PREFACE

Festschriften are prepared for a wide variety of reasons. Sometimes they are the result of the worthy sense of duty and indebtedness felt towards a scholar of retiring age by his or her students. The editors and contributors to this volume, however, are not sensu stricto Michael Goulder's students, but all have at some time—whether at a conference or an occasional seminar or lecture, or simply reading some of his engaging writing—sat enthralled at Michael's feet. The very coming into being of this tribute is an eloquent testimony not only to the seriousness with which Michael's scholarship is respected and valued, but to the warmth of the personal esteem and affection in which Michael is held. His friends and colleagues agree that—to speak in this context only of his expertise in the broad field of biblical studies—Michael is a giant of his generation, and a Festschrift in his honour is more than deserved.

Not all the contributors to this book agree with Michael’s often controversial positions on particular points touching their respective fields (for Michael has a strongly held and assiduously defended non-standard view on so many aspects of biblical studies), but all recognize that his work can be ignored only by jeopardizing their scholarly and intellectual integrity, and engaged with only at grave risk to their security in a particular view (even a “consensus” view). Michael is never less than challenging and never other than relentless in getting to the heart of a question and engaging enthusiastically in the battle of debate. On the other hand his compassion is immediately apparent, and his personal support of and encouragement towards students and younger scholars, such as the editors of this volume, have been formative as well as salutary.

Like Professor Nineham, author of the Foreword to this volume, the editors have come greatly to appreciate Michael's character: in particular his indomitable good humour in the face, sometimes, of adversity; his honesty, his willingness to take on board the results of his own enquiries, wherever they lead; his astonishing command and recall of the biblical texts in the original languages, with references always at his fingertips; his sharp and penetrating wit; above all his genuine humanity.

This volume seeks to honour Michael by responding in
appropriate ways to various aspects of his work. In a collection of articles spanning (at least part of) the range of Michael's interests (witness the bibliography of his works), there is necessarily an element of eclecticism in the compilation. Nonetheless, there is a cohesion to the collection, as there is to Michael's own work. Not least, reflected in the range of subjects covered and approaches followed there is a common willingness to venture beyond the trodden paths, to dare to cross the boundaries of the disciplines and self-imposed limits of competency and explore unknown territory. Michael is that great rarity of our day, a scholar completely at home in both Old and New Testaments, and many of the contributions reflect this breadth of vision. Accordingly, alongside contributions on method and the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in its own context, a large part of the collection is concerned with the illumination of New Testament ideas, attitudes and texts from perspectives gained outside the confines of the early Christian documents. It is itself an exercise in the crossing of the boundaries ...

Stanley E. Porter
Paul M. Joyce
David E. Orton