

## 1.

## xrv. LITERATURE OF THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD.

The liberal view that canonical books such as Daniel, Ecclesiastes and some Psalms were written during this period between the testaments is rejected. For replies to this view see Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*; Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*; or Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

A. The Septuagint (LXX). A Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, begun by Jews (ca. 280 BC) in Alexandria, Egypt, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. (See point V above).

B. Apocrypha (hidden, secret). Books which were never accepted as canonical (part of inspired scripture) by the Jews. There is no clear New Testament reference to these books. They did not come into common use until the 2nd century AD. Augustine (AD 354—430) was the first to favor canonizing them. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent (AD 1546) declared the books to be canonical (except those marked with an asterisk). The Apocrypha may be classified, in general, according to the content of the book. Most of them were written in Greek. Historical: Esdras\*

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

Didactic or Teaching: The Wisdom of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus (by Sirach. The only book whose author is known with certainty.)

Religious Romance: Tobit

Judith

Prophetic:

Baruch

Epistle of Jeremiah (Baruch, ch. 6, in

Douay

[Catholic] Version.)

2 Esdras\*

Legendary:

Additions to Esther

Song of Three Young Men (Prayer of Azariah).

(Dan. 3:24-90, Douay)

Susanna (Dan. 13 in Douay)

Bel and the Dragon (Dan. 14 in Douay)

Prayer of Manasseh\*

- I. Value and importance of the Apocrypha: ' 'Although the books of the Apocrypha have and claim neither inspiration nor authority, yet they have value and importance. They are a part of the literature of God's covenant people, and they help to fill the gap of 450 or more years between the end of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament literature, when prophecy and inspiration had ceased. They supply a connecting link. Although through lack of inspiration they contain inaccuracies, contradictions, absurdities, and teaching which conflict with the teaching of Scripture, yet they yield valuable information concerning the outer and inner life of Judaism, an insight into the Jewish thought, feeling, philosophy, character, and history during the time in which they were written" (Miller 112).
- C. The Pseudepigrapha. False or spurious writings, written under false names. These books have never been accepted as canonical by Jews, New Testament writers, or the church fathers. Catholics call them the "apocrypha." Protestants have referred to these books as the "wider apocrypha" or "apocalyptic literature." "Most of these books are comprised of dreams, visions and revelations in the apocalyptic style of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah" (Geisler and Nix 166). Geisler and Nix classify the 18 books ' 'worthy of mention" as follows:
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|--------------|---|
| Legendary:   | The Book of Jubilee; The Letter of Aristeas;<br>The Book of Adam and Eve; The<br>Martyrdom of Isaiah.                                 |
| Apocalyptic: | 1 Enoch; The Testament of the Twelve<br>Patriarchs; The Sibylline Oracle; The<br>Assumption of Moses; 2 Enoch; 2<br>Baruch; 3 Baruch. |
| Didactical:  | 3 Maccabees; 4 Maccabees; Pirke Aboth;<br>The Story of Ahikar.  |
| Poetical:    | The Psalms of Solomon; Psalm 151.   |
| Historical:  | The Fragment of a Zadokite Work.  |
1. Nature of Apocalyptic Literature: It was occasioned by an hour of desperate need. "Most of it was written between the years 200 BC and AD 100. when the Jewish nation was struggling for its very life.... When trials and persecution were the most severe, the light of apocalyptic hope burned the brightest" (Jenkins 35. See this work for more information on apocalyptic literature-).
  2. The Pseudepigrapha is alluded to in the New Testament. Examples: Jude 14-15 (possibly 1 Enoch 1:9 and Assumption of Moses 1:9); 2 Tim. 3:8 (allusion to the Penitence of Jannes and Jambres). Same principle as quoting from heathen poets, Aratus (Acts 17:28); Menander (1 Cor. 15:33); Epimenides (Tit. 1:12). "Truth is truth no

matter where it is found, whether uttered by a heathen poet, a pagan prophet (Num. 24: 17), or even a dumb animal (Num. 22:28). Nevertheless, it should be noted that no such formula as 'it is written' or 'Scripture says' is connected with these citations" (Geisler and Nix 165).

#### D. The Dead Sea Literature (See THE ESSENES, Point XIII, E).

1. The Essene community lived at Qumran on the north west shore of the Dead Sea between the second century BC and AD 68. They spent much time in copying Biblical manuscripts and writing their own literature. When the Essenes learned that the Romans were about to take Jerusalem they hid many of their scrolls in clay jars in the caves around Qumran. They never returned, and the scrolls were hidden until the first of them were found by chance in the spring of 1947.
2. The scrolls may be divided into 4 categories.
  - a- Biblical: fragments of every Old Testament book except Esther were found. One complete scroll of Isaiah was found, and another one almost complete.
  - b- Commentaries on Scripture: Commentary on Habakkuk, fragments of commentaries on Psalms, Isaiah, and Nahum, etc.
  - c- Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: fragments of Tobit, Psalm 151, etc.
  - d- Essene Literature: War Scroll (War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darlmess); Thanksgiving Hymns; Manual of Discipline.
3. The Significance of the Scrolls.
  - a- The Old Testament manuscripts antedate our previous earliest extant Hebrew Text (the Masoretic text) by about 1,000 to J .20() years. This confirms the accuracy of our extant manuscripts.
  - b- Provides new knowledge of the history, literature and religion of the intertestamental period.
4. Brief Bibliography on the Scrolls:
  - a- Two inexpensive English translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls are available (Gaster; Vermes).
  - b- Books about the scrolls and the Dead Sea sect: Bruce, Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls; Burrows, The Dead Sea Scrolls; Fitzmyer, Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls; Pfeiffer, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible.

#### E- Alexandrian Allegorism.

1. "With no intention to abandon their ancestral faith, Alexandrian Jews followed their gentile neighbors in subscribing to a school of Greek philosophy. This resulted in that attempt to harmonize Scripture with Greek thinking which produced the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture. Aristobulus and Philo were the great allegorizers. To them the literal meaning of the Bible was vulgar, misleading, and insufficient. A hidden, deeper meaning must be sought. By reading into

the Bible their pagan philosophy, they were able to consider themselves enlightened Hellenists and orthodox Hebrews at one and the same time. Some of them adopted Greek names to help in the process of assimilation.

'The allegorist regards the literal sense of Scripture as the vehicle for a secondary sense which is regarded as more spiritual and profound" (Pfeiffer 87).

- a. An Alexandrian Jew named Aristobulus (ca. 160 BC) taught that the Greek philosophers had borrowed much of their thought from the Mosaic law.
  - b. Philo (ca. 20 BC to AD 50) was the most famous Jewish allegorist. He mentioned 64 Greek writers in his literature and considered them as men of God on a par with the prophets of Israel.
2. This type of allegorism actually influenced the church more than it did Judaism. Origen (AD 185 to 254/5) advanced this type of interpretation of Scripture. It dominated Roman Catholic thinking.
- a. Theodore of Mopsuestia, of Syrian Antioch, opposed allegorism and insisted on the literal interpretation of Scripture.
  - b. 'The Reformation brought a renewed emphasis on the literal, historical interpretation of Scripture" (Pfeiffer 90).
  - c. The allegorical influence is seen today in the approach to interpretation which finds extreme typology in Scripture.

### Conclusion:

It is hoped that this brief outline will assist each one who studies it to come to a clearer understanding of the period between the testaments. One should see the providential preparations to bring about the "fulness of times, " when Jesus would come and the church would be introduced to the world. This study should provide a good background for a survey of the New Testament.

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## Selected Bibliography

This list includes some books and articles which we believe will be helpful in your continuing study of the intertestamental period. Many additional articles can be found in the good Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias such as The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (revised, 1979ff.), The New Bible Dictionary, the New International Dictionary of the Bible, et al.

Arrian. The Campaigns of Alexander. 1958. Tran. Aubrey De Séincourt. New York: Penguin, 1984.

Balla, George. The Four Centuries Between the Testaments. Vallejo, CA: BIBAL Press, 1993.

Bruce, F. F. New Testament History. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.

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1956.