

tradition. How is it that saner views upon this matter are now so much more generally maintained even by unsympathetic critics? Two of the chief causes may be mentioned: (1) the influence of the true doctrine of development as applied to the Old Testament literature; (2) Oriental discoveries, which have enabled us to fill up blanks in the Bible story, and have given us the historical setting of the larger movements of peoples and nations in which Israel played its distinctive part.

It will now be best to present a few far-reaching conclusions which are arrived at with the help of the lately exhumed monuments of Oriental antiquity. In subsequent papers these general positions will be illustrated from sample texts or passages from the Old Testament records.

I. The Old Testament is a history of the ancient Northern Semites, and among them especially of the people of Israel, to whom and by whom has come the knowledge of God's works and ways.

II. Viewed outwardly, the history of Israel is an episode in the larger history of the states of Western Asia. Israel was itself an offshoot of the race that controlled for thousands of years the whole great region between the Mediterranean and the Tigris. It shared with the kindred peoples some of its fundamental institutions, political, social, and religious. Its destiny was determined also by the movements of the larger states that were dominant within the circle of those kindred peoples.

III. The great controlling factor among the nations, and the disposer of the destiny of Israel, was the dual empire and civilization of Babylonia and Assyria. With Babylonia the Old Testament history begins, and Israel's career as a nation ends. The political aims and enterprises of Assyria and Babylonia determined the status of Israel and even its very existence.

IV. Viewed from within, these relations of Israel were so ordered and disposed that they ministered materially to its higher life. Israel received the word of Jehovah. But only by prolonged and drastic discipline could the moral and spiritual truths of revelation be made real to its recipients.

V. The golden age of prophecy in Israel—the most active period of revelation, the most productive and influential era of Hebrew literature—was coincident with the time of the closest contact between Israel and the Eastern Empire. The relations were so intimate and involved that they form a leading theme of the prophets of the time. To understand them is to hold a key to some of the priceless treasures of the Word of God.

VI. The Babylonians and Assyrians were the best record-keepers of the ancient East. Their surviving annals are fairly full, and on the whole accurate. They serve at once to explain and to supplement the Hebrew records. These people were also the best timekeepers of antiquity. Their chronological notices furnish a framework for the Old Testament history.

VII. Assyriology holds already a foremost place in biblical apologetics. It furnishes by far the best tests of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. It performs this splendid function in two principal ways:

(a) Directly by the actual record. All the numerous statements as to international events made in the historical books are verified by the cuneiform annals wherever the same topics are touched upon in the two literatures.

(b) Indirectly through the larger interpretation of history. The many allusions in the Bible to peoples outside of Israel, and to the relations between them and Israel, have more than an incidental significance and more than a mere archeological interest. They are shown by the reconstructed history of Western Asia to bear an essential part in the unfolding of the providential purpose displayed in the discipline and education of God's ancient people for the salvation of the race.