In Memoriam

Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1893. After attending Hamilton College he went for two years to Drew Theological Seminary and then to Garrett Biblical Institute, from which he received the bachelor's degree in theology in 1917. He then studied for three years at Harvard, where he was much influenced by the teaching of George Foot Moore, and for three years at Oxford, from which he received the D.Phil. in 1923. In that year he returned to the United States as instructor in history at Yale, where he remained, becoming Assistant Professor of History in 1926 and Associate Professor in 1931, then Professor of History of Religion in 1934, and John A. Hoober Professor of Religion in 1959. On his retirement from Yale in 1962 he spent a year at Brandeis University as Jacob Ziskind Professor of Mediterranean Studies, and settled in Cambridge, where Harvard placed at his disposal an office in Widener Library. Here he continued his research until his final illness.

During his work for his first published book, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (1923), he came to the conclusion that many hellenistic elements of early Christianity were probably derived, not directly from the pagan world, but from the already hellenized Judaism through which Christianity first spread abroad. Almost all the rest of his scholarly works were devoted to the study of this hellenized Judaism, which figured largely in all of them and was the primary concern of the *The Jurisprudence of the Jewish Courts in Egypt* (1929), *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (1935), *The Politics of Philo Judaeus, with a General Bibliography of Philo* (1938), *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (1940), and the monumental *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, of which the publication began in 1953 and was completed, by publication of the thirteenth volume, in 1968.
In these works Goodenough set forth a picture of hellenized Judaism which may be seen as complement and counterpart to Moore’s classic picture of rabbinic Judaism. But while Moore’s work was the careful analysis and description of a well-recognized body of written sources, Goodenough’s work required the collection of a vast body of archaeological material hitherto scattered through thousands of publications, museums, and private collections, some of it unrecognized, most of it neglected, and almost all of it misinterpreted. With the presentation of this material, the volumes of *Jewish Symbols* necessitated a profound revision of previous notions of hellenistic, and also of rabbinic, Judaism. From now on, wherever the Judaism of the Greco-Roman world is seriously studied, Goodenough’s work must be used as one of the major sources.

This great scholarly achievement was recognized by grants from the Bollingen Foundation (whose magnificent publication of *Jewish Symbols* is a credit to our country), by degrees from Garrett, Yale, the Hebrew Union College, and the University of Uppsala, and by membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. It was, however, only one aspect of Goodenough’s career. He was always an active participant in many scholarly organizations in this country and abroad. From 1935-42 he edited the *Journal of Biblical Literature* and he was long the representative of the Society of Biblical Literature to the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS); from 1947-58 he was President of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences; he was a member of the councils of the International Association for the History of Religions and the World Union for Jewish Studies, and of the Committee on the History of Religion of the ACLS. In this last role he played a large part in the organization of The American Society for the Study of Religion and was its first President.

Along with this activity in historical studies, he was also deeply concerned with contemporary religious problems, a concern which derived from his upbringing in a household of intense Protestant piety. Because of this he was always anxious to determine the valid and enduring elements of religion and to redefine religious life in the light of scientific discoveries, particularly in the fields of physics, psychoanalysis, anthropology and sociology. He was much involved in the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science, and was a member of its advisory board from 1956 on. At Yale he gave generously of his time in counseling students with religious problems, his home was always a center for discussion of religious questions, and his own beliefs were summed up in his book, *Toward a Mature Faith* (1955).

All these achievements live on. What is lost to us, and what we mourn, is the personality – the wide learning, the extraordinary
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combination of clarity and profundity, the candid recognition of the limitations of his learning and of the suppositions required for his theories, the warmth and intensity of his life.

Morton Smith