

NINEVEH SAILS FOR THE NEW WORLD: ASSYRIA ENVISIONED BY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

By STEVEN W. HOLLOWAY*

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews;
I adopt each theory, myth, god and demi-god;
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true, without exception;
I assert that all past days were what they should have been.

— Walt Whitman: *With Antecedents* (1860)

In order to understand the unique reception of ancient Assyria in nineteenth-century America, it is necessary to describe the British public's own reception of the earliest British Museum exhibits, together with the marketing of publications of Layard and others. And, in order to grasp something of both Britain's and America's keen fascination with the earliest images of Assyria, I must introduce you briefly to the changing perceptions and tastes in admissible historical representation that, I believe, drove this fascination.

The British public's breathless enthusiasm for the monuments from Bible lands had radical origins in English soil. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquarians surveyed, sketched and wove theories about the prehistoric relics that dot the English landscape, occasionally linking them with a mythical Christian past. William Stukeley, for example, student and first biographer of Sir Isaac Newton, made something of a career out of surveying Avebury and Stonehenge, in an early eighteenth-century quest for evidence that could link the Britons of Celtic fame with the peoples and the received timeline of the Bible.¹ By the early nineteenth century, the Gothic Revival movement had begun in earnest. Its proponents saw this project as a moral mainstay in the revitalization of English society and culture. English prehistoric and medieval monuments would be measured, drawn, catalogued, published, and ultimately by so doing, laid at the feet of the British public.² The Napoleonic wars accelerated this movement, for Continental sightseeing was impossible, so the classic Grand Tour evaporated down to an insular walking tour. This of course fuelled the sense of British national destiny:

Works on topography . . . tend to make us better acquainted with every thing which exists in our native land, and are therefore conducive to the progress of real knowledge, to the diffusion of rational patriotism, and to virtuous sentiments and propensities . . .³

* American Theological Library Association.

¹ See William Stukeley, *Palaeographia Sacra: or, Discourses on Monuments of Antiquity that Relate to Sacred History: Number 1. A Comment on an Ode of Horace, Shewing the Bacchus of the Heathen to be the Jehovah of the Jews* (London: Printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, 1736); idem, *Stonehenge: A Temple Restor'd to the British Druids* (London: Printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, 1740); Stuart Piggot, *William Stukeley. An Eighteenth-Century Antiquary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950); David Boyd Haycock, "'A Small Journey into the Country': William Stukeley and the Formal Landscapes of Stonehenge and Avebury", in *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice 1700–1850* (ed. Martin Myrone and Lucy Peltz; Reinterpreting Classicism: Culture, Reaction and Appropriation; Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999) 67–82; idem, *William Stukeley: Science, Religion, and Archaeology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2002).

² Derek D. Churchill, "A Gothic Renaissance in Modern Britain", in *Modern Gothic: the Revival of Medieval Art*

(ed. Susan B. Matheson and Derek D. Churchill; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 10–35; Georg German, *Gothic Revival in Europe and Britain: Sources, Influences and Ideas* (trans. Gerald Onn; London: Lund Humphries with the Architectural Association, 1972), especially 24–73; Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994) chapter 5, "Gothic Archaeology and Gothic Propriety", 129–73; Roderick O'Donnell, "'An Apology for the Revival': the Architecture of the Catholic Revival in Britain and Ireland", in *Gothic Revival: Religion, Architecture and Style in Western Europe 1815–1914* (ed. Jan De Maeyer and Luc Verpoest; Leuven, University Press, 2000) 35–48. The standard textbook on Victorian Gothic remains Charles L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival; an Attempt to Show How the Taste for Mediaeval Architecture Which Lingered in England During the Two Last Centuries Has Since Been Encouraged and Developed* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1872).

³ Anon., "Review of Nicholas Carlisle, *Topographical Dictionary of England*", *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* 29 No. January-April (1808) 266.

Another theme that ran through the debate over British medieval monuments was that of Protestant supercessionism. Contemplation of the past, through its preservation of the remains of abbeys, cathedrals, and other monastic foundations, yields sobering historical lessons. In the words of Uvedale Price (1794), “The ruins of these magnificent edifices are the pride and boast of this island; we may well be proud of them, not merely in a picturesque point of view — we may glory that the abodes of tyranny and superstition are in ruins”.⁴ The preparation for the extraordinary effort expended to excavate, record, and transfer Middle Eastern artifacts to a fascinated England was thus foreshadowed by indigenous experience and cultural outlook. Preservation of the material past was a means of realizing national heritage, and at the same time, the preservation of Catholic ruins bespoke the demonstration of the Bible through prophetic fulfilment, a theme that would be greatly amplified through the recovery of fabled Nineveh.⁵

As the ascendant evangelical movement magnified the place of the Bible in daily life as well as corporate worship, illustrations of biblical events and places allowed the public, literate or not, to inhabit the texts of the Old and New Testaments in unprecedented ways. Although British travellers to the Southern Levant had published travelogues with illustrations of Holy Land sites, including Egypt and Mesopotamia, since the seventeenth century, popular appetite for such vicarious experience was whetted by British commercial, military and leisured presence in the early nineteenth-century Orient. Napoleon Bonaparte’s dazzling expedition to Egypt in 1798 culminated in the British military containment of his ambitions by 1801.⁶ “These are favourable times for travellers in the Levant”, wrote Dr Edward Clarke of events in 1801, “when frigates are daily sailing in all directions, and the English name is so much respected”.⁷ The exploration of coastal Syria and Palestine, while beset with unromantic dangers from disease and brigands, was less fraught with peril than travel through Cisjordan and the Arabian Peninsula, which several intrepid Englishmen brought off by travelling incognito in Arab dress. Through the publication of such illustrated books as *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria and Asia Minor; During the years 1817 & 1818*, and *Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, the Oasis Boeris, Mount Sinai, and Jerusalem*,⁸ a formidable visual “database” of Holy Land vistas began to transform vague ideals of the appearance of the Near East and its inhabitants into concrete images of cityscapes and landscapes. This in turn created a climate in which the old style art of biblical illustration, like the staging of orientalizing theatricals with turbans, curved scimitars and other hackneyed visual cues, was supplanted by drawings, engravings and paintings that sought to project factual and accurate depictions of regional livery and topographical detail backwards into biblical narratives. In the 1836 preface to Finden and Finden, *Landscape Illustrations of the Bible*, the publisher John Murray II stipulated that it comprised “A series of matter of fact views of places mentioned in the Bible as they now exist”.⁹ As was true with the landscape drawings of prehistoric menhirs and medieval English ruins, the visually literate and reading British public had been educated to desire a retrospective past that embodied not only pictorial details worthy of a professional draftsman, but a culture of biblical art and science that captured the “antiquities of sacred scripture”.¹⁰

⁴ Quoted in Ian Ousby, *The Englishman’s England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 107.

⁵ On the complex issue of the social movements behind the rise of modern archaeology in Victorian Great Britain, of which the Gothic Revival movement was a prime embodiment, see Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians, and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶ Terence M. Russell, ed. *The Napoleonic Survey of Egypt: Description de l’Égypte: The Monuments and Customs of Egypt: Selected Engravings and Texts* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001); Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 31–6.

⁷ William Otter, *The Life and Remains of the Rev. Edward Daniel Clarke, LL.D., Professor of Mineralogy in the University of Cambridge* (London: J. F. Dove, 1824) 477,

quoting a letter by Clarke. See Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe Asia and Africa, Part 2: Greece Egypt and the Holy Land* (2nd ed.; London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1813).

⁸ Charles Leonard Irby and James Mangles, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and Asia Minor; During the Years 1817 & 1818* (London: T. White and Co., Printers, 1823); Frederick Henniker, *Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, the Oasis Boeris, Mount Sinai, and Jerusalem* (2nd ed.; London: John Murray, 1824).

⁹ William Finden, Edward Finden, and Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Landscape Illustrations of the Bible; Consisting of Views of the Most Remarkable Places Mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. From Original Sketches Taken on the Spot* (2 vols; London: John Murray, 1836).

¹⁰ For an excellent survey on the topic, see T. S. R. Boase, “Biblical Illustration in Nineteenth Century English Art”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966) 349–67.

The creation of modern Assyriology in Victorian England as a discipline cannot be understood apart from the biblical archaeology movement, a movement devoted to the war against Continental skepticism and irreligion.¹¹ Whatever their intrinsic fascination, the relics of ancient Assyria would be mustered into immediate battle like sailors swept up by press-gangs to serve in Her Majesty's Navy. As British commercial and military interests gained ground in the Middle East, missionaries and biblical specialists with an empirical bent set out to measure the altitude of the Jordan River or link biblical places with modern toponyms. The selfsame rational investigative techniques used by deists and other agnostics to expose the perceived crude deceptions of Christianity would be appropriated by Christian apologists striving to vindicate the literal historicity of the Bible through the authority of the monuments, whether Judaeon or Assyrian. The paradox of the biblical archaeology movement resided in its staunch if unimaginative Victorian faith in progress: as knowledge of past civilizations mounted in an open-ended spiral, it was fancied that the historical truth of sacred scripture would be made impregnable against rational contest. News from Nineveh could only hasten the victory.

While America could not experience a Gothic Revival rooted in its own past, the young nation enjoyed manifold ties to the ancient world. The politics of the living Near East informed American foreign policies as early as 1778, when John Adams and Thomas Jefferson petitioned Congress for permission to negotiate with the Barbary States; a series of treaties, trade agreements and small wars would ensue.¹² American Protestants, imbued with an ideology stemming in part from Puritan convictions of election, in part from a consciousness of embodying a unique experiment in political independence, began aggressive proselytism of the Bible lands in the 1820s, generating widely circulated missionary letters for domestic periodicals and evangelical tracts.¹³ Knowledge of and identification with the classical heritage of Greece and Rome followed European settlers across North America, as witness countless Greco-Roman place names and birth records. Edward Everett, the Eliot Professor of Greek Literature at Harvard in 1815, perhaps the first American student of classical archaeology, prepared himself by studying classics and philology in Germany and by visiting numerous collections on the Continent.¹⁴ Elite New England periodicals speedily translated works of German classical philology and historiography, and recounted the installation of the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum.¹⁵ More popular were narratives of journeys through

¹¹ A situation that was openly embraced by many at the time; for representative examples, see George Rawlinson, *The Historical Evidences of the Truth of the Scripture Records Stated Anew, with Special Reference to the Doubts and Discoveries of Modern Times. In Eight Lectures Delivered in the Oxford University Pulpit, in the Year 1859, on the Bampton Foundation* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1868); idem, "Early Oriental History [review of F. Lenormant, *Manuel d'histoire ancienne de l'Orient jusqu'aux guerres médiques*]", *The Contemporary Review* 14 No. April-July (1870) 80–100; idem, *Historical Illustrations of the Old Testament* (London: Christian Evidence Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1871); Donald J. Wiseman, *The Expansion of Assyrian Studies: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered on 27 February 1962* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1962) 11; P. R. S. Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991) 1–24. For parallels on the other side of the Atlantic, see Neil Asher Silberman, "Between Athens and Babylon: The AIA and the Politics of American Near Eastern Archaeology, 1884–1997", in *Excavating Our Past: Perspectives on the History of the Archaeological Institute of America* (ed. Susan Heuck Allen; Colloquia and Conference Papers Vol. 5; Boston: Archaeological Institute of America, 2002) 115–22.

¹² Charles O. Paullin, "Naval Administration under the Navy Commissioners", *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 33 (1907) 624; Fuad Sha'ban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought: The Roots of Orientalism in America* (Durham, NC: Acorn Press, 1991) 65–81.

¹³ Clifton Jackson Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810–1860* (Harvard East Asian Monographs 32; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) 133–71; Sha'ban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought*, 83–114. American missionaries evince interest in European archaeological exploits in Mesopotamia (Khorsabad) as early as 1844; letter of Thomas Laurie, Mosul, August 8, 1844, *Missionary Herald* 41 (1845) 40–2. Ten years hence, with the help of Henry Rawlinson, the American missionary Henry Lobbell would procure Neo-Assyrian relief slabs and other antiquities for American colleges; William Seymour Tyler, *Memoir of Rev. Henry Lobbell, M.D., Late Missionary of the American Board at Mosul; Including the Early History of the Assyrian Mission* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1859) 243–4; Selah Merrill, "Assyrian and Babylonian Monuments in America", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 32 No. 126 (1875) 320–49.

¹⁴ Thomas C. Patterson, *Toward a Social History of Archaeology in the United States* (Case Studies in Archaeology Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995) 23. Everett strongly promoted American Protestant missionary efforts among the Greeks during the Greco-Turkish conflict; Edward Everett, "Affairs of Greece", *North American Review* 17 (1823) 398–424.

¹⁵ I am here thinking of the *Biblical Repository* and *Bibliotheca Sacra*, both founded by Edward Robinson, and *The Princeton Review*.

Syria-Palestine and the connections made between extant ruins and the pages of the King James Bible. The American author John Lloyd Stephens' *Incidents of Travels in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, originally published in 1837, had sold 21,000 copies by the following year, and continued in print until 1882.¹⁶ In the world of academe, Edward Robinson, the man who organized biblical archaeology as a discipline, took the coveted gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1842 for his *Biblical Researches in Palestine*.¹⁷ The exotic lands surrounding the Mediterranean pond, though separated by time and ocean, robustly inhabited the imagination of antebellum America.

Considerably before the time of the French and British discoveries in Mesopotamia, the American reading public grasped the promise of controlled excavations for unearthing the past. In the decade following the American Revolution, American antiquarians began to explore the enigmatic Native American earthworks of the Mississippi Valley. A tenacious mythology was born, based on romantic parallels drawn between the mounds of North America and similar artificial structures of the Old World, opening the floodgates of speculation. The identity of the mounds' builders held more than academic curiosity, however. The earnest nineteenth-century debate over their identity severely taxed the racial ideology of Manifest Destiny: for, if the culturally sophisticated mound-builders were indeed the ancestors of the living Native Americans, and not the Phoenicians, Turanians, Hindus or the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, among other learned guesses, then European settlers' claims to tribal hinterlands raised intractable moral quandaries.¹⁸ In addition, nationalistic jealousy over European success in Mesopotamia also spurred on the need to sketch, dig and publish in North America. In the words of a New England savant writing of Indian antiquities in 1855, "various monuments of our ancient people in their palmy days, stand out before us . . . in life-like and imposing array, worthy to be classed with the proudest memorials of fallen Thebes or buried Nineveh".¹⁹ What with the archaeological exploits of the American Antiquarian Society and the Smithsonian Institution at home,²⁰ and the explorations of Edward Robinson and others in Palestine,²¹ the American public grew accustomed to a diet of new and enthralling intelligence of bygone peoples, the more closely linked to the Bible, the more exciting.

Apart from countless exegetical sermons, Nineveh and other biblical locales figured in many popular American perorations on the relationship between the glorious past and the contemptible state of the Ottoman present. Prior to the excavations in Mesopotamia, evangelical writers harped on the theme of the utter desolation of the sites of ancient Nineveh and Babylon and the degeneracy of the present inhabitants as visible, palpable proofs of biblical prophecy fulfilled. For example,

¹⁶ John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*. Edited, and with an Introduction by Victor Wolfgang von Hagen (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970) xxxviii–xl.

¹⁷ Patterson, *Social History of Archaeology*, 24.

¹⁸ The classic early study of Native American historiography is Samuel F. Haven, *Archaeology of the United States; Or, Sketches, Historical and Bibliographical, of the Progress of Information and Opinion Respecting Vestiges of Antiquity in the United States* (Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge Vol. 8; Washington, D.C.: 1856), who patiently assembles every published theory of the origins of the mound builders in the process of permitting the most outlandish to collapse of their own weight. For details of the creation of the myth and its refutation, see Robert Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (Athens, Ohio and London: Ohio University Press, 1968). On the tragic hold of the ideologies of Manifest Destiny on Native American archaeology, see the brilliant study by Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Archaeology* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁹ John L. Taylor, "American Antiquities", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 12 (1855) 433–67.

²⁰ Haven, *Archaeology of the United States*, 32–8, 61, 129; Ephraim George Squire and Edwin Hamilton Davis,

Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley (Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge Vol. 1; New York: Bartlett & Welford, 1848).

²¹ The most up-to-date survey explorations in the Holy Land would figure in the voluminous writing career of Robinson, whose *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea. A Journal of Travels in the Year 1838*, by E. Robinson and E. Smith. Undertaken in Reference to Biblical Geography. Drawn up from the Original Diaries with Historical Illustrations, first published in 1841, created in large measure the genre of the biblical archaeology report and travel-guide. Even the United States Navy financed the first full nautical exploration of the Dead Sea in the course of the voyage of Lieutenant W. F. Lynch in 1842, part of the United States Exploring Expedition, 1838–42, voyaging to South America, Oceania, and the Mediterranean; William Francis Lynch, *Narrative of the United States's Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1849); idem, *Official Report of the United States' Expedition to Explore the Dead Sea and the River Jordan*, by Lieut. W. F. Lynch, U.S.N. Published at the National Observatory, Lieut. M. F. Maury, U.S.N., Superintendent. By Authority of the Hon. Wm. A. Graham, Secretary of the Navy (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1852).

in the exceedingly popular work by Alexander Keith, *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion, Derived from the Literal Fulfillment of Prophecy* (in its 35th reprint by 1848), he takes the cities prophesied against in the Bible, reproduces the prophecies themselves in italics, and links them in a narrative compounded of travellers' tales and Keith's own sonorous moralizing in a "demonstration" of the prophecy's fulfilment.²²

Learned American theologians shared the suspicions of their European colleagues that the site of ancient Nineveh was known, and that exploration of the looming tells near Mosul would lead to discoveries that would advance knowledge of the Bible. For instance, the Andover Theological Seminary divine B. B. Edwards published an essay in 1837 entitled "Ruins of Ancient Nineveh", in which he combs classical and biblical literature for geographical data about the city, then gives a competent digest of its visitations by Westerners, chronicling the detailed surveys made in early nineteenth century by the British Resident in Baghdad, Claudius James Rich.

Mr. Rich discovered a piece of fine brick or pottery, covered with exceedingly small and beautiful cuneiform writing... Not far from this mound [Koyunjik], an immense bas-relief, representing men and animals, covering a grey stone of the height of two men, was dug up, a few years since, from a spot a little above the surface of the ground... The question whether these ruins will prove to be the actual remains of the Nineveh of the Hebrew prophets, which Mr. Rich and others, have conjectured with so much probability, may hereafter be put at rest by the researches of still more fortunate travellers.²³

Another venue of American interest in ancient Nineveh stemmed from missionary work among the Nestorians in Kurdistan. An American Presbyterian mission was established in Urmiah in 1834; rancorous publicity and deadly politics would ensue.²⁴ Curious to relate, the archaeological exploits of the British in Mesopotamia radically refocused Western interest in this ancient Christian community. In his chief publications, Austin Henry Layard proclaimed these historic, linguistic, and religious minorities to be "as much the remains of Nineveh, and Assyria, as the rude heaps and ruined palaces".²⁵ The Anglican observer J. P. Fletcher wrote in 1850 that "the Chaldeans

²² Alexander Keith, *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion, Derived from the Literal Fulfillment of Prophecy; Particularly as Illustrated by the History of the Jews, and by the Discoveries of Recent Travellers* (reprint of the 6th Edinburgh ed.; New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832). One example will suffice: "You find here [Tyre] no similitude of that glory for which it was so renowned in ancient times. You see nothing here but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, &c. Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harbouring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly upon fishing, who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence, as a visible argument how God hath fulfilled His Word concerning Tyre", 240, quoting from Maundrell's *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem*.

²³ Bela Bates Edwards, "Ruins of Ancient Nineveh", *The American Biblical Repository* 9 No. 25 (1837) 157-9. Edwards' essay was obviously inspired by the posthumous publication of Claudius James Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan, and on the Site of Ancient Nineveh; With Journal of a Voyage Down the Tigris to Bagdad and an Account of a Visit to Shirauz and Persepolis* (ed. by his widow; London: James Duncan, 1836).

²⁴ In the forefront of the economic and imperial engagements of the West in Asia, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions dispatched two New England-born missionaries to the Nestorians of Persian Azerbaijan in 1831. A mission was established in Urmiah in 1834 led by Justin Perkins (1805-96), a tutor from Amherst College, who for the next 36 years would work among the Nestorians and publish travelogue letters filled with intriguing news about regional antiquities, ruins, and ethnographic colour. Extremely naïve diplomacy and rash deeds on the part of the American missionaries upset the delicate political appletart in the region, and in 1843 Kurdish forces slaughtered hundreds of the local Nestorian

Christians. American newspapers and periodicals were alive with recriminations and fierce denunciations of Catholic and Anglican meddling in a missionary field that, many fulminated, rightly belonged to American Protestants. Justin Perkins, *Missionary Life in Persia: Being Glimpses at a Quarter of a Century of Labors Among the Nestorian Christians* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1861); Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World*, 147-59; John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, and Colonial Powers* (Studies in Christian Mission Vol. 26; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 67-85. On the competition between the American and British missions to the Nestorians of Urmiah, see J. F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 30-54.

²⁵ Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849) 5. While in Constantinople, Layard had by 1843 filled three manuscript notebooks with an unpublished study, "An Inquiry into the Origin, History, Language and Doctrines of the Chaldean or Nestorian Tribes of Kurdistan" (British Library MSS Add. 39061, 39062, 39063); Coakley, *Church of the East*, 46. Layard's assistant, Hormuzd Rassam, himself a Chaldaean whose brother's father-in-law was an ardent Christian Missionary Society missionary, would play a notable role in promoting the lineal linkage between the ancient Assyrians and the modern Nestorian Christians; Hormuzd Rassam, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod: Being an Account of the Discoveries Made in the Ancient Ruins of Nineveh, Asshur, Sepharvaim, Caleh, Babylon, Borsippa, Cuthah, and Van. Including a Narrative of Different Journeys in Mesopotamia, Assyria, Asia Minor, and Koordistan* (Cincinnati and New York: Curtis & Jennings, 1897) 167-83; Coakley, *Church of the East*, 44-6.

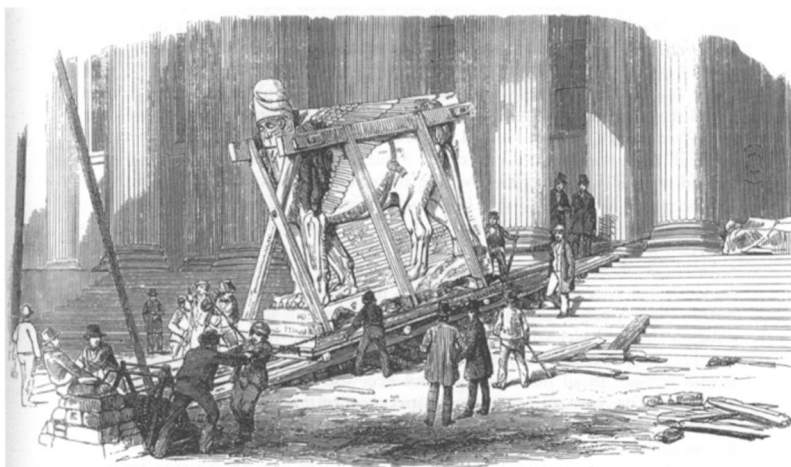


Fig. 1 *Illustrated London News*, 28 February 1852, 184.

and the Nestorians” are “the only surviving human memorial of Assyria and Babylonia”.²⁶ The combination of living Assyrian fossil and a beckoning missionary field would prove irresistible to the American evangelical press.

In 1849, the British Museum mounted the first major display of Assyrian antiquities in England (Fig. 1).²⁷ While the public had enjoyed access to published images of British-sponsored excavations in Mesopotamia since early 1846, by October 1850 it became possible to make a comfortable excursion to the British Museum and sat one’s curiosity literally at the knees of colossal human-headed bulls. The popularity of the first British Museum exhibits of Assyrian sculptures is difficult to grasp from our modern coign of vantage. Although the custodians of patrician British aesthetics decried the rudeness of the “Assyrian marbles”, the art of a stunted civilization immeasurably inferior to the masterpieces of Athens and Rome,²⁸ ancient Assyria’s exotic glamour, its evocation of British imperial success, but above all its association with the Bible served to galvanize the public. Following his first expedition, Austen Henry Layard composed a stirring narrative cast in the guise of a travelogue, the genre commonly used to convey vicariously the vistas and vicissitudes encountered by westerners in the exotic Orient. The shrewd publisher John Murray III hired master engravers to turn the excellent sketches and watercolors of Layard and others into enduring images of Assyrian palace reliefs and action-scenes of local tribesmen labouring at the excavation face or struggling like pack animals to drag ponderous sculptures to the Tigris River.²⁹

²⁶ James Phillips Fletcher, *Notes from Nineveh, and Travels in Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Syria* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850) 188. F. Bowen expressed grave doubts regarding Layard’s conclusion that the Nestorians of Kurdistan are the lineal descendants of the ancient Assyrians; F. Bowen, “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *North American Review* 69 (1849) 140.

²⁷ Although materials from Layard’s excavations first became accessible to the general public in a jammed “Antiquities Gallery” in 1848, the first room devoted solely to the objects, the “Nimroud Room”, a vacant area in the basement, opened in mid-1849. The first of the bull colossi arrived in a flurry of publicity in October 1850. The southern side gallery saw the completion of its Assyrian relief installations in 1852, whereas the south and north side galleries and the Assyrian Transept would not be complete until February 1854. The Assyrian Basement Gallery would be finished in 1859. See Frederick N. Bohrer, “A New Antiquity: The English Reception of Assyria” (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1989) 236–44; idem, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 114–31; Ian

Jenkins, *Archaeologists & Aesthetes: In the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800–1939* (London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by the British Museum Press, 1992) 252–3; John Curtis, “Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities: The British Museum, London”, in *Vorderasiatische Museen: Gestern-Heute-Morgen Berlin-Paris-London-New York: Eine Standortbestimmung: Kolloquium aus Anlass des Einhundertjährigen Bestehens des Vorderasiatischen Museums Berlin am 7. Mai 1999* (ed. Beate Salje; Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001) 37–49.

²⁸ Regarding aesthetic assessments of Assyrian art in Victorian England, see Bohrer, “A New Antiquity”, 251–62, 282–3, 294–337; Jenkins, *Archaeologists & Aesthetes*, 68, 155–7, 160; Frederick N. Bohrer, “Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France”, *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998) 336–56.

²⁹ For the details of Murray’s role in the creation of Layard’s *Nineveh and its Remains*, see Bohrer, “A New Antiquity”, 135–51, and idem, “The Printed Orient: the Production of A. H. Layard’s Earliest Works”, in *The Construction of the Ancient Near East* (ed. Ann Clyburn Gunter; Culture & History Vol. 11; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1993) 85–103. On the life and career of the fascinating

That Layard's works were hugely popular may be gauged by the publication record in both England and America.³⁰ *Nineveh and its Remains* was issued in various formats by John Murray throughout the 1850s, and re-released as an abridgment by the author in 1867 and 1882. The American publisher George P. Putnam published runs of the original in 1849, 1850, 1851, 1852 (a printing of thirteen thousand copies), 1853, and 1854, with other editions by D. Appleton and Harper & Sons. *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* was marketed in America by Putnam in 1853, A. S. Barnes & Co. in 1854, 1856, and 1865, Harper in 1853, 1856, 1859, and 1875. Murray duplicated his strategy with the earlier volume by selling authorized abridgments in 1867 and 1882.³¹ There was no want of copies of these handsomely illustrated adventure stories for perusal by anyone.

As early as 1850, a far-sighted art critic of the Assyrian monuments in the British Museum prophesied that

It is not too much to say, that the minute truthfulness with which every action of life has been rendered by these early artists, has produced a total revolution in the style of Biblical annotation, as far as its Archaeology is concerned; and that all authors now refer to these pictures or sculptures as to a pictorial commentary, wonderful for its true and perfect accordance with the most minute allusions made by the inspired writers.³²

In other words, from this point on, writers wishing to use persuasive pictorial illustrations for works on ancient Assyria would be compelled to rely on a visual idiom created in the 1840s and 1850s. The idiom was based on drawings made by Layard and other artists working in the excavation fields of Ottoman Mesopotamia, expertly translated into easily recognizable engravings by professional draftsmen, together with engravings made "on the spot" in the British Museum for periodical spreads. Once the engravings hit the press, they would be recycled time and time again, reinforcing the sense of authenticity of these "sermons in stone" through sheer media bombardment.

Like mutating viruses, the striking Layard/Murray illustrations quickly found novel sources of dissemination. George Rawlinson, Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford University and a determined foe of German higher criticism, had the uncanny good fortune to be the brother of Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, the celebrated English decipherer of Akkadian.³³ Not only did Henry impart late-breaking news of the ancient Near East to his Oxonian brother in the guise of translations and historical syntheses, but Henry's own fervour to interlace the inscriptions of Western Asia with the received portrait of the Bible suited the Akkadian-challenged George Rawlinson's purposes admirably. John Murray III, the publisher who pioneered the mass-marketing of electrifying Assyriological developments for the British middle class, commissioned George Rawlinson in the early 1850s to produce a definitive translation of Herodotus, including major essays on Assyrian history and religion, essays written by George and his brother. Under the auspices of the enterprising Murray, George Rawlinson plagiarized most of his own essays in *Herodotus* Vol. 1 for unrevised incorporation into his oft-reprinted syntheses of ancient history, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, in print from 1867 to 1900, only to be subsequently reproduced in *The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, in print 1876 to 1900, republished in 2002.³⁴ The *Monarchies* volumes were lavishly adorned with hundreds of attractive engravings, in fact the very same engravings published earlier in Layard's two volumes, a marketing gambit guaranteed to move inventory.

Victorian publisher John Murray III, see John Murray IV, *John Murray III 1808–1892: A Brief Memoir* (London: John Murray, 1919); George Paston, *At John Murray's: Records of a Literary Circle 1843–1892* (London: John Murray, 1932).

³⁰ On the social ramifications of the recovery of ancient Assyria in the 20th century, see Bohrer, "A New Antiquity", *passim*; Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 66–271; Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Empire in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002) chapter one, and the bibliography cited therein.

³¹ Publication data is based on RLIN and WorldCat database queries, and physical examination of the hard copy in the Joseph Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago.

³² Anon., "Nineveh and Persepolis", *Art Journal* ns 2 (1850) 225.

³³ On his life, see Ronald Bayne, "Rawlinson, George (1812–1902)", in *Dictionary of National Biography, Twentieth Century, January 1901–December 1911, Supplement, Vol. 3* (ed. Sidney Lee; London: Oxford University Press, 1951) 165–7.

³⁴ Publication data is, again, based on a combination of RLIN and WorldCat queries and physical inspection of the volumes.

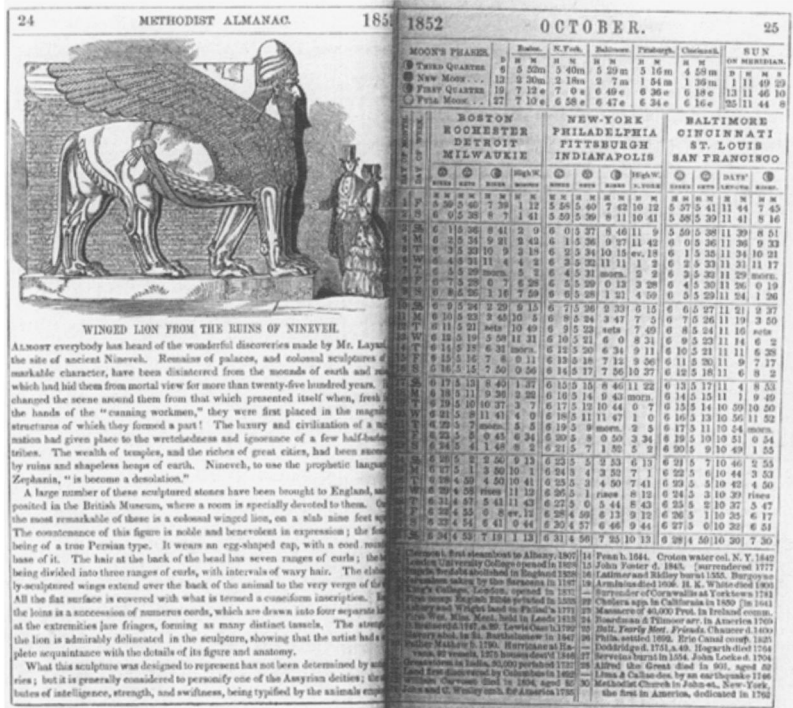


Fig. 2 Anon., “Winged Lion from the Ruins of Nineveh”, *Methodist Almanac* (1852) 24.

With the advent of Layard’s sensation-making publications in 1849 and 1853, virtually every English-language periodical ran some form of notice, ranging from a two-line publication announcement to fifty-page reviews, replete with eye-catching illustrations (Fig. 2). British reviews usually devoted as much space to describing Layard’s adventurous exploits among the exotic locals as they did to his excavations and discoveries concerning ancient Assyrian art.³⁵ Lengthy quotations from the more coloratura narratives fill the pages. American reviews, on the contrary, tended to eschew the ethnological vamp in favour of the Assyriological findings and biblical correlates, reflecting perhaps the American lack of empire and cultural insularity.³⁶ Layard himself, unsurprisingly,

³⁵ Sir David Brewster, “Review of A. H. Layard’s *Nineveh and its Remains*, and *The Monuments of Nineveh, from Drawings Made on the Spot*”, *North British Review* 11 (1849) 209–53; idem, “Review of A. H. Layard’s *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*”, *North British Review* 19 (1853) 255–96; Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *Eclectic Magazine* 17 (1849) 106–31 (from the *Quarterly Review*, London); Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*”, *Eclectic Magazine* 29 (1853) 341–59 (from the *English Review*, London); Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country* 39 (1849) 446–54; Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, and *Monuments of Nineveh*”, *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* 51 (1851) 290–334: “Our antiquaries may now thank Mr. Layard, that instead of having to wander along the desolate shores of the Tigris, cut off from their kindred and countrymen, like departed spirits on the banks of the Styx, to visit these Plutonic halls of the Arabs, they may henceforth pay their pilgrimages to the shrine of Assyrian art at the British Museum”. (310); Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* 11 No. 265 (1849) 56–69; Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*”, *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* 19 No. 485 (1853) 250–3; J. R. Beard, “Review of

A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *British Quarterly Review* 9 (1849) 399–442.

³⁶ Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *Littell’s Living Age* 20 (1849) 358–67; Anon., “Review of Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*”, *Littell’s Living Age* 37 (1853) 423–7; Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *Littell’s Living Age* 21 (1849) 19–43; Anon., “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* 24 No. 127 (1849) 355–62; F. Bowen, “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *North American Review* 69 (1849) 110–42: “We cannot account for the sudden stinginess of John Bull in this matter [British Museum financing], as on other occasions he has shown great munificence in patronizing learning and art. The whole world will cry shame on the present Whig administration, if it allows the noble work to stop short of completion which a British subject has so admirably begun. Parliament gave £50,000 to pay Lord Elgin for robbing the Parthenon, an enterprise in which his lordship incurred no risk but that of covering his own name with eternal opprobrium, for plundering what even the Goths and the Turks had spared; will it not give at least a quarter as much to unearth the precious remains of Assyria?” (132); Anon., “Story of Ancient Nineveh”, *The National Magazine: Devoted to Literature, Art, and Religion* 7 (1855)

was lionized in the British Protestant press.³⁷ By contrast, some American and most Irish Catholic reviewers praised Layard as an archaeologist but snubbed his ethnography and raised serious concerns regarding his historiography of the ancient world.³⁸

Be that as it may, of the contemporary English-language reviews that I have canvassed, all without exception maintain the unshakeable conviction that Layard's excavations in Nineveh would lead to the vindication of scriptural history. No reviewer questioned the enduring value of the work nor the necessity of continuing the exploration of the ancient tells of Mesopotamia for the dual sake of Christian scholarship and evangelistic application. The anonymous reviewer for *The National Magazine* expostulates:

How the researches of Botta and Layard silence the infidel, and strengthen the faith of the Christian, and assist us in the intelligent study of the sacred records! Incidental allusions by the historians and prophets, to manners and customs seeming strange, are verified by the monuments now brought to light. It is demonstrated that the Bible gives a true picture of the ancient life of the world. The crumbling mound of Mosul, and the rest, show the fulfillment of Scripture prophecies relative to the ruin of Nineveh; while the records of the past they so long entombed, but which are now revealed in the nineteenth century, exhibit the glory of Nineveh before its ruin.³⁹

The American domestication of Victorian Assyria occurred through many media and touched people at all levels of the socio-economic spectrum. American editions of Layard's first volume appeared within months of Murray's initial publication, prepared by the New York firm G. P. Putnam from plates imported from England (Fig. 3).⁴⁰ This edition of *Nineveh and its Remains* contains a short introductory note by the distinguished American biblical scholar and Palestine geographer Edward Robinson, assuring the readership of the bona-fide nature of Layard's efforts.⁴¹ But while unauthorized abridgements of Layard's text, as well as American editions of George Rawlinson's *History of Herodotus* and his perennially popular *Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, graced American bookshops, many other venues of nascent Assyriological knowledge emerged. Aimed explicitly at a public hungry for biblical confirmation,

226–34; Anon., "A Day in Nineveh", *The National Magazine: Devoted to Literature, Art, and Religion* 2 (1853) 247–52; Anon., "The Buried Palaces of Nineveh", *The National Magazine: Devoted to Literature, Art, and Religion* 1 (1852) 108–12; Anon., "News from Nineveh", *The International Monthly Magazine of Literature, Science and Art* 1 (1850) 476; Anon., "Austen Henry Layard, LL.D.", *The International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Science* 2 No. 4 (1851) 433–5; W. A. Larned, "Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*", *The New Englander* 7 (1849) 327–8; L. W. Bacon, "Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (Putnam edition)", *The New Englander* 11 (1853) 457–70; F. L. Hawks, "Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*", *Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science, and Art* 1 (1853) 498–509: "We have been so long accustomed to hear ourselves denounced by the English press, as an all-grasping, unprincipled, and 'annexing' race, wandering over the face of the earth for no purpose but that of plunder or traffic; that it is quite refreshing to encounter a story told by an English gentleman of what he has seen done by Americans, who, in a holy cause, have entered upon, and successfully labored in, a field to which English philanthropy in the East has not even found its way. Let us hear what Mr. Layard has to say of our American missions in the East" (503); Anon., "Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (Putnam edition)", *Methodist Quarterly Review* 31 No. 4 (1849) 577–94; R. Davidson, "Review of W. Osburn, *Ancient Egypt, Her Testimony to the Truth of the Bible*"; F. L. Hawks, *The Monuments of Egypt*; E. W. Hengstenberg, *Egypt and the Banks of Moses*; A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*", *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 22 No. 2 (1850) 260–79; C. Collins, "Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (Harper & Brothers edition)", *Methodist Quarterly Review*

36 No. 1 (1854) 113–31; A. B. Chapin, "Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (Putnam edition)", *The Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* 2 No. 2 (1849) 245–63; Anon., "Austen Henry Layard", *National Magazine: Devoted to Literature, Art, and Religion* 8 (1856) 556–60.

³⁷ Anon., "Dr. Layard and Nineveh", *Littell's Living Age* 28 No. 358 (1851) 603–6; Anon., "Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*", *Eclectic Magazine* 29 (1853) 341–59 (from the *English Review*): "Should the sovereign grant him armorial bearings to reward his [Layard's] great achievements, we would suggest, on a shield sable the palace of Sennacherib argent; supporters, a winged lion and a winged bull, both proper; motto, Litoris Assyrii Viator" (359).

³⁸ Anon., "Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (Putnam edition)", *Methodist Quarterly Review* 31 No. 4 (1849) 577–94; Anon., "Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (G. P. Putnam edition)", *The Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* 54 (1853) 503–4; Anon., "Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*", *Dublin University Magazine* 41 (1849) 740–57; Anon., "Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (Putnam edition)", *Methodist Quarterly Review* 31 No. 4 (1849) 577–94; George Crolly, "Review of A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*", *Dublin Review* 35 (1853) 93–138.

³⁹ Anon., "A Day in Nineveh", *The National Magazine: Devoted to Literature, Art, and Religion* 2 (1853) 247–52.

⁴⁰ Bela Bates Edwards, "Layard's Nineveh", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 6 No. 24 (1849) 792.

⁴¹ Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains: With an Account of a Visit to the Chaldaean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil-Worshippers; and an Inquiry into the Manners and Arts of the Ancient Assyrians* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852) iii.

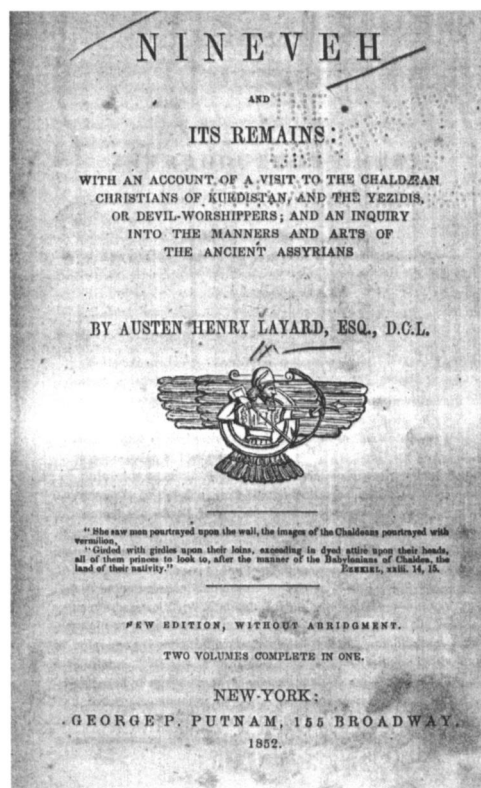


Fig. 3 Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (Putnam edition, 1852), title-page.

Sunday-School literature, Bible histories, biblical antiquities handbooks, Bible dictionaries, academic essays and biblical commentaries would hasten the burden of the latest news from Nineveh into ready hands.

Academic essays in American periodical literature began to assimilate the initial Assyriological publications within a matter of months. In “Translation of the Prophecy of Nahum with Notes”, 1848, B. B. Edwards connected the chariots of doomed Nineveh in Nahum with relief depictions of chariots published from the French Khorsabad excavations.⁴² In the words of the reviewer writing for *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, “The numerous illustrations of circumstantial allusions in the prophetic writings, respecting the magnificence of the Assyrian apparel, the luxury of their manners, their mode of waging war, their extensive commerce, their suspending the *shields* of the warriors on wall and ships (Ezek 27: 11); all these things tend to corroborate the authority and credibility of the Holy Scriptures”.⁴³ The legendary cruelty of the Assyrians is fully borne out by the grisly palace-relief illustrations of human executions, impalements, and flayings. The story in Amos 5: 25–7 of the worship of the gods Sakkut and Kaiwan is vindicated, somehow, by images of idols carried on litters by Assyrian soldiers.⁴⁴ Layard and most of his reviewers accepted his correlation between the spurious etymology of Nisroch, “eagle”, first proposed by Gesenius, the image of the bird-headed genius frequently depicted on the Assyrian palace reliefs, and the god Nisroch in whose temple Sennacherib was slain, 2 Kings 19: 37. While articles and biblical commentaries of the 1860s dealt mostly with “king and country” historical issues, scholarship in the 1870s would introduce the American reading public to the intractable chronological problems in correlating certain Old Testament reigns and events with the so-called Assyrian eponym canons. The most vexing conundrum of

⁴² Bela Bates Edwards, “Translation of the Prophecy of Nahum with Notes”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 5 No. 19 (1848) 551–76.

⁴³ R. Davidson, “Review of W. Osburn, *Ancient Egypt, Her Testimony to the Truth of the Bible*”; F. L. Hawks, *The Monu-*

ments of Egypt; E. W. Hengstenberg, *Egypt and the Banks of Moses*; A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 22 No. 2 (1850) 278.

⁴⁴ J. R. Beard, “Review of A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*”, *British Quarterly Review* 9 (1849) 440–1.

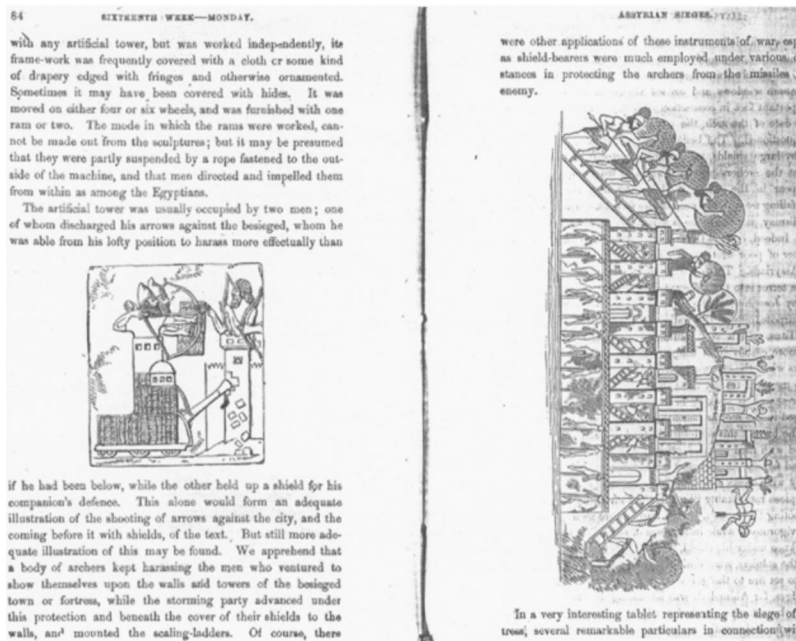


Fig. 4 Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, 1871, 1: 84–5.

them all was the failure of King Pul (the scriptural entity by that name) to appear in Akkadian language sources. Only by the early 1880s would most English-speaking scholars come to accept the equation that biblical King Pul was the same individual as the scriptural and cuneiform entity Tiglath-pileser.⁴⁵

American writers complained of the lack of cuneiform interest among their countrymen. William Hayes Ward, a president of the American Oriental Society and future leader of the Wolfe Expedition to Mesopotamia, despondently wrote in 1870, “In this country so little has been done, that the slabs covered with inscriptions have for years attracted ignorantly curious eyes in the rooms of Amherst and Williams Colleges, and of the New York Historical Society, and other cabinets. Not one has had a wedge translated as yet”.⁴⁶ Ward himself published the first American translation of an Akkadian text in 1872, a recension of the Standard Inscription of Aššur-nāšir-pal II housed at Amherst College.⁴⁷ In the United States the first instruction in Assyriology was provided by the biblical specialist Francis Brown at Union Theological Seminary in 1879.⁴⁸ David Gordon Lyons, probably the first dedicated Assyriologist to teach in America, inaugurated Assyriological studies at Harvard in 1882.⁴⁹

Layard’s publications certainly did not supplant the family Bible in American parlours, but within a few years, nearly every American picture Bible boasted its familiar Layard/Murray images. Within the four-volume set of John Kitto’s *Daily Bible Illustrations*, published in 1871 but prepared in the early 1850s, weekly readings from Isaiah 36–7 are richly illustrated with line-drawings rifled from the publications of Layard (Fig. 4).⁵⁰ Elsewhere, in an exposition of

⁴⁵ George Rawlinson, *Historical Illustrations of the Old Testament* (London: Christian Evidence Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1871) 211–12; P. A. Nordell, “The Assyrian Canon”, *The Baptist Quarterly* 10 (1876) 141–64. On the history of the 19th-century hunt for King Pul, see Steven W. Holloway, “The Quest for Sargon, Pul, and Tiglath-Pileser in the Nineteenth Century”, in *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations* (ed. Mark W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger Jr.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) 68–87.

⁴⁶ William Hayes Ward, “Assyrian Studies — Text-Books”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 27 No. 105 (1870) 184.

⁴⁷ William Hayes Ward, “On the Ninevitic Cuneiform Inscriptions in this Country”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 10 (1872) xxxv–xxxvi; see Selah Merrill, “Assyrian and Babylonian Monuments in America”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 32 No. 126 (1875) 320–49, and idem, “Recent Assyrian Discoveries”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 32 No. 128 (1875) 715–35.

⁴⁸ C. Wade Meade, *Road to Babylon: Development of U.S. Assyriology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 28–30.

⁴⁹ Meade, *Road to Babylon*, 30–2.

⁵⁰ John Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations; Being Original Readings for a Year on Subjects from Sacred History*,

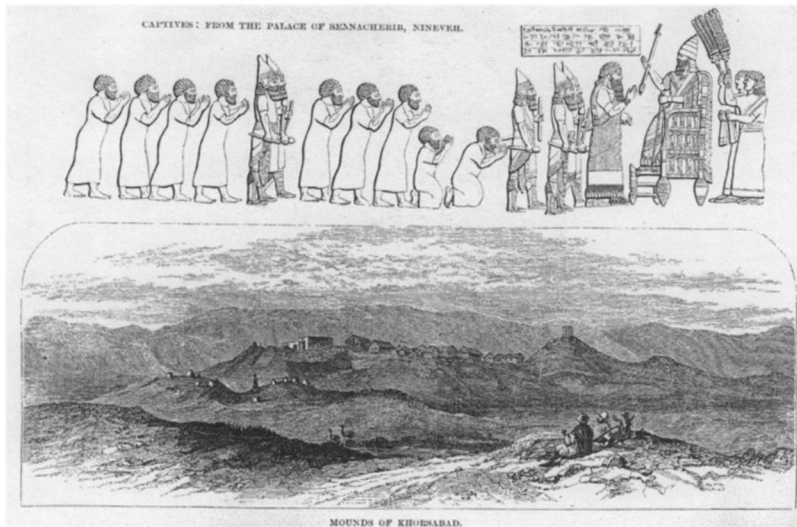


Fig. 5 Barrows, *Sacred Geography, and Antiquities*, 1875, 312–13.

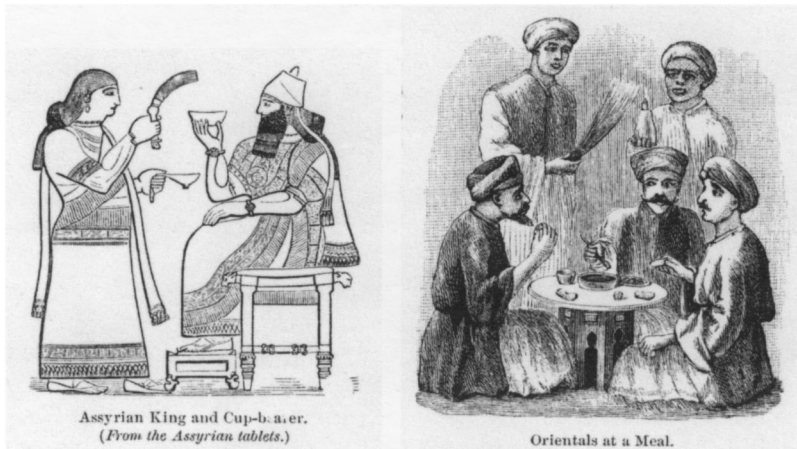


Fig. 6 Bissell, *Biblical Antiquities*, 1888, 81, 85.

cherubim, Kitto reproduces drawings of a medley of Egyptian, Greek and Assyrian winged monsters, including the oft-republished drawing of the human-headed lion colossus.⁵¹ The “trickle-down” effect into mainstream Sunday School literature would be pronounced by the 1870s and commonplace by the 1880s.⁵²

American authors and publishers of biblical antiquities handbooks quickly incorporated illustrations from Egyptian and Assyrian *realia* as they became available, thus adding to the scriptural exposition an aura of visual historical verisimilitude. Elijah Porter Barrows’ *Sacred Geography, and Antiquities. With Maps and Illustrations* presents a line-drawing of Sennacherib

Biography, Geography, Antiquities, and Theology, Especially Designed for the Family Circle (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1871) 1: 84–5.

⁵¹ Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*, 1: 87–93.

⁵² See, for example, Francis Nathan Peloubet, ed., *Select Notes on the International Sabbath School Lessons for 1878. Explanatory, Illustrative, and Practical. With Four Maps, a Chronological Chart, and Table of the Signification and Pronunciation of Proper Names* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1878) 59–65, the lesson for March 17, 1878, “Hezekiah and the Assyrians”, which provides a mostly accurate etymology of Sennacherib’s name, details about his palace in Nineveh,

and quotations from his annals. An accurate sketch of the geography of the Assyrian heartland follows, together with a succinct résumé of modern excavations, and an account of Sennacherib’s siege of Lachish. The sophisticated tone of this line-by-line commentary, harmonizing as it does excavations, Assyrian texts, and reconstructed biblical history, is indistinguishable from a host of twentieth-century historical-critical commentaries, such as the Anchor Bible volume on 2 Kings, Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible Vol. 11; Doubleday & Company, 1988).



Fig. 7 Yaggy and Haines, *Museum of Antiquity*, 1882, 435.

enthroned receiving the submission of Lachish, incongruously grouped with a drawing of the site of Khorsabad (Fig. 5).⁵³ Edwin Bissell's *Biblical Antiquities* made substantial use throughout of Layard/Murray's "Assyrian" line-drawings, with an admixture of stock "Oriental" tableaux sufficient to satisfy the most indiscriminate palate (Fig. 6).⁵⁴ As time went on and middle-class incomes permitted the acquisition of parlour libraries, publishers catered to growing American tastes for time-travelogues through classical and biblical civilizations. Note the wonderful composite drawing in *Museum of Antiquity*, laid out like a Roman trophy or a curiosity cabinet, with images that had been reproduced so often that they could be jumbled together with complete assurance of "brand identification" (Fig. 7).⁵⁵

In parting, allow me to offer some reflections on the triumph of Assyria in America. Within two decades of the sensational publications by Layard and the creation of the Assyrian exhibit in the British Museum, the publishers of English-language Sunday-School and technical expository literature, devotional works, biblical antiquities handbooks, illustrated Bible histories and dictionaries exploited illustrations based on Layard's sketches and the *Illustrated London News* in order to ensure biblical fidelity — and to boost sales. With the battle between the monuments and biblical higher criticism escalating in decibels, recognizable images of Assyrian bas-reliefs, sculpture, architecture and *Kleinplastik* came to act like certificates of authenticity guaranteeing the historical "slant" of the contents (Fig. 8). Was their inclusion a nod to historical integrity, or a clever exercise in the cash value of ancient Assyria? It was both, little different in kind than the attractive covers and reproductions sported by the *State Archives of Assyria* volumes today.

There was, however, a notable difference between the visual monopoly of Assyrian antiquities in England versus America: the physical accessibility of the British Museum. For the British, the conquest of ancient Assyria and the ensconcement of her riches in the British Museum, like the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles and the mummies of Pharaonic Egypt, symbolized that the power of the British Isles dominated the globe, pulling all the peripheries into the emblematic national trophy-house of the British Museum. America would never gain ancient Near Eastern spoils through the Great Game, at least not in the Victorian era, and American collections of Assyrian relief slabs, housed in eastern universities and seminaries through the efforts of American missionaries in the 1850s, were accessible only to the elite few. Unlike England, there would be no widespread form of "Assyromania" in antebellum America, no Nineveh Court at an American

⁵³ Elijah Porter Barrows, *Sacred Geography, and Antiquities. With Maps and Illustrations* (New York: American Tract Society, 1875) 312–13.

⁵⁴ Edwin Cone Bissell, *Biblical Antiquities: A Hand-Book for Use in Seminaries, Sabbath-Schools, Families and by All Students of the Bible* (Green Fund Book Vol. 5; Philadelphia:

American Sunday-School Union, 1888), *passim*.

⁵⁵ L. W. Yaggy and T. L. Haines, *Museum of Antiquity: A Description of Ancient Life: The Employments, Amusements, Customs, and Habits, the Cities, Palaces, Monuments and Tombs, the Literature and Fine Arts of 3,000 Years Ago* (Kansas City: Wever & Company, 1882) 435.

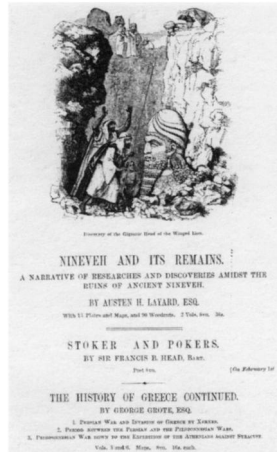


Fig. 8 Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* (Putnam edition, 1852), advertising back-matter for John Murray publications.

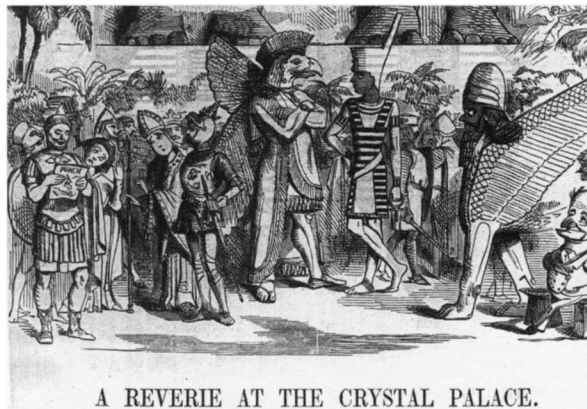


Fig. 9 *Punch* Vol. 26, 17 June 1854, 250–1.

Crystal Palace (Fig. 9), and no parodies of British Museum objects in an American equivalent of *Punch* magazine.⁵⁶ American popular culture made no such appropriation, because American national identity was not bound up with the decipherment of Akkadian and the acquisition of Assyrian antiquities, unlike one John Bull.

⁵⁶ For examples of early British “Assyromania” in the guise of porcelain, jewellery, and prints, see the catalogue of the superb exhibition mounted in the British Museum during the 49th RAI, Henrietta McCall and Jonathan Tubb,

I Am the Bull of Nineveh: Victorian Design in the Assyrian Style (London: PDC Publishers (privately printed), 2003), and Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 174–8.