

THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA AS TRUTH

It is important here that I emphasize that my thorough study of the Old Testament Apocrypha (edited by Prof. R. H. Charles, published by Oxford University Press, Vol. I and II) is confined to the following books in Vol. II:

The Book of Jubilees; The Letter of Aristeas; The Books of Adam and Eve; The Book of Enoch; The Testaments of the XII Patriarchs; The Book of the Secrets of Enoch; and the prophecies of Baruch and Ezra. Although I have read the other books contained in Vol. I and II, it is advisable to rely only on such texts produced by authors who were familiar with and wrote in the universal system of symbolism, the language of blessed or enlightened people whose knowledge originated with the source of ultimate truth, i.e., the God-given soul.

Therefore, when I speak of the Apocrypha I refer only to these books which I know as reliable sources. There is also a New Testament Apocrypha in existence but it is another matter. It contains a number of inspired, reliable books but also many uninspired and contradictory texts such as the Gospel of Thomas and other infancy gospels.

Originally, the books now contained in the Old Testament Apocrypha were integral parts of the Old Testament; they were, of course, written in Hebrew. During pre-Christian times Jewish authorities studied them because they are in harmony with the Torah, the law of Moses. The most ancient available copies are dated 300 B.C. to A.D. 100. (Fact is, that scrolls wear out and require copying over decades and centuries. And if no earlier copies are available to us, this does not mean that they did not exist.) With the early church fathers and apologists, the apocryphal books had all the weight of canonical books. During the 5th century A.D., when St. Jerome was translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin, and produced what is now called the Vulgate, the church fathers debated whether or not to include the apocryphal books. Saint Augustine, by his authority as bishop of the Western Church, ended this debate and insisted that the apocryphal books be retained. ¹

¹Have to add this footnote when I find my bibliography

Throughout the Middle Ages, these books were regarded as Holy Scriptures, although theoretical doubts were raised from time to time.

It is interesting to observe the changes in the meaning of the word "apocryphal" (Greek: "apokryphos") over a thousand years. In its earliest use the term was applied in a laudatory manner to writings which are withheld from public knowledge because they were vehicles of mysterious or esoteric wisdom which was too sacred or profound to be disclosed to any save the initiated. In the course of time the meaning changed; the term was used to *describe* writings that were relegated to secondary or questionable status. Eventually, the word came to be applied to what is false, spurious, or heretical, or that which is hidden.²

When the Bible was translated into modern languages during the 14th to 18th centuries, authorities again debated the inclusion of the apocryphal books. Some denominations, later on, retained a few of these books such as I and II Maccabees (there are five in all), the Book of Tobith and Judith, and others. The most important and most informative books, some of which I quoted above, were excluded from all Bible editions.³ Today neither Christian nor Jewish scholars study these books; their reading is unlawful because authorities are undecided as to their validity. Since the earliest available sources date from 300 B.C. to A.D. 100, it has been suggested that they were authored by unknown authors of that time who only adopted the names of Enoch and other ancients. This assumption does not hold:

The Book of Genesis is only a summary account that contains mere references to major events in the spiritual history of the priestly family of the sons of Adam, whereas these events are described in detail, frequently in condensed symbolic terms, in the earliest books of the Apocrypha. For instance, I Enoch 6 - 15 explains in ten chapters the two verses of Gen. 6:3-4 about the so-called "fallen angels". Then, too, the creation record in II Enoch adds refined scientific detail to the Genesis creation, and this detail coincides perfectly with modern sciences.

²The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament. Vol. I, Introduction, page VIII.

³Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed. 1974. "The Christian Canon". Vol. 2:883.

Now, could any pseudo-Enoch of 300 B.C. to A.D.100 have authored such books, in condensed symbolic terms, which is the Sacred Language typical of only enlightened people whose knowledge originated with the source of ultimate truth? As explained in the preceding chapter, true prophets or seers always give their names, those of their fathers and of their kings, so that we may know who they were and when they lived. Furthermore, the symbolic language had been forgotten among priesthoods already more than 1,000 years before Christ, according to the lamentations of the prophets. It was unknown to common people for which reason priests were commissioned with the interpretation of God's word to the members of congregations. Therefore, how could any unenlightened pseudo-prophet have produced texts in the style of writing of enlightened people, describing forgotten spiritual history of earlier millennia and advanced sciences which, too, were long forgotten?

With knowledge of the universal system of symbolism, one can easily distinguish between inspired (reliable) texts and uninspired ones which become reliable only if several independent sources are in harmony concerning the same subjects. The apocryphal books are in absolute harmony with the Torah, the law of Moses, when accurately interpreted. The following example shows the wisdom of Enoch in the areas of creation. Translations, however, leave much to be desired because translators of several centuries ago still did not have the knowledge to comprehend Enoch's wisdom. This knowledge has become available again only in the 20th century:

I (God) COMMANDED IN THE VERY LOWEST PARTS, THAT VISIBLE
THINGS SHOULD COME DOWN FROM INVISIBLE. IIEnoch 25:1

For lack of understanding translators often used neutral terms such as "parts, things, blessings, glory" etc. Invisible existences are, of course, energies; visible ones that can be seen with physical eyes are matter. If invisible energies are commanded to "come down" it means, that they are to lower their frequencies and to settle down to become "visible" matter. This process is known to modern scientists who call matter "frozen energy", comparing the frequencies of energies with the waves of water which, too, stop and fall silent once the water is frozen. There are a number of verses in I and IIEnoch that describe fascinating scientific processes in very plain

terms but, so it seems, one needs to have knowledge of the sciences involved to understand what Enoch recorded.

The processes of the invisible becoming visible matter has not changed in billions of years. We can still observe it in documentaries that show how new life develops from the invisible, environmental energies to form new bodies, each species according to its kind. Yet who had such knowledge still 3,000 years ago? King Solomon wrote:

AS YOU DO NOT KNOW HOW THE SPIRIT COMES TO THE BONES IN THE
WOMB (OR HOW THE BONES GROW IN THE WOMB) OF A WOMAN WITH
CHILD, SO YOU DO NOT KNOW THE WORK OF GOD WHO MAKES
EVERYTHING. Eccl. 11:5

In King Solomon's time such knowledge was rare. In Enoch's time during the 4th millennium B.C. it was still common among spiritual leaders and their students. These ancients were familiar with the laws of life according to which new life forms, which is the law of God in the Scriptures. If today's scientists were aware of such fine scientific records in the Scriptures, they would relate with delight to the "wisdom of the ages".

Apart from a lack of understanding of these texts by the church fathers and translators of the Middle Ages, there were also other reasons for the removal of the apocryphal books from the Old Testament. The printing press had been invented and books were produced much faster than the earlier hand-written copies. This meant that the number of intelligent readers was about to increase rapidly, a development which created major problems for church authorities: the apocryphal books contain significant information that conflicted then and conflicts now with the established dogma of the Christian church. For instance, several apocryphal books describe detail concerning spiritual worlds beyond our physical one, where one dwells after physical death and prior to rebirth, i.e., reincarnation. We read in the Book of Baruch, a contemporary and personal friend of the prophet Jeremiah (6th cent. B.C.) who is mentioned 23 times in Jeremiah's book, about reincarnation:

FOR IF THERE WERE THIS LIFE ONLY, WHICH BELONGS TO ALL MEN,

NOTHING COULD BE MORE BITTER THAN THIS. 2Bar. 21:13

Professor Charles, the editor of the Apocrypha, commented on this verse saying, "The balance of this life needs re-adjustment in another." In this sense the prophet Baruch said further:

FOR WHAT WE WERE FORMERLY (in a former life) NOW WE NO LONGER ARE, AND WHAT WE NOW ARE WE SHALL NOT AFTERWARDS (in a new life) REMAIN. 2Bar. 21:16

This is but one reference to reincarnation; there are many but I cannot quote all of them here because they would fill fifty pages on their own. The authorities of the Middle Ages did not include such concepts in their system of teaching. Christians are virtually the only ones in the world who are made to believe that the present life is the only one they are permitted to live, and that beyond this physical world is either heaven or hell for them. Thus the fire and brimstone sermons hail down on them regularly. Many subjects that are mysteries to Bible readers are explained by the authors of apocryphal books. Since these subjects are frequently veiled in our Bible and, in translations, facts were replaced with neutral terms, one does not have to be a seer to realize why the apocryphal books were hidden from everyone in the Christian world. For instance, if Ararat climbers of the 20th century were familiar with Enoch's description of the Deluge, they would never climb Mount Ararat in search of Noah's Ark. Enoch's information might lead devoted researchers to the true resting place of this Ark, and to Noah's tomb which is in the same hill according to the apocryphal Book of Jubilees. The location is described in various apocryphal books, and all are in harmony.

Evidently, for various reasons Christian authorities could not afford to include the apocryphal books in modern Bible versions without taking the risk of exposing church doctrines and traditional legends to readers who would have questioned them. Such an occurrence would have shaken the very foundation of Christian teachings. Yet no one can hide God's truth forever. In the 19th century copies were discovered by travellers in Ethiopia and they are now available again.

Yet we would be ignorant if we criticized the work of medieval translators of Scripture without taking a good look at the circumstances and conditions involved. For the purpose of understanding the serious problems which they were faced with, translators' predicaments ought to be briefly considered, which I have done in the following chapter.