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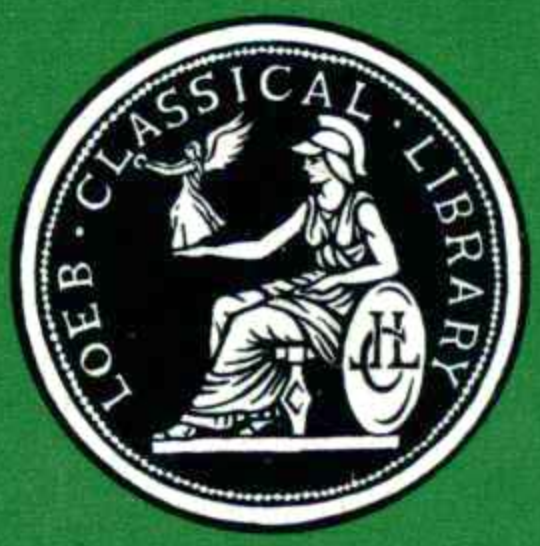
PHILO

VOLUME I



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PHILO

VOLUME I

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

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AND

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PHILO

I

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PREFACE TO VOLS. I. AND II.

The number of persons who have read or will read Philo's works from beginning to end is probably very small, but there are many more who may wish to refer to them occasionally and in both these classes there is always likely to be a large proportion who will welcome a translation. And if this be granted, it will hardly be disputed that the time has come for a new version. The only English version known to us is that of C. D. Yonge (1854), and this is out of print and copies appear to be scarce. Yonge's work has considerable merits, but there is much that requires correction, and he had before him a less trustworthy text than that which is available at the present day. Moreover, his way of reproducing Philo's long and involved sentences in the exact form of the Greek seems to us to make the treatises duller and heavier than they need be. We have adopted a somewhat different method, without, we hope, sacrificing faithfulness to the original.

We must not, however, omit to mention the German translation by various hands, edited till his death by Cohn, which is still in progress. We have found this useful in many ways, but our chief debt is to the notes and the references which they give to Plato and the later Greek philosophers. Though a translation is not a commentary, the reader of Philo is not fairly dealt with, if his attention is not called to the fact that the author is constantly quoting or adapting Plato and

the Stoic writers. Our account of these quotations and adaptations is probably very incomplete, but it would have been far more so without the help which the German translators have given us.

The publication of the great edition of Cohn and Wendland (1896–1914), which has now superseded that of Mangey, has left us little difficulty with regard to the text. Generally speaking, we have both of us adopted the readings of this edition, even when we have felt some hesitation, though where that hesitation has amounted to something like conviction, we have occasionally with the aid of the very complete apparatus criticus supplied by the editors adopted readings which they had rejected, and in such cases our text is often nearer to the MSS. than theirs. We have also introduced a few emendations of our own, all of which are indicated in the footnotes.

It should be understood that our translation is not a collaboration in the fullest sense of the word. Each of us has carefully read and criticized the work of the other, and many of these criticisms have been accepted as improvements or corrections. But on the whole each of us remains responsible for his own work both in text and translation and not for that of his colleague. In Volume I. the whole of the translation is by Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Colson's contribution, apart from the criticisms and suggestions just mentioned, is confined to the General Introduction, a share in the Tables of Reference and a considerable part of the notes in the Appendices. In Volume II. the three treatises *De Cherubim*, *De Sacrificiis* and *De Gigantibus* are translated by Mr. Colson and the other two by Mr. Whitaker.

F. H. C.
G. H. W.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It has probably seldom happened that the characteristics of a man's home and birthplace have been so faithfully reflected in his writings as they are in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. A citizen of the place which was at once the chief home of the Jewish Dispersion and the chief centre of Hellenistic culture, he owes his position in the history of religious thought mainly to that remarkable fusion of Hellenism and Judaism which we find in his voluminous writings. He has many other claims on our consideration—he is one of the most spiritually-minded of thinkers—but this is the first and most obvious.

It is not necessary to discuss the little that is known of Philo's life. It will be enough to say that he came of a rich and influential Jewish family and was trained in Greek as well as Jewish learning. The one public event in his life was his taking part in an embassy sent by the Jews of Alexandria to Caligula to complain of the persecutions which they had been suffering. This is dated A.D. 39-40, and as Philo in writing his account of the mission at some time later speaks of himself as an old man,[a] it has been generally held that he was born about 20 B.C. The date of his death is uncertain, but it will be seen that his lifetime

[a] *Leg. ad Gaium* 31 ; *cf. ibid.* 182.

covers the lifetimes of Jesus Christ and John Baptist, and much of that of St. Paul. There is no intimation that he knew anything of their life or work.

The present introduction is intended to serve mainly for the first three of the six volumes of Cohn's text.[a] These three volumes containing twenty-two treatises will probably occupy five volumes of this translation. These treatises, which are fairly homogeneous, do not aim at any continuous or systematic body of thought. They are expositions of what Philo conceives to be the inner and spiritual meaning of various incidents and texts in Genesis. So far his method is consistent enough. Unfortunately, perhaps—though it is a fault which is rather lovable—he is an inveterate rambler. This word does not mean that the thoughts are disconnected. In fact it is the mark of the true rambler that his points are always connected, and that he is unable to restrain

[a] But it may be well to indicate the contents of the remaining three volumes of Cohn :

(*a*) Biographical treatises, *viz.*, On Abraham. On Joseph. Two books on the Life of Moses (vol. iv.).

(*b*) Treatises on the Mosaic Legislation, *viz.*, On the Decalogue (vol. iv.). Four books on the Special Laws (vol. v.).

(*c*) Philosophical treatises, *viz.*, On the Virtues. On Rewards, Punishments and Curses (in vol. v.). On "Goodness is Freedom" ("Quod omnis probus liber sit"). On the Contemplative Life (a work largely on the Therapeutae, which has given rise to much controversy). On the Eternity of the World (sometimes regarded as spurious). The last two make up vol. vi., together with the following :

(*d*) Political treatises, *viz.*, Against Flaccus. On the Embassy to Gaius.

[Besides these there are "On Providence" and "Questions on Genesis and Exodus." As these only survive in the Armenian and are only known through the Latin translation by Aucher, they will not form part of this translation.]

himself from following up each connexion as it occurs. Philo takes his text and expounds its philosophical meaning and proceeds to illustrate it from some other text, in which he discerns the same idea. But this second text generally contains some other words in which he finds some other idea, too valuable to be passed over. The process might, of course, go on indefinitely, but even Philo feels that there must be some limit to it and ultimately returns to his main subject.

It may be well to illustrate this characteristic by a single specimen, neither worse nor better than hundreds of others. Let the reader turn to p. 409 of this volume, *i.e. Leg. All.* iii. lv. § 161, where Philo has arrived at the words of the Lord to the serpent, interpreted as the evil principle of pleasure, " earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." That Philo should pass at once to the implied contrast between the lower and the higher food of the soul is natural enough, and thus we are at once switched off to the Manna story of Ex. xvi. All the details of this are worked out ; for instance, how the command to the wanderers to gather only the day's portion for the day suggests that humanity cannot receive God's gifts all at once, but only in due measure and proportion, and other thoughts which the reader may observe for himself. But then let him note how in 169, taking the text " this is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat ; this is the word which the Lord prescribed," Philo at once identifies the " word " with the " bread " and extracts a new set of thoughts about the " word." So far, though the primary " serpent " has been forgotten, the secondary " manna " has on the whole held the field. But in

177 we are again switched off by the thought of the "word" or "logos" to one of Philo's more mystical ideas, that God Himself is greater than His Word, and this is supported by the prayer of Jacob where the phrase "*God* who feeds me" coupled with "the *Angel* who delivers me from evils" teaches us that health, bodily and spiritual, is God's direct gift, while rescue from evil comes to us indirectly. Then in 179. another transition, Jacob's prayer acknowledges God and is in contrast with the words of that inferior character Joseph,[a] "*I* will nourish thee (Jacob)." And so too Joseph's mother Rachel erred when she said to Jacob "give me children," and thus what has begun as an exposition of "earth shalt thou eat" ends with one of Philo's favourite ideas that God is the parent of virtue in the soul, though, unlike earthly parents, He begets not for Himself. but for us.

The above may serve to illustrate, not only Philo's method, but the nature and value of his deductions from Scripture. Their ingenuity is undeniable; so also is their fancifulness and even perversity, when measured by the canons of sound exegesis; and the estimates of readers will vary according as they are attracted by the first or repelled by the second. But if we would appreciate Philo fully we must remember that he combines the strongest possible belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures with the freest possible criticism. Every word of the Scriptures, particularly

[a] Philo's constant depreciation of Joseph and Rachel in favour of Judah and Leah is a curious feature and shows us how little consciousness he had of the charm which we feel in the story of the former pair. Was there some national or tribal prejudice at the bottom of it?

those which he attributes to the " all-wise " Moses,[a] is to him inspired, and quite as much in the God-guided translation of the Seventy as in the original Hebrew, which he knew but little, if at all. This belief is part of his very nature, and his patriotic instincts served to confirm it. But at the same time he is profoundly conscious that the sacred words, when taken in their literal sense, are occasionally incredible, and not infrequently trivial, or at any rate inadequate, and therefore *must* conceal some " underlying thought," [b] which patient meditation, aided by God's grace, cannot fail to extract.

It follows that the statements of fact in these inspired narratives need not be literally true. Creation cannot, he says, have taken place in six natural days, for days are measured by the sun's course and the sun is but a portion of creation.[c] The literal story of Adam's rib being made into Eve he flatly calls " mythical." [d] Sometimes perhaps he is over-critical. The account of Joseph being sent by his father to visit his brethren is incredible, for why should a great chief like Jacob send his favourite son on such an errand instead of one of his numerous servants ?[e] If we ask whether in a broad sense he accepted the historicity of the narratives, the answer is that he probably did. Certainly his treatment of the lives of Abraham, Joseph and Moses in the books which deal with them biographically, books in which he shows that the lives have a lesson for

[a] A glance at the table of references to the O.T. on pp. xxviii-xxxiv will show how vast is the preponderance of quotations from the Pentateuch over those from the other books.

[b] *ὑπόνοια.*

[c] *Leg. All.* i. 2.

[d] *μυθῶδες, Leg. All.* ii. 19.

[e] *Quod Det.* 13.

edification apart from allegory, indicates that he took them as historical, though it is suspicious to find elsewhere the statement that "*perhaps*[a] there has been an actual man, Samuel, but we understand by him a mind devoted to God's service." On the whole, a still better answer is that he did not much care about the matter. But while in his eyes it is permissible to doubt the literal, if we accept the spiritual truth, to deny both is a deadly sin, and he records with some triumph how one such scoffer was shortly by God's judgement driven to suicide.[b] Further, though the law is allegorical, its literal injunctions must not be disobeyed. Sabbath and circumcision have their inner meaning, but the actual rites are to that inner meaning as body to soul, and the body demands our care as the dwelling of the soul.[c]

If we realize this and also make due allowance for the unfamiliarity of the Platonic and Stoical dress in which his thoughts are clothed, we shall find in them not a little richness and substance. The rambling[d] sermon, half-analysed above, would be better described as a mosaic of sermonettes, some eight or ten in number. When set forth in such a brief analysis as is here given, they may, perhaps, appear poor things. But if studied in full they will be found, each of them, to contain an idea or ideas, which to some minds will appear fanciful, to others profound,

[a] Or "probably" (ἴσως), *De Ebr.* 144.
[b] *De Mut. Nom.* 62.
[c] *De Mig.* 82 f.
[d] Though in justice it should be said that these expositions in spite of their kaleidoscopic character often have some *motif* which does not exactly run through them, but always tends to re-appear. Thus in the one noticed the idea of "feeding" is never long absent.

but to hardly any, trivial. And these ideas will be none the worse for their exegetical setting. The profoundest thoughts, when stated in the abstract, are apt to seem bald and dull. They are seen at their best when set in beautiful verse as Wordsworth's, or failing this when they are brought into association with some familiar and venerated saying, which we had not suspected of bearing any such meaning. Few forms of eloquence are more effective than that in which "a mere mustard-seed of a text grows into a many-branched discourse."[a] And it may perhaps be said that much of Philo's exegesis is of a kind which a modern preacher might easily adapt, not indeed as expressing the intention of the original, but as showing how "fresh truth and light may break out of the Word."[b]

Philo is, as is here suggested, quite independently of his merits as a thinker, interesting from the mere fact that he interprets the Old Testament in terms of Greek philosophy and thus makes a link between Judaism and Hellenism. But it would be a mistake to suppose that this was his purpose. His purpose was the same as Bunyan had in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*, and Dante to some extent in his *Divine Comedy*, namely, to set forth an allegory of the history of the human soul and its relations to God. But while Scripture to Bunyan and mediaeval eschatology to Dante were merely foundations on which they could rear the fabric which their own imagination

[a] George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, ch. iv.

[b] The oft-quoted words of Pastor John Robinson's farewell address to the Pilgrim Fathers, "I am very confident that the Lord has more truth and light yet to brake out of His Holy Word," would have pleased Philo well.

created, Philo, entirely devoid of creative genius,[a] could never get away from the rôle of interpreter. The fact that he clothed these interpretations in the language of Greek philosophy is merely incidental. The educational ideas, the logic, physics, psychology and ethics of his day were part of his mental make-up, and he necessarily expressed himself in their terms. But incidental as they are, it is necessary to understand them, if we are to understand Philo at all.

Underlying Philo's philosophy is the conviction of the value of general education as a stepping-stone to higher things. He accepts without question the ordinary course of education of his time, commonly called the Encyclia, consisting of literature, rhetoric, mathematics, music and logic. He enlarges several times on its value as mental training. The Encyclia are the ornaments of the soul conceived of as the house which is being fitted to receive the Divine Lodger,[b] the saplings which must be planted in young minds,[c] the milk which must precede the meat,[d] the source of that spiritual strength, the "much substance" which Israel must take for its sustenance, as it journeys out of the spiritual Egypt.[e] But above all the Encyclia are symbolized by Hagar,[f]

[a] When he attempts an allegory of his own, as in *De Sac.* 20-44, it is poor stuff. [b] *De Cher.* 101 f.

[c] *De Agr.* 18. [d] *ibid.* 9. [e] *Quis Rer.* 272.

[f] *e.g. De Cher.* 5 f. It is noteworthy that this comparison has a close parallel in one of the Homeric allegories, which were common in the philosophical schools. Some philosopher (the name is variously given) said that those who dwelt too long over the Encyclia were like the suitors of Penelope, who, when unable to win the mistress, contented themselves with the maids. How far such allegorizing of Homer influenced Philo in his treatment of the Old Testament is an interesting problem.

for as Abraham, when Sarah bore him no child, took the handmaiden, so the young soul as yet unable to mate with philosophy must have union with the school subjects, the lower or secular education.[a] True, this is only useful as a stepping-stone to philosophy. If it is persisted in too long or misused, as it well may be, particularly the rhetorical branch, it breeds the sophist Ishmael and must be cast out, as he and his mother were. But in its proper place it is valuable, and Philo's insistence on this makes him one of our chief authorities on the educational ideas of his time.

In philosophy proper Philo is an eclectic, drawing from nearly all the schools.[b] His insistence on the significance of particular numbers, 4, 7, 6, 10 and others, which to our minds is the most fantastic part of his system, is an inheritance from the Pythagoreans. He owes something to Aristotle, notably the fourfold nature of causation,[c] and the doctrine of the virtues as means between extremes.[d] His profound sense of human ignorance and weakness make him not

[a] *μέση παιδεία.* The translators have had considerable doubt as to how to render this important phrase. In strict Stoic usage *μέσα* = *ἀδιάφορα*, *i.e.* things which are neither good nor bad. Still sometimes the word seems to acquire the rather different force of things midway between good and bad and therefore having a definite value, though not the highest. Philo seems to use it in this way. To translate *μέση παιδεία* by "intermediate" or "secondary" education would be clearly impossible in view of the modern professional use of these words.

[b] We need not conclude from this (though some have done so) that his philosophy is a mere chaos taking at random from the different schools. His position is rather that Moses is the primary source of philosophy, and that the "little systems" of the schools are but "broken lights" of him.

[c] *De Cher.* 125. [d] *e.g. Quod Deus* 162.

disinclined to borrow from the Sceptics.[a] Platonism is a more important element. The most famous of all Plato's doctrines, the theory of Ideas, is an essential part of Philo's cosmology, and like many others he was greatly fascinated by the mysterious theories of the *Timaeus*. Above all it was chiefly from Plato that he learned to think of the body as the tomb or prison-house of the soul, and the putting off of material things as the true freedom. There is also a vast amount of Stoicism in Philo, though whether the Stoic outweighs the Platonist would be a difficult question to decide. To take a few instances out of many, the doctrines of the four passions,[b] of the sevenfold division of bodily functions,[c] of the fourfold classification of material things,[d] of sense, "presentation" and "impulse" as the three sources of consciousness and activity in living beings and of the manner in which they work,[e] are all Stoic. So too he recognizes the value of freedom from passion (*ἀπάθεια*), of "living according to nature," and of the "indifference" of neutral things (*ἀδιάφορα*). He accepts as a worthy expression of his ideal of virtue the Stoic phraseology that "the morally beautiful" (*τὸ καλόν*) is the only good.[f] But on the whole he is opposed to the Stoic materialism, and in what is perhaps the kernel of Stoic ethics he is profoundly anti-Stoical. Though he adapts the famous para-

[a] See particularly *De Ebr.* 154 f.

[b] Grief, fear, desire, pleasure. *Cf. Leg. All.* ii. 99, "passion is four-legged."

[c] Five senses, speech and reproductive power. See *Leg. All.* i. 11.

[d] Inorganic matter, plants, animal, reasoning. See *Leg. All.* ii. 22 f.

[e] *ibid.* 23.

[f] See particularly *De Post.* 133.

doxes of the wise man as the truly free man, the truly rich, the true king and true citizen,[a] he will have none of the Stoic apotheosis of the Sage. The creed which proclaims that "man is master of his fate and captain of his soul," which pictures the just and firm-willed man as standing unmoved among the ruins of the universe,[b] which Lucan expressed by declaring that Pompey's cause had as much moral support as Caesar's because, while the latter had heaven on his side, the former had the true Stoic Cato [c]—that creed had no attraction for Philo, or rather it was blasphemy. For there is nothing on which he harps more than on the sinfulness of ascribing any faculty or virtue to ourselves instead of to God.

In fact when Philo once begins to speak of the nature of God and our relations to Him—and seldom is there a chapter without some such meditation—the Hellene gives way almost entirely to the Hebrew, and what there is of Hellenic is much more Platonic than Stoic. His more mystical side, his absorption in the thought of the Divine and our union with it, are matters on which one can hardly enlarge here. But the ruling idea of his theology is that while God is absolutely removed from us, incomprehensible and only known as absolute being, He is also infinitely close to us, in fact at once transcendent and immanent. As is well known, Philo solved this antinomy by postulating, as intermediaries between the uncreated and the created, the Logos or Divine Reason, and also "Powers" or "Potencies," the two chief of which are goodness and sovereignty represented in the Old Testament by the names of "God" and

[a] *De Sobr.* 56 f. [b] Hor. *Odes*, iii. 3. 1-8.
[c] *Phars.* i. 128, "Victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni."