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METHODISM AND THE ORIGINS OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY: THE WILLIAM FOXWELL ALBRIGHT STORY

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I. *Introduction*

Methodism and biblical archaeology have a closely entwined history that previously has not been fully addressed in the literature of either discipline.[1] The close relationship between the discipline and the Church may be attributed to the childhood of William Foxwell Albright (1891-1971), a son of Methodist missionaries, who became the father of biblical archaeology in America.[2] While there is little debate about the significance of Albright's scholarship and that of his students who continued his work as part of the "Albright School," there is little awareness of the profound impact Methodism had on his personal life. This article seeks to remedy this situation by attempting to understand Albright's childhood experiences that molded him into the adult scholar he would later become. It addresses not the scholarship, but the person behind the scholarship, specifically focusing on one single incident in his life that he himself portrayed as being the first step in his journey toward becoming the father of biblical archaeology.

Albright was born in Chile in 1891 to Methodists who had grown up on neighboring farms in Fayette, Iowa, married, and become William Taylor missionaries in 1890.[3] He described his parents as evangelicals in his unpublished 1916 dissertation at Johns Hopkins University,[4] noting that his

[1]This investigation is based on the pioneering work of Burke O. Long, *Planting and Reaping Albright: Politics, Ideology, and Interpreting the Bible* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 124-125.

[2]His biographers prefer to use the term "Dean of Biblical Archaeologists" (Leona Glidden Running and David Noel Freedman, *William Foxwell Albright: A 20th Century Genius* [Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1991], 2-3).

[3]For more on Taylor, see David Bundy, "Bishop William Taylor and Methodist Mission: A Study in Nineteenth Century Social History," *Methodist History* 27 (1989): 197-210. For more on his missionary work in Chile and South America, see G. F. Arms, *History of the William Taylor Self-Supporting Missions in South America* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1921); William Taylor, *Our South American Cousins* (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1878); and O. Von Barchwitz-Krauser, *Six Years with Bishop Taylor in South America* (Boston: McDonald and Gill, 1885).

[4]William Foxwell Albright, "The Assyrian Deluge Epic" (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1916), "Vita."

family returned to America on furlough in 1896-1897, where he injured his hand for life on his grandmother's Iowa farm. The family remained in Chile from 1897 to 1903, when it returned again to Iowa. Albright attended Upper Iowa College (now a state university), the Methodist college that his father had attended in Iowa before he had become a minister. Following graduation, he spent a year failing as a high-school principal in the German-speaking town of Menno, South Dakota. He then matriculated at Johns Hopkins University as a graduate student in 1913, graduated in 1916, and was a teacher there until 1919, with a brief military interlude during World War I. From 1920 to 1935, he was based in Jerusalem, where he became the Director of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) and editor of the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (*BASOR*), ASOR's journal. He visited the United States periodically during this time including ongoing teaching stints at Hopkins. He returned to the States for good in 1935 and taught at Hopkins until 1958. During these years, the Baltimore, later Albright, School took shape with students such as George Ernest Wright, John Bright, Frank Moore Cross, David Noel Freedman, and George Mendenhall. Albright died in 1971, but his legacy lives on through his writings and his students.

Albright traced the origin of his journey into biblical scholarship to a childhood incident at age 10, when he was first exposed to the world of archaeology in the library of his Methodist missionary parents in Chile. His reading of Robert W. Rogers's *A History of Babylonia and Assyria* was so important to the development of his career that his biographers asked: "What forces had shaped his mind up to the age of ten, that he should so covet, and then devour and absorb, a book on ancient history?"[5] The goal in this analysis is to answer that question. In so doing, it is necessary to investigate the guiding experiences of Albright's early life, to explore the meaning of Methodism to the young child, and to determine what captured the boy's imagination as he read Rogers's book. Certainly one can attribute the incident at age 10 to chance, coincidence, or even providence, a more traditional Methodist term.[6] However, it is possible to identify more specific actions and events that contributed to the reading of the book that launched him on the career that would define his life. In other words, instead of using the story Albright told about his childhood to begin the attempt to understand him, one should see it as a conclusion to his early childhood or as a focal point to the life he would subsequently lead. By so doing, it is possible to place the

[5]Running and Freedman, 1.

[6]To illustrate the use of providence in Methodism, consider this centennial explanation for Methodist success in America: "Thus, in the providence of God, Methodism took organic shape in a land peculiarly favorable to its growth" (*Methodist Centennial Yearbook*, 1884, 310). By contrast, a leading American religious historian wrote: "No group prospered more in the West or seemed more providentially designed to capitalize on the conditions of the advancing American frontier than the Methodists (Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972], 436).

larger story of Albright's life within context and thus more fully answer the question posed by his biographers.

II. *The Childhood Incident*

The story of the pivotal events in Albright's childhood first appeared in print as part of an autobiographical essay published in 1948. As the adult Albright recalled, he was a child abroad in a hostile environment both as a "gringo" (American) and a "canuto" (Protestant) and, as a result, he "never felt secure." He wrote of "the unknown terrors in the street," where "[i]nsults were frequently interspersed with stones" and of his minimal contact with other children in "play." Instead, the nearsighted child with a metal brace on his left hand withdrew to his father's library and the "solitary games of his own contrivance." As he later put it, he did not "have a taste for picnics and outings enjoyed by other children."[7] In this description of Albright's early life, one may draw two conclusions: there were physical dangers in his life as the child of Methodist missionaries in Catholic Chile; the library was a place of refuge and solace.[8]

As Albright recalled in his autobiographical essay, he became at age 8 intensely interested in archaeology and biblical antiquities. No explanation is provided of why such an interest clicked in his mind. Given the occupation of his parents, as well as the content of their personal library, the interest in the Bible is understandable; exactly how archaeology manifested itself into his consciousness is not. Albright described how two years later, in 1901, he ran errands for his parents until he had saved $5, which he was free to spend as he saw fit. He chose to purchase Rogers's book. As Albright remembered this moment, "[t]hereafter his happiest hours were spent in reading and rereading this work, which was fortunately written in beautiful English by a well-trained and accurate scholar." The reading of this book in his father's library as a ten-year-old child was the event that launched his journey to becoming the adult scholar of ancient civilizations.[9]

There is no reason to doubt the historicity of the event. The "official" position within the Albright school is that Rogers's book of archaeology marked the starting point of Albright's life as a scholar and that as a scholar he should be classified primarily as an Orientalist, and not as a biblical scholar. After all, the book was about Assyria and Babylonia, not Israel and the Bible.

[7]*Baltimore Sun*, September 16, 1956, Section A.

[8]William Foxwell Albright, "William Foxwell Albright," in *American Spiritual Biographies*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 158-159; George Ernest Wright, "The Phenomenon of American Archaeology in the Near East," in *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck*, ed. James A. Sanders (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 23. According to a footnote, Wright, 39, n. 42, derived his information on Albright from the latter's 1948 autobiographical essay and from private conversations with him.

[9]Albright, "William Foxwell Albright," 159.

Rogers's book with its strictly secular approach in methodology and subject matter lends credence to this characterization of Albright as an "Orientalist." His oft-repeated remark—that "if his eyesight had been better, he would have continued along the lines indicated by his studies and his dissertation on *The Assyrian Deluge Epic*"—has often been cited as support for this position. Yet David Noel Freedman noted that he was "dubious"[10] of such an assertion, stating that

> At a very early stage in his career it seemed clear that Albright's primary interest was neither in being an Assyriologist nor in being a comprehensive encyclopedic historian. While several of his early major articles reflected his special training and his wide-ranging interests, the twin foci would always remain the Bible on the one hand, and comparative religion—or to be more precise—the religious ideas of the ancient Near East on the other. In all his subsequent major undertakings, he attempted to combine or blend these interests. A brief glance at his books elucidates and confirms this impression: *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, and *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, are all efforts to place biblical tradition and biblical religion in the context of ancient Near Eastern religion. We recognize here as well the final choices as to the area, subject, and focus. Throughout his career and even in retirement Albright's primary and abiding interest was the Bible, first of all the Hebrew Bible—the Old Testament—and along with it the New Testament.[11]

Freedman referred to Albright at "a very early stage in his career" and not to a very early stage in his *life*. Had Freedman made the latter connection, he would have recognized that those twin foci of Oriental studies and biblical archaeology were present when the child was playing historical games that were influenced by his reading of *A History of Babylonia and Assyria* and the *Methodist Review*, from which he first learned of Rogers's book.

III. *Methodist Review*

Albright appears to have been introduced to the field of biblical archaeology through the *Methodist Review*, a magazine the family received while in Chile and after returning to America. The *Methodist Review* was a semiprerequisite for being a minister in good standing with the Church. The Upper Iowa Conference, the local Methodist organizational unit Wilbur Albright belonged

[10]In an interview, 13 May 1972, Freedman, Cross, and Wright all expressed doubts about the "eyesight" excuse so frequently employed by Albright throughout his life (Leona G. Running Archive, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University).

[11]Freedman, 34-35; see also William Foxwell Albright, "Return to Biblical Theology," *ChrCent* 75 (1958): 1328-1329; idem, *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 287-300.

to before being reassigned to missionary work, strongly recommended its purchase to its members. Albright stated that he read this journal with avid interest between 1897 and 1909, when he began college, a reading that included earlier issues as well.[12]

Through *Methodist Review*, Albright became connected to biblical archaeology. Without this journal he would not have become aware of the field until later in life and back in Iowa. This does not mean that he would not still have become an influential scholar, only that the journey might have started later. It is through this journal that one can document the origins of his interest in both Assyriology and biblical archaeology. Now not only did he know the stories of Goliath and Sennacherib, he knew about the people who were excavating the ancient cultures from centuries of burial and who were revealing their truths to the light of day. "Light" was a critical term, as archaeology seemingly corroborated biblical history at a time when that history was under assault.

The *Methodist Review*, which itself underwent changes during the 1890s, reflected this conflict. The editor, J. W. Mendenhall, had died in 1892, after leading an effort against agnosticism, OT criticism, rationalism, and upheavals in the path of Christian culture and progress. When the president of Methodist Drew Theological Seminary turned down the position, it was offered to Rev. William Kelley in 1893.[13]

The following January, Kelley launched a recurring column, "Archaeology and Biblical Research." He presumably wrote these columns or they were written with his guidance and approval—they are unsigned. The excitement generated by discoveries such as the Amarna Letters with their biblical implications may have contributed to this decision.[14] The purpose of the new column resonated with the values of biblical archaeology later to be expressed

[12]"Minutes of the Upper Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church" (1889), 119, 140; "Minutes" (1890), 200, 213; Long, 124, citing a 1947 letter by Albright. See also a letter dated 18 October 1924, from Albright to Rogers (uncatalogued Albright material, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia) in which Albright states not only that he had read Rogers's book, but had read articles written by Rogers before and after the purchase of the book. The "before" readings suggest that Albright did read the back issues of *Methodist Review* published before 1897, since the earlier articles by Rogers are from 1894 and 1895. The post-1901 article in *Methodist Review* is from 1909. Rogers also wrote for the *Sunday School Times* from 1901 to 1906.

[13]James Mudge, "Seventy-five Years of the 'Methodist Review,'" *Methodist Review* 76 (Fifth Series 10) (1894): 530-532, 533.

[14]The Amarna Letters were the subject of the second column in March 1894 ("The Tel-El-Amarna Tablets," *Methodist Review* 10 (Fifth Series 76) [1894]: 303-306). The article, "The Antiquity of Writing," stressed the pre-Exodus role of writing that undermined the higher-critical notion that Moses could not write: "It is reasonably certain that the excavations going on in Palestine and the surrounding countries have many surprises in store for the Bible student" (*Methodist Review* 76 [Fifth Series 10] [1894]: 480).

by Albright. In the inaugural column, the editor explained the origins for the change: "Our chief reasons for introducing a department of biblical research and archaeology into the *Review* are an intense love of the Bible and a strong belief in its divine power."[15] Indeed, the scope of biblical archaeology in 1894 was vividly described: "We shall hail with joy any light which Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria, or any land may throw upon Old Testament chronology and history. We shall welcome all the *light* [emphasis supplied] which the study of comparative religions may furnish us regarding the origin of religion and the growth of revelation."[16] Importantly, it anticipated the words Albright himself used in 1966:

> Biblical archaeology is a much wider term than Palestinian archaeology, though Palestine itself is of course central, and is rightly regarded as peculiarly the land of the Bible. But Biblical archaeology covers all the lands mentioned in the Bible, and thus is coextensive with the cradle of civilization. This region extends from western Mediterranean to India, and from southern Russia to Ethiopia and the Indian Ocean. Excavations in every part of this extensive area throw some *light* [emphasis supplied], directly or indirectly on the Bible.[17]

These words served as a blueprint for his academic life. The sciences of archaeology and comparative religions were the light to revealed truth that should be welcomed.

There was, however, a problem: higher criticism. The remainder of the inaugural column was devoted to "The Burning Question" of higher criticism. Higher criticism refers to the attempt to discover the source documents that allegedly were compiled to create the Pentateuch. Julius Wellhausen was its high priest, a term of approbation chosen deliberately. The subject of higher criticism would emerge as a recurring theme in the publication of this normally four-page column in *Methodist Review*. Examples of articles expressing this focus include three from the years of 1895, 1896, and 1898.

a. January 1895: "Hittites." The British higher-critical biblical scholar, T. K. Cheyne, was cited as being "very loath to accept the biblical account of the Hittites"[18] because their peaceful appearance when Abraham purchased a burial cave from them for Sarah (Gen 23) is at odds with their more violent appearance on then-known monuments. Therefore, the biblical account could not be historical. Actually, it was only the monuments that were currently being discovered by archaeology that began to force scholars to accept the

[15]"Archaeology and Biblical Research," *Methodist Review* 76 (Fifth Series 10) (1894): 135.

[16]Ibid., 135-136.

[17]William F. Albright, *New Horizons in Biblical Research* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 1.

[18] "The Hittites," *The Methodist Review* 77 (Fifth Series 11) (1895): 139.

historical existence of the Hittites—after all, the Greco-Roman histories did not mention them as a great nation of antiquity, so how could the biblical account be taken seriously in this regard?[19]

Albright remembered this denial of the Hittites long after the controversy had died down. In a 1923 publication, he noted how "many sober scholars laughed at the visionary Hittite Empire . . . just as others now doubt the existence of another great empire—that of the Amorites." In 1936, he recalled how earlier scholars had routinely dismissed biblical references to the "kings of the Hittites" as false. Thus archaeology had proved and was continually proving the skeptics wrong about entire peoples and, therefore, also wrong about the biblical exegesis involving those peoples.[20]

b. January 1896: "Archaeology and Old Testament Criticism." In this publication, Cheyne received the title "high priest of higher criticism in Great Britain," with the priestly designation meant as a term of derision within the Protestant context. But there was hope. One could be rescued from the deep abyss by archaeology, as Archibald Sayce had been: "Professor Sayce, having been led to the edge of a dangerous precipice, and having realized the tendencies and results of the criticism advocated by his Oxford colleague and his friends, deemed it wise and necessary to change front."[21] He had come back from the brink thanks to archaeology!

c. March 1898: "Archaeology and Criticism." By the time the March 1898 edition of the *Methodist Review* was published, Albright was no longer only fighting imaginary battles in his father's library. He was now reading the *Methodist Review* in terms of a real battle of importance being fought in the present with heroes, villains, and a battlefield. The enemy was represented by the wild speculations generated by Wellhausen. "Wellhausenism followed to its legitimate results would wipe out the supernatural about the religion of Israel, and would reduce the Old Testament to the level of the sacred books of the other nations."[22] And in case there was any doubt, the charge was repeated on the next page.

The hero against Wellhausen's wild speculations was the British scholar, S. R. Driver. The *Methodist Review* praised him for his just-published *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, which Albright would later praise. Driver was portrayed as repudiating the extremism of the Wellhausen school: "It is, therefore, refreshing to learn from the pen of Professor Driver

[19]"The Hittites," 136-138, 139.

[20]William Foxwell Albright, "The Epic of the King of Battle: Sargon of Akkad in Cappadocia," *JSOR* 7 (1923): 1-2; idem, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," in *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, ed. Robert Young (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1936), 19. The full five-page section of "Archaeology and the Bible" was devoted to the Hittites in 1912, as Albright was graduating from college, a marker of the change that had occurred (*Methodist Review* 94 [Fifth Series 28] [1912]: 307-311).

[21]"Archaeology and Old Testament Criticism," 138.

[22] "Archaeology and Criticism," *Methodist Review* 80 (Fifth Series 14) (1898): 312.

that archaeology and the general critical position are after all not so widely separated."[23] Thus the weapon of choice in this struggle was archaeology.

> Archaeology has constantly pushed to the front, and as it has revealed its varied treasures it has shown the weakness of Wellhausenism. In a general way we may say that not a single one of the recent discoveries has in any way contradicted the Old Testament, but on the other hand, many a passage which at one time was regarded as doubtful or obscure has been explained and confirmed in a most wonderful manner.[24]

Albright made the same claim in his lecture, "The Bible in the *Light* [emphasis supplied] of Archaeology," which was subsequently published in his first book *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*.[25]

The battlefield that would come to be Albright's own was centered on the narrative of Gen 14. The January 1898 edition of *Methodist Review* noted that the monuments discovered by archaeology confirm

> in a remarkable way several important things reported in the Bible as historical, but relegated by the critics to the region of myths, such as the account of the military campaign reported in Genesis xiv. The monuments have shown that this chapter may have been actual history, and not a fanciful story invented centuries later by some one who had witnessed the expeditions of the later Assyrian kings.[26]

Genesis 14 thus provided Albright with heroes, villains, weapons of war, and a battlefield. He probably wrote more about Gen 14 than any other single chapter in the Bible. That chapter provided the archaeological link to the story of Abraham, thus securing the existence of the patriarchal age through science. Proving the historicity of Gen 14 through archaeology was important to Albright and a task to which he dedicated himself throughout his career.

Thus the 1894-1898 articles depicted a universe where archaeologists and Assyriologists triumphed over the destructive forces led by the high priests of higher criticism. This attitude was summarized in a book review, published in the *Methodist Review* in 1902:

[23]"Archaeology and Criticism," 312; William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible* (New York: Revell, 1932), 20, 176; idem, "The Old Testament and the Archaeology of Palestine," in *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 2; idem, "Prolegomenon," in *The Book of Judges with Introduction and Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Kings*, C. F. Burney (New York: KTAV, 1970), 4. See also "'Christian' Rationalism," *Methodist Review* 78 (Fifth Series 12) (1896): 446.

[24]"Archaeology and Criticism," 313.

[25]Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, 127.

[26]"Archaeology and Criticism," 314-315.

> The *Encyclopedia Biblica* is revolutionary in theology and positively menacing in its attacks upon the very citadel of faith. In many of its articles it uses learning recklessly or viciously, as if with a desire to undermine and overthrow the Christian religion. This mania for destruction will pass by, its methods will be discarded, its subjective criticism and conjectural history will be discredited, its skepticism will go into the limbo of abandoned fads. . . . [N]o theory [is] too wild to be fastened on the Bible, no view too absurd to be connected with its chronicles.

The language could not have been more blunt. It was war. Sasson's comments about the "atmosphere" of the times and Albright's immigrant fervor understates the cultural tension. William Rainey Harper, the founder of the University of Chicago, led a "Bible Renaissance" in the 1880s and 1890s through his mail-order publications. Wilbur Albright learned Hebrew from one such publication and the booklet was passed on to his son, William. Nonetheless, it is the *Methodist Review* that provides a more specific and documented explanation for Albright learning of the ongoing battle between science and religion, expressed in terms of higher criticism and archaeology. The clash between these two phenomena was a critical aspect of the religious world in which young Albright was raised, and highlighted the need for warriors of light to hold science and religion together.

For young Albright to follow in his father's footsteps as a missionary would have been to fight an old war while ignoring the new one. Higher criticism assaulted the very basis of the Methodist religion by denying the historical validity of the text on which Christianity was based. Why be either Methodist or Baptist if Jesus quoted from a book that was simply human in origin and full or errors and contradictions? Why be a Protestant or a Catholic if David was not a historical figure? Why be a Christian if God was not involved in human history as attested in Scripture? While it is unlikely that the child asked these questions in precisely these terms, the precocious youth certainly recognized that the stakes were high in the showdown between destructive higher criticism and reverent Methodism. To succeed he needed to master the weapons suitable for such a war, weapons that were not those of the great Brush College warriors who had made Methodism the largest religion in America.[27]

Albright was only following the advice given by Rogers anyway. In 1909, while Albright was still reading *Methodist Review*, Rogers wrote about the ongoing war waged against Wellhausen:

[27]G. E. Wright, "Biblical Archaeology Today," in *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, eds. David Noel Freedman and Jonas Greenfield (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969), 160; P. Feinman, "Itinerant Minister: Warrior of Light in a Wilderness of Chaos," *Methodist History* 45 (2006): 43-53. For an account of his experiences by one of the most famous circuit riders, see James B. Finley, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley or Pioneer Life in the West*, ed. W. P. Strickland (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1858). One can't help but notice that Albright's father, Wilbur Finley Albright, born 1859, and William's younger brother Finley both may have been named after this wilderness warrior hero.

> I am jealous of the reputation of our Methodist journals. . . . I take no exception to the writer's expression of the hope that Wellhausenism is waning. . . . [But] Wellhausenism seems to me to be a pretty vigorous theory still. If we wish to be rid of it, I fancy that we shall have to fight it with *weapons forged directly out of its own armory* [emphasis supplied].[28]

It is in this context that the purchase of the book by Rogers needs to be understood.

IV. *Robert W. Rogers's* A History of Babylonia and Assyria

In 1900, a series of ads appeared in *Methodist Review* for a new set of books by Robert W. Rogers. The price for the two-volume series was $5.00. The ad stated:

> This new history of Babylonia and Assyria contains in Book I, Prolegomena, the most elaborate account ever written of all the explorations and excavations in Assyria and Babylonia as well as the history of the decipherment of the inscriptions. It is untechnical and popular in style, and is abundantly illustrated with copies of inscriptions, showing the processes of decipherment. Book II gives the history of Babylonia from 4500 B.C. [long before 4004 B.C.E.!] to the period of Assyrian domination, and Book III the history of Assyria to the fall of Nineveh. Book IV contains the history of the great Chaldean empire to the fall of Babylon.
>
> All histories of Babylon and Assyria published prior to 1880 are hopelessly antiquated by the archaeological discoveries of the great expeditions to the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates. Students of ancient oriental history in general, and of the history of Israel in particular, have long desired a new history of the Babylonians and Assyrians which should be consistently based on original sources, and yet so written as to be intelligible and interesting to men who are not specially trained in the subject. It is confidently believed that this great gap in modern historical literature is filled by this new history.

A testimonial by Sayce in the ad saluted the book as a "veritable romance" of the history of the decipherment of inscriptions. One should not ignore the romance factor in the appeal of archaeology not only to men, but to children.[29]

If this ad was not enough to grab Albright's attention, then two issues in 1901 were likely to have provided the motivation for him to save money to

[28]R. W. Rogers, "Wellhausenism on the Wane," *Methodist Review* 91 (Fifth Series 25) (1909): 294.

[29]This ad was taken from *Methodist Review* 83 (Fifth Series 17) (1901): no p. no.

buy the newly published book. The opening line of the January 1901 "Notes and Discussions" reads: "A book of extraordinary interest, just issued by our Book Concern, in two volumes, octavo, is *A History of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Professor R. W. Rogers, of [Methodist] Drew Theological Seminary. A full notice will appear in our pages in due time."[30]

So not only did *Methodist Review* report the publication of the book, it blessed the event as "our" book since it was published by the Methodists. Since the publisher of the book and advertisement was Eaton and Mains, and not the Methodist Book Concern, the connection to Methodism may be overlooked or not realized. The emphasis on the role of this book in the Albright mythology generally obscures the Methodist universe that created, published, and blessed it, and then informed Albright of it.

The subsequent book review characterized Rogers's book as fourth in a series on the history of Assyria and Babylonia in which each scholar expanded the synthesis as more information became available on the subject. The bringing together of the ancient chronological data was especially praised as an "unprecedented achievement"—and Rogers writes well, too! according to the review, words similar to Albright's characterization of it as "written in beautiful English by a well-trained and accurate scholar."[31] On one level, the book simply furnished him with more scripts for his dramas of stone wars on his mother's patio or in his father's library. On another level, the formal discipline of biblical archaeology may be construed as having emerged out of the battle lines textually revealed to him as a child in *Methodist Review* and Rogers's book.

V. *Conclusion*

Albright and the Albright school have identified the purchase of Rogers's *A History of Babylonia and Assyria* as a seminal event in the life of a young child, depicting it as the first step toward the life of the adult scholar. The analysis of his life does, indeed, confirm the importance of this event in his life. The analysis also reveals the need to understand the event within the context of young Albright's life as the son of American Methodist missionaries in the late nineteenth century. His decision to acquire this book did not occur in a vacuum.

The child who played imaginary games that transcended centuries became the adult who saw the unity in time and space from the Stone Age to Christianity. It is easy, given his scholarship in pottery and philology, to overlook the sheer grandness of the scope of his mind and the role he assigned to himself in

[30]"Notes and Discussions," *Methodist Review* 83 (Fifth Series 17) (1901): 113. The Methodist Book Concern was the subject of an article in the January 1900 *Methodist Review*, celebrating eleven decades as the publishing arm of the Methodist denomination in America: "In our twentieth century Church the Book Concern should have a mission little less sacred in our thought than was that of the ark of God in the camp of ancient Israel" (George P. Mains, "Reviews and Views of the Methodist Book Concern," *Methodist Review* 82 [Fifth Series 16] [1900]: 49).

[31]"Book Notices—*A History of Babylonia and Assyria*," *Methodist Review* 83 (Fifth Series 17) (1901): 505-506, 507

the grand scheme of things. In a letter to his mother, dated 18 May 1919, he wrote that he was following the path he had chosen at age 11, thanks to God.[32] It is as if he considered divine providence to have been showing him the way when at age 10 he purchased Rogers's book. On 30 August 1920, he wrote his mother that his actions served God in bringing his kingdom closer.[33] It would be another decade before the scholar Albright was prepared to begin publishing his research, but divine providence had already shown him the path to walk, while he was still a young boy in his missionary parents' home.

[32]Leona G. Running Archive.

[33]Ibid.