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A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA.

THE publication of the *Speaker's Commentary* forms a landmark in the history of religious thought in England. It would be interesting to trace the circumstances in which the undertaking originated; to indicate the changes of view caused by the growth of opinion which has occurred during the quarter of a century since the work was first planned; and to estimate the kind and degree of influence which the *Commentary* has exercised. All this lies outside my subject, though I hope that it will be treated by some abler and more competent pen. But the completion of the task by the recent publication of the "Commentary on the Apocrypha" furnishes an opportunity for taking a rapid glance at the curious and important body of literature of which a new key has now been placed in the hands of English students. I have no intention of attempting any review of the work, or of pointing out the many merits and occasional inequalities of the different contributors. I wish rather to furnish such general and introductory considerations as may perhaps induce some readers to turn with deepened interest to the mass of exegetical material which, in these two learned and valuable volumes, is now placed conveniently within their reach. But in order to do this within the narrow limits of a single paper I must rigidly exclude all collateral topics.

The historical value of the *Apocrypha* can hardly be exaggerated. From the books which are classed together under that name we derive our chief information, both direct and indirect, respecting the events and influences

which affected four centuries of the history of the chosen people. When the voice of genuine prophecy falls silent with the last words of Malachi, we have not a word more of canonical Scripture to explain the immense change of practice and opinion which we find firmly established in the days of our Lord. But there is no discontinuity in history. If St. Augustine was right in the thought which predominates throughout his *De Civitate Dei*; if Orosius, in the opening words of his *Epitome*, correctly states the view of the great African Father in the words, “Divinâ Providentiâ agitur mundus et homo”; if Vico truly describes history as “a civil theology of the Divine Providence,”—then it would be absurd to suppose that the hand of God was not felt as distinctly as at other times through the wheelwork of human events during those four hundred years. The spirit of man which is the candle of the Lord did not cease to shed some light on the problems of life for that long interspace between the death of Malachi and the angel songs which heralded the Saviour’s birth.

The events of that history have been narrated by Josephus, and in modern times recapitulated with much learning and candour by Dean Prideaux in his *Old and New Testament Connected*; by the Roman Catholic Dr. Jahn in his *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth*; by Ewald in his *History of Israel*; by the Jewish historians, Grätz, Jost, Herzfeld, and others. They have attracted the attention of all writers who desired to understand the tone of thought which we find reflected in the Gospels, and which issued in one direction in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, and in another in the spread of the Christian faith. The *praeparatio evangelica* was going on throughout these centuries alike in the Jewish and Pagan world.

The state of things which prevailed at the dawn of the Christian era was the result of three dominant influences: of which two were purely foreign, and the other was an

indigenous development due to the pressure of surrounding circumstances and to the powerful impress which the Jewish nation received from the character of one memorable reformer. Those three influences were, (1) Parsism ; (2) Hellenism ; and (3), if I may be allowed to borrow the word, Scribism.

1. God teaches nations, as He teaches individuals, by their mutual intercourse. The bigoted and narrow notion, that there was no such thing as ethnic inspiration, and that during the old dispensation God confined His gifts and His teaching to the Jewish people, has now, it is to be hoped, been entirely abandoned. The recent science of comparative religion has brought home to us in their full significance the golden words of St. Paul at Athens, that God “made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” St. Paul endorsed the sentiment of Aratus, that we are also His offspring; and thus there is nothing to shock us in the fact that certain doctrines of Judaism, and those of great importance, were not indeed exclusively learnt or borrowed from the PERSIANS during the Babylonian exile, but yet were considerably developed by the intercourse of the Hebrews with that vigorous Aryan nation. The great doctrine of the Unity of God was the choicest possession of the Semitic races; yet it had never saved the Jews from those incessant apostasies into all kinds of idolatrous nature-worship which their history records. They returned from the Exile cured for ever of that fatal tendency of which the Exile itself had been the retributive consequence. If their Monotheism had been deepened by reaction, as they became eye-witnesses of the monstrous aberrations prevalent among Assyrians and

Babylonians, it had been also strengthened by the contrast of those idolatries with the purer fire-worship of the race of Cyrus. Similarly it is certain that, in spite of the mysterious silence of Moses, the Jews were not without some hope of immortality; but as that belief grows purer and more definite in the course of their annals, so undoubtedly it acquired new force from the intercourse of Jews with the most gifted of their foreign conquerors. The belief in one personal Satan seems also to have become more vivid among them from their familiarity with the Persian conception of Ahriman; and both the angelology and demonology of the chosen people acquired fresh prominence and variety during the seventy years' captivity.¹ In none of these instances can it be asserted that the doctrines in question were of entirely foreign origin; but since we find the conceptions more active and more developed after the Exile, it seems certain that they were strengthened by extraneous influences. Truth—even religious truth—had never been confined to the offspring of Abraham. Other nations beside Judæa had angels and heavenly princes and watchers of their own. The practices as well as the doctrines of the later Jews acquired force and distinctness from their eye-witness of foreign religions. The existing rules about clean and unclean meats gained cogency from their observance by the Parsees; and the growth of synagogues—an event of capital importance—was greatly stimulated by the necessity for such institutions among the scattered captives as well as by the daily observation of a worship of which the sacred ceremonies were not tied down to a single temple.

2. The powerful influence exercised over the East by the HELLENIC races did not begin till a century later. It was the most permanent result of the conquests of Alexander the Great. Had he never done anything but found Alexandria, we should still have had to reckon him among the

¹ See Dan. x. 13–21, xi. 1; Zech. iii. 1–9, iv. 10, etc.

number of those who have most deeply affected the fortunes of the human race. Like the seething of grapes in a vine-cluster, the various nationalities represented by the motley groups which thronged the streets of that remarkable city caused, by their mutual contact, an interpenetration of opinion which created a new epoch in philosophy and religion. The latest historical personage mentioned in the Old Testament is Jaddua the high priest (Neh. xii. 11),¹ who, according to the Jewish legend, met Alexander at Sapha in B.C. 332, and received his homage—as Acholius received that of Theodosius, and Paulinus that of Edwin of Deira,—because he recognised in the High Priest a figure which he had already seen in vision.² Jaddua induced the youthful hero not only to avert his wrath from Jerusalem, but even to bestow privileges and immunities upon its inhabitants. The conqueror of Tyre found no difficulty in persuading a colony of Jews to settle in his new Egyptian city. He died B.C. 323, and in 320 Ptolemy Lagi captured Jerusalem on a Sabbath day, and carried to Egypt a multitude of Jews. From this time till the beginning of Roman domination, Judæa was reduced to an insignificant subdivision of a Greek empire, and became the battleground of rival Greek dynasties—the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. It was left to the caprice and ambition of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV.,—Epiphanes, “the Illustrious,” or, as his enemies loved to call him, Epimanes, the “Frantic,”³—to arouse the Jews, in B.C. 167, to a fierce revolt. This rebellion called forth a succession of hero priests and princes, whose efforts ended, in B.C. 143, in the brief establishment of Jewish independence. Antiochus endeavoured to force them to the worship of Greek gods by savage persecution,

¹ I exclude all consideration of the difficulties in 1 Chron. iii. 21–24, where the LXX. reading would bring down the date to B.C. 225.

² Josephus: *Ant.* xi. 8, § 5.

³ Dan. xi. 21: פָּתַח, “a vile person.”

but he only kindled in their hearts a flame of holy zeal and splendid patriotism. It was this rude awakening which caused an outburst of national literature and vigorous exertion. Whatever view may be taken of the Book of Daniel—and in spite of Dr. Pusey's arguments, it is strange that any one can still hold that the whole book, as we possess it, was written before B.C. 533—we see in Daniel xi., not only a minute description (as unlike the spirit of Hebrew prophecy as can well be conceived) of events which occurred during this entire epoch, but we can also judge what were the events which made the deepest impression on the imagination of the Jews themselves.

Hellenism worked upon the minds of the Jews in many ways, and Judaism in its turn affected the views of the Greeks. The Septuagint translation became, as has well been said, “the first great Apostle of the Gentiles”; and there, as in Josephus, we can trace the dislike of the anthropomorphism and primitive simplicity of parts of the Old Testament, which shows that the Jews were very sensitive to the criticism of cultivated heathens. Philo and the great Alexandrian school of thought and exegesis both Jewish and Christian, of which he was almost the founder and certainly the ablest representative, permanently affected the whole course of biblical interpretation by borrowing from Greek philosophy that allegorical method, of which the Stoics had set them the example in spiritualising the poems of Homer. The influence of Greek philosophic systems is distinctly traceable in the Book of Wisdom. From the days of the founding of Alexandria, when the Jews began gradually to learn that

“All wisdom is not hid in Moses' law,
The Pentateuch, and what the prophets wrote
The Gentiles also know and write and teach
To admiration, led by Nature's light,”—

the waters of the Ilyssus begin to mingle with the affluents

of the Jordan. The attempt indeed to Hellenise the *practices* of Judaism and the general *form* of its literature failed ignominiously. The high priests Jason and Menelas, who tried to introduce gymnasias into Palestine, and to fit their countrymen for gymnopaedic contests by obliterating the seal of the national covenant,¹ were execrated by all religious patriots, and Jason earned for himself the title of that “ungodly wretch and no high priest.”² Nor was the attempt to write Jewish dramas in Greek iambics, and Jewish epics in Greek hexameters any more successful. Such literature could only be at the best a sickly exotic. Like a dead and rootless flower it perished of inanition at an early stage. It has only left us the shadows of names: Philo the elder, who wrote an epic on Jerusalem; Ezekiel, the author of a Greek drama on the Exodus; Theodotus, who related in verse the story of Dinah and Shechem. The *tallith* of Shem could not thus be united with the *pallium* of Japheth. But in other ways there was an interchange of thought between the races. The characteristics of Jewish nationality were too stubbornly tenacious to be altogether deracinated, but they received ingrafted shoots which had life and beauty of their own. Henceforth the ancient terebinth which had murmured over the cradle of Isaac is not only adorned externally, like the golden platanus of Xerxes, with Persian jewels and mantles, but it is also budded with Hellenic grafts, and brings forth new fruit,

“Miraturque novas frondes, et non sua poma.”

3. But the third and indigenous influence which radically affected the heart and soul of Jewish faith, and which has been called *Scribism*, dates its origin from the remarkable

¹ 1 Macc. i. 11–15, 41–61; 2 Macc. iv. 10–15; Jos., *Ant.* xii. 5, § 1; מִשְׁׂאכִים; 1 Cor. vii. 18, ἐπιστασύς; Ewald, *Hist. of Isr.* v. 268–271, etc.

² 2 Macc. iv. 13.

personality of Ezra, the first great Scribe. Ezra was the founder of Judaism in the more modern sense of the term, with its oral law, its liturgical forms, its long succession of Sopherim, Chakhamim, Tanaim, and other rabbinic schools; and ultimately with its Targums, Mishna, Midrashim, and Talmud. Ezra, so far as he was the founder of the legalistic spirit, deserved his title of "a second Moses"; but only in the very inferior sense that the veneration for tradition, with its endless micrology and its deification of traditions and observances, had its roots in the movement which he inaugurated, and professed to be based upon the Mosaic law. From the labours of the so-called Great Synagogue began in two different directions the intellectual impulses, which resulted in the two great branches of rabbinic activity, the Halakha and the Haggada;—the nature of which is now sufficiently known to need no further explanation to readers of *THE EXPOSITOR*.

There is nothing in the Apocrypha which is definitely marked by the spirit of Rabbinism in its minuter features. The distinctive elements of the Halakha were of later development, although it is true that Epiphanius speaks of a Mishna (*δευτέρωσις*) of the Hasmonæans. The full Halakha was not committed to writing till the days of Akiba at the earliest. But the deification of the law, and the rigid insistence upon observances, which mark the teaching of most of the Apocryphal books, show the general stream of tendency. In several of the treatises of the Apocrypha we have some of the earlier and better specimens of the Haggadic fiction, which assumed such immense and monstrous forms in the Gemara and the Midrashim. Nor is it without significance that the name "Judaism" makes its appearance for the first time in the Second Book of Maccabees.¹

The whole mass of literature which we call Apocryphal,

¹ 2 Macc. ii. 21, viii. 1, xiv. 38 (comp. Gal. i. 13).

and of which only a part has ever been admitted into proximity with our sacred Scriptures, sprang up during the centuries in which these three influences of Parsism, Hellenism, and Scribism had been at work. For fully a century and a half of that epoch we have no Jewish literature, except such as may be represented by the very earliest fragments of any translations of the Bible into Greek. The Septuagint itself in its oldest portions—the version of the Pentateuch—is hardly of earlier origin than B.C. 277. The letter of Aristearus is a notorious forgery. The fragments of Aristobulus are perhaps genuine, but are not earlier than B.C. 160. The earliest of the books in our present Apocrypha are perhaps some of the additions to the Book of Daniel, and probably they do not go back further than B.C. 167. If Ewald's theory be right, the Book of Baruch, in part at least, is considerably earlier than this date; but his view is disputed and is highly disputable.

The name Apocrypha corresponds to the Hebrew סְפָרִים חֲזֹנִים, “hidden books,” and סְפָרִים גְּנוּזִים, “books of outsiders.” These non-biblical writings fall under the classes of (1) Those incorporated with the Bible by the LXX; (2) Those imbedded in the oldest portions of the Talmud and Midrashim; and (3) Those which are of independent origin. With the two latter divisions we are here entirely unconcerned. Those of the first division may be classed under various heads. They have been sometimes classified as Historic, Didactic, and Prophetic. There have also been attempts to divide them into Palestinian and Hellenic, according as they were originally written in Hebrew (Aramaic) or in Greek; or as they show the traces of opinion prevailingly Pharisaic or Alexandrian. The lines of division are however too obscure and interchangeable to enable us to rely on such a division.

They may perhaps be conveniently arranged as follows:

HISTORIC. The first Book of Maccabees.

PARTIALLY HISTORIC. The Second Book of Maccabees.

PARÆNETIC FICTION. The Books of Judith and Tobit.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC FICTION. Bel and the Dragon ; the Story of Susanna.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC AND UNHISTORIC COMPLETIONS OF SCRIPTURE BOOKS. The First Book of Esdras ; the Rest of Esther ; the Book of Baruch ; the Epistle of Jeremy ; the Song of the Three Children ; the Prayer of Manasses.

APOCALYPTIC. The Second Book of Esdras.

SAPIENTIAL. The Books of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom.

Perhaps I shall best fulfil the task assigned to me, if I glance swiftly at the contents and characteristics of each book, and then conclude with a few words on the Apocryphal literature as a whole. For it is my object, as far as possible, to "orientate" the reader (if I may adopt a convenient French phrase) as to the general significance of the Apocrypha, which he may now study with exceptional advantage under the guidance afforded to him by the new commentary.

1. HISTORIC.—Of all the books of the Apocrypha the *First Book of the Maccabees* is perhaps the most valuable. It is a serious and trustworthy history of forty memorable years (B.C. 175–135) in Jewish history, beginning with the tyrannous attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to force the Jews into idolatry, and ending with the death of the high priest Simon. The brief introduction (i. 1–9) deals with the history of 156 years (B.C. 331–175), being a sketch of the growth of the Macedonian power from the battle of Arbela onwards. The book is mainly occupied with the wise and heroic deeds of the three Maccabean brothers, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon. It is composed throughout with simplicity and seriousness in the style of the Old Testament, though it only indirectly recognises the intervention of God, and generally avoids the use of the sacred name.

The speeches no doubt are sometimes imaginary, and the numbers loose ; but in all other respects the narrative is trustworthy, and the writer made use of existing documents.¹ It was probably written in Hebrew or Aramaic by a devout and patriotic but unknown Palestinian Jew during the reign of John Hyrcanus, about B.C. 110.² It is only when the writer touches on foreign affairs that he falls into serious mistakes. Josephus and all subsequent writers have accepted his authority.

2. PARTIALLY HISTORIC.—*The Second Book of Maccabees* is greatly inferior to the first in historic credibility. It was probably written a hundred years later by a Jerusalem Hellenist and Pharisee ; and its chief object was the glorification of Judas Maccabeus. As “a poor and somewhat tawdry frontispiece” it begins with two spurious letters, supposed to be addressed by the Jews of Jerusalem to their brethren in Egypt. It covers the story of the twenty years between B.C. 180–161. It is full of historical errors, yet contains some valuable material. It was an attempt to embellish and popularize the history of an unknown Jason of Cyrene, whose five books it epitomised into one.³ It entirely differs in spirit from the first book, especially in that insistence upon holy places and rites, and on the doctrine of the resurrection, which shows that the writer leaned to the views of the *Chasidim*.⁴ He emphasises the religious and miraculous elements of his narrative, and shows a more developed faith in immortality, the resurrection, and the judgment to come than the previous writer.

3. PARÆNETIC FICTION.—The growth of religious fiction is a marked characteristic of the later phases of Jewish literature. In the Books of Tobit and Judith we have the

¹ See 1 Macc. ix. 22, xvi. 23, 24.

² The curious name by which Origen alludes to the book, Σαρβὴ Σαρβανέλ, seems to be בְּנֵי אָלָשׁרַבָּת שְׂרָבָת, “History of the Princes of the Sons of God.”

³ 2 Macc. ii. 23.

⁴ See 2 Macc. vii., xii. 43–45, xiv. 46 ff.

precursors of the vast Haggadistic collections, of which so many strange specimens are found in the literary activity of the rabbinic schools in later ages.

(1) The *Book of Tobit* has always been a deserved favourite. It is a gentle, childlike, genial, domestic story, written mainly with the object of teaching the Jews to glorify God among the heathen.¹ It exhibits a pious and practical spirit, and reflects the ideal of the Scribes, attaching great importance to fasting and alms. Whether it is a pure romance, or whether it had any bases in tradition, we cannot tell. The date is entirely conjectural, nor can we be certain whether it was originally written in Hebrew or in Greek.² It is remarkable for its developed angelology and demonology, and was probably the work of a Jew of the Dispersion. It constitutes, as Ewald says, “the fairest monument of the spirit of the Jews in the distant East during these centuries.” All readers are pleased in spite of themselves by the introduction of the superfluous dog of the young man in v. 16, xi. 4; and all the more when we know that all mention of the dog is omitted in the Chaldee and Hebrew texts, and that this is the only instance in Hebrew literature of any regard for the despised dog of the East.³ But it is inexcusable that the angel Raphael should be introduced as calmly saying what is not true (v. 6, 12). The standard of spirituality and belief is far below that of the humblest book of the Old Testament; but we may say of it with Luther, “Is it history? then it is a holy history. Is it fiction? then is it a truly beautiful, wholesome, and profitable fiction.”⁴

¹ See Tob. i. 4, 8; iv. 15; v. 13; xii. 8; xiii. 3, 5.

² From the phrase *καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός* in Tob. vii. 7, it has been inferred that it was written in Greek.

³ Ambrose (*Hexaem.* vi. 4, § 17) says that Raphael uses the dog to help in the training of Tobias.

⁴ The book is alluded to by Talmudists in Palestine till the third century, but after that only in Babylon. Hamburger, *Talm. Wörterb.* ii. 70.

(2) *The Book of Judith* is written in a prophetic-poetic style, and is pronounced by Ewald to be “as a work of art quite perfect.” It is an absolute fiction, written originally in Hebrew. Its object was partly religious, partly patriotic. It was intended to recommend Pharisaic principles in the strict observance of times and rules, and to show that the Jews would only be conquered if they transgressed the law.¹ Judith wins the aid of God by her ceremonial purity and legal scrupulousness. The names are probably allusive associations. Judith recalls Judas; by the Assyrians are meant the Syrians; Nineveh the Great stands for Antioch the Great; Arphaxad recalls “Artaxata and Arsacides”; and Holofernes is slightly transliterated from the Persian title Orophernes. The same patriotic Haggada occurs in various forms in the Midrashim.² The moral ideal presented by the character of Judith in almost every particular, except those of patriotism and formalism, is extremely low.

4. PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC FICTION.—The practice of pseudepigraphy is one of the decisive marks of a decadent literature. Writers who were too depressed and diffident to claim attention for themselves, claimed it on the spurious authority of some venerable name. The stories of Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon, are found in the additions to the Book of Daniel.

There was nothing morally wrong in pseudepigraphy; but thus to fight behind a visor shows a certain artificiality of sentiment, and a lack of vigorous and independent life.

(1) *The History of Susanna* is chiefly interesting as having furnished one of the finest specimens of early criticism in the letter of Julius Africanus to Origen impugning its authenticity. The reply of Origen is one of the few extant letters of the great Alexandrian thinker. It is highly curious, but it must be admitted that it shows

¹ Comp. Tob. xiv. 10.

² Jellinek, *Beth hamidrasch* i. 130.

the lack of the critical and historic spirit which was one of Origen's chief limitations, and that Julius Africanus had very much the best of the argument in all respects. Without going so far as to call the story a *fabula ineptissima*, and even admitting that it compares favourably with many stories of the Haggada, it is still the poorest book in the whole Apocrypha, and the attempt to treat it as genuine and historical is entirely futile. The Fathers made Susanna the type of the Church tempted by Paganism and Judaism. In the interesting introduction to this book by Mr. Ball, he quotes evidence from Brüll to show that the story probably originated in a desire to support the views of the Pharisees against those of the Sadducees as to the examination of witnesses. The traditional sentence ascribed to Simeon ben Shetach in the *Pirqé Abôth* is, “*Examine the witnesses abundantly*”; and it was the fruit of bitter experience, since his own son had fallen a victim to the false accusation of witnesses suborned by his enemies. The little romance had therefore a good didactic purpose—that of remedying the crying evil of a badly administered justice. It is a story with a purpose, and is aimed at “painted Pharisees” like the dissolute elders, and at worldly Sadducees.

(2) The story of *Bel and the Dragon* has no pretence to be historical, but is an early Haggadic satire upon the frauds and follies of idolatrous worship. In the LXX. it is said to be “*from the Prophecy of Habakkuk son of Jesus, of the tribe of Levi.*”

5. PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC AND UNHISTORIC COMPLETIONS OF SCRIPTURE BOOKS.—To this class belong the *Prayer of Manasses*, an addition to 2 Chronicles xxxiii., and the *Prayer of Azarias*, and the *Song of the Three Children*, an addition to Daniel iii.; the *Epistle of Jeremy*, a somewhat feeble cento of scriptural phrases, artificial and monotonous; the *Book of Baruch*, a very secondhand and imitative *rifaci-*

mento of passages in Daniel, Jeremiah, and other writers, though in some passages it gives "no unworthy echo of old prophetic voices"; and the *Rest of the Book of Esther*, the work perhaps of some Alexandrian Jew, with spurious documents and copious introduction of the name of God, which is absent from the canonical Book. More important than these is the *First Book of Esdras*, which is indeed "little more than a reproduction of parts of the Second Book of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah," and is an incomplete and loosely arranged series of un-authentic documents, touching on parts of Jewish history from B.C. 623-445.¹ Even Sixtus Senensis describes these books as *lacinias hinc quorumdam scriptorum temeritate insertas*. It has however one independent section (iii. 1-v. 6). Perhaps Luther spoke as favourably of these books as is permissible, when he compared them to corn-flowers in a wheatfield, but "placed in a separate bed, that they may not wither, because there is much good in them." The Book of Esdras however he (metaphorically) "tossed into the Elbe."

6. APOCALYPTIC.—The *Second Book of Esdras* is a very interesting specimen of a Jewish Apocalypse, and furnishes data of great importance for the true method of interpreting the Revelation of St. John. It was written in Greek, and consists of three revelations and four visions, in which the doubts of Ezra about the dark present and the uncertain future are removed, and a sort of theodicæa is attempted. The first, second, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters stand apart from the main Apocalypse, and were probably the interpolation of a Christian Jew of Alexandria, added to the original book about A.D. 200. This melancholy book offends by its crude imagery, but is not without a sombre merit

¹ The Bishop of Bath and Wells points out that the author uses "Medes and Persians" and "Persians and Medes" indiscriminately, as he happens to be imitating Daniel or Esther.

in its endeavour to grapple with the awful problems and perplexities of human life. Gloom and despondency are its prevalent characteristics (vii. 70; viii. 52–55; ix. 13; xiv. 10 ff., etc.). The Vision of the Eagle (xi., xii.) shows that the book may have been written in the reign of Domitian (between A.D. 81–96).¹ The author seems to have been a Jew by religion (*see* vi. 49), and perhaps an Alexandrian, though he uses language (vii. 29) which is surprising in any Jew after the death of Christ.² Jerome speaks of this book contemptuously, and rebukes Vigilantius for quoting its authority.

7. It only remains to speak of the books which we describe as

SAPIENTIAL.—They belong to the class of literature known by the Jews as the Chokhmah (חָכְמָה), and they used to be quoted by the Fathers with the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes under the general head of *Πανάρετος Σοφία*. The Jews had no theoretic philosophy which can be properly so called. Their philosophy was mainly a practical application of the lessons of experience and revelation embodied in the antithetic, and more or less poetic, form of proverb and moral apologue (לִשְׁנָה). It recognises that man's chief wisdom consists in trusting God and obeying the law.

(1) The *Book of Ecclesiasticus* is perhaps the oldest entire book of the Apocrypha.³ It gives us a vivid picture of the customs and modes of thought which prevailed in the days when it was written. It is specially interesting because in it we trace the germinal elements of the chief form of later Jewish thought. It reflects the moderate orthodoxy of

¹ The vision has been most variously understood and explained, and consequently the suggested dates for the book vary widely.

² See Hilgenfeld, *Messias Judeorum*, p. lxi.

³ The name seems to mean “Church reading book” *quo vocabulo*, says Rufinus, . . . *scripturæ qualitas cognominata est.*

Judaism before the days of that burning party spirit which drove both Pharisees and Sadducees into the falsehood of extremes. The original work was perhaps written about B.C. 235. It is Palestinian, not Alexandrian ; but the Hebrew writer—the only writer of the Apocrypha who has not concealed his identity by anonymity or pseudopigraphy—had felt the influence of the Greek cities established in Palestine. “We might almost characterize it,” says Dr. Edersheim, “as alike Pharisaic before the Pharisees, Sadducean before the Sadducees, and Hellenistic before Hellenism.” And yet it is not eclectic—only preparatory. It contains much that is wise and beautiful, and was almost certainly known to St. James¹ and to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It has also influenced Christian hymnology, and is quoted as “Scripture” by some of the Fathers. Bunyan has recorded how profoundly he was comforted by the verse, “Look at the generations of old, and see : did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded ?” (Ecclus. x. 2;) and how he was at first a little damped to find that it only occurred in an uncanonical book ; but that he was comforted by regarding it as an epitome of many scriptural promises, so that “the word doth still oft-times shine before my face.” Yet its morality is very much poorer and thinner than that of the Book of Proverbs. The Son of Sirach is often merely prudential, not unfrequently commonplace, and sometimes positively coarse. His religion is legalistic, his theology vague, and his hopes of the future extremely dim.² His ideal is that of a respectable egotist with a tinge of fatalism and superstition. Yet as a sort of ethical manual, compiled in part from previous gnomologies, his book had its value, and the celebration of the saints and heroes of Judaism so finely introduced in chapter xliv. is a work of entire originality and great beauty.

¹ See especially Jas. v. 3 ; Ecclus. xii. 10, 11, xxix. 10.

² See xiv. 16 ; xvii. 27, 28 ; xliv. 14, 15.

(2) Lastly, the *Book of Wisdom* must be regarded as in some respects the greatest and most original book of the Apocrypha. It also exhibits the distinctest impress of Hellenic culture and philosophy, showing traces both of Stoic and Platonic doctrine.¹ It was written by a man of undoubted genius, of wide knowledge, of poetic imagination, of forcible eloquence, of great literary skill. The author was evidently an Alexandrian Jew, who combined Hellenic culture with Hebrew faithfulness. No book has produced a deeper effect on the language and imagery of some of the New Testament writers than this. In its theology and eschatology, its idealism, its recognition of God's universal love, its comparative tolerance, and its belief in some form of immortality, it marks the highest point of religious knowledge obtained by the Jews in the period between the close of the Old Testament and the dawn of the Gospel dispensation. The book had a threefold object—hortatory, apologetic, and polemical. Its polemic was aimed first at apostate Jews and then at idolaters. The dates assigned for the book by critics vary between B.C. 217 and A.D. 40, and the later date is far more probable than the former. Yet with all its merits the Book of Wisdom has such serious defects and limitations as to place it very far below the Books of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. A German editor tells us that in editing the Book of Esdras he began with something like contempt, and ended with a qualified admiration. The present writer is free to confess that, beginning to study the Book of Wisdom with high admiration, he ended with a deepened sense of the chasm which separates the highest forms of Apocryphal literature from the canonical books of the old dispensation. An attentive study will show that among the many jewels of thought and expression with which the book is studded, it is often artificial in its colouring, narrow in its particularism, and sweeping in its gene-

¹ Wisd. vii. 24; viii. 1, 7, 20; ix. 15.

ralizations. Yet with all its defects it is a book which will better repay study than any other in the Apocrypha, and which the world will not willingly let die.

Such in swift summary is the body of Jewish uncanonical literature which, under the supervision of a most competent editor, is now published, with an exegetical apparatus which leaves the general reader little to desire. Large and various ability has been shown by some of the commentators upon this adjunct to the *Speaker's Bible*, and certainly the greater part of the work stands fully on the level of the best specimens of exposition contained in the previous volumes of this useful and important work. The reader will be taught neither to underrate the Apocrypha nor to exaggerate its intrinsic merit. Much of its importance is, so to speak, accidental; in other words, it depends not on the actual thoughts of the writers, but on the light which their works throw upon the events of Jewish history and the growth of Jewish opinion in an epoch which would otherwise be left dark. Surely no decree more fatal and reckless was ever passed by any Church Council than that in which the Council of Trent, misled chiefly by the authority of St. Augustine on a question as to which St. Jerome was a far more competent judge, declared that the Church "*pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipit et veneratur*" the Apocryphal books as those of the Old and New Testament. Still more inexcusably the Council anathematized all who do not receive "these entire books with all their parts as sacred and canonical." The authenticity of the Apocryphal books, their credibility, their literary value, their moral teaching, their theological doctrine stand immeasurably below those of the canonical books. In these books the harp of Judah has ceased to vibrate, and the humblest psalm of David is worth all such poetry as they contain. The voice of prophecy has entirely ceased to be heard in them, and its cessation is accepted

with all the resignation of conscious inferiority.¹ Above all, the Divine Messianic hope which lay at the heart of all that was noblest and most inspiring in Jewish religion has either evaporated altogether, or has lost its priceless personal element in exchange for a vague national aspiration. Pseudoeigraphy, literary weakness, extravagances and exaggeration, fiction assuming the form of history, spurious documents, a general secondhandness and lack of original force, gross errors in geography and chronology, the substitution of bare morality and outward formalism for spiritual communion with God, are all marks of a decadent literature and a petrifying religion. The Church reads these books, as St. Jerome says, and as our Article repeats, "for example of life and instruction of manners"; but as she reads them she feels the ever-deepening conviction, that whereas the sibyl of inspiration, "speaking things simple, and unperfumed, and unadorned, reaches through myriads of years because of God," the voice which speaks to us in these books is the voice of a purely human wisdom, often fallible, often feeble, sometimes profoundly erroneous, never elevated beyond the range of our criticism, and which not unfrequently must submit to our emphatic rejection. I will not go nearly so far as the learned Dr. Lightfoot, who, in a sermon preached in St. Margaret's, Westminster, before the House of Commons in 1643, spoke of the "wretched Apocrypha" as "a patchery of human invention," divorcing the end of the law from the beginning of the Gospel. To speak of these books in a tone of entire contempt is unjustifiable. The study of the Apocrypha is full of interest and instructiveness, and it will serve a most valuable subsidiary purpose if it leaves on our minds the impression

¹ 1 Macc. iv. 46, ix. 27, xiv. 41 (Ezra ii. 63; Neh. vii. 65). It is true that the Book of Wisdom claims (vii. 27) that "in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God and prophets"; but this is a "prophecy" of a lower and more general order.

that, whatever may be our attempts to define inspiration, the teaching of the Old and New Testament stands incomparable and alone ; and that no other book can be said, like the Bible, to be “ vast and wide as the world, rooted in the abysses of creation, and towering up beyond the blue secrets of heaven ! Sunrise and sunset, promise and fulfilment, birth and death, the whole drama of humanity are in the Bible, and there alone.” “ Its eclipse would be the return of chaos, its extinction the epitaph of history.”

F. W. FARRAR.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

II. CHRIST AND THE PROPHETS (CHAP. I. 1-4.)

THIS long, sonorous sentence forms the introduction to the whole Epistle, is, as it were, the portico of an august temple, its many weighty clauses being as rows of stately ornamental pillars supporting the roof. This temple front has a most imposing aspect ! It fills the mind with awe, and disposes one to enter the sacred edifice in religious silence, rather than to indulge in critical remarks. Sensible of this, let us remember the wise counsel, “ let thy words be few,” and refrain from attempting to express the inexpressible.

In these opening verses the writer announces at once the theme of his discourse, and introduces the leading thoughts on which he intends to expatiate. It has been suggested that the rhetorical style of the writing may be the reason why it does not begin with salutations, but rushes at once *in medias res*. Be this as it may, the writer certainly does at once plunge into the heart of his subject, setting forth Christ as the supreme object of religious regard—superior