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978-0-521-31548-7 - Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo

Ronald Williamson

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CAMBRIDGE COMMENTARIES ON
WRITINGS OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN WORLD
200 BC TO AD 200
VOLUME I PART 2

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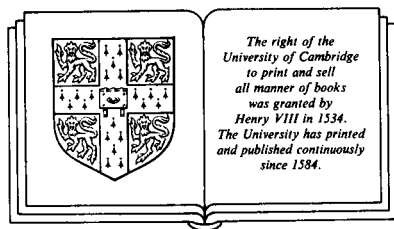
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JEWES IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD: PHILO

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General Editors' Preface

The three general editors of the Cambridge Bible Commentary series have all, in their teaching, experienced a lack of readily usable texts of the literature which is often called pseudepigrapha but which is more accurately defined as extra-biblical or para-biblical literature. The aim of this new series is to help to fill this gap.

The welcome accorded to the Cambridge Bible Commentary has encouraged the editors to follow the same pattern here, except that carefully chosen extracts from the texts, rather than complete books, have normally been provided for comment. The introductory material leads naturally into the text, which itself leads into alternating sections of commentary.

Within the severe limits imposed by the size and scope of the series, each contributor will attempt to provide for the student and general reader the results of modern scholarship, but has been asked to assume no specialised theological or linguistic knowledge.

The volumes already planned cover the writings of the Jewish and Christian World from about 200 BC to AD 200 and are being edited as follows:

- 1 i *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Josephus, Aristeas, The Sibylline Oracles, Eupolemus* – John R. Bartlett, Trinity College, Dublin
- 1 ii *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo* – R. Williamson, University of Leeds
- 2 *The Qumran Community* – M. A. Knibb, King's College, London
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General Editor's Preface

A seventh volume by one of the general editors, A. R. C. Leaney, *The Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200*, examines the wider historical and literary background to the period and includes tables of dates, relevant lists and maps. Although this companion volume will preface and augment the series, it may also be read as complete in itself and be used as a work of general reference.

P.R.A. A.R.C.L. J.W.P.

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Preface

I should like to express my deep gratitude to the Cambridge University Press for allowing me the privilege of contributing this volume on Philo of Alexandria as the second part of the volume on *Jews in the Hellenistic World* in the series Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200. I should also like to thank very much the three editors for their considerable help. A special word of thanks must be offered to Canon John Packer, who has given enormous encouragement to me and has provided substantial help just when help, in difficult circumstances, was most needed.

The reader will notice that in the case of the three chapters on 'Philo's doctrine of God', 'Philo's Logos doctrine' and 'Philo's allegorical exegesis of Scripture' there is more introduction and less commentary on selected passages, whereas in the chapter on 'The ethical teaching of Philo' the commentary on selected passages exceeds the introduction. The reason for this is that, while Philo wrote continuously on ethical matters in at least six treatises, making it possible to select extended passages for commentary, his thoughts and ideas on other subjects occur intermittently over vast distances in his many treatises. It should, perhaps, be added that, in the case of his employment of the allegorical method of exegesis, there is almost no paragraph in the whole of his works where it is absent. This fact, however, also makes it difficult to select compact groups of passages from his works to illustrate his procedure.

Having read the great works on Philo by eminent Philonists such as Drummond, Wolfson and Goodenough, to name only some of the most famous, and having taken part in international seminars at SNTS conferences, with the modern generation of distinguished Philo experts, I realise how inadequate this small volume is and how lamentably it fails to do justice to its subject. However, if it helps some students to discover Philo, to realise his importance and to want to go on to study more of his works, then I shall feel it has served its limited purpose.

The reader of Philo's works will, like the man referred to in one

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of Philo's treatises, be 'nourished with peace' and will depart from his reading 'having gained a calm, unclouded life, a life of true bliss and happiness'.

I should like the reader to note that, while the translation of the selected passages is my own, I have been helped greatly by the translation in the Loeb edition; by that, in four volumes, made by C. D. Yonge (London and New York, 1854) in Bohm's Ecclesiastical Library; and by the volumes of the French translation (by various translators) published under the patronage of the University of Lyons: *Les Œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie*, Vol. I (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1960).

Finally, I wish to extend my warmest thanks to Miss B. Spensley, who kindly undertook the task of checking that the Philo quotations in the commentary passages corresponded accurately to the translated sections of text.

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Abbreviations

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>	On Abraham
* <i>Aet. Mund.</i>	<i>De Aeternitate Mundi</i>	On the Eternity of the World
* <i>Agric.</i>	<i>De Agricultura</i>	On Agriculture
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De Cherubim</i>	On the Cherubim
<i>Conf. Ling.</i>	<i>De Confusione Linguarum</i>	On the Confusion of Tongues
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia</i>	On the Unity of Study
* <i>Decal.</i>	<i>De Decalogo</i>	On the Decalogue
<i>Det. Pot. Ins.</i>	<i>Quod Deterius Potiori insidiari solet</i>	The Worse is wont to ambush the Better
<i>Deus Imm.</i>	<i>Quod Deus sit Immutabilis</i>	On the Unchangeableness of God
<i>Ebr.</i>	<i>De Ebrietate</i>	On Drunkenness
* <i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>	Against Flaccus
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De Fuga et Inventione</i>	On Flight and Discovery
<i>Gig.</i>	<i>De Gigantibus</i>	On the Giants
<i>Jos.</i>	<i>De Josepho</i>	On Joseph
<i>Leg. All.</i>	<i>Legum Allegoriae</i>	Allegorical Interpretation of the Law
* <i>Leg. Gaj.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>	The Embassy to Gaius
<i>Migr. Abr.</i>	<i>De Migratione Abrahami</i>	On the Migration of Abraham
<i>Mut. Nom.</i>	<i>De Mutatione Nominum</i>	On the Change of Names
* <i>Omn. Prob. Lib.</i>	<i>Quod omnis Probus Liber sit</i>	Every good Man is free

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<i>Op. Mund.</i>	<i>De Opificio Mundi</i>	On the Making of the World
<i>Plant.</i>	<i>De Plantatione</i>	On Planting
<i>Poster. C.</i>	<i>De Posteritate Caini</i>	On the Posterity and Exile of Cain
* <i>Praem. Poen.</i>	<i>De Praemiis et Poenis</i>	On Rewards and Punishments
* <i>Prov.</i>	<i>De Providentia</i>	On Providence
* <i>Quaest. in Gn. (Ex.)</i>	<i>Quaestiones in Genesin (Exodum)</i>	Questions and Answers on Genesis (Exodus)
<i>Rer. Div. Her.</i>	<i>Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres sit</i>	Who is the heir of Divine Matters
<i>Sacr. AC.</i>	<i>De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>	On the Sacrifice of Abel and Cain
<i>Sobr.</i>	<i>De Sobrietate</i>	On Sobriety
* <i>Som.</i>	<i>De Somniis</i>	On Dreams
* <i>Spec. Leg.</i>	<i>De Specialibus Legibus</i>	On the Special Laws
* <i>Virt.</i>	<i>De Virtutibus</i>	On the Virtues
* <i>Vit. Cont.</i>	<i>De Vita Contemplativa</i>	On the Contemplative Life
<i>Vit. Mos.</i>	<i>De Vita Mosis</i>	On the Life of Moses

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Since the New English Bible did not seem a suitable source for the biblical quotations used in a volume on Philo, they are largely translated directly from the Septuagint or taken from the Revised Version or Revised Standard Version.