THE BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP OF H.H. ROWLEY (1890-1969)[1]

Harold Henry Rowley was born in Leicester on 24 March 1890, the fifth of six children born to Richard Rowley, a foreman finisher in one of the factories of the most prominent local industry - shoemaking. His mother[2] was Emma Rowley, née Saunt, and he came early to attend the most celebrated of the local Baptist chapels, Melbourne Hall, founded by F.B. Meyer.[3] In the Preface to his Louisa Curtis Lectures, delivered at Spurgeon's College, Rowley paid tribute to the eighteen years at Melbourne Hall during which he was so profoundly influenced by the ministry there of W.Y. Fullerton, who indirectly provided a link back to C.H. Spurgeon.[4] His early education was at Wyggeston School, Leicester, which has also produced two other distinguished Old Testament scholars in the persons of Stanley Arthur Cook and more recently Michael Knibb, currently Samuel Davidson Professor of Old Testament Studies at King's College London.

In 1910 Rowley was admitted as a student to Bristol Baptist College and Bristol University, whilst also having enrolled as an external student of London University for the Pass BD which he obtained in 1912. After graduating BA (Theology) from Bristol in 1913, he was awarded a Baptist Union scholarship, but the outbreak of war in 1914 prevented him from studying in Germany. He chose Oxford instead. There he became a student of Mansfield College, researching under G. Buchanan Gray, and was awarded the Houghton Syriac Prize in 1915.

After a period of war service in Egypt with the YMCA, ill-health compelled Rowley to return to England. He became minister to the United Baptist-Congregational Church at Wells, Somerset, until 1922. From there he sailed for China to become a missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society, being appointed as Associate Professor of Old Testament in Shantung Christian University. Rowley resigned from the university there in 1929 and returned to Britain.[5] He resumed active research in the Semitic language field and was awarded the Oxford University BLitt for a thesis on the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Aramaic of the Old Testament. The publication of this marked the first of his distinguished list of writings.[6] In view of the fact that Rowley's later publications were almost exclusively in the literary, historical and theological fields, it is important to keep in mind the high level of importance, for himself and for others, which he attached to this grounding in linguistic research.

Subsequently Rowley became Assistant Lecturer in Semitic Languages in the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cardiff, in October 1930, where he became a colleague of Theodore H. Robinson. In 1935 he moved to the Chair of Semitic Languages in the University College of North Wales, Bangor, succeeding Professor Edward Robertson. In 1945 he again succeeded Robertson in the University of Manchester in the Chair of Semitic Languages and Literatures. Expansion and development of the university led to the terms and title of his

appointment being changed to Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature from 1949 until his retirement in 1959.

Besides his research studies of biblical Aramaic and the book of Daniel,[7] Rowley had begun publishing in a more popular fashion in 1939 with the appearance of *Israel's Mission to the World* (1939). The 1946 publication of *The Rediscovery of the Old Testament* rapidly grew into a significant stream of writings for students and the general public. The first post-war decade marked years of remarkable achievement and productivity. These included the publication in 1950 of the Schweich Lectures of the British Academy for 1948, entitled *From Joseph to Joshua*.[8] There followed a steady flow of carefully researched essays and books, largely split between highly focused essays on major critical points and more popularly directed surveys of the progress of scholarship. These years also enabled Rowley to build up the extensive international contacts and friendships which led to his name becoming one of the most widely known and respected among biblical scholars throughout the world. Through these links he established a high level of international co-operation and interchange which lent to Old Testament studies a very high profile in the realm of theological research more generally. In a reciprocal manner his world-wide interest in what was happening in biblical research abroad, especially in its Germanic and Scandinavian realms,[9] encouraged British scholars to take increasing note of it. Like Theodore Robinson before him he believed strongly that biblical research was a shared international task and his summaries of recent literature entitled *Recent Foreign Theology* in the *Expository Times*[10] brought increased awareness of this wider field.

Rowley's achievements during this period of carefully organized writing and editing ensured that he contributed very decisively towards shaping the major directions of Old Testament teaching and popular understanding in the English-speaking world. He did this through the publication of popular surveys, textbooks and articles which continued almost up to the time of his death in 1969.

1 THE MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

The Festschrift prepared for Rowley's sixty-fifth birthday and published in 1955 contains a select bibliography of his writings,[11] but regrettably no subsequent updating of this is known to me. This leaves a significant deficit of perspective since his retirement years were remarkably productive. He himself revised and updated several of his most important critical essays, chiefly by adding to the already extensive bibliographical references - an enthusiasm of his which remained unabated and for which he became famous. He loved books, delighting in possessing and handling them, and was proud to claim that he got all the exercise he needed walking from one bookshelf to another. Loose pamphlets and offprints were carefully classified and bound and the contents of his extensive reading were recorded on a card index. Early in his career he had established practical and effective habits of garnering and storing the fruits of his reading, so that wide

reference to published opinion spearheaded his techniques of research.

His card index became famous, although latterly much dependent on secretarial assistance as he sought to record the contents of an ever-enlarging corpus of writing. His delight in correcting mistakes and inadequacies in the references contained in the writings of others was not based on any kind of *Schadenfreude*, but arose out of a genuine love of precision and accuracy without which he was convinced competent critical scholarship could not progress. Sloppiness here was to him inexcusable. Yet his research was not a mere formal collating and indexing of material, since he developed a remarkable memory regarding authors' names, as well as the titles and dates of their publications. Care, orderliness and comprehensiveness were for him indispensable tools in the pursuit of truth.

It is helpful to classify Rowley's publications into four categories which correspond to some extent with periods of his own researches. These are first the early studies of biblical Aramaic and the Book of Daniel, enlarging into a special interest in the biblical apocalyptic writings generally. Second come the historical studies, centring on the Schweich lectures, but establishing to his satisfaction the historicity of the exodus story and the historical reality of the person of Moses. Along with this was a claim to the Mosaic origin of the Ten Commandments. Third we should place the many topic-focused studies of critical and historical issues which were in many instances delivered as lectures in the John Rylands Library, the Manchester institution of which he was especially proud. These special lectures eventually appeared again in three collected volumes, the first of which was revised and updated. The fourth group of publications represents a wide spread of more popular writings on general religious and theological themes, including his editorial sponsorship of dictionaries and commentary series, but extending also to cover important themes of a broader theological nature. We can also include here the studies resulting from his missionary days in China and devoted to aspects of Chinese religion.[12] Overall it was a remarkably large output, covering highly detailed and technical studies as well as short popular writings such as *The Teach Yourself Bible Atlas* (1960), *Dictionary of Bible Personal Names* (1968), *Dictionary of Bible Themes* (1968), and *Student's Bible Atlas* (1965).

Every assignment represented a challenge which he was eager to grasp because he genuinely loved all aspects of the book world, not because he hoped to obtain some great reward thereby. His own library must certainly have cost him a small fortune and he was exceptionally generous in seeking to assist less fortunate scholars abroad in obtaining hard-to-get items.

2 THE WRITINGS ON APOCALYPTIC

The first group covers the early writings on the Aramaic of the Old Testament and its relationship with later developments of the language. Such linguistic issues plunged Rowley into the debate concerning the date of the Aramaic portions of the Book of Daniel,[13] the evidence that they provided for the understanding of the unity

of the book, and the relevance and significance of apocalyptic generally. Rowley viewed this as a recognizable expression of faith which bore a direct relationship to earlier prophecy out of which it had emerged. So his essay on 'The Unity of the Book of Daniel',[14] the study of *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel*,[15] and the three editions of the popular *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*[16] are the fruits of this interest. In view of the relative neglect of apocalyptic in German-speaking scholarship, it is noteworthy that Klaus Koch,[17] in re-opening attention to the subject, pointed to the singular contributions made by the British scholars, R.H. Charles and H.H. Rowley. These had kept the subject high on the scholarly agenda at a time when the canonical books of Daniel and Revelation had tended to be regarded as confused, murky and rather treacherous by-waters.

In reflecting on this it is worth considering that Rowley's interest in the subject almost certainly reflects something of his own evangelical and missionary background. The so-called 'calendar of prophecy' in the books of Daniel and Revelation was a prominent feature of the teaching of British and American evangelicalism in the nineteenth century and has rightly been recognized as a formative feature in the rise of American Fundamentalism.[18] For Rowley the emerging break between this Puritan-evangelical understanding of apocalyptic and the newer critical viewpoint made possible by the recovery and translation of the Enoch corpus of literature must have necessitated a marked shift of perspective. The belief that the world mission for the preaching of the Gospel would be undertaken 'in the last days' was progressively giving place to a larger understanding of the divine purpose of Christian missions. We can only speculate how the youthful Rowley had to work hard at integrating his own personal evangelical faith learnt at Melbourne Hall with the critical assessments of the nature and growth of the Bible learnt in Bristol and at Oxford. It is worth reflecting therefore that the subject with which Rowley began to explore the intricacies of critical evaluation of the Old Testament was one which inevitably compelled him to rethink at the most basic level the eccentricities of nineteenth-century evangelicalism and its links with earlier Puritan theology and millenarianism.

3 ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

At the time when Rowley first began the study of theology in Bristol before the First World War a new field of research and exploration of the most direct relevance to biblical interpretation was in its infancy. This was that of archaeological research in the biblical lands. Scholars like A.H. Sayce[19] had begun to win widespread popular attention to the possibilities that were opening up and had adopted a strikingly polemical stance in doing so. Such eminent scholars as Samuel Driver[20] and Rudolf Kittel[21] had focused on archaeological excavation and research in the Bible lands as offering a new path of scientific opportunity and understanding. Rowley's student days cannot fail to have excited him with the prospect of potentially breathtaking

new discoveries shedding fresh light upon obscure areas of biblical history. In an apologetic and theological context it could be expected that they would add a new level of confirmatory evidence for the historicity of the story that unfolds in the Old and New Testaments. It can be no surprise therefore that, when invited to follow in the steps of such distinguished forerunners as S.R. Driver and S.A. Cook to deliver a series of Schweich Lectures to the British Academy in 1948, Rowley chose as his subject *From Joseph to Joshua: Biblical Traditions in the Light of Archaeology.*

These lectures attempted a fresh evaluation of the historical evidence and probable date for ancient Israel's exodus from Egypt and the subsequent conquest of the territory known as the land of Canaan.[22] Their special interest rests on the fact that, within the historiographic aims and principles current in the research of the period, these events stood in a rather clouded and indistinct grey area. Whereas fifty years of study of ancient Israelite history had left the period covered by the Book of Genesis shrouded in uncertainty and obscurity, the period covered by the formation of the Israelite kingdom under Saul and David was understood to enter a reliable realm of factual history. Between the two periods lay events linked to the names of Joseph, Moses and Joshua. To fill that gap seemed to Rowley a reasonable and attainable goal, rendered possible by piecing together the biblical traditions, as critically understood, and linking these to the surprising miscellany of evidence brought to light by archaeological researches in Egypt and the Holy Land. In presenting his conclusions it is of interest that Rowley gave a qualified endorsement to what had become described as 'The Kenite Hypothesis', which his one-time colleague in Cardiff, Theodore Robinson, had also embraced.

Rowley was not attempting any new breakthrough of method but rather a new synthesis of the evidence that had been accumulating over half a century and more. It depended on a careful balancing of a very diverse collection of clues and hints, each of which needed to be individually assessed and classified before it could be fitted into a reconstruction of the overall picture. Undoubtedly this kind of historical balancing act, in which the value and weight to be attached to each of the evidential clues had to be carefully judged, greatly appealed to Rowley. False trails and red herrings had to be set aside, much in the manner of a fictional detective story.

That Rowley shared very fully the general conviction that archaeological research presented the modern world of biblical scholarship with a priceless tool of fresh understanding is further evidenced from the space devoted to the subject in his 1946 book, *The Rediscovery of the Old Testament.*[23] Further support for this view comes from the fact that two chapters were allocated to it in the volume of essays entitled *The Old Testament and Modern Study.*[24] It served as a kind of stocktaking survey for those persons who were interested in, but not academically caught up in, Old Testament scholarship. In each of these treatments of the importance of archaeology to biblical research there emerges very strongly the high regard which Rowley attached to his friendship with the American, William F. Albright,[25] who had become the leading figure in America in the interpretation and popularizing of

archaeological research in the biblical lands.

A similar strong advocacy on Rowley's part can be seen in the eagerness with which he greeted the discovery in 1947 and subsequent first publication of scrolls from the Dead Sea caves.[26] The enthusiasm he brought to the first publications of this material was subsequently rather soured and spoilt by the speculative and disconcerting interpretations published by his Manchester colleague, John M. Allegro. His disagreement with Allegro was a cause of deep personal pain.

4 THEOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY GOAL

The third area of Rowley's scholarship we may see exemplified initially by the short book entitled *Israel's Mission to the World* published by him in 1939. This is based on four lectures he gave to the Vacation Term for Biblical Study in Oxford, as were his later studies published as *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (1945). Both books are small but important because they reveal the combination of evangelical zeal, missionary commitment and rigorous historical-critical method which characterized all his scholarship. They reveal the motives which shaped his thinking and work. The themes they adumbrate concerning the relationship of the Hebrew Bible to a continuing Judaism, the Christian inheritance from this Bible to form its 'Old' Testament, and the servant-mission of the Church were all to re-appear in later writings. The most immediate sequels are to be seen in the books on *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (1950) and *The Unity of the Bible* (1953), but a number of other books and lectures later continue to reflect their central themes. Woven into the very texture of the book on *Israel's Mission to the World* and in several of his writings is a strong emphasis on the underlying ethical nature of worship, the centrality of this as a biblical theme, not least in the Old Testament prophets, and on the Decalogue as providing a structural backbone to the entire faith of ancient Israel, which was subsequently handed on to the Christian Church. The theme of Israel as the Suffering Servant, and of the Church's obligation to continue this Servant-mission to the world were prominent and repeated emphases of his.

The final achievements of this group of Rowley's writings, which in many respects represents the more theological and evangelical side of his work, can best be seen in the two late books entitled *The Faith of Israel* (1956) and *Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Form and Meaning* (1967). Between them these books summarize and elaborate with clarity, and without the distraction of too much bibliographical detail, his central conclusions regarding the legacy that the Hebrew Bible has left to the Christian Church and which remains alive in the more liberal stream of Jewish life and scholarship. They are, for my bookshelves, treasured memorials of the best of Rowley's extensive writing.

It is worth noting that, in the concluding historical assessment of the work of Moses set at the end of his Schweich Lectures, Rowley not only affirmed the important role of Moses as a founding father of the faith of Israel, but also defended the Mosaic origin of the Decalogue.[27] This was a subject which he developed in

far greater length and with much greater detail in one of his special lectures.[28] The issue is an important one because, although the arguments adduced in favour of such a historical, literary and ethical conclusion are of a rather broad character, they establish a kind of substructure to the overall picture that he drew of the unique revelatory character of the Old Testament and of its strong ethical emphasis.

Rowley's writings in this apologetic-theological vein reveal why he was so drawn to the Old Testament, how his commitment to it related to his early venturing on to the mission field in China and how strongly he defended the Old Testament as a component part of the Christian revelation. Not least Rowley's several writings in these broad areas illustrate how much he sought to be a 'biblical scholar' with a Bible that contained two Testaments, rather than resting content with being a Hebraist or an ancient historian. They show how seriously he viewed the bond between a balanced and careful historical criticism and the Protestant-evangelical faith. This meant treading a path between a rigid fundamentalism, which Rowley believed resisted the essential critical-historical component of faith, and an unevaluated historicism, which saw only past facts and no contemporary groundwork for faith. In reviews and public lectures Rowley appears carefully to have avoided open controversy with the ultra-conservative and fundamentalist wings of biblical scholarship, although on occasion he ventured to uncover what he saw as its errors and limitations. The sharpest critical review from his pen that I have discovered is devoted to the *New Bible Handbook*, published by the Intervarsity Press.[29] It is of interest, not least because of its significant length, but because of the dishonesty which he believed led it to bring 'unfounded charges of ill-informed writers against scholars of integrity and understanding' (p.290). Much as he respected the evangelicalism which showed a deep commitment to the Bible, he vigorously opposed any refusal to embrace a rigorous critical methodology in its interpretation.

A striking feature of his extensive work as a popular author and editor during the 1960s is to be seen in the extent to which he promoted revisions and new editions of earlier publications, often retaining the original format and even the names of the earlier editors. So A.S. Peake's one-volume *Commentary on the Bible* was given a wholly new content, with new contributors, long after Peake's death.[30] Similarly the revisions to the one-volume *Dictionary of the Bible*, originally edited by James Hastings,[31] and the *Companion to the Bible*, originally edited by T.W. Manson,[32] showed extensive revisions and up-dating but retained the style and format of the original. There is a significance in this publishing strategy for what it reveals of Rowley's deep conviction that for more than half a century Old Testament scholarship had been progressing steadily on the right track and substantially on target.

When surveying the long list of Rowley's writing on a popular theological front, there now appear in retrospect to be serious gaps in it. These arise from his strong belief that it is readily possible for the modern reader and interpreter of the Old Testament to leap directly from its pages, or at least from the pages of its New Testament sequel, straight into the modern world. Words like 'relevance',

'rediscovery' and 'message' became very much a part of his presentation during the 1940s and 1950s. It is often far from clear how this relevance is imparted and can be discerned. It frequently appears to rest largely on a re-affirmation of the ethical realism and integrity of all true religion. So recognizing and highlighting this ethical urgency and priority in the Bible is held to provide a path of bridge-building between the biblical world and our own. So there can be a 're-discovery' of the Old Testament, made possible by modern historical-critical scholarship when it recovers its original meaning with the help of fresh discoveries and historical research. Yet in spite of this search for a valid historical context biblical ethics remain, in Rowley's view, rather detached from their proper social and legal-historical setting. Mankind's moral advance is held to depend upon the new revelatory insights of great figures such as Moses and the prophets to an improbably high degree. So Rowley presents a strongly ethical-idealist view of biblical history and nowhere does this come out more forcibly than in his essay on 'Moses and the Decalogue'.

No single word seems more cogently to express Rowley's belief in the evangelical message of the Old Testament, or the purpose of the scholar's task, than does this one word *relevance*. So we encounter it in a whole range of interpretive bridges stretching from the complex symbols and ciphers of the Book of Daniel to the finished canon of Christian Holy Scripture. Ritual and the more outward aspects of Ancient Israel's religion are strongly interpreted in terms of their inner meaning.[33] Ideas of election must be matched to obligations of service to the larger human community. So the image of the Servant in the Servant Songs of Isaiah 40-55 is a fitting image of the Church in human society - a theme to which Rowley turned repeatedly.

It would not be unjust to claim that the subject of ancient Israel's claim to be the object of divine election, coupled with the undeniable Jewishness of the Hebrew scriptures, were topics which compelled Rowley to face far-reaching hermeneutical issues, particularly concerning the unity of the Christian Bible. They begin to make their appearance in his popular book, *Israel's Mission to the World*. In this he remarks on the relative neglect of the post-exilic period, and even its denigration, in earlier attempts to recover biblical history. He defends it as a necessary period of preparation for the birth of the Christian Church when the world-perspective of God's plan of election, implicit in a monotheistic faith, recovered its proper goal.

To some degree Rowley's treatment of Judaism reveals some of the limitations of his work by pointing to the larger context in which the Old Testament must be placed. If we were to introduce the term 'hermeneutic' in place of 'relevance', there seems little doubt that Rowley is unlikely to have been well pleased. Yet his defence of the latter term draws attention to the absence of the former. In no small measure it was the absence of any necessity of reading the Old Testament with the help of an independently defined hermeneutic that made an enthusiasm for historical issues and interpretations so attractive to him. History appeared to have a self-defining hermeneutic of its own.

By the 1950s Rowley had established his reputation and position so well that he could embark upon a programme of writing and publication which marked his mature years and through which his name has remained widely known. It must be said that he loved the task of planning, researching and writing a book, or an essay. Books were his proud possession, the tools of his trade, and they provided the focus of his concern to influence and shape the thinking of the Christian Church and the wider intellectual life of society. Through them he could perform the work of a Christian apologist, defending the faith against spurious attacks and the heresy of false reasoning. He could also, he believed, write with a view to persuading others of the incomparable richness that remained accessible in the Bible. His missionary zeal never forsook him, even when health made strenuous travel tiring and difficult.

5 THE CRITICAL ESSAYS ON SPECIAL THEMES

We see the fruits of the central period of Rowley's writing most fully exemplified in the lengthy lecture-essays, many of which he first delivered publicly in the John Rylands Library in Manchester and which were subsequently published in three separate volumes, *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays*,[34] *Men of God*[35] and *From Moses to Qumran*.[36] I have categorized them as marking a separate group, although in essence they both arose out of his earlier researches on apocalyptic and the Mosaic period of biblical history. They certainly also provide an important foundation for the books on *The Faith of Israel* and *Worship in Ancient Israel*, which he published in his later years. For many they are likely to represent the central focus of Rowley's claim to be an original researcher and scholar. They undoubtedly have done much to generate his reputation for bibliographical thoroughness. Some can best be described as bibliographical essays, since their value to the scholar and student largely lies in the fullness with which they survey published treatments of a problem. They also reveal the extent to which Rowley's interest in a particular subject was sometimes initiated by a lecture or book from another scholar. Others had to light the touchpaper for him!

Certainly these essays epitomize the kind of scholarship which Rowley most fully endorsed and through which he believed he could advance an understanding of the Bible. At their best they have served to provide a platform for his contemporaries through which a particular subject, or exegetical issue, has been focused, divided into its component parts, illuminated by what other scholars have said and then subjected to a carefully considered re-assessment. At other times the bibliography tends to mask the fact that the flood of published 'ifs' and 'buts' had not much altered Rowley's views from those with which he began and which he inherited from his predecessors. This is true of his study of 'The Early Prophecies of Jeremiah in their Setting', where he ends up largely alongside the views of John Skinner.[37]

I am assured that his lectures were as clear and easily followed as their written counterparts are to read. In his retirement years his lucid commentary on the Book of Job,[38] in the New Century Bible series, was intended to be followed by one on

the Book of Daniel which his declining health denied to us. He studied in order to publish and gave firm instructions that incomplete or outdated lectures were to be destroyed. That he spent some time on minor writings, which many would have considered to be beneath his scholarly stature, reflects his deep personal love of books. He was delighted to plan, along with Matthew Black, the new series of commentaries, eventually called the New Century Bible. These were to replace the older Century Bible commentaries, whose title they were originally to have retained, and which had become familiar friends to him from his student days.

6 THE SCHOLAR IN RETROSPECT

It would be of little service to the history of biblical scholarship in the twentieth century to remember Rowley and his books without also noting both his broader influence as a scholar and his limitations. Of primary significance was his position as a major player on the international theological scene, making research into the Old Testament widely known and popularly accessible. He wanted Christians at all levels to read the Old Testament and did not shun from preparing quite short non-technical books to help them to do so. He wanted private Bible reading to be informed by the very best scholarship. Accordingly his enthusiasm, industry and sense of purpose lent a great deal of authority and status to the Society for Old Testament Study, of which he was an eager member. Most especially his initiating the annual Book List, at first a simple duplicated newsletter, made it a pioneering tool of academic life, envied and subsequently emulated by others. From being a help to busy scholars, he saw it grow into a primary international tool of scholarship by badgering publishers and reviewers alike to support it and recognize its value to all sides of the scholarly world - educational, commercial and research-oriented.

Rowley was a remarkably prompt and indefatigable correspondent, usually with letters personally typed and signed by him. Replies were usually made in a day or so. In his retirement years, when others might have been content to play a game of postal chess, Rowley enjoyed writing to colleagues who had access to the world's great libraries, asking them to check queries and sort out puzzlingly inadequate or mistaken references - latterly in the English translation of the original French *History of Protestantism* by E.G. Léonard.[39]

Yet his very passion for historical exactitude, for careful checking of bibliography and references, and his conviction that caution should govern all biblical research, could make for a rather fixed attitude of mind. He believed that biblical history lay at the very heart of all interpretation so that to depart from received historical tradition demanded reverent care. No argument in which he became engaged appears to have been more bitter to him than that involving J.M. Allegro whose speculative and tendentious approaches to researching the historical origins of the sect associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls caused Rowley much personal hurt. When his colleagues in Manchester felt that he was taking an academic disagreement with a colleague to the point of a personal vendetta, they

refused to endorse his proposal to deny Allegro a tenured lectureship in the University. Rowley felt deeply wounded personally.[40] Their decision appeared to him irresponsible, rather than a concession to the need for free and open enquiry after truth, wherever it pointed.

Behind such action we can see something of Rowley's own ideas concerning the role of academic research and the close relationship between history and revealed truth. Novel historical speculation appeared to him to be a form of heresy, because it contravened reasonable canons of integrity and commonsense. Faith that disregarded a serious and rigid historical criticism was no true faith. So there was a proper path for the scholar to pursue between unthinking and unquestioning acceptance, which was the error of the fundamentalists, and risky, and thinly substantiated, historical speculation. By honest and accurate scholarship the scholar would be serving both Church and university since the goals of faith and of responsibly based historical research were, ideally at least, wholly compatible with each other, however much human imperfections clouded the scene at any one time.

Like C.H. Spurgeon, and many a respected cleric, Rowley enjoyed a good cigar. He was an excellent guest and entertainer, storing up a great fund of stories and anecdotes, some of which involved himself. He delighted to recall a report in the *Manchester Evening News* concerning his year as B.U. President, noting that his many engagements meant that he was constantly travelling away from home. The report added the comment that Mrs Gladys Rowley must be having a very lonely time. However, to Rowley's delight the word 'lovely' appeared instead of 'lonely'.

From a scholarly perspective Rowley's writings appear to have lasted less well as standard textbooks than he would have wished and probably expected. Deeper and more serious theological issues underlie their distinctly period look, beyond those which Rowley himself can have foreseen. Some of his most basic assumptions belong to the phase of theological development in which Old Testament studies occupied a higher and more uncritically accepted place in the theological curricula of the time than is currently the case. He addressed the emerging problems only slightly, even though it is certainly true that in *Israel's Mission to the World*, *The Re-discovery of the Old Testament* and *The Unity of the Bible* he himself defended his most basic convictions. Nevertheless, the combination of theological and historical claims presented in these books calls for closer examination.

Besides this, the blend of evangelical passion and historical-critical positivism which he embraced also raises far-reaching questions. The uncertainties of attaining any clear and decisive consensus over the course and nature of ancient Israel's history are now very strongly evident in the light of recent debates.[41] In particular, the basic assumptions of methodology, and the assumed definition of the subject matter to be studied, which form the basis of *From Joseph to Joshua*, would all now be called into question. The very themes of 'Exodus' and 'Conquest' call for careful examination as focal centres of large clusters of traditions.[42] That ascertaining their historicity as 'events' can suffice to rediscover their 'message' and 'relevance' - to

use Rowley's own favoured terminology - begs many questions. Historicism, rather than hermeneutics, shaped Rowley's academic agenda, even though he would have staunchly defended the claim that a real history lay at the heart of all biblical faith.

In a similar vein we should have to criticize the over-emphasis upon bibliographical exactitude. Some of the greatest scholars have been serious offenders against the strict canons of accuracy and detail which Rowley endorsed.

The pursuit of too much bibliographical information has sometimes, and perhaps too often, disturbed the clarity of presentation which marks the best scholarship. On the positive side we may, nonetheless, defend Rowley's personal bibliophilism as having engendered a powerful move towards the production of excellent bibliographical tools, of wide international co-operation between scholars and of a serious commitment to a constant process of finding out the results of scholarly endeavour.

NOTES

1 This paper was presented at the BHS Summer School, Cambridge, July 1998.

2 Details of Rowley's life are taken from *Proceedings of the British Academy* 56, 1972, pp.309-19.

3 The work of F.B. Meyer and the origins of Melbourne Hall, Leicester, are described in W.Y. Fullerton, *F.B. Meyer: A Biography*, London and Edinburgh 1929, pp.53ff. Fullerton provides reminiscences of his own life and ministry in *At the Sixtieth Milestone: Incidents of the Journey*, 1917.

4 H.H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 1950, preface.

5 Rowley was concerned that the University should continue to declare its positive Christian commitment and evangelical purpose at a time when strong anti-foreign feeling, linked with anti-British demonstrations, were current. The circumstances are described in Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, Edinburgh 1992, pp.310-13.

6 H.H. Rowley, *The Aramaic of the Old Testament: A grammatical and lexical Study of its relations with other early Aramaic dialects*, Oxford 1929.

7 H.H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A survey of current opinions*, Cardiff 1935, rep.1959.

8 H.H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua: Biblical traditions in the light of archaeology* (The Schweich Lectures for 1948), 1950. In the preface Rowley recalls how the subject had first interested him while he was still in China and how he had written to Dr S.A. Cook on the subject, but how his courage failed him since he had never met Stanley Cook so the letter was never posted! (preface, p.vii).

9 Rowley was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Uppsala in 1948.

10 Cf. the extensive list of Rowley's contributions under this title in the bibliography by G. Henton Davies, *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Festschrift for H.H. Rowley on his sixty-fifth birthday*, (SVT III), M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas, eds., Leiden 1955, p.xix.

11 *ibid.*, pp.xi-xix.

12 H.H. Rowley, *Submission in Suffering and Other Essays in Eastern Thought*, Manchester 1951; cf. also his lecture 'The Chinese Philosopher Mo Ti', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, xxxi, 1948, 241-276, and *Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel* (Jordan Lectures 1954), 1956.

13 Rowley's first significant publication was 'The Belshazzar of Daniel and of History', *The Expositor*, 9th Series, ii, 1924, pp.182-95; 255-72.

14 H.H. Rowley, 'The Unity of the Book of Daniel', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, xxiii, Pt.i, pp.233-73; reprinted in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays*, 2nd edn., Oxford 1965, pp.247-80. The basis of the essay was first given as a Presidential Address to the Society for Old Testament Study in January 1950.

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40 An account of what happened, and its consequences, was told to me by E.G. Rupp, the Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Manchester at that time.

41 Cf. Lester L. Grabbe, ed., *Can a 'History of Israel' be written? Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supp 245, Sheffield 1998.

42 This point is well shown in the treatment of these subjects in J.H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 1986, pp.54-79.

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