

Báez-Camargo, Gonzalo: *Archaeological Commentary on the Bible*. xxxvii+288pp. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc. 1984. \$17.95.

The author was a translator, special consultant and research associate in UBS until his death in 1983. Dr. Nida encouraged him to adapt and update this English version of his *Comentario Arqueológico de la Biblia* (Editorial Caribe, 1979). We must be grateful for this since many modern commentaries do not include the results of such archaeological and historical research.

This book gives brief notes on 615 verses (464 OT; 151 NT) arranged in biblical order. The Introduction provides a balanced, though brief, overview of the relation of archaeology to the Bible showing how it can provide background data and comparative and illustrative material as well as confirmation of some historical and geographical situations. The emphasis throughout is thus on points of historical comparison, the books of Kings (87 verses) Genesis (65) and Acts (46) receiving major attention with less on Exodus, Joshua, Proverbs and Mat. The remaining books are accorded only a few spasmodic notes. Again this follows from the nature of archaeology as a handmaid of history, even when 'Biblical archaeology' is taken, as here, as any evidence, documentary or physical which can be made to refer directly to the biblical text which is itself a collection of books with a theological purpose.

The author derives most of his information from J. B. Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* (1955), not from the later edition and supplement to that work in 1969 nor to the accompanying volume of pictures (ANEP); from Y. Avi-Yonah and A. Malamat, *The World of the Bible* (1964); the excellent periodical *The Biblical Archaeologist* (and *Reader*), and from J. Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament* (1969). He also refers to articles in the *Encyclopedia de la Biblia* (Barcelona, 1969). Since these may not be readily available to many readers it underlines the general value of the book. However, those who wish for more detailed and documented recent work will find it in later dated Bible dictionaries which specialise in the archaeological references (e.g. *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (3 vols. IVP & Tyndale House Press, 1980). The latter have the advantage that they bring together all the evidence for a given theme or site under one heading. Here it is difficult to trace the rise, development, changes and destruction of such cities as Beersheba, Shechem, Megiddo, Gezer, Hazor or Jerusalem even with the help of the useful index. Breaking the comment up according to various verses militates against presentation of the overall historical picture on which the understanding of Scripture must depend. Such a picture is also the aim of archaeological research at any one site. The verse by verse approach also does not allow for any literary forms and structures to be studied though this has been one of the major contributions from the ancient Near East of interest to Bible students. Only brief and general reference is made to the covenant/treaty/loyalty-oath form at Gen 6.18 and nothing in Deuteronomy, where the textual reference is to that found at Masada and not to the Qumran scrolls (mentioned at Luke 4.17).

The Foreword rightly emphasises the positive approach and strong confirmation of the biblical account provided here. It also commends the book for

not glossing over problems and for making no attempt to argue for or against one line of evidence. That can be a point of weakness as when the author follows unquestioningly the first interpretation of the Ebla texts given by Pettinato in which he finds a creation story or the names of Adam, Ishmael and even Saul there c. 2300 B.C. Much of this has been refuted by A. Archi's subsequent technical publications. Other scholars would use more caution in presenting some of the rather uncertain archaeological data and do not class Kathleen Kenyon as the great historian the author does.

Archaeological data is of such a scale and complexity that it probably cannot now be adequately conveyed in a single volume, especially without adequate illustrations (the thirty here are of poor quality). Nonetheless, this volume packs so much detail into it that the general reader will be fascinated by the range of knowledge which he would not normally research or collect for himself. It is excellent in referring to seals with Hebrew/Aramiac inscriptions and gives a fair coverage of the extra-biblical references to named kings of Israel and Judah (though that of Joash, *Ia-ú-su*, in the Tell el-Rimah stela is omitted and the names of Ahab (*a-ha-ab-bu*) and of Jehu (*Ia-ú-a*) spelled incorrectly). There are a few references to points of translation: most are well known (Gen 27.33; 1 Sam 4.4; 2 Sam 1.21; 2 Kings 23:5 and 1 Chron 17.19 'and your dog' (dubious)) though 'through the earth', i.e. underground, in 2 Chron 32.4 is interesting. This is a useful book for beginners or those without access to reference books on Biblical archaeology.

D. J. WISEMAN

Hagner, Donald A.: **Hebrews. A Good News Commentary.** San Francisco: Harper and Row 1983. xxviii+257 pp., \$9.95.

This is the first volume in this series to have come into my hands; but commentaries on Mark, Philippians, and 1-2 Thessalonians have already appeared in the United States, and there are plans for Marshall, Morgan & Scott to publish the series in Britain. The New Testament Editor is W. Ward Gasque.

The present volume will not make the recent *Translator's Handbook on Hebrews* superfluous, and does not aim to compete with major commentaries such as those of Michel and Spicq; yet within the relatively limited space available, the author gives an adequate and balanced introduction to this letter and the problems which surround it. His use of GNB enables him to make many helpful comments on the way in which a translator moves from the literal wording of the Greek to a dynamic-equivalent representation of its meaning. He is in general sympathy with GNB, but gives alternatives where appropriate, and takes account of other English translations where they have something distinctive to offer.

A particularly valuable aspect of the commentary, from the translator's point of view, is the set of "Additional Notes", in slightly smaller print, which follow each section of the commentary. These give references to much secondary literature which is not listed in the bibliography. These are, perhaps unfortunately, almost all to publications in English; so that, for example, there is no mention of Vanhoye's work on the structure of Hebrews.