

PROFESSOR D. J. WISEMAN

ON HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1998

Dear Donald

The British School of Archaeology in Iraq is in good heart and active, despite the current problems with Iraq itself, and we want to express the School's indebtedness to you for your contribution to its prosperity as you reach your eightieth birthday.

We note that it was fifty years ago you began your professional career at the British Museum and soon after that you joined the Nimrud Expedition, serving as epigraphist in its early years. Following a British pattern and disciplined by the two-year time limit placed on your publication of *The Alalakh Tablets* (1953), you produced catalogues and partial publications of Nimrud tablets (and later some from Tell al-Rimah) very rapidly. That process reached its peak in *The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* (Iraq 20, 1958), appearing within two years of the discovery, an achievement one Assyriologist described as "astounding speed". As Editor of this journal for twenty-five years (1953–78) you ensured many other discoveries were made public as quickly as possible. Indeed, making information available has been a characteristic of your own scholarship and something you have stimulated others to do. It is your encouragement and help for other people that we should celebrate most gratefully. Colleagues and students from the schoolboy to the prince have benefited enormously from your generosity and wisdom. You have shared your time, knowledge and experience, often affecting people positively at formative stages in their careers. You have always gone to great pains to encourage younger scholars, and many of us are grateful to you for your support and friendship.

Despite your many commitments in other contexts — at the British Museum, in the chair of Assyriology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, as a staunch member of the Society for Old Testament Study and a pillar of Tyndale House in Cambridge — you always found time for the School, and were ready to take on administrative duties that were crucial to its well-being. We have always needed experienced and perceptive leadership in times of calm and of crisis. You gave that during your long service as Chairman (1970–88), often ending confused discussions with sensible proposals. And time and again they were proved right. In the forums of the British Academy your diplomatic skills operated in the School's interests, and your advice steered us safely through periods of change and reform. On your visits to Iraq we witnessed your concern for the well-being of the School and its staff, and for our friendly relations with our hosts. We were pleased you accepted the Vice-Presidency in 1988 and glad to make you President five years ago. Our hope is that you will continue long in that role, with our respect and affection, and we send all best wishes to you and to your wife Mary, who has supported you in all your endeavours and has likewise earned the gratitude of the School.

Congratulations!