

PREFACE

THE present work was published in Danish in 1938 under the original title of "Graad og Latter i Det gamle Testamente, En Studie i kanaanæisk-israelitisk Religion" in the series of memorial volumes published by the University of Copenhagen on the occasion of the anniversary of the University. Through a brief summary of the contents in ZAW 1939, pp. 151 f., the author informed a greater circle of readers than could be expected for the Danish edition, of the principal lines of his argumentation and the aim of the book. It was evident that in this way the influence of the book would be restricted to Scandinavia. At an early stage the author, however, encouraged by the favourable reception which the book rightly obtained, harboured plans for a translation of the book into one of the principal European languages, perhaps with a view to an enlargement by means of the texts later published, thus in a partly revised and enlarged edition.

The outbreak of the war, however, put a stop to these plans, and during the following years of distress for his country, the author became heavily involved in popular and national movements which drew him out of his study and into politics, first as a member of the Folketing, later as Minister of Education. So a resumption of the work had to be postponed until some indefinite future date. Considering that science hardly has had any more devoted and humble worshipper or a servant who with a profounder consecration and more pleased wonder entered its temple, we may form an idea of the sacrifice which was made here. However much it may be regretted that this work was thus interrupted and never carried through by the author, it should not be forgotten that his rich gifts as an inspiring initiator also in the political sphere were of the greatest importance for science and scholarship and their prosperity, which he never lost sight of, whether it was a question

of the interests of the universities or of the primary school, in which they are rooted.

During the last period of his life, in which more time was left for studies, FLEMMING HVIDBERG again devoted his time to the study of subjects from the history of Canaanite religion, but it was then mainly the study of the Qumran texts that had aroused his interest, as he could there resume his earliest studies on late Jewish sects, which had been the subject of his thesis (*Menigheden af den nye Pagt i Damascus*, 1928). During the preparations for a work within this field the author died in Jerusalem in February 1959.

At this distressing loss to Danish scholarship it was evident that it would be a debt of honour to realize the author's plans for a translation of the present work, about which G. WIDENGREN as late as 1958 (in "Myth, Ritual, and Kingship", ed. S. H. HOOKE, p. 178f.) wrote that it had "by no means received from scholars outside Scandinavia the attention that it deserves."

Much has been written about Canaanite religion since 1938, and the study of the Ugaritic texts has not been idle. Therefore it is probable that the author himself, if he had had the good fortune to be able to do so, would have revised the book and added more material. At the author's death there was no manuscript for a second edition left, only a limited number of marginal notes in the author's own copy of the book. So it was evident that the book must appear in its original form, apart from a revision of the Ugaritic texts included in it. The interpretation of these texts has since 1938 made such progress that it must be considered correct to undertake such a revision, as there can be no doubt that the author would himself have undertaken it, the more so as the marginal notes for the passages in question were more numerous than they were elsewhere in the book. The revision of these texts has been made with some reserve so that there is a possibility that certain translations are neither expressive of the author's nor of the editor's view. The editor has often had the painful feeling of missing the only one whose advice he could ask. It is his hope that he has not offended against the reverence he is conscious of owing to a predecessor's work, and he has made a point of not breaking the chain of argumentation. For that matter the book is so solidly anchored that in spite of some changes in the interpretation of the texts such a breaking has not forced itself

upon the editor and thus defeated the task. At the revision it has not been marked in the text where a revision has taken place, as it was deemed to disfigure the book by unreasonably striking the eye; but in the notes the editor has introduced additions in square brackets, while later additions from the author's hand, where these have been sufficiently worked out to be included, have also been introduced in square brackets, but marked with an A. Omissions from the notes have not been marked, either. The editorial adjustment was finished by January 1960, and later literature has not been used.

As a university teacher FLEMMING HVIDBERG had a happy faculty of making the learned dust blow away where he penetrated into his subject. As with a magical wand he made springs well up in otherwise arid country, and it was as if the soil turned green where he set foot. This book, with its spirited and positive view of Canaanite religion is a memorial to an inquiring personality who in him—in weeping and laughter—combined a rich human life with a scholar's work.

The editor is much obliged to Mrs. KATE HVIDBERG for entrusting him with the task of preparing this edition of her late husband's work for the press. The expenses of the publication have with great readiness been defrayed by the Rask-Ørsted Foundation (The international scientific foundation of Denmark), for which the editor on behalf of Mrs. HVIDBERG and himself offers his respectful thanks. Furthermore, there is reason to offer our cordial thanks to the publishers for their great obligingness regarding the plan and its implementation. The translation has been made by Mr. NIELS HAISLUND, M.A. The editor is much indebted to him for his painstaking and conscientious work.

26th October 1961.

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