

Bierling, Neal. *Giving Goliath His Due: New Archaeological Light on the Philistines*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992. 281 pp. \$14.95.

Bierling's book is a popular, almost conversational, introduction to the archaeological study of those known to us from the Bible as "Philistines." Its value is not limited to the "armchair archaeologist"—Bierling's self-announced target readership (21)—but is also a worthwhile introduction for the Bible student, the anthropologist, or the historian. Although the writing style of the book is not "scholarly," it does, however, presuppose a basic understanding of archaeological terminology and methodology.

Following a review of Philistine history from the Bible and a detailed look at the excavation of Tel Miqne (which becomes his primary source), Bierling devotes the next six chapters of his text to a spiraling presentation of biblical history, relating the current archaeological understanding of culture at specific sites. Primarily centering on the "five" cities: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron (Tel Miqne), Gath (Tell es-Safi), and Gaza (Tell Harube), he also includes a handful of additional sites such as Timnah (Tel Batash) and Ziklag (either Tel Sera' or Tel Halif) and Beth-Shan, as well as numerous peripheral sites. Conclusions and endnotes (which enable access to Bierling's sources) precede 13 pages of bibliography, including many 1990-1991 entries. Two indices (subject and Scripture) provide easy reference access. Errata are minimal and limited mainly to typographical errors. Graphics include 37 photos, 8 illustrations, 9 maps, 14 plans and reconstructions, and 2 tables.

Arguing that the name "Philistine" is used in a sociopolitical manner in the Bible rather than ethnically or linguistically (23), Bierling uses it sociopolitically in his analysis. With this starting point, Bierling also tips his methodological hand: *Giving Goliath His Due* is about a biblically-identified people, not an archaeologically-identified one. Bierling relies on a textual source (the Bible) for his historical framework. In fact, as Bierling repeatedly admits (109-110, 151-152, 181; cf. 69, 224), to date there is very little evidence of even a "Philistine" language. This means there are no signs saying, "Biblical Philistines lived here," nothing with Goliath's name on it, not even absolute identification of many "Philistine" sites. It is by implication and general scholarly agreement that the connection between these people on the coast of the Levant and the biblical Philistines is made.

Drawing from inscriptions at Karnak, Medinet Habu, and the Merneptah Stele, as well as excavations at Ashdod and Ashkelon, Bierling makes two basic points about the origin and dating of these people accepted as Philistines: (1) They were from the general Aegean area; (2) they were (during the reign of Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses III, ca. 1175 B.C.) part of the second of two waves of "Sea Peoples" who began entering the Levant

during the 13th century B.C. (53-58, 97-105), with the total migration occurring over about 50 years (126). However, while accepting the evidence of the Egyptian inscriptions, Bierling rightly points out that there is no absolute connection between the people mentioned in those inscriptions and the biblical five-cities empire dominated by the sociopolitical people called "Philistines," that such a relationship is only "likely" (23).

In the process of doing his archaeological analysis, Bierling remains a friend of the text. He does seek alternative interpretations where he thinks it necessary. In standard fashion, he attributes the reference to "Philistines" in the book of Genesis (10:13-14) either to "an early wave of raiders" or to "a copyist" who "added or substituted" the name (24, cf. 66, 92). Bierling defends the text in his treatment of the issue of Israel's reliance on Philistines for metal-working (1 Sam 13:19-22). He details the difficulties of producing high-quality iron weapons (higher heat, complicated technology, etc.), thus supporting the plausibility of the text's claim to Israel's lack in this area. He argues that Zech 9:5-7 (which predicts the future destruction of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod) must predate Zechariah's ministry, since the cities of Ashdod and Ekron were destroyed well before 520 B.C. (244)—a claim for Zech 9-14, long held by higher critical scholars on other grounds. Bierling also indicates that the archaeological record does not show that the Philistines retook Timnah during Ahaz's reign, as stated in "2 Chr 29" (184; he evidently refers to Chap. 28); but there is an inherent problem in trying to archaeologically deny such an ephemeral event, especially since the site has not been comprehensively excavated.

How, then, does Bierling measure up to his stated goal of providing the "armchair archaeologist" the "archaeological evidence" for the Philistines and illuminating the "biblical world" (21)? He devotes half the body of his text to analysis of archaeological sites, including a discussion of particular discoveries from Tel Mique. Notably, these include a new pottery type (Mycenaean IIIc:1b) now verified at Ashdod; the superabundance of horned incense altars, following the analysis of Seymour Gitin (221-224); and, of course, the unexpected and extensive olive oil production installations present at the site during the period of Assyrian occupation (217-221). In spite of this, much of Bierling's text (large sections of many pages and most of pp. 205-245) is a running explanation of international conflicts that embroiled the Levant. This discussion may be desirable for thoroughness, but it is not "new archaeological light" on the Philistines, as the book's subtitle promises. His analyses of particular recurring scriptural issues are not new. His sketch of the formation of the "Sea Peoples" and their migrations is a popularization of current archaeological thought on the matter, but is not innovative. The only "new light" Bierling provides is a few archaeological fragments which provide detail, but certainly do not alter the broad strokes defining the biblical Philistine picture.

Bierling promised to "give Goliath his due" by providing "new archaeological light" which, based on his conclusion (249), the reader may expect to be the vindication of the moral character of a maligned people. The whole subject of Philistine religion is touched only briefly and tangentially when discussing the loss of the Ark and the context of Saul's disgrace at Beth-Shean. There is lacking a general treatment of Philistine city-planning/military fortifications. What of food-gathering? Domestic life? International economy? Bierling has de-emphasized major segments of Philistine life. What Bierling has provided is a pageant of current fashion, or, when advocating a 13th-century Exodus (92, 94), retention of a bit of that which is passing out of vogue.

The preceding appraisal may give the impression that this book is unsatisfactorily flawed, but such is not the case. *Giving Goliath His Due* may not be groundbreaking, but it remains an up-to-date summary and synthesis. It is a valuable, well-written contribution to the literature on the biblical Philistines, and will no doubt find significant use as a classroom text and personal study tool.

Andrews University

RALPH E. HENDRIX

Bosman, H. L., I. G. P. Gous, and I. J. J. Spangenberg, eds. *Plutocrats and Paupers: Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament*. Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1991. 265 pp. \$16.60.

This collection of essays is the outcome of a decision by a number of South African Hebrew Scripture scholars to engage in social dialogue focusing on poverty and wealth.

With the narrative of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21) serving as base text, the volume is structured into five sections. The first is statistical in intent, focusing (in a limited form) on poverty in selected parts of the Western/Northern world and the Two-Thirds World. It also attempts to suggest a definition of faith as well as to articulate sound hermeneutical principles.

The second section takes the reader on a journey through centuries of biblical interpretation, working backwards from contemporary black theology and prosperity reading, via the historical-critical as well as the historical-grammatical methods, to the typological, allegorical, and other early methods of interpretation used in Christendom.

Section 3 lays out the historical, geographical, cultural, political, and religious background of Israelite existence, while the fourth section traces poverty and wealth from premonarchical times to the postexilic period. The final section reviews the substance of the book and presents a brief statement of the relevance of Naboth's episode to South Africa.