

type of firing, the color of the dish, the type of decoration, the color of decoration, etc. There are so many possibilities of variation that styles constantly changed, sometimes gradually, sometimes suddenly (in the latter case the coming of a new ethnic group is usually indicated). As soon as a few mounds have been excavated and the pottery of the various strata arranged in sequence, it is possible to take bits of pottery from the ^{side} ~~dis~~ of an unexcavated mound and to make a judgment as to its equivalence with those from the excavated mound. A few specialists in Palestinian pottery have acquired sufficient skill to date it within half a century and thus to know when a site was occupied, simply from examining the pottery strewn on its side, or washed out by the rain. It is hard to overestimate the great importance of this discovery for the increase of our knowledge of the history of ancient Palestine.

From the excavation of Palestinian sites has come many discoveries of great importance to Bible students. Some of these will be mentioned later on.

Since the problems of excavation in Syria are quite similar to those of Palestine, Syria can be included under this head. However, a somewhat larger amount of inscriptional material has been found in the region north of Palestine. An outstanding discovery has been a large collection of tablets found at Ras Shamra in northern Syria containing a new type of alphabetic cuneiform writing.

While the great bulk of archaeological discoveries relating to the Bible have come from the three regions we have listed, it would 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. Also in Persia discoveries have been made relating to the book of Esther.

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

not clear

9

10

11