

BOOK REVIEW

EXCAVATIONS IN NAZARETH, VOL. I: FROM THE BEGINNINGS TILL THE XII CENTURY, by B. Bagatti, O.F.M., translated from the Italian by E. Hoade, O.F.M., Jerusalem, 1969, pp. 316, figs. 240, pls. 9; \$12.

Archaeological excavation of Nazareth in the zone of the Shrine of the Annunciation was occasioned by the decision of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land to rebuild the shrine in 1953. The demolition of the existing building provided an opportunity to study previous structures down to bedrock and this was entrusted to Father Bellarmino Bagatti, who already had gained experience from many similar sites in Palestine. Even though a confessional interest is central to the report, this study must be accounted an important landmark for those with wider historical interests because Father Bagatti broadened his scope, examining other venerable sites in the narrow confines of the ancient village, sinking test trenches to establish boundaries and the original topography, correlating the notes of previous excavators with his own findings and bringing documentary evidence to bear on the archaeological data. The result is a fascinating glimpse of Galilean village life from the Middle Bronze Age to the present.

It is a sobering thought that while archaeology is constantly clarifying the succession of cultures in Palestine, most excavations have selected important city sites and give little idea of the conditions of life for the majority of people who must have inhabited little villages away from the main highways. Nazareth was one such village, occupying a rocky spur hardly more than 600 x 150 metres, without walls and serving a poor agricultural people. The Middle Bronze Age is represented by tombs in the near vicinity while habitation from the Iron Age on is evidenced especially by grottos and silos on the ridge. Pottery and other artefacts are comparable with what is found at the classic sites, such as nearby Megiddo, but interest would lie in noting how much more restricted the corresponding assemblages are at the village level. Of interest, too, are local products, such as hand-made pans, small vases and lamps. The report furnishes full descriptions and illustrations of all types of movable objects.

From the first centuries of the Christian era Nazareth has been a place of pilgrimage, hence the abundance of graffiti, inscriptions and art-motifs, especially in the pre-Byzantine period, are a rich source of material for the palaeographer and for the religious historian alike. The varied origins of the pilgrims are attested by the presence of Greek (including the Doric dialect, probably from Pamphylia), Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Armenian. The 5th century dating for the Armenian was surprising, not from the fact that Armenian pilgrims should be found so early in the Holy Land (this was already known from Cyril of Scythopolis), but from the evidence that they made use of a distinctive Armenian alphabet several centuries earlier than previously presumed.

The history of primitive Christianity has benefited from the impetus that this material has given to the study of the Judaeo-Christians. It has already been put to use by the author in his *L'Eglise de la Circoncision* (1965) and by E. Testa in *Il Simbolismo dei Giudeo-Cristiani* (1962). It opens up a rich, strange world of mystical beliefs and symbolism, which bids fair to have a bearing on N.T. studies. (Readers may recall a summary account of the Judaeo-Christians by Albert Storme in the last issue of this journal.)

In the English-speaking world it is not generally recognised that there exists a highly scientific Italian school of archaeology, initiated by de Rossi in the last century. It involves a close study of architectural development, topography and documentary evidence. One trained in the canons of British archaeology may miss the stratigraphic discipline of that school but he will find that the Italian method is just as alive to the need of relating architectural features to sealed deposits of datable material and arrives at the same end by its own sophisticated means. Italian methodology is shown at its best in Father Bagatti's study of the traditional sites of the House of Mary (cf. Luke 1:26-38, 56) and the House of Joseph (cf. Matt. 1:18-25).

On both sites there is found a succession of cultic installations going back to the first centuries of the Christian era and identified by the many pilgrimage itineraries throughout that time. The trustworthiness of these traditions hinges on that of the first Christian community at Nazareth. Up to the 5th century this community was a thoroughly Judaeo-Christian one, governed, as was their custom, by members of the family of Christ. This provides two strong reasons for the authenticity of the traditions: (a) the Judaeo-Christians are known to have been very conservative of

their traditions, (b) in this case it is a question of two dwellings which were the family property of the community leaders, who on this account would be less likely to forget the exact location.

The focal point for the tradition of the House of Mary is a grotto which was first incorporated into a Jewish-Christian synagogue. Graffiti associated with this building clearly established the Marian cult at this place before the 5th century. A memory which stands out vividly in my mind was the occasion when Father Bagatti showed me one of these graffiti bearing the Greek invocation XAIPE MAPIA, whereby some pilgrim wished to recall the words of the angel at the Annunciation (Luke 1:28). There were minor modifications of this building until the 5th century, when Gentile Christians demolished the synagogue and erected the Byzantine church in its place. This was replaced by a larger Crusader church and more recently by Franciscan re-buildings.

The House of Joseph knew much the same history, though in this case Father Bagatti was not involved in the excavations and had to rely on notes of others and on observation of the present state of the site. The fragmentary nature of this information highlights his own very detailed account of the former site. Many scholars are justifiably wary of claims of authentication of venerable religious sites, but in the case of Nazareth they can satisfy themselves on the critical approach to the problem.

The abundance of plans and illustrations go a long way to clarifying the confused legacy of centuries. Obviously the excavator has been very careful in observing the principles of stratigraphy, although the reader might wish for a greater control of data by means of sketches of "live" sections as they actually occurred on the vertical face of trenches. Some specialists might regret that biological remains were not subjected to detailed analysis, especially in these times when there is interest in relating ancient man to his economy and to his ecosystem. A more serious criticism can be levelled at the English translation: the reader is under constant annoyance at what is little more than a literal translation from the Italian. For this Father Bagatti can hardly be blamed. What he has produced is an important landmark in Palestinian archaeology.

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KEY TO DAVIDSON'S HEBREW GRAMMAR (3rd Edition)
 by J. Mauchline, T. and T. Clark, 1969. Price: 35 shillings;
 pp. 192.

As the author notes in his introduction there are arguments for and against the publication of a key such as this. The most telling argument must remain that, however unsuitable a grammar may be for a beginner working on his own, the grammar should also supply a key to the exercises so that the student can correct his work. As anyone who has attempted to work on his own from a grammar is aware a key on its own is not always adequate since it gives no guidance to hidden traps or special problems in the exercises. Hence this key and *some* of the explanations in this key are to be welcomed both as a means of reinforcing the instruction and as a means of reassuring the student and directing his attention to pitfalls. Notes should not, however, be distracting, nor should they form a grammar of their own with the addition of new material. Despite Professor Mauchline's denial that this key is not a 'related manual giving a more advanced course of instruction', and despite his shortening of the notes from the previous edition he still seems to have been unable to determine what constitutes an adequate key. One cannot avoid the feeling that if the original exercises were transposed from the grammar to the key one would have in hand a substantial manual guiding the student in the composition of Classical Hebrew grammar.

In respect of over prolific notes one must question the wisdom of adding copious notes to translations from Hebrew. Thus, note 1 to exercise 9A, for example, would seem unnecessary for a beginner who is asked only to translate a simple phrase. Ditto note 5 to the same exercise. By the same token one wonders why in exercise 10A 1:1 the author offers the student an alternative in the key to the sentence he was called on to translate or why in exercise 22B 1 an extended comment should be made on a particular use of *methegh*. Examples of notes of doubtful value in their context can be multiplied throughout the book and however helpful the intent of the author the result for the student must be considerable distraction and a concomitant detraction from the value of other notes.

Some of the notes point to shortcomings in the grammar itself (e.g., exercise 1A note 1, exercise 11A note 3) and it would seem better that the original flaw were corrected rather than justified or explained. Such explanations could create their own problems (as in exercise 9A 3) since, as in the case of the

reviewer, the edition of the grammar in hand could contain the correction explained in the key, the note thus being redundant even in a new edition of the key.

In short, the key, as any key, is useful, and is more valuable than most with its guidance to problems, it is somewhat copious and would bear considerable shortening in future editions.

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