

Just as the political situation during the four centuries between the Testaments helped mold Jewish thought, so the religious literature of this period was an important influence on Jewish life. We turn now to study the literary activity in the inter-Testamental period.

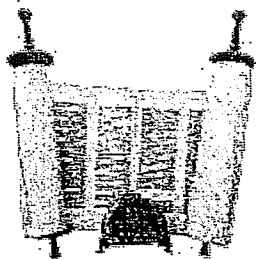
RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

The religious literature produced during this time is in three main divisions: the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Septuagint. We shall examine first the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha. The voice of prophecy was silent for 400 years between Malachi and Matthew. Many wars and persecutions had taken place, but they had not stopped the Jews

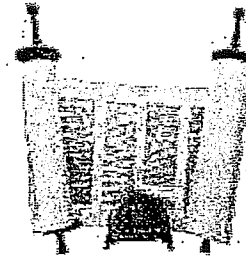
from writing literature for their own **inspiration**. The literature of this period, however, lacks proof of Holy Spirit inspiration. It does help us, though, to understand some of the history and problems experienced by the Jewish nation.

The first group of books is called the Apocrypha. The word means *hidden* or *secret*. This meaning implies that the writer often used objects, numbers, or symbols to hide the real meaning. The Apocryphal books of the inter-Testamental period number from eleven to sixteen. The Jews who were taken captive into Egypt included the Apocryphal books in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, The Septuagint. The Jews of



1 ESDRAS
2 ESDRAS
BARUCH
1 MACCABEES
2 MACCABEES
JUDITH
TOBIT

THE EPISTLE OF JEREMIAH
THE HISTORY OF SUSANNA
BEL AND THE DRAGON
THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON
THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH
ADDITIONS TO ESTHER
ECCLESIASTICUS
THE SONG OF THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN



| APOCRYPHAL SCROLLS IN RANDOM ORDER

Israel, however, rejected them and would not include them in the Hebrew Bible. In AD 1546 the Roman Catholic Church included eleven of them in the Catholic Bible. The Protestants did not believe them to be inspired of God.

For these four main reasons they were not included in the Protestant Bible: (1) Jesus never quoted from them, as He did other Scriptures; the apostles probably did not quote from them either; (2) most of the early church leaders did not accept them as inspired; (3) they are not included in the ancient Hebrew Scriptures; and (4) the quality of the writings, compared with

the accepted books, makes them unacceptable as inspired Scripture.

The Apocryphal books of a historical nature are 1 and 2 Maccabees and Esdras. The books with traditional stories are Esther, Susanna, Song of the Three Holy Children, Bel and the Dragon, Judith, and Tobit. Those books having a prophetic purpose are Baruch and the Prayer of Manasseh. Books written in symbolic style are 2 Esdras and 4 Esdras in the Latin Bible. The books that are instructive are Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. These last two books are written in a style similar to the book of Proverbs in our Bible.



Complete these statements.

1.26 The word *Apocrypha* means a. _____, or b. _____.

1.27 The Apocryphal books were included in the a. _____ translation and the b. _____ Bible, but not in the c. _____ Scriptures nor in our d. _____ Bible.

Complete this activity.

1.28 List four reasons why the Apocryphal books are not acceptable as Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Having looked briefly at the Apocrypha, let us turn our attention now to the second main division of the religious literature of the inter-Testamental period.

The Pseudepigrapha. The word *pseudo* in Greek means *false* or *deceiving*. The term *grapho* means to *write*. The whole word, then, refers to false writings named after people who did not originally write them. In this group are

too many books to list. We will mention only two as examples. One book is called *The Psalter of Solomon*. A psalter is a writing intended to be sung as a song. This Psalter was not written by Solomon, as the name implies. It was first of all written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek. It contained a collection of songs of worship. The songs are very touching and talk of true faith that will not die in the heart of a believer, even under suffering. The second

book is the Book of Enoch. Again, Enoch is not the author of the book. It is **apocalyptic** in nature because of the symbolic style in which it is written. It was composed in either Hebrew or Aramaic and later translated into Greek. It seems that this book was widely known when the Christian period began. The author of the New Testament book of Jude quotes from this book (see Jude, verse 14).

This literature was written largely during times of persecution. Its purpose was to inspire and encourage its readers. Some of the writings prophesied of better times and of the coming Messiah. He was to deliver the Jews from their oppressors and to set them up as the ruling nation. Many of these writings had a great influence on the concept of the coming Messiah and the purpose of His coming. Because of them, many false ideas came into being and continued until Jesus' day. Some believed that the Messiah would come upon the scene suddenly by some spectacular miracle. This belief is possibly the reason many did not believe in Jesus because they knew His family (John 7:27). It may also be why Satan wanted Jesus

to leap from the highest tower of the Temple to the crowds below (Matthew 4:5-7). A sudden entrance like that would get immediate followers, but Jesus wanted men to believe in Him because of the truth and not just because of the miracles He could perform.

Others believed that the Messiah would be a superhuman or superangelic being who would use his power to overthrow the Roman Empire. This act would allow the Jews to become a world power in place of Rome. The disciples may have had just such a thought in mind when they asked Jesus if He was going to restore their idea of the kingdom again (Acts 1:6). The Lord had to remind them that His kingdom was different from their concept (John 18:35-36). Jesus was constantly correcting the false ideas of His disciples. Many of their wrong concepts of the Messiah and His work came from the literature written during the inter-Testamental period. Jesus warned them (John 5:39), "Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."



Complete these statements.

- 1.29 *Pseudepigrapha* means _____ writings.
- 1.30 This literature was largely written during times of _____.
- 1.31 Many of these writings were later translated into the _____ language.
- 1.32 The Book of Enoch is quoted in verse 14 of the book of _____.

Answer these questions in complete sentences.

- 1.33 What two things did the Jews expect the Messiah to do when He came?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- 1.34 What two false ideas did the Jews have about Christ's appearance and Person?
- a. _____
- b. _____

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were religious writings with a rather negative influence during the inter-Testamental period. We shall look now at The Septuagint, which had a more positive spiritual influence on the Jews.

The Septuagint. This word is from the Latin term meaning *seventy*, represented by the Roman numeral LXX. Because the Jews in Egypt were forced by the business community to adopt Greek as their language, they were concerned about preserving their Hebrew heritage. Thus, seventy Jewish scholars from Israel were sent to Alexandria in Egypt to translate the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. This translation became known as the Septuagint, or the LXX Version.

This translation did much to acquaint other nations with the Jewish Scriptures and Hebrew

history. Alexandria was a city of many nations and a great center of trade and commerce. Many people would have become acquainted with the Septuagint in passing through the city. By the time the Roman Empire was ruling the world, this version of the Old Testament was scattered all over its territory. Most of the New Testament writers were familiar with the Septuagint and quoted regularly from it, rather than from the Hebrew Scriptures. It did much to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus by spreading the hope of a coming Messiah in the common language of the day. When Paul the Apostle was tried before King Agrippa, he mentioned that the king was an expert in Jewish customs and prophecy (Acts 26:2-3, 26-28). King Agrippa was probably very familiar with the Jewish faith because of the influence of the Septuagint.



Write the correct letter and answer in each blank.

- 1.35 The Septuagint was a _____ translation of the Old Testament.
 a. Roman b. Syrian c. Hebrew
 d. Greek e. Persian
- 1.36 The number of Jewish scholars commissioned to do this version was _____.
 a. 90 b. 60 c. 70
 d. 50 e. 40
- 1.37 The Septuagint is also referred to as the _____ Version.
 a. correct b. LXX c. Egyptian
 d. Alexandrian e. XLV
- 1.38 The Septuagint translation was done in the city of _____ in Egypt.
 a. Jerusalem b. Cairo c. Nile
 d. Alexandria e. Rome



Answer these questions in complete sentences.

- 1.39 Why were the Old Testament Scriptures translated into Greek? _____

- 1.40 How did the Septuagint prepare the world for the coming of Jesus and the spread of the Gospel? _____
