

PREFACE

This is the second time that I have had the opportunity to assemble sundry studies into a single volume. In 1961 *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* presented a selection of research work completed in the 1950s. Now, a kind invitation by the editor of *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity* enables me to revise and bring up to date twelve papers—the thirteenth appears here for the first time—printed between 1960 and 1974.

The three sections, Qumran—Bible Exegesis—Rabbinic History, reflect my evolving interests. My scholarly career began with old-fashioned biblical study, but faced unexpectedly in the late 1940s with the challenging novelty of the Dead Sea Scrolls, I decided in 1950 to abandon a fairly advanced doctoral thesis (on the Servant of the Lord) in favour of a dissertation on the historical framework of the Qumran documents. These, in turn, compelled me to pay special attention to the interpretation of Scripture in ancient Judaism, and during the late 1950s and early 1960s my efforts became centred on post-biblical midrash and the largely neglected Aramaic Targums.

Subsequently, an appointment to Oxford in 1965 to the Readership in Jewish Studies, as well as the intrinsic demands of both the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish exegesis, have strengthened my concern with history and led me to integrate the first two interests with the religious, cultural and literary reality of the Palestinian world in the first centuries of the Christian era. Apart from the studies which form the last section of this volume, this third goal has associated me with the collective venture of the new English Schürer and inspired also *Jesus the Jew : A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*.

To complete a circle which starts with the Old Testament and continues with the Scrolls, Targum, New Testament and rabbinic literature, it would seem a useful move—reserved for the future—to look at the Bible in retrospect, in the light of the traditions to which it has given birth. Such an approach would, I believe, revitalise the study of the Hebrew Scriptures, and counteract some of the worst trends of contemporary biblical scholarship, lifeless philology and historico-literary analysis, occasionally spiced with theologizing homiletics.

Two friends who were closely connected with this work are no longer alive : Paul KAHLE (1876-1965), and Paul WINTER (1904-1969). Professor KAHLE, who was prompt to assist when support was most needed, continued his advice and encouragement almost until the end ; and Paul WINTER shared, and helped to clarify, many of the ideas which appear in these pages.

Among the living, I owe especial gratitude to Jacob NEUSNER for his devoted interest in all my activities. But as always, it is my wife who has played the most vital part in this achievement. Her queries and criticisms have obliged me to crystallize my thoughts, and she has also greatly contributed to the shaping and embellishment of their expression.

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