

BOOK REVIEWS

Baez-Camargo, Gonzalo. *Archaeological Commentary on the Bible*. Translated by American Bible Society. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984. 288 pp. \$17.95. (A Doubleday-Galilee Book edition was published by Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986. 288 pp. Paperback, \$9.95.)

This archaeological commentary by Gonzalo Baez-Camargo was first published in Spanish in 1979. In the preface to the English edition the author states that the book was written "with a modest end in view" (p. xiii). Its original purpose was to provide an "elementary knowledge of biblical archaeology" (p. xiii) for the Spanish-speaking student of the Bible who did not have ready access to current information, most of which is found in publications which are not in Spanish.

With those limitations, the book is probably of greater value in its Spanish edition than in its English translation. The approach followed is to provide a commentary on selected biblical passages from Genesis to Revelation in chapter-and-verse order based on relevant archaeological findings. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, which this kind of an approach easily could lead to, adequate cross-referencing has been used in most entries.

A significant omission in a book which follows this approach is failure to include a general archaeological introduction to each book of the Bible. In this volume, such introductions could well have been utilized to describe the cultural setting, and thus an otherwise much-neglected aspect of modern archaeology could have been given a more significant place.

In most cases Baez-Camargo summarizes differing interpretations of archaeological findings. In this respect he provides a generally fair representation of ideas, allowing the student to draw his own conclusions.

This book is too general, however, to be of significant value for anyone but the serious lay-person who wants to learn what archaeology has contributed to the understanding of certain biblical passages. Nevertheless, the English edition does meet the original expectations of the Spanish edition—namely, to provide archaeological information to persons who do not have easy access to the professional literature in biblical archaeology. The book could also be used effectively by a gospel minister desiring quick reference to archaeology on a specific text, though in most cases the information would not be adequate, and further reading would be necessary. The bibliographical references usually found at the end of each entry provide an introduction to the relevant literature.

In the process of translating the book from Spanish, some unfortunate transliterations have been allowed to slip through. One such is the Arabic word *yebel*, which in English transliteration should have been *jebel* (p. 34).

This volume provides no attempt to distinguish between textual evidence and archaeological evidence, a procedure which seems to have limited the extent to which each of these disciplines could have been used. To write an archaeological commentary on the Bible is a very ambitious enterprise, especially by a person who is not primarily involved in archaeology. And though the work is of only limited value to the serious student, when we remember its original intent it is not an altogether unhappy result.

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Carmignac, Jean. *La naissance des Évangiles Synoptiques*. 2d ed. Paris: O.E.I.L., 1984. 120 pp. Paperback, fr. 80.00.

In this monograph Carmignac presents the first results of twenty years of research on the Hebrew of NT times. After his prolonged immersion in the Hebrew of Qumran, he has come to the firm conviction that Mark, Matthew, and most of the sources for the Gospel of Luke were originally written in a Semitic language. Accordingly, our actual Synoptics are but Greek translations of these Semitic originals, little more than a *décalque littéraire* (p. 10) of the Hebrew or Aramaic documents.

Although the author states that the identity of the original language is secondary to his thesis (p. 76), he definitely favors the Hebrew hypothesis. He sees his view confirmed by numerous retroversions of the Gospels "back into Hebrew," listing these in chap. 2. In fact, Carmignac is an expert in this kind of translations, being also editor of an excellent series of reprints of Hebrew translations of the Gospels called *Traductions Hébraïques des Évangiles* (published thus far through vol. 4 [Brepols, 1982]). However, he acknowledges that in order to ascertain whether the Semitisms are Hebrew or whether they are Aramaic will require further study.

In chap. 3 the author expresses his theory on the origin of the Gospels, based mainly upon arguments from Semitisms. After recognizing the difficulty of establishing certain Semitisms, he classifies three groups that are considered the supporters of his thesis. There are, first of all, what he calls the "Semitisms of composition"—that is to say, those which are made evident by the fact that the Greek text would not have its present form if it had not been composed originally in a Semitic language. This might explain, e.g., the connection between "stones" and "children" in Matt 3:9