

BOOK REVIEWS

Aharoni, Yohanan, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*. Translated from the Hebrew by A. F. Rainey. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967. xiv + 409 pp. 34 maps. \$ 7.95.

There is no dearth of books dealing with the geography of Palestine. Some of them confine their scope of study to a pure geography of the country and all its features, such as the works of George Adam Smith, F.-M. Abel and Denis Baly, while others treat the geography of Palestine in the light of its political history. To these works belong the *Bible Atlases* of Emil G. Kraeling and Charles F. Pfeiffer. Aharoni's new book belongs more or less to this last-mentioned category, although it blazes new trails and is intended to be a textbook (p. xiv).

The book under review has certain advantages over others, because its author through interest and training is extremely well versed in Palestine's ancient history and geography. He writes about his own country, in which he was born and reared, and in which he has worked as a scholar and archaeologist for many years. As an Israeli, Aharoni also uses a great number of Hebrew sources which usually are ignored by other scholars, and as a student of Benjamin Mazar, the great Israeli archaeologist, to whom the book is dedicated, Aharoni reflects his teacher's views throughout his work without divergence or disagreements. Another strong point of this book is the thorough and abundant use of Egyptian source material, and to a lesser degree of thoroughness the use of Hittite, Assyrian and Babylonian sources.

The Christian reader of Aharoni's book will be disappointed that the Bible ends for the author with the last book of the OT, with the result that NT Palestine remains undiscussed. Aharoni also fails to use the NT, Josephus, later Jewish writings, or the reports of the pilgrims as source material, and does not deal at all with the country's historical geography after Nehemiah. Christian students who are not satisfied in being limited by the author to the historical geography of Palestine during the OT period will thus be forced to supplement Aharoni's book by turning to other works. This is a regrettable shortcoming of the book.

Another weakness is the brevity or lack of discussion of certain geographical problems, especially with regard to sites of which the identification is still questionable. For example, J. Naveh's identification (made in 1958) of Ekron with *Khirbet el-Muqanna'* is accepted without question, and the archaeological remains of that site are used to elucidate the history of Ekron (pp. 198, 248, 251). While Naveh's identification is plausible, it is far from certain, and a discussion of the problems connected with the identification of Ekron with various

possible sites as well as the views of other scholars in this respect should have been given. The same criticism can be made with regard to another Philistine city, Gath, of which the problems of identification are even graver than those of Ekron. Aharoni suggests (p. 250) its location as *Tell es-Safi*, where scholars of an earlier day had placed it before others identified it with several other sites. In a few places he attaches a question mark to his proposed identification (pp. 23, 339), but in other passages his identification of Gath is made as if no problem existed (pp. 45, 149, 376 and elsewhere), and the student of the Bible, who may be neither an expert in geography nor acquainted with the intricate problems connected with the identification of this site, is not sufficiently warned that the proposed identification is rather uncertain. Many other examples of a similar nature could be cited. But the two samples used show that the serious student of Palestinian geography will still need Abel's discussion of, and bibliographical references to, the various Biblical sites which are presented in Volume II of his monumental work, although that work, published more than 30 years ago, is now badly out of date.

The translator deserves a special word of commendation. He has done a superb job. Hardly anywhere is the reader aware of the fact that the book is a translation. A. F. Rainey, a scholar in his own right, could hardly have found better expressions to transfer Hebrew idioms into English ones, than he does throughout the book. The maps are no masterpieces, being all in black-and-white. However, they show what the author wants them to present and are clear enough to be useful. The book is well produced and remarkably free from disturbing typographical errors. It certainly is a pleasure to recommend it highly to students of the Bible who want to have a good and quite authoritative historical geography of OT Palestine.

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Braaten, Carl E., *History and Hermeneutics*. "New Directions in Theology Today," Vol. II. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966. 205 pp. \$ 3.95.

Occasionally books appear which enable the serious reader to start with almost the rudiments of a particular discipline, by providing interesting and relatively brief but fair and summary treatment of the situation. With economy of words, involving economy also of the overall size of the book, the issues are focused and the main figures presented, so that one may thereafter move to further study. Such, essentially, is the book here under review. In it we are invited to consider the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg as addressed to the chief problems of contemporary theologians (mostly German), and are provided the most suggestive approach to a contemporary constructive systematic theology.

The method of the book is to give an historical survey of the treat-