

PREFACE

The aim of this volume is to present a general survey of the history and literature of the Palestinian Jews in the last five centuries BC for students and others concerned with the later parts of the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and early Judaism. The shortness of the bibliography at the end is congruent with the author's purpose, the list being confined to books likely to be accessible to the ordinary reader. These titles can be supplemented by the works mentioned in the notes. In order to keep the study within manageable limits, it is confined to the Jews of Palestine, thereby excluding the Jews of Egypt and of Babylonia, although both of the latter groups had, or were destined to develop, considerable significance in the Jewry of the ancient world.

The importance of the period 550 to 4 BC in Jewish history has long been recognized. It is in this span of time that we witness the completion and consolidation of the literary and religious achievements of ancient Israel. Not only were the Scriptures assembled, but Jewish values and customs, including acceptable expressions of piety, were firmly established, and upon this foundation all subsequent Judaism was to be built. Since the Christian Church was initially the child of the Synagogue, it too stands in debt to these centuries, for much of Israel's legacy was appropriated by the early Christians and became in fact basic for the Christianity of the New Testament.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Humanities Research Council of Canada, using funds provided by the Canada Council, and a grant from the Publications Fund of University of Toronto Press. It remains for me to thank Joan Bulger, assistant editor at University of Toronto Press, for her great care in editing the manuscript and seeing it through the process leading to publication.

W.S.McC.
September 1974