

*Lost Apocrypha of the Old Testament.* Collected, translated, and discussed by M. R. JAMES. (S.P.C.K., London, 1920.)

THERE are many remains of apocryphal writings connected with the Old Testament, collected in particular by Fabricius, to which, however, as Dr James says, there is 'not a handy English guide'. This guide is now very adequately supplied. For Dr James gives us far more than a mere list, far more than a mere translation. His little book is really a guide, for it clears the path and shews the way; it discusses sources, explains contexts, and offers sound judgements as to dates. Dates, indeed, are most elusive, but few will question the editor's conclusion that most of the material treated by him was produced during the period covered by 100 B.C. to A.D. 100. Nor ought it to be thought that Dr James is guide solely to realms explored by others. He is also a pioneer and a discoverer. The originality of his work is as conspicuous as is the industry of his research.

The subjects are arranged 'in the Biblical order of the personages to whom they are attributed, or of whom they treat'. In view of the uncertainty as to the dates of authorship of the various citations and fragments, it was obviously impossible to follow a chronological order. The Biblical sequence is with equal wisdom adopted in Dr Louis Ginzberg's larger work on *The Legends of the Jews*, four volumes of which have appeared, while the fifth (containing the references) is in the press (Philadelphia, the Jewish Publication Society of America). Now, whereas Dr Ginzberg uses the Rabbinic sources as a basis, merely illustrating these by quotations from non-Hebrew (not necessarily non-Jewish) apocrypha, it is the latter that form the main sources of Dr James's extracts. His authorities are not Hebrew Midrashim, but Greek and Latin Patristic lists and quotations. Thus his book is a complement to Dr Ginzberg's, and the two together will place future scholars in a far more favourable position than their predecessors occupied. As to his own brilliant contribution to this desirable end, 'I hope and believe', writes Dr James, 'that in the present collection not much that is of really old date will be found to have been passed over.' This confidence is completely justified. Students have reason to thank him for a collection at once complete and critical.

The importance of these texts is manifold. In the first place, their value is historical. We see here the type of legend that interested antiquity, and at the same time we perceive how much more restrained than these attempts to supply gaps in Scriptural stories are the narratives which were accepted as canonical. In the second place the significance of the texts is theological: we see theological preconceptions at work;

indeed such stories often reveal these preconceptions more naïvely than do the formal presentations of dogma. Thirdly, and perhaps for the general reader this is the most arresting feature, the texts have great literary value. Some of them are fine as literature, some of them are a link in the chain of the dissemination of folk-lore. We note here some of the same stories as meet us elsewhere. And the literary problems which they raise are attractive enough. Take, from the apocryphal book of Ezekiel, the parable of the Lame and the Blind (discussed by Dr James on p. 64, previously by the same writer in this JOURNAL xv 236, and by the present reviewer in *Studies in Pharisaism* p. 97). To other reasons for believing the Hebrew version to be older than the Greek may be added this. Faced by the problem of adjudicating the guilt of stealing the fruit between the blind man who could not see and the lame man who could not walk, the Ezekiel version runs: 'The judgement was at a standstill. What, then, does the just judge do? (τί οὖν ποιεῖ ὁ κριτὴς ὁ δίκαιος;).' There is, it is true, a parallel to τί οὖν ποιεῖ in the τί οὖν ποιήσει of Luke xx 15. But the phrase מַה עוֹשֶׂה הַקֹּדֶשׁ ('What does the Holy One do?') of the Hebrew version (Leviticus Rabba ch. iv § 5) is nearer, and it gives us the literary source of Luke's phraseology, so that it is hard to resist Dr Felix Perles's suggestion that this of itself argues for the greater age of the Hebrew version (*Oriental. Literaturzeitung* 1912, col. 349).

Apart from the fascination of such discussions, Dr James's book provides English readers with their first real opportunity of becoming acquainted with a whole type of quaint fancies and traditions which are interesting in and for themselves. Take, as an instance, the legends concerning the Lost Tribes (on the Hebrew forms of which Dr A. Neubauer wrote four articles in the first volume of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*). The Utopian character of the lost community (lost to history but found by legend) is a striking feature of most of these apocryphal accounts. As Dr James quotes (p. 105): 'No word of lying hear we in our land, and no man knoweth another who speaketh that which is false.' Such visions of an abode of truth were a comfort to those who dwelt in our less ideal world, and the Talmud (Sanhedrin 97 a) has its own dream of a city of *Qushta* (Truth). That Dr James, besides offering so substantial a contribution to his subject, leads us into such pleasant pastures, is surely evidence enough of the manifold charm with which he handles an intricate theme.

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