and natural this account becomes when we learn that excavators in recent years have uncovered in Mesopotamia the indications of a great civilization stretching back thousands of years before the time of Christ and many hundreds of years before the time of Abraham himself. Beginning in 1918 a series of excavations at the site of Ur,¹⁰ in the southern part of Mesopotamia, gave evidence that it had been one of the most highly developed of the early cities of the region. In fact, the excavator, C. Leonard Woolley, declared that the standard of living at Ur in 2000 B.C., as evidenced by the quality of the houses of the middle class, was far above what one would have been led to expect by the type of houses used at Babylon at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, well over a thousand years later.¹¹

The book of Genesis states that Abraham left Ur with his family to go into the land of Canaan, but that he stopped at Haran in northwestern Mesopotamia and stayed there until the death of his father. Abraham had already covered

¹⁰Genesis 11:28; 15:7; Neh. 9:7.

¹¹C. L. Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, (New York: 1930), pp. 164, 165.