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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

he had to come at last to sit at the feet of Uncle Tom in his Cabin to learn the meaning of the word God. Heine knew logic and philosophy: he was a poet and a wit, but intellect alone could not find God. But if God is not found in fullness either in nature, or history, or humanity, where is He found?

4. In the fullness of time He revealed Himself in *Jesus Christ*. The old question, 'Shall God indeed dwell with man on earth?' was answered when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Divine Spirit wore our human form, used our human speech, and expressed Himself in words of beauty and works of mercy. Because He was veiled in human form there were doubters even amongst His friends. 'Show us the Father,' said Philip. To which Jesus replied, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Had the Eternal Son not come in the flesh we would never have known God or understood about His Fatherhood. Too often God was thought of as dwelling apart from His creation, aloof and inaccessible; as one who stood outside the world, letting it go its own way. With that picture in mind it is hard to find

any reality in God when His children are suffering and struggling here.

But this is a false idea of the teaching of Christianity. In the New Testament do we not find a contest in which not only men are engaged but powers above and beyond men? And in that struggle God takes the supreme part. What else does the Incarnation mean?

O generous love! that He Who smote
In Man, for man, the foe
The double agony in Man,
For man, should undergo.

In Christ God is acting. Christ is God doing things. Where in any world religion will you find that truth expressed save in the gospel of Christ? 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' And what does the Cross mean but that God is in the midst of the world's struggle bearing the cost of it in pain; and not there as the victim but as the victor? At Calvary the quest is ended. And this end of the quest is not the end of life, but its beginning, which enables us to be remade in His likeness.

The Apocryphal Gospels.

BY THE REVEREND ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D., FORMERLY MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM.

I.

'ΑΠΟΚΡΥΦΑ,' when used of writings (*ἀποκρύφα βιβλία*), may mean either 'kept in concealment,' 'hidden or stored away'; or 'of concealed origin,' 'of unknown authorship.' In the former sense it is commonly *laudatory*; in the latter not, but rather *depreciatory* or even *contemptuous*. A book may be kept in concealment for various reasons. Because it is worn out, and yet is too precious to be destroyed, as was often the case when the Scriptures were written on rolls of papyrus, which were being constantly handled in the synagogues. Or, because it is difficult to understand, and therefore unfit for general use; only the elect few being able to read it without risk of evil to themselves. Or, because it refers to a distant future, and cannot be understood by any one until the time arrives. Thus Daniel is charged: 'The vision of the evenings and mornings which hath been told is true; but thou, shut thou

up the vision, for it belongeth to many days' (*i.e.* to a distant time), 8^{14. 26}; and again, as a closing injunction: 'But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end' (*i.e.* the persecution under Antiochus); and 'Go, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end,' when they will become intelligible, 12^{4. 9}. Cf. the Book of Enoch 1²; the Assumption of Moses 1^{16. 17}. That this 'stored up' literature was highly estimated among the Jews is evident. Ezra is supposed to have restored the Books of the O.T. which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, after being specially inspired to dictate them to five men who were specially equipped for writing swiftly. 'So in forty days were written ninety-four Books. And it came to pass when the forty days were fulfilled, that the Most High spake unto me, saying: The twenty-four Books that thou hast written publish, that the worthy and unworthy may read; but the seventy last thou

shalt keep, to deliver them to the wise among thy people. For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge' (4 Ezr 14⁴⁴⁻⁴⁷). The twenty-four Books are the O.T. The seventy are the apocalypses, which few could appreciate or understand. From the production of the Book of Daniel onwards Judaism was flooded with apocalyptic literature, which in certain quarters was highly estimated.

But 'Apocrypha' did not always mean 'stored away' as being of great value or special interest. It sometimes means 'of unknown origin,' 'of doubtful authorship,' and thus it easily acquires a bad signification. What is obscure in origin, and not very clear in meaning, is regarded with suspicion. Its teaching is likely to be pernicious and its claim to authority false. In this way 'Apocrypha' often seems to imply what is now generally understood by the term 'apocryphal.' The etymological connexion between the two terms is in some respects unfortunate, for it inevitably leads to the inference that the O.T. Books which are called 'The Apocrypha' are in some sense false, and hence that it is better not to read them. Whereas during the last fifty years scholars of nearly all Christian communions have continually told us that these uncanonical Books are indispensable for true understanding of both the Old Testament and the New. They show us the trend of religious thought among the Jews in the long interval during which no Prophet spoke or wrote.

There are uncanonical writings connected with the New Testament, and they are even more numerous than those which are connected with the Old. But they differ from the latter very considerably in character; and the term which is commonly applied to them is not 'Apocrypha,' but 'apocryphal,' and 'apocryphal' in a decidedly bad sense. The O.T. Apocrypha may be regarded as a supplement to the Canonical Books; an innocent attempt at continuing the records in the historical Books, and the instructions in the writings of the Prophets, without any claim to Divine authority or profession of special inspiration. But the apocryphal additions to the N.T. are by no means innocent in design. They are meant to deceive. The deception is by no means always the same: it differs in amount and in evilness of character. In some cases the main object is simply to gratify the curiosity which many of us feel with regard to the N.T. narratives, because so much that we greatly desire to know is

not recorded there. Some of the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts attempt to fill up the gaps, professing to have authority for what they add to the contents of the Canonical Books. In other cases the object has apparently or evidently been to suggest and promote the acceptance of certain false doctrines. Some have a manifestly heretical bias.

These apocryphal writings fall naturally into four classes; Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelations. We possess many of them, and we know the titles of others which at one time were in circulation. Some of them, especially the spurious Acts of Apostles, have had much permanent effect by originating or promoting traditions about religious doctrine and ritual, and legends about persons and events.

In the present paper we have to confine our attention to the first of the four classes—Apocryphal Gospels, the study of which is by no means a mere investigation of an early and curious kind of fiction. If conducted with seriousness and intelligence, it leads directly to a strong confirmation of the Christian Creed, by exhibiting the impressive contrasts which, in many directions, are glaringly conspicuous between these spurious Gospels and the four which we have ample reasons for believing to be authentic and divinely inspired.

It might be thought that these Apocryphal Gospels have already been amply studied, analysed, and classified by scholars of the first rank, and that any further discussion of them would be mere repetition and waste of time. Repetition to a considerable extent there must be. But it may safely be asserted that, if the repetition is of the right sort, and is mingled with explanations and criticisms of a simple kind, such work will not be wasted.

The many standard works on the subject which already exist are, for the most part, intended for experts and for students of theology and ecclesiastical history. Many of them are written in Latin, or German, or French, and could not be read by the multitudes of intelligent and fairly educated Christians who know no language but English. And many of the essays on the subject which are written in English exist only in encyclopædias and dictionaries, or in extensive theological works which are unknown to the ordinary Christian, or, if known, are practically inaccessible. Even the very useful volume on the subject, published in 1870 by Messrs. T. & T. Clark in the 'Library of Ante-Nicene

Theology,' is probably not known to many and is used by few, excepting theological students. Consequently, a large number of intelligent Christians, who are doubtful as to the attitude which they ought to adopt towards the perplexing criticisms of the Gospels which they find in newspapers, magazines, and novels, lose a very interesting, intelligible, and convincing method of strengthening their trust in the most important and indispensable portion of the N.T. They do not know of the existence of this helpful literature.¹

Apocryphal Acts have come down to us in far greater abundance than Apocryphal Gospels, and were probably always more numerous. They were more easy to invent, and were less jealously criticized. They were to the early ages of the Church what Lives of Saints were to mediæval times, and what novels are to our own. But the Apocryphal Gospels which have survived are only a fragment—'scarcely the tenth part' (Lipsius)—of a literature which at one time was very extensive. About fifty are known to us. We have seven in their entirety, and fragments of many others; but of some we know only the names; and it is probably true to say that we have none in their original form. Nevertheless we have abundant materials for the instructive comparison mentioned above. Some of these were composed with the innocent object of preserving traditions about Christ and His disciples which the writers found floating about in various quarters, and which they thought worthy of preservation. The effort to put these into definite shape involved a certain amount of imagination, but there was little or no attempt to deceive. More often there are traces of attempts to insinuate doctrines which were not taught in the Catholic Church. Even in such cases there is not a very great deal of pure invention. The writers enlarge what are mere hints in the Gospels; they transform Christ's words into actions, attribute miracles

¹ The following admirable articles on Apocryphal Gospels may be accessible to some persons; by Professor Lipsius of Jena (one of the very highest authorities) in Smith and Wace's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, vol. ii., 1880; by Principal Tasker, in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. v., 1904; by R. H. Charles, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. ii., 11th edition, 1910; by Professor Moffatt, in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, vol. i., 1915. This last, if only on account of its recent date, is specially worthy of study; and the learning of the writer is well known.

to Him which are based upon miracles recorded in the O.T. or in the N.T., but are often repulsive in their new and exaggerated form. Sometimes they take Jewish anticipations respecting the Messiah and record a definite fulfilment of them as having taken place. But in these cases, although the writers had the Canonical Gospels as models, yet the poverty and clumsiness of their imitations are often amazing. They seem, in most cases, to have had little sense of the beauty of the originals, or of the want of it in their own attempts. At times one is inclined to suspect that the authors were under the impression that they *excelled* the Canonical Gospels in effectiveness.

It is remarkable, but not very surprising, that these Apocryphal Gospels were received by the Catholic Church far less readily than the much more numerous Apocryphal Acts. Stories of the labours and troubles of Apostles, even if they had little or no foundation, could easily be made harmless, or even edifying. If there were any insinuations of false doctrine, these could easily be expunged. Something of the same kind might be said of the stories about Joseph and Mary and her parents, previous to the Nativity. But expansions of the facts recorded in the Canonical Gospels were looked upon with grave suspicion, especially with regard to the utterances attributed to our Lord.² It was here that Gnostic and other unwholesome ideas could be inserted or implied. It is just possible that in a very few instances the utterances thus attributed to Him are based upon a true tradition; but it is not likely that true traditions about His sayings were still in circulation after A.D. 200.

There are critics who ask us to believe that what is recorded in our Gospels is, in the main, imagination and invention. The Evangelists show us, not what Jesus of Nazareth really said and did, but what certain Christians in the second century thought that one who claimed to be the Messiah would be likely to have said and done. These Christians believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and therefore they attributed to Him the kind of conduct which they thought would be suitable. The Apocryphal Gospels show us the kind of material that we should have had if Chris-

² In the *Apostolic Constitutions* (vi. 6) we read of poisonous apocryphal books in which the wicked heretics reproach the creation, marriage, the providential government of the world, whose doctrine *eschew*, etc.

tians of the second century had constructed the Gospels out of the products of their own imagination. It is only when the constructors of them keep closely to the Canonical Gospels that they are edifying. Even with these to guide them, these writers in most cases (not quite in all) give us what is uninspiring, often what is silly, and sometimes what is blankly immoral.

But we must be cautious in our criticisms, especially in the case of those uncanonical Gospels of which we possess only fragments; and (as already stated) they are far the most numerous. In some cases the fragments occur in writers whose object is to exhibit the unsatisfactory character of the Gospel which they quote. What is not quoted may have had better features. But, as in the case of the 'New Sayings of Jesus,' discovered at Oxyrhynchus in 1897, and edited by Grenfell and Hunt in 1904, it is rarely that we 'come upon any touches or traditions which even suggest that by their help we can fill out the description of the Synoptic Gospels' (Moffatt).

A few quotations will illustrate the kind of statements made as to the historical worthlessness of the Canonical Gospels. 'The four Gospels are a hash of fragments. Many of their alleged facts are fictions indeed' (Kenealy). 'No historian would care to undertake an attempt to produce the biography of an historical Christ' (A. Drews). 'In default of any historical certainty the name of Jesus has become for Protestant theology an empty vessel' (Kalthoff).

In comparatively recent times it was not uncommon, in arguments about Church Order, to assume that our Lord must have given directions respecting the matter in dispute. As no such directions are recorded in the Gospels, it was maintained that He had given them in the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. The convenience of this assumption was that a disputant could always contend that Christ's directions were in accordance with his own views respecting the primitive Church. The Apocryphal Gospels often served a similar purpose. The composers of them put into Christ's mouth doctrines which they wished to promote, and condemnations of doctrines which they wished to oppose. And whoever copied one of these uncanonical Gospels could vary these imaginary sayings at pleasure; for there was no standard text, such as quickly grew up in the case of the Canonical Gospels. It was difficult for Church authorities to cope with this evil. They could forbid the reading of these unauthorized Gospels in the public services of the Church; but they could not prevent their being read privately at home. And as these invented Gospels were often found to be very interesting, especially in their additions to the Canonical Gospels, they were widely read, not only silently by individuals, but aloud to companies who came to listen to them. Jn 21²⁵ seemed almost to encourage such augmentations of the Canonical Gospels.

Contributions and Comments.

*The Local Colour of the Bible.*¹

THE Bible is an Oriental book, and it can never be fully understood by one who does not know how far the East is distant from the West. This very interesting volume is a constant reminder of the distance between them. Both authors have earned their right to speak from a residence of some years in the Middle East, and the son of Dr. Hastings is sure of a welcome from the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for his father's sake as well as for his own.

¹ *The Local Colour of the Bible*, by Charles W. Budden, M.D., and the Rev. Edward Hastings, M.A. (T. & T. Clark; pp. 356; 8s. net).

The work is to be completed in three volumes; this volume carries the study from Genesis to the end of Second Samuel. The plan of the authors is to pursue their way through the books of the Bible in regular order, dividing them up into convenient sections, and selecting within each section for special discussion incidents, allusions, and customs which require for their thorough understanding a knowledge of the East; and the general effect is to restore the Bible to its ancient setting, and to enable its readers to see it with the light of the East upon it.

All sorts of interests pass in review before us—history, geography, archæology, ethnology, mar-