

FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to welcome a new writer into the field of Old Testament studies, where there have been such exciting changes during the past generation. New discoveries have brought about the re-examination of views which had been regarded as established, and on many questions there is a greater fluidity of view than we should once have thought possible.

At the beginning of the present century the influence of Wellhausen on all critical scholars was immense, and while in many respects his views have had to be modified it is still considerable and likely to remain so. In the present study Dr. Thompson challenges Wellhausen's theories on the development and interpretation of sacrifice in ancient Israel. On many questions I too have been compelled to abandon Wellhausen's ideas on the religious history of the Israelite people. Yet I have retained a greater respect for Wellhausen than Dr. Thompson expresses, and have acknowledge with gratitude my debt to him. No man can attain all the truth, and the utmost any can hope to do is to make some contribution here and there to its full attainment.

My welcome to Dr. Thompson's study is precisely because I think he brings some contribution. At a number of points I am in agreement with him, and at many I have learned from him; at some I do not agree with him, as the reader will discover. But it is by the disagreements of scholars engaged on a common search for truth that we advance towards our goal.

For the fullness of his acquaintance with the literature relevant to every aspect of his study, and for the integrity with which he indicates views other than his own and the scholars who have held them, Dr. Thompson's work is to be most warmly commended. His diligence matches his independence. In not a few respects his views are in line with current trends: in some he stands aloof from

them. This is all to the good. For it may well be that in a century from now views which are widely accepted today may be challenged from a new standpoint. When scholarship becomes static, it ceases to function. Happily it is far from static today, and while every man who offers to his colleagues of the fruits of his researches is welcomed to their ranks, none who is wise imagines that all he offers will survive their examination. It is my hope that Dr. Thompson will continue his researches, and will enrich us all by what he finds.

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