

PLATE XXI



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HAROLD HENRY ROWLEY

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1890-1969

H. H. ROWLEY, who died on 4 October 1969, was an outstanding representative of the great succession of distinguished Baptist Old Testament scholars. His achievement was not limited to his academic publications, which were numerous, and to his work as a University teacher, which extended over a period of some thirty-five years in four centres of learning. It may safely be said that no one did as much as he for the promotion of understanding and co-operation among Old Testament scholars throughout the world in the period after the Second World War. His own contributions to knowledge earned him profound respect wherever the Old Testament is studied. His encouragement and guidance of younger scholars was given promptly and generously, in spite of the heavy load of his own work, from which he was never free and without which he would have been ill at ease. His statesmanlike influence on the affairs of the Society for Old Testament Study and his energetic and self-sacrificing concern for international co-operation in biblical scholarship revealed gifts of leadership and administrative ability of an unusually high order. This formidably wide range of academic activity was combined with unswerving loyalty and sustained service to the Baptist denomination and, in particular, to its Missionary Society.

Rowley was born in Leicester on 24 March 1890, the fifth of the six children of Richard Rowley, a foreman finisher in a shoe factory, and of Emma Rowley (*née* Saunt). Like another great Hebraist, Professor Stanley Arthur Cook of Cambridge, he received his early education at the Wyggeston School, Leicester, where his academic record was good, but not brilliant, giving no obvious promise of his later achievement. Indeed, his health was so precarious during his schooldays that he was not given long to live. Throughout his life he suffered from defective vision in one eye, and for this reason was at one stage advised not to overtax his eyesight by studying Hebrew.

In 1910 Rowley was admitted to Bristol Baptist College and Bristol University. At this time he was also an external student of London University, where he gained the pass degree of B.D. in 1912. A year later he graduated B.A. (Theology) at Bristol. He continued his studies at Bristol for one more year, having

been awarded in September 1913 the first of two Dr. Williams' Divinity Scholarships, open to British graduate theological students of the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist Churches. Two further awards followed in 1914: a Baptist Union Theological Scholarship, and the Elmslie Memorial Scholarship in Hebrew and Aramaic. It was a condition of the Baptist Union award that he should study in Germany for two years. Rowley decided to sit the London B.D. Honours examination (at that time an advanced examination corresponding to the later M.Th.) in Hebrew and Aramaic before leaving the country. This gave him inadequate time for preparation and he was awarded a third class. The outbreak of the First World War made it impossible for him to study at a German university. Instead, he proceeded to Oxford, where he became a member of St. Catherine's Society and of Mansfield College, continuing his Semitic studies mainly under the direction of Dr. George Buchanan Gray, whose vast erudition and rigorous scholarly integrity made a profound and lasting impression on Rowley. In 1915 he was awarded the Houghton Syriac Prize.

After a short period of war service in Egypt, with the Y.M.C.A., in 1916, Rowley was obliged by ill-health to return to England. He became minister of the United Baptist-Congregational Church at Wells, Somerset, where he remained from 1917 till 1922. He then went to China as a missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society. After spending two years studying the language, he was appointed Associate Professor of Old Testament in Shantung Christian University, a post which he held until 1929. This university, which had its charter from the Canadian government, worked under the aegis of fifteen different British and American Mission Boards. Rowley's work lay in the Theological School, to which students came from all parts of China. His teaching was done through the medium of Chinese. In later years he remarked to a colleague in the University of Wales that Chinese was child's play compared with Welsh. At all events he retained his knowledge of, and interest in, Chinese language, literature, and philosophy, as is evident from references to them in his later writings on Old Testament subjects, and above all from *Submission in Suffering and other Essays on Eastern Thought* (1951) and from his Jordan Lectures, delivered at the London School of Oriental and African Studies in 1954 and subsequently published as *Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel* (1956).

In 1929, because of a disagreement with the policy of the Baptist Missionary Society, Rowley returned to England. With characteristic determination and industry he had continued his research in the Semitic field during the years since he left Oxford. He had returned there in 1927-8 during a furlough from China, and had gained the degree of B.Litt. with a thesis entitled 'A Comparison of the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Aramaic Portions of the Old Testament with those of the Aramaic Papyri and Inscriptions'. An earlier draft of the thesis, prepared while Rowley was in China, had been accepted by Hugo Gressmann for inclusion in the series *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, but Rowley had been unable to find the fee of £80 required by the publishers. Now, however, Rowley's examiners (G. A. Cooke and G. R. Driver) recommended its publication and secured for him a grant for this purpose from the Kennicott Trustees. The thesis was published in 1929 by the Oxford University Press as *The Aramaic of the Old Testament: a Grammatical and Lexical Study of its Relations with other Early Aramaic Dialects*. The book was, as Rowley himself said, a long overdue reply to the strictures passed by R. D. Wilson on S. R. Driver's presentation of the linguistic evidence for the dating of Daniel in the Greek period and for its Palestinian provenance. It was also a contribution of lasting value to the study of Biblical Aramaic (G. A. Cooke described it as 'the best book in existence on the Aramaic of the Old Testament') and a milestone in the progress of Rowley's own researches into problems connected with the book of Daniel and apocalyptic literature generally.

Rowley had won his academic spurs. Soon after his return from China he was appointed Assistant Lecturer in Semitic Languages at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cardiff, under Professor Theodore H. Robinson, himself a distinguished Baptist Old Testament scholar, and an energetic and inspiring teacher. But it was evident that a scholar of Rowley's ability and maturity was not likely to remain long in the junior post at Cardiff. In 1935 he moved to the Chair of Semitic Languages in the University College of North Wales, Bangor, in succession to Professor Edward Robertson, whom he was to succeed again, ten years later, in Manchester. The Bangor Chair afforded Rowley increased scope for research, teaching, and administration. These were not the years of his greatest literary production, but the preparations were made for the profuse flow of articles and books which

appeared under his name in the post-war years. A broad range of competence does not often go with the rigorous accuracy and scrupulous attention to detail which were the hallmarks of Rowley's work. But in him these qualities were combined in a signal degree, and it was wholly in keeping with his interests and expertise that from 1940 to 1945 he carried, in addition to the responsibilities of his Chair, those of Lecturer in the History of Religions. Dedicated scholar as he was, Rowley was also an able administrator and organizer and a far-seeing policy-maker. The energy and determination which impelled him in the pursuit of knowledge, and the discerning and dispassionate judgement which marked his treatment of Old Testament problems, were equally evident in the practical sphere. Accordingly, it was entirely appropriate that he served as Dean of the Bangor School of Theology from 1936 to 1945 and as Vice-Principal of the College from 1940 to 1945. In addition, he was personally responsible for organizing all the A.R.P. work in the College, an inordinately exacting task, which made heavy demands on his time and energy.

The years at Bangor were years of achievement and of preparation for more notable achievement. Rowley's appointment in 1945 to the Chair at Manchester opened wider fields of activity and influence. From 1945 to 1949 he held the Chair of Semitic Languages and Literatures. But developments which he himself did much to promote led to the establishment of other Chairs in the Department, and from 1949 till his retirement in 1959 he was Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature. Both in the Department and in the Faculty of Theology (of which he was Dean from 1953 to 1956) he had entered into an unusually distinguished succession. Of those who were his contemporaries and colleagues in Manchester, none stood as close to him as the brilliant and sagacious New Testament scholar, T. W. Manson. Indeed, the prospect of collegueship with Manson was one of the factors which led Rowley to accept the new appointment. Manchester's magnificent library facilities, both at the University and in the John Rylands Library, also made it a congenial centre for one who was beyond question the most accomplished biblical bibliographer of this century in the English-speaking world.

Manchester University also provided Rowley with an excellent *pied à terre* at a time when his influence in the wider world of Old Testament scholarship increased immeasurably. In 1946 he was appointed Joint Secretary of the Society for Old Testa-

ment Study, with special responsibility for foreign correspondence, an office which he continued to hold until 1960. At a meeting of the Society in January of that year he had presented a remarkable report (which was subsequently printed and circulated) entitled 'European Scholars and Publications chiefly relating to the Old Testament during the War Years'. From this it was evident that, in spite of the difficulty of re-establishing the lines of communication which the war had disrupted, Rowley was already in effective touch with a wide range of foreign scholars. In the years that followed he continued, with characteristic enterprise and courtesy, to extend these contacts and to restore the international community of Old Testament scholarship. As a correspondent he was indefatigable and unfailingly prompt, and he was prodigal in providing books and offprints, not only to friends and close colleagues, but to many who might have been thought to have had no claim on his kindness. He used his pen and his personal influence to introduce to the English-speaking world the work of European scholars, even when he himself disagreed with their views. Rowley's unique achievement in this sphere was the more effective because of his commanding stature as a scholar, but it revealed unmistakably his stature as a man.

It was, too, in the Manchester period that Rowley's literary production reached formidable proportions. It had begun before his appointment to Cardiff, and it continued after his retirement in 1959 up to the very end of his life. Three main phases may be discerned. In the first, Rowley's researches were concerned almost exclusively with problems related to the book of Daniel and the apocalyptic literature. Three books gather together the fruits of these researches. His work on the Aramaic of the Old Testament has already been mentioned. From philology he moved to historical criticism in his monograph, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: a Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (1935, ²1959). Later, there appeared a more comprehensive and less technical work, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic: a Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation* (1944, ²1947, ³1963), which not only ran into three editions but was translated into German.

In the second phase, several studies of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, and the settlement in Canaan, culminated in the Schweich Lectures for 1948, published under the title *From Joseph to Joshua: Biblical Traditions in the Light of Archaeology* (1950, ²1951, ³1952, ⁴1958, ⁵1964, ⁶1970). This was a masterly

example of the type of critical study in which Rowley excelled, marshalling a complex array of evidence, and scrutinizing with scrupulous fairness a bewildering variety of conflicting hypotheses. Like many others, Rowley argued for a thirteenth-century date for both the Exodus and the invasion under Joshua. The two most striking features of his conclusions were that (according to the evidence of biblical genealogies rather than biblical chronology) the sojourn in Egypt began in the fourteenth century and not during the Hyksos domination, and that the period of the wilderness wandering lasted only two years.

The third phase, which overlapped the second, was devoted to three main kinds of work. First, the discovery of the Qumran documents provided Rowley with material for a series of studies, some technical and some semi-popular. The most substantial of these was *The Zadokite Fragments and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1952). In this field Rowley's interest was directed less to the textual importance of the Scrolls than to their significance for the history of Jewish sects and their relationship to Christianity. He held that the covenanters of Qumran were probably the Essenes at an earlier period than that represented by other sources, and that the Teacher of Righteousness should be identified with Onias III and the Wicked Priest with Menelaus. As evidence illuminating the background of Christianity, the Scrolls were of prime importance, but the claim that they explained, or explained away, the content of the Christian gospel, the nature of the early Christian movement, or the person of its Founder, was rejected by Rowley with forceful logic and withering scorn. On other matters of academic debate Rowley appeared as a dispassionate judge; on this he was an eloquent and committed advocate. Second, during this period Rowley produced a number of invaluable critical surveys of outstanding biblical problems, principally in the Old Testament field. They were notable for their lucid analysis of the issues involved, their comprehensive documentation, their unbiased presentation of the views of other scholars, and the combination of caution and sound judgement with which the conclusions were presented. These studies, many of which were originally delivered as lectures at the John Rylands Library in Manchester and subsequently printed in its *Bulletin*, were collected and published in the volumes entitled *The Servant of the Lord and other Essays on the Old Testament* (1952, ²1965), *From Moses to Qumran: Studies in the Old Testament* (1963), and *Men of God: Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy* (1963). In critical

work of this kind, Rowley laid the appropriate foundation for a history of Israelite religion or a theology of the Old Testament. He himself regarded his *The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought* (1956) as falling within the field of Old Testament theology, though not in itself a complete theology of the Old Testament. While it may be acknowledged that the main emphasis of the book is theological, it is also an important contribution to the study of Israel's religion, and much of its value lies in the skill with which Rowley used both approaches to the Old Testament material. When, in *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (1950, ²1964), he turned to a specifically theological theme, he was less successful. A more broadly based approach to a treatment of theological issues in both Old Testament and New Testament was adopted in *The Unity of the Bible* (1953), a collection of lectures on major themes in biblical teaching which Rowley had delivered at various institutions in England and the United States. His last major work, *Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning* (1967), lies much more definitely in the field of *Religionsgeschichte* and, indeed, might fairly be regarded as a historical survey of Israel's religion. The third kind of literary work in which Rowley engaged during this period was editing. For eleven years (1946–56) he edited the annual *Book List* of the Society for Old Testament Study, transforming it into an internationally recognized work of bibliographical reference. The issues which he edited were subsequently collected and published in book form as *Eleven Years of Bible Bibliography* (1957). Another of the activities of the Society has been the publication, at varying intervals, of surveys of work done in the different areas of Old Testament research. In connection with the fiftieth meeting of the Society there was published under Rowley's editorship the volume *The Old Testament and Modern Study: a Generation of Discovery and Research* (1951). Rowley also edited, or collaborated in the editing of, three notable works of reference: he co-operated with Professor Matthew Black in producing a new edition of *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (1962), together with Professor F. C. Grant he edited the second edition of the one-volume *Dictionary of the Bible* (1963), originally edited by James Hastings, and he was responsible for the second edition of *A Companion to the Bible* (1963), of which the first edition had been produced by his distinguished Manchester colleague, T. W. Manson. From its inception in 1956 till his retirement, he was joint editor of the quarterly *Journal of Semitic Studies*. In the closing years of his

life he acted as Old Testament editor of the *New Century Bible* series, to which he himself contributed the commentary on Job (published posthumously, in 1970), the only substantial commentary which he produced during over forty years of unremitting literary activity.

Rowley was at his best in the disentangling of complex critical problems where the proliferation of rival views had tended to obscure the essentials. His technical works were characterized by patient examination of all the available evidence, lucid presentation, balanced judgement, and formidable bibliographical documentation. It has sometimes been said that his works displayed no high degree of originality. There is some justice in this judgement. It is perhaps only in his reconstruction of the events of the Exodus and the Settlement that a stroke of genuine originality accompanies the comprehensive presentation of the evidence and the discerning appraisal of rival hypotheses which are the staple elements in his other technical studies. The charge is not necessarily a serious one. Sound judgement is the hallmark of scholarship and the frontiers of knowledge are advanced not only by imaginative hypotheses but also by the reduction of problems to their essentials and the presentation of evidence with a sense of perspective and proportion. Rowley may not have flown many kites, but he pricked many balloons.

In addition to his more technical writings, Rowley produced several popular or semi-popular works. Of these probably the best was *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, which has already been mentioned. *The Rediscovery of the Old Testament* (1946) runs it a fairly close second. Rowley's missionary interest appears in two series of lectures delivered at summer schools: *Israel's Mission to the World* (1938) and *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (1945). Similar material is gathered together in *The Relevance of the Bible* (1942). *The Growth of the Old Testament* (1950) and *The Teach Yourself Bible Atlas* (1960) are serviceable textbooks, though necessarily rigorously condensed. Rowley did not have the popular flair of a T. R. Glover, but he could with great effect organize a mass of complex material in an orderly and readily comprehensible form and express it with forceful simplicity. Shortly before his death he published two unpretentious but valuable works of reference: *Dictionary of Bible Themes* (1968) and *Dictionary of Bible Personal Names* (1968).

Behind all of this varied literary activity lay Rowley's efficiently arranged card-index system, his vast library, and the

immense collection of offprints, carefully bound and indexed, which had come to him from biblical scholars in nearly every part of the world. In a remarkably short time he could put his finger on the secondary sources relating to any Old Testament passage or any important theme or problem in biblical or Semitic study. He had an extraordinarily retentive memory and the pen of a ready writer. The text of an article or lecture could be set down with remarkable rapidity and copious documentation added later from the almost exhaustive and practically infallible card indexes.

Some time after his retirement, Rowley moved from Manchester to Stroud, where his house with its three studies became a legendary repository of learning. For many years publishers had found in him a shrewd counsellor. Now, in this closing phase of his life, he undertook consultative and editorial responsibilities which carried him well beyond the boundaries of Old Testament or even biblical scholarship. Translations of foreign publications and new editions of standard works passed under his keen scrutiny before appearing in their new form. With him accuracy of reference was a passion. Now that he could no longer visit the great libraries easily or often, he was able to call on the co-operation of friends and colleagues in various university centres. From time to time notes would come inquiring about the page-reference for an article or the number or year of some volume of a periodical. Such help was gladly given by those who had so often benefited from his ready help and prompt replies, but it was natural to wonder whether his great gifts were most effectively employed in some of the undertakings on which he lavished time and trouble. To Rowley himself, drudgery seemed to be a delight. It was characteristic of him that, when the colleague who was to have been responsible for the extensive index to *Peake's Commentary* had to withdraw because of ill-health, Rowley carried this formidable task to completion. It was also characteristic that, only a few weeks before his death from a prolonged and painful illness, he was working hard on the proofs of his commentary on Job and also devoting a considerable amount of time to helping a former colleague to prepare a substantial work for publication. With the resolute diligence there went careful and far-sighted planning of his literary work. It was Rowley's way to be ahead of a publisher's deadline rather than behind it. For a quarter of a century he contributed to *The Expository Times* surveys of recent foreign theology, and at his death there was so much

material in hand that these surveys continued to appear for months afterwards. This multifarious literary activity was combined with academic work in other fields. Rowley was a member of the Old Testament translation panel of the *New English Bible* from the beginning, and he lived to see the completion, but not the publication, of the work. He was Schweich lecturer in 1948, and delivered courses of lectures on various foundations in Europe and North America. Honorary doctorates were conferred upon him by many universities. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1947 and awarded the Burkitt Medal in 1951. The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, the Royal Flemish Academy, the Royal Society of Letters of Lund, and the American Society of Biblical Literature all elected him to honorary or foreign membership. He was President of the British Society for Old Testament Study in 1950. In 1955 the Society, in association with the Editorial Board of *Vetus Testamentum*, produced in Rowley's honour the volume *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Vol. III, edited by M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas)*, containing essays by twenty-two scholars from a dozen countries and a select bibliography of his writings up to and including 1954.

His own denomination, too, honoured him by electing him to the Presidency of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland (1957–8); and he served twice (1959–60, 1961–2) as Chairman of the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society. He was the first Chairman of the joint conference of the three British Baptist Unions and of the Baptist Missionary Society. With exemplary fidelity he travelled regularly to London to attend meetings of the committees of which he was a member. With characteristic gallantry and obstinacy he persisted, in spite of indifferent health, in a plan to visit Baptist missionaries in the Congo during the troubled period after the end of Belgian rule, but soon after his arrival in Kinshasa illness compelled him to return.

It was doubtless Rowley's early physical weakness together with his natural love of learning that made him averse from physical exertion. He used to claim that for him the secret of survival lay in avoiding all but the necessary minimum of bodily exercise. To a colleague who inquired whether he ever went for a walk he replied, somewhat sharply, 'I get all the exercise I need walking from one set of bookshelves to another'. Another, who asked whether he had ever walked over the mountains in

Wales, was answered with the bland question, 'Mountains? Are there any mountains?' He had the great gift of being able to sleep at any time and in any circumstances. On train journeys to Bangor he could put himself to sleep at Penmaenmawr and be sure that he would wake up at Bangor. He used to claim that he sometimes took the opportunity of a nap while the notices and offering were being dealt with during a service which he was conducting. His only hobby was philately. Towards the end of his life he gave his fine collection of stamps to the Baptist Missionary Society. This was only one instance of a generosity which was one of the dominant traits in Rowley's character. He gave without stint of his money, time, books, and practical help wherever he felt that they were needed. Alike to his contemporaries and to younger scholars, he was a loyal and warm-hearted friend, and the best of company. His footnotes might bristle with references to works in Polish, Czech, and Swedish, but his conversation sparkled with good stories, many of them drawn from his own experiences on his numerous lecture tours in Europe and North America.

In 1918 Rowley married Gladys Barbara Shaw, of Bristol. There were one son and three daughters, of whom the second married Professor Aubrey R. Johnson. Absorbed as he was in the constant round of academic and other work, Rowley owed much to the affection of his family, and, above all, to the self-sacrificing devotion with which his wife supported him throughout their married life. His closing years were overshadowed by a lingering and painful illness, but, with characteristic determination, he continued to work and to maintain his immense correspondence almost to the end. He had devoted time and energy without stint to many causes, but it is above all as a scholar and a friend and encourager of other scholars that he will be remembered.

G. W. ANDERSON