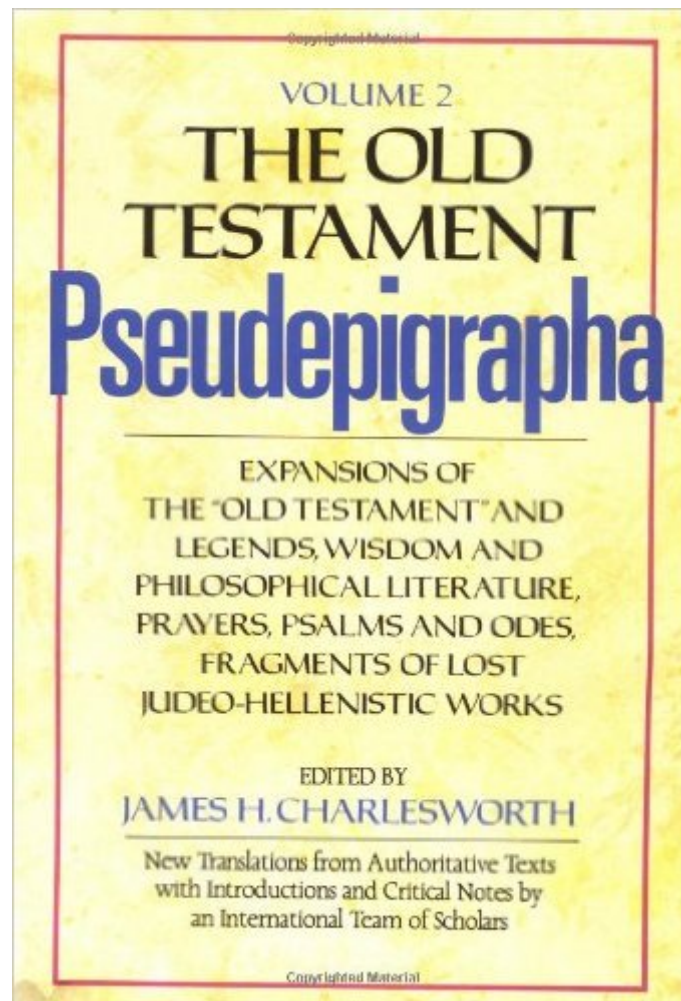


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The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. 2: Expansions Of The Old Testament And Legends, Wisdom And Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, And Odes, Fragments Of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works





Synopsis

Expansions of the "Old Testament" and legends, wisdom and philosophical literature, prayers, psalms and odes, and fragments of lost Judeo-Hellenistic works.

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Customer Reviews

This is the most spectacular volume of literature from the period c. 200 BCE to 200 CE. There is the Hebrew Bible and there is the New Testament writings. In between is the myth of the 'four hundred years of silence'. This volume and the second volume reveal that writings during this time were prolific. In this volume are such vital works as 1 Enoch. The apocalyptic literature which began, if scholars are correct, with Daniel (and traces in some of the Prophets) blossomed into an entire genre of literature which would greatly influence what would become Christianity. The book of Jude quotes from 1 Enoch expressly and Revelation and other New Testament books bear many commonalities with 1 Enoch. This is just a taste of what is in store for the reader. This volume and the second volume reveal just what was going on in the Judaism(s) of this period of time. There was lots going on and it is not so cut and dry as it is often traditionally taught. The variety of beliefs derived, no matter how loosely, on the Jewish Scriptures is endlessly diverse. This book does an excellent job of placing the actual writings in one book. Charlesworth and those who have introduced/translated the works contained herein have done a great job tracing the history of the works and what is known about the communities in which they were written. Also included are margin notes that show the connection, directly or indirectly, to the Tanakh and the New Testament

(including the Apocrypha). This is a necessary resource for anyone interested in and open to understanding exactly how it was that Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism emerged from the tumult of the period between c. 200 BCE and 200 CE.

Some of the best literature, whether divinely inspired or not, has long been lost to the world, too often for political ends. Fortunately, volumes like this one, admirably edited by James H. Charlesworth, replenish much of what was "lost" between the time of the Councils at Jamina and Nicaea. Whatever one's creed or intentions, if one approaches this volume in earnest, one will find much of interest including, but not limited to, strong, implied historical evidence of egregious tampering by the early Church fathers of certain non-canonical works. A good example in this collection is 1 Enoch, which had been in the canon for centuries before being finally removed and, in the West, abandoned. In other instances, copies were, on Church orders, simply destroyed. Fortunately, complete copies of Enoch (or Henok) were preserved in Ethiopic texts. In fact, the version of 1 Enoch presented in this volume (translated by E. Isaac) is largely structured on the Ethiopic texts, though the Aramaic fragments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls have been consulted along with Greek and Hebrew renditions. Charlesworth has also included many other fine renditions of apocalyptic works, including selections from the Syriac and Slavonian. Even more is to be had in the many non-canonical Testaments presented here, many with apocalyptic passages. Matters of whether these "rebel" and "outcast" books appeared to be divinely inspired by the various communities that embraced them is a matter of conjecture, though there are strong hints here and there from the various communities of seekers that preserved these texts around the Mediterranean world. Of greater interest to me was the thoroughness with which each non-canonical text has been researched and translated. Charlesworth should be lauded for at least that contribution to our body of collective knowledge about what was being written and by whom at the end of the pre-Christian era and in the early years of the Common Era. To the truly curious I recommend both volumes, whether for personal enrichment, Bible study, research, or tasting and comparing various translations of non-canonical literature. This is as unbiased a compilation as I have seen in many years. I rank it with the work being done by scholars like Geza Vermes as invaluable to any person seeking a deeper understanding of the great minds on either side of that turbulent millennium (i.e., give or take 300-500 years either way). Of course these writings can lead one's mind to many other insights and down many other paths of inquiry and thought; that is best left for the individual. Be assured that this scholarly work is exactly that, and is not only highly-informative about the stories, symbols and myths of non-canonical literature that informed the

consciousness of the Near East and eventually the Western world, but this volume does so in a highly accessible way. It is easy to read and certainly gives one pause. Savor it.

This is the best collection of the non-canonical Jewish writings available. It does not contain the official Apocrypha or the complete Dead Sea Scrolls but it has the major complete works like Enoch and Jubilees from there, and essentially everything else including works still unavailable online and in other collections such as the Apocalypse of Elijah. Charlesworth's introductions and notes are invaluable covering themes, dates, authorships rescensions, translations notes and variants.

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