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THE APOCRYPHA, A SOURCE OF ROMAN CATHOLIC ERROR.

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The Apocrypha excepting "Maccabees" and "Ecclesiasticus" are spurious books. They pretend to be written by persons mentioned in the Bible. As John Geffcken says of the New Testament Apocrypha, "They all bear a false title and furnish a new understanding of the Canonical Books." Jewish apocryphal books were written by the score from 200 B. C., before the revolt of the Maccabees, to 135 A. D., the time of the revolt of Bar Cochba against the Emperor Hadrian. The enemies of the Jews, the Greek and Syrian Gnostics, continued the business of making counterfeits and within one century they had sent out as many as the Jews had struck off in three. In the fourth century, after the conversion of Constantine, Roman writers found it in the interest of their order to counterfeit for a while longer. But most of the Apocrypha appeared from 200 B. C. to 200 A. D., being furnished for three centuries by Jews and for one century by Gentiles. They appeared in the four centuries in which Rome was spreading her dominion over the East. What happened to the Jews happened to all eastern races. They all passed under the Roman yoke, but none resisted so bitterly, so fanatically as the Jews and none suffered so much as they. The victory of Roman arms over them was a shock to the religious faith of this most religious people. It seemed as though Jehovah, in whom they had trusted, had forsaken and forgotten them. At first compensation for present distress was sought in the glories of the history of Israel and in the consolations of the philosophy of Greece. This is the noble aim of the author of "Ecclesiasticus", a genuine work and regarded by F. H. Scrivener as one of the noblest of uninspired compositions. The brave but fruitless struggle of the Maccabees against the Syrians called forth a genuine account of the desperate conflict in first "Maccabees",

a work that Coleridge found inspiring enough to be inspired. Below these genuine works stands "Judith", grave and elevated in thought and expression in Scrivener's estimation, yet sacrificing chronology, geography, and history to its story, which Keil calls a fable. On the same low level stands "Tobit" with no historical value in G. Rawlinson's opinion, and "Wisdom", which is a weak solution of Plato's philosophy. Now begin to appear magic, marvel and monstrosity, that run riot in the apocalypses. From the book of "Enoch" onwards the remaining Jewish apocryphal books are apocalypses. Throughout these centuries of despair the chief comfort which the masses of the people found was in these supposedly new discoveries of ancient prophecies. In these prophecies the enemies of Israel were to be trampled under foot while the Jewish people was to be crowned with glory and honor. They breathe the spirit of hatred and scorn for the foreign despot. These books were written by exiles or by men who were strangers on their native heath. They cry out against their oppressors. Still they indulge in fervid hopes and in their fever they dream of deliverance.

The mind of the race demanded relief from the strain of centuries of abject servitude and it found in these apocalyptic books surcease of sorrow. In them was diversion with legend, myth and romance, with symbols, types and numbers, with angels and demons. Truth was discarded for fable, and faith gave way to superstition. They were foolish rather than wicked; yet foolishness in the realm of religion is wickedness. Despairing in turn of the Hebrew prophet and the Greek philosopher, they turned to the oriental wizard and sooth-sayer. Otto Trevelyan describes the meschianza, which Major André devised to divert the British army occupying Philadelphia, as a medley of amazing rhodomontades and fantastic sham chivalry absurdly inaccurate to a genuine and sturdy antiquary. Such a medley, changing form and color like a kaleidoscope, were the apocalypses.

Such literature could not be popular except in a decadent age among "a people scattered and peeled". It was a parasite

that attached itself to the decaying trunk of Judaism. It was like not flowers and fruit but mould and mildew, indications not of life but of death.

It belongs to the category of the eccentric, the bizarre and the abnormal. It has not foundation either in Scripture or in reason. It calls not for thinking but for the indulgence of the fancy. Such literature marks no advance. It forms but an eddy and back-water in the stream of progress. The writers were like sailors who had thrown away or lost overboard chart, compass and anchor. All they could do was to drift, with no thought of reaching any haven. If there is anything new in them it is not true. Even their errors are not original. They are but echoes of pagan voices.

At last the Jews ceased producing apocrypha, but hardly have they penned the last one when Greeks in Alexandria and Syrians in Antioch succeed to this business.

The Jews wrote for diversion or to gratify their hate for the Gentiles. The Gentile Gnostics wrote partly to antagonize the Jews and partly to impose on Christianity their peculiar opinions.

Two ideas possessed the Gnostics. One was that matter is inherently evil. Therefore Jesus could not have been perfect if he had possessed a material body. Therefore while our Lord seemed to have a body, the body He had was a phantom. This is Docetism which the Apostle John condemns in those whom he calls Antichrists, because they denied that Christ had come in the flesh.

The other prominent notion of the Gnostics had to do with the emanation from the supreme being of a hierarchy of æons. Under this notion there was a large place for angels and arch-angels and other powers intermediary between God and man. They taught, as L. Diestel says, not the highest reverence of the true God but true reverence for the highest god. The Old Testament Jehovah, the Creator, they denominated the Demiurge or evil intelligence.

These two ideas, docetism and emanationism, originated from the mingling of Greek idealism and Persian dualism in

the schools of Antioch and Alexandria. In the second century, the classical age of the Gnostic apocrypha, there was a revival of Pythagorean magic, of the occult arts, and of the Eleusinian mysteries. It was the century when Apollonius of Tyana was magnified as a miracle worker, and when new Sybilline prophecies appeared, prophecies that seemed so wonderful to those who did not know that they were written after the event.

In this century the gods of Heaven were discarded for the gods of earth and the under world, and national shrines were abandoned for foreign cults, for Isis of Egypt, the Great Mother of Phrygia, the *dea Syria*, and Mithras of Persia.

Vespasian had been elected emperor by the legions of Asia and later emperors surrounded themselves with Asiatics. Lucian, a leading writer of the second century, represented old Olympus as invaded by a legion of barbarian deities that disputed the ground with Jupiter himself. Nebulous fancies kept floating in from the east. Europe was never so near becoming Asiatic as in the second and third centuries.

The people had itching ears. They listened eagerly for the sensational. They sought pleasurable excitement in the titillation of the nerves. The more incredible the story the more popular it became. As Paul says, "they turned from the truth to fables". They luxuriated in fancy but, as A. Neander says, "fancy is nothing but unconscious representation. It is only the intellect that leads to conscious development." The Greeks sought wisdom and the Apocrypha have the outward form and terminology of wisdom. The Jews sought a sign and the Apocrypha abounded in signs and wonders.

While, as J. B. Lightfoot says, the gnostic writings were "more than the ravings of religious fanaticism, yet they are not to be compared with the productions of Neoplatonism, which has been described as "that cloud-land in which the sun of Greek philosophy set". The Gnostics tried to express the gospel in the terms of current opinions. Out of the wreck of thought and feeling in the second century they threw together a disjointed and unsubstantial mass of symbols and mysteries that could not possibly hold together long. They attributed

power to symbols, a power which, of course, does not exist in such figments of the brain.

Henry Osborne Taylor of Columbia University, well says: "To conceive an object or a fact to be a symbol of something else is different from conceiving it to embody or to effect or to be something else.

To confound the two conceptions must be regarded as wilfull. It was a confusion to which human beings abandoned themselves after periods of clear thinking among their ancestors Roman, Greek and Hebrew". The condition of the times and of the public mind was favorable to their quasi-science and philosophy.

They tried hard to save their pagan notions in a vessel which, as far as technical phraseology and external apparatus were concerned, was Christian.

Irenæus said that their innumerable writings sound Christian and biblical. The aim of their gospels, acts, epistles and revelations, was to enlarge, to surpass, to displace the New Testament Scriptures.

As Ephræm Syrus says "the Gnostics wrote the Apocrypha that, by means of the apostolic miracles that they describe, they might write in the name of the apostles ungodly notions against which the apostles had contended." This old verdict is confirmed by the latest, that of Ira Price, who says that "there were palmed off on a credulous public works which were intended to promote some religious or philosophical idea".

In other words, to justify their pagan notions they invented books and then quoted these books as authority for their innovations.

Irenæus wrote five volumes against the Gnostics, and Tertullian joined in the combat. These two Church Fathers succeeded in checking this evil, for the followers of Basilides, Valentine and Saturnilus, the Ophites, the Marcionites and the Marcosians soon disappeared.

The Gnostics disappeared but not their legends and their methods. Their popular stories purged of docetic poison reappeared in orthodox hymn and homily. Even the method

of spreading doctrines by the manufacture of apocryphal books was adopted and "the gospel of Nicodemus", and "the gospel of James" and "the assumption of Mary" and other spurious books appeared from the hand of Roman Catholic authors.

The common mark of all apocryphal books, whether Jewish, Gnostic or Roman Catholic, is spuriousness. The authors of these books, if not commended are defended, in their use of pious frauds to this day. These defenders of the apocryphal method were never more distinguished than today. Dean Farrar considers that, in those days, the use of false names was perfectly legitimate. E. H. Plumptree and Samuel Davidson regard the use of another's name, under the circumstances, a justifiable expedient. W. H. Simcox says the readers did not distinguish between the sentiments of the author and the sentiments of his history.

But Lord Acton asserts, on the contrary, that "the *chronological* plea does not allow of our saying that such a man did not know right from wrong unless we are able to say that he could not know right from wrong." "The inflexible integrity of the moral code is to me," he says, "the secret of the authority, the dignity and the utility of history."

J. S. Candlish also asks for *proof* that the ancients could not distinguish between the true and the false.

There is a great difference between a fiction and a fabrication, between a historical novel and a deliberate falsification of history. Forgery in letters is as villainous as forgery in notes and bonds. To use an honored name, a holy name, as an endorsement and guarantee in order to get a hearing and a market is a pious fraud. A pious fraud, as Neander defines it, is "the use of a palpable falsehood to put certain statements in circulation." Paul characterizes it as "speaking falsely in hypocrisy" and he warns the Thessalonians against receiving spurious letters as coming from him.

These books lack the peculiar air and tone of sincerity. They are produced not in the bracing atmosphere of candor and simplicity but in the stifling air of the den of the counter-

feiter. They fly a false flag, pirates as they are. They pass themselves off as old books just come to light. The use of an ancient name casts discredit on any book. The difference between a believer in a falsehood and the man who made it is of little credit to either of them. For, if the one is foolish, the other is infamous. These clumsy counterfeits, these Munchausen tales formed the reading matter of the people for several centuries.

The Apocrypha are the product of an age that the gospel could not redeem. They present ideas that maintained themselves side by side with the gospel, that survived the Renaissance and the Reformation, and that continue their baleful influence in creed and ritual in the twentieth century.

The great influence of the Apocrypha was due in the first place to the fact that thirteen of them were included in the rolls of the Greek version of the Old Testament. The Hebrew manuscripts did not contain these thirteen books. What influence the Apocrypha had on the "Talmud" and especially on the "Kabbala" it is outside the scope of this essay to consider.

Philo, a resident of Alexandria, makes no reference to these books, and Josephus definitely excludes them from holy writ. The apostles, who used the Greek version, nowhere cite any of them. Yet the oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament extant, the Sinaitic, the Vatican and the Alexandrian, include not only these thirteen books but later apocrypha, like third and fourth Maccabees, the Prayer of Manasseh and the Epistle of Barnabas, that are not found in the Septuagint version. Having found a place in the Greek manuscripts and in the versions made from the Greek text, it is no wonder that the Apocrypha were read in the churches and thus obtained an ecclesiastical standing. The exposition of Papias and the visions of Hermas expand the book of "Baruch". The apostolic fathers and Clement of Alexandria and Irenæus quote them as they do canonical books. Cyprian uses them freely and Augustine found them so entrenched in the affections of the people that, in opposition to Jerome's *caveat omnia apocrypha*, he secured,

through the councils of Hippo, 397 A. D., and Carthage, 399 A. D., action favorable to the use of several of these books.

Just before the outbreak of the Reformation, the great Cardinal Ximenes raised his voice against paying such honor to the Apocrypha but, when the Reformers took up the same position as the Spanish cardinal, the Council of Trent came to the defense of the Old Testament Apocrypha and definitely raised them to the rank of holy Scripture. H. Hævernick attributes this action to "blind hate of Protestantism".

Indeed, Campian charged Luther with opposing these books because they favored Roman Catholic views. Nevertheless the Church of England in its thirty-nine articles declares that the Bible consists of "the Old Testament, the Apocrypha and the New Testament", adding this qualification, however, that "the Apocrypha are for an example of life and instruction of manners but do not establish any doctrine".

The Puritans in the days of Elizabeth feared that the people would not discriminate between canonical and apocryphal books, and a thousand clergymen protested to James I at his accession against the retention of the Apocrypha. Bishop Lightfoot exclaimed with indignation, "The two testaments would sweetly join and kiss each other but that the wretched apocrypha doth thrust in between." He adds: "Cast out the bond-woman." The Prayer Book of 1662 had lessons in the church calendar from September 29 to November 23 taken from the Apocrypha.

Until the year 1825 these books were printed *with* the canonical books, not *mingled* with them as in Roman Catholic lands, but by themselves at the end of the Old Testament. In that year Robert Haldane, the wealthy Scotch Baptist, began an agitation against the further publication of the Apocrypha with the Bible. The British and Foreign Bible Society was induced to exclude them first from English Bibles and finally from all Bibles receiving its support and imprint. The "Oxford movement", with its reverence for tradition, felt the need of the support of the Apocrypha and advocated its retention in editions of the Bible. The "Society for the Propagation of

the Gospel" will not assist those versions of the Bible from which it is omitted.

In the year 1905 the "Journal of the Apocrypha" was founded to raise these books to honor once more.

King Edward refused to receive a costly Bible that was presented to him because it did not contain the Apocrypha, which must be found in the official and legal Bible of England.

When the revised version was made the Apocryphal books were not included in it, although references to them were allowed to remain in the margin.

The Old Testament Apocrypha, over which a two thousand years' war has been waged, are responsible for certain errors that crept into the Roman Catholic Church from the reading of these books in the public services. These errors have no place in Scripture. They found their way into the Apocrypha from the schools of Alexandria where most of these books were written. For instance, the worship of angels as mediators naturally became a custom among the people after they had heard from "Tobit" (12:15) Sunday after Sunday of Raphael, "one of the seven holy angels which present the prayers of saints". Prophets also were regarded by the people as mediators, for does not the book of "Maccabees" (2:15, 14) declare that "Jeremiah, the prophet of God, and a lover of the people, prays much for the people and for the holy city?" This error that the dead pray for the living was indorsed by Origen when he said: "Do not pray for the dead; they pray for us."

But these two false notions are hard to separate and as they occur side by side in "Maccabees" they recur in Roman Catholic tradition. Judas Maccabeus is represented (Maccabees 12:45) as "making reconciliation for the dead that they might be delivered from sin. He sacrificed for those fallen in battle. If he had not hoped that they that were slain should have arisen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead." E. C. Bissell regards this passage as a proof text of Roman Catholics for the doctrine of purgatory and of prayers for the dead. There is no trace of this false doctrine in Justin,

Ignatius, Irenæus, Clement of Rome, or "The Teaching of the Twelve", but Tertullian advocates prayer for the forgiveness of the sins of the dead, and Arnobius defends the churches as places where prayers are offered for the living and the dead.

There are two fountains, both in the Apocrypha, that send forth, as bitter water, the false opinion that works merit salvation. In "Ecclesiasticus" (3:30) occur these words: "Water quenches flaming fire and alms-giving makes atonement for sin." In "Tobit" (4:7) the same extra-biblical teaching is found: "Give alms of thy substance and the face of God shall not be turned away from thee."

Justin, and after him, Irenæus, quotes from an apocryphal vision that "God remembered His dead that slept in the dust of the earth and descended to them to bring to them the goodness of His salvation". This is the germ of the doctrine of Christ's "descent into hell", which, as T. H. Holtzmann says, "found a place in the church creed after it had been cultivated by the syncretist Gnostics". "Hast thou preached to them that sleep?" the gospel of Peter says, is a question that was asked of Jesus as He hung upon the cross.

Schaff follows A. Neander in tracing to the gnostic Marcosians the practice of extreme unction.

From the gnostic teaching that matter is evil and that the soul must free itself from the contamination of the body, there naturally grow up asceticism. Instead of hating sin, which God did not make, the Gnostics hated the world which He did make. Saturnilus and Tatian, the Gnostics, forbade marriage. The "Acts of Thecla", that had a great influence in glorifying virginity, declared that the married would have no share in the resurrection. All the gnostic gospels lauded celibacy and this widespread literature produced a state of mind or rather a tendency that could not be resisted. It was this perverted gnostic teaching of the evil of matter and of marriage that filled the caves of Egypt, the desert of Sinai and finally monasteries and convents everywhere with unmarried devotees.

When monks and martyrs were canonized as saints and saint days were appointed, it was necessary to find a miracle

performed by each candidate for sainthood and they found them, one after another, R. A. Lipsius says, in the apocryphal "Acts". J. Geffcken designates the "Acts of Peter", which has recently been found in Egypt, as a pandemonium of wonders. It was gnostic phantasmagoria that supplied the Roman Catholic demands for thaumaturgical legends of the saints.

"Up to a certain time," Edwin Hatch says, "there is no evidence that Christianity had any secrets. The simple gospel was preached openly to the world. After a time all is changed. Mysteries have arisen in the once open and easily accessible faith. The elements which are found in the later and not in the early form of baptism are elements which are formed *on to* Christianity." Justin is the first to call baptism the "enlightening", a word which is taken from the Greek mysteries. This word, Adolph Harnack says, is "probably taken from the Greek mysteries". In Professor G. Anrich's opinion the Gnostics "expressed forms that appeared again later in the Roman Catholic Church, but as unconscious rather than as deliberate additions." Dean Stanley thinks that the Roman Catholic mysteries were "the effect of the same vast wave of superstition which produced the charms and invocations of the Gnostics". "There was connection," H. O. Taylor says, "between pagan mysteries and the initiations and doctrines of the Gnostics, and between gnosticism and the growth of mysteries in the Roman Catholic Church, but the connection is obscure. The terminology of the pagan mysteries certainly passed into the Christian, and yet it does not follow that the development of Christian mysteries was connected with any ancient pagan rites."

Prof. A. V. G. Allen surmises that "converts from heathenism may have translated Christian rites into heathen equivalents". Cardinal Newman finds "an affinity between magical rites and the Christian *disciplina arcana*."

All of these writers agree that the Roman Catholic rites were very much like the earlier gnostic ritual. The only difference between these authorities is as to the degree of assurance which they have that the later was deliberately borrowed

from the earlier. The exorcism of evil spirits, the consecration of the water, the anointing after baptism, the cakes, the wine, the milk and the honey, the white garments, all appeared alike in the Gnostic and the Roman Catholic ritual. "The sacraments," as A. Harnack says, "became more and more solemn and impressive until they rivalled the most imposing ceremonies of the ancient pagan cults, and the most momentous result was the gradual assimilation of the entire Christian worship to that of the ancient mysteries." Following the gnostic terminology the Lord's supper was called an "offering" and the Lord's table an "altar", and the bread and the wine were declared to possess magical power. All of these radical changes in the use of baptism and the supper were justified by the secret tradition of the apostles which had been handed down by the Gnostics in their spurious "Acts" and "Epistles".

Mariolatry is a late error. In the third century all the apostles were declared to be martyrs, and martyrs were glorified, but Mary was not a martyr. In the fourth century nuns were canonized but Mary was a mother. Until the year 300, it was a mark of orthodoxy to believe that Mary was the mother of a large family. The *gnostic* gospel of Peter, a fragment of which has recently been found in Egypt, affirms that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were born to Joseph not by Mary but by a former marriage. This perversion of the gospel record was made by the gnostics to preserve the virginity of Mary and the immaculate conception of Jesus.

But the early Church Fathers in their eagerness to overthrow the gnostic position insisted that Mary was the mother of the whole family. So it happened that saints were multiplying fast but Mary was not among them. Feast days were established and churches were dedicated but none of them in honor of Joseph's wife. If she appears in an early fresco, she is never alone, as if honored for what she was in herself. There are symbols of Jesus in the catacombs—the fish, the lamb, the vine—but none of Mary. She may have attracted private devo-

tion before the year 300, but no public worship was paid to her.

Docetism in time disappeared and it was no longer necessary to argue that Mary had so many children. Then the gnostic, the heretical, view of Mary as ever virgin became the orthodox conception. It appeared in homilies and in hymns, in new expurgated editions of the gnostic "Acts", especially in an enlarged edition of the "Gospel of James", which appeared near the end of the fourth century, an edition of which more than fifty manuscripts, in many languages, are extant. It is this book that gives us the names of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, and tells us that she herself was immaculately conceived. The day of Anna's immaculate conception of Mary was fixed on December 8, her nativity on September 8, and her presentation in the temple on November 21st. All of these days are holy days in the Roman Catholic calendar. Epiphanius said no one knows how Mary died; but soon afterwards another apocryphal book, the "Assumption of Mary", appeared. The argument for the assumption of Mary is borrowed from another apocryphal book, the "Assumption of John", which says that when John's tomb was visited nothing was found in it but his sandals. This led to the naive inference that he must have ascended to Heaven. The feast of the Assumption and the other feasts of Mary, one after another, began to be observed after the appearance of this apocryphal legend. It is this book that is the direct source of the worship of Mary. It lifted her from her former obscure position to become first Queen of Heaven, and then soon after, by decree of council, the Mother of God.

While the apostolic fathers were fighting gnostic heresies they thought it advisable to centralize authority in a diocesan bishop. This is H. Weingarten's explanation of the rise of Episcopacy in the second century.

G. Solomon ("Infallibility of the Church", p. 360) says that the real inventor of the story of Peter's Roman Episcopate was an editor of the Clementine romance, the spurious epistle of James. Later developments in the hierarchy in the fourth

century were hastened by the publication of apocryphal "Acts" in favor of such development.

It thus appears that to the Jewish Apocrypha are traceable four errors, viz.: the worship of angels, the intercession of saints, prayers for the dead and works of merit.

To the gnostic Apocrypha are due seven errors, to wit: the doctrine of the descent into hell, the practice of extreme unction, the movement toward celibacy and monasticism, the miracles that are pleaded for the canonization of saints, the mysteries that formed the *disciplina arcana*, the theory of the perpetual virginity of Mary which led to mariolatry and the rise of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.