## Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

The term *Apocrypha* is applied by Protestant Christians to the books included in the OT by the Roman Catholic, Coptic and Eastern Orthodox churches but which are not found in the Jewish or Protestant canon. The term *Pseudepigrapha* refers to a much larger body of texts, most of which share the literary device of being written under the pseudonym of a great or an ancient figure in Israel's heritage (Roman Catholic and Orthodox writers usually refer to this body as Apocrypha). These collections preserve important voices that witness to the thought, piety and conversations within the Judaisms of the Second Temple period and that provide essential background for the theology, cosmology, ethics, history and culture of the authors of the NT and shapers of the early church, many of whom knew, valued and drew upon the traditions preserved in these texts.

- 1. Definitions of Terms
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## 1. Definitions of Terms.

1.1. Apocrypha. The word apocrypha (Gk "hidden things") was originally an honorable title for books containing a special, esoteric wisdom that was "too sacred or profound to be disclosed to any save the initiated" (Charles). Some scholars locate the origin of this term in 4 Ezra 14:44–47 (= 2 Esdr 14:44–47; see Esdras, Books of), which speaks of "hidden books" containing divine wisdom for the "wise among the people" and which are distinct from the canonical collection that contains divine wisdom for the unworthy and the wise alike (Rowley; Fritsch). In the wake of controversies in the early church and again in the aftermath of the Reformation, the term took on negative connotations, signifying books that were withheld on account of their "secondary or questionable" value (Charles) and that were potentially "false, spurious, or heretical" (Charles; Rowley).

The term is now used in Protestant circles to designate thirteen to eighteen texts included as part of the OT that include historical works (1 and 2 Maccabees, 1 Esdras), tales (Tobit, Judith, 3 Maccabees, an expanded Esther, additional tales about Daniel), wisdom literature (Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Ben Sira), pseudepigraphical prophetic literature (Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah), liturgical texts (Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 150, Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men; see Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah, Additions to), an apocalypse (2 Esdras) and a philosophical encomium (4 Maccabees). These books are found, with the exceptions of 4 Ezra and Prayer of Manasseh, in numerous manuscripts of the Septuagint and were clearly prized by the early church and read as Scripture. Recent discoveries at Qumran show that such works were not only preserved among Christian circles—Ben Sira, Tobit and Letter of Jeremiah were all found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, together with numerous pseudepigrapha (1 Enoch [see Enoch, Books of], Jubilees and other pseudepigraphic works not previously known; Stone).

The lack of consensus concerning what books belong in the Apocrypha bears witness to the variety in OT canon among Christian churches. All of these books are considered by some Christian communions as canonical. J. H. Charlesworth calls for a uniform and exclusive delineation of Apocrypha, following the lists of the majority of LXX manuscripts rather than the Vulgate. He would exclude 3 and 4 Maccabees, Prayer of Manasseh and 2 Esdras (2 Esdras 3–14 = 4 Ezra) from the Apocrypha and include them among the Pseudepigrapha. The more recent study Bibles (Meeks; Metzger and Murphy) [p. 59] opt for a more inclusive collection of Apocrypha (all eighteen). In LXX manuscripts 3 and 4 Maccabees have in their favor a strong presence, commanding great respect in the Greek Orthodox church. C. A. Evans rightly notes that the line between Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is not clearly drawn and is blurred even further as one considers the relationship between Jude and *1 Enoch* and

Assumption of Moses (Evans 22 Russell 1993). We may never arrive at the consensus for which Charlesworth calls.

The books contained in the Apocrypha have had a spotted history of reception in the church, and not all eighteen (or thirteen) have fared equally well in that history (see Fritsch for a fuller discussion). Paul clearly knew and used Wisdom of Solomon, and echoes of Ben Sira appear in the sayings of Jesus. The apostolic fathers (Polycarp, Clement, Pseudo-Barnabas) quote from or allude to Wisdom of Solomon, Tobit and Ben Sira as authoritative writings, and numerous allusions to other Apocrypha appear as well. Some leading figures in the church, like Jerome and Origen, recognized the difference between the collection of OT Scriptures used by the church and the Hebrew canon, and Jerome especially calls for a practical distinction to be made between the "canonical" texts and "ecclesiastical" texts, which are useful and edifying but not of the same order. Other figures, such as Clement of Alexandria and Augustine, embrace the larger collection as of uniform inspiration and value.

Only the Protestant Reformation forced a decision. Martin Luther decisively separated the books or parts of books (e.g., the Additions to Esther and Daniel) that were not included in the Hebrew canon from his OT as "books which cannot be reckoned with the canonical books and yet are useful and good for reading" (quoted by Rowley). The rest of the Protestant Reformers followed his practice. The apocryphal books continued to be printed and recommended as edifying material, but they were not to be used as a basis for doctrine or ethics apart from the canonical books. The Roman Catholic church responded at the Council of Trent (1546) by declaring these books (excluding 1 and 2 Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh and 3 and 4 Maccabees) to be fully canonical.

The opinion of many Protestants concerning the Apocrypha has fallen considerably from Luther's estimation. Emphasis on "Scripture alone" and the "sufficiency of Scripture," fueled by centuries of tension between Catholic and Protestant churches, has rendered the Apocrypha more suspected than respected, and lack of acquaintance with the texts among most Protestants has reinforced this aversion. Nevertheless, the collection of texts included in the Apocrypha merits careful attention not only on the basis of its testimony to the currents and developments within Judaism during the intertestamental period but also on the basis of the influence these texts exercised on the church during its formative centuries.

1.2. Pseudepigrapha. The term pseudepigrapha (Gk, "things bearing a false ascription") highlights primarily a literary characteristic of many writings from the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods, that is, writing under the assumed name of a great figure from the distant past. The term does not in itself distinguish the body of texts to which it refers from canonical writings, as numerous scholars have maintained that pseudepigrapha are present within the canon (e.g., Daniel, Song of Songs, Deutero-Isaiah, numerous psalms). Study of the larger phenomenon of pseudepigraphy among Jewish and Greco-Roman writings of the period might, however, help students assess the implications of canonical pseudepigraphy (Evans; see Pseudonymity and Pseudepigraphy).

This term, like "apocrypha," has acquired negative connotations. Charlesworth's survey of several dictionary articles shows that in common parlance the term denotes "spurious works" that are "not considered canonical or inspired." These dictionaries, Charlesworth correctly avers, perpetuate a misleading equation of pseudepigraphy with illegitimacy. Moreover, he rightly asks for clarification concerning the question of canonicity and inspiration. A number of these books are cited as authentic and authoritative texts. We must beware, then, of attaching modern value judgments on an ancient literary practice.

The term is used by scholars to refer to the "rest of the 'outside books'" (Rowley) or to "literature similar to the Apocrypha which is not in the Apocrypha" (Stone 1984). The turn of the twentieth century witnessed the publication of two important collections of pseudepigrapha (Kautzsch and Charles), although these were "reductional" collections of only a dozen or so texts (Charlesworth). Charlesworth

and his team sought a broader delineation of this body of [p. 60] literature, including sixty-three texts that matched the general description proposed for the corpus. These texts (1) were almost exclusively Jewish or Christian; (2) were often attributed to ideal figures in Israel's past; (3) customarily claimed to contain God's word or message; (4) built on narratives or ideas in the OT; (5) were written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200 (or, if they were written later, appeared to preserve substantially earlier traditions). Charlesworth asserts that these criteria are meant to describe a collection, not present hard-and-fast criteria for what constitute Pseudepigrapha.

Major bodies of texts are not grouped among the Pseudepigrapha (see Writing and Literature: Jewish). Philo and Josephus have left voluminous materials, but, as the authorial attestation is not pseudepigraphic, their works stand outside of this category. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain many pseudepigraphic texts, but, since the "channel of transmission" (Stone) is so well defined, these are treated as a separate corpus. Finally, there are the targums (see Rabbinic Literature: Targumim) and other rewritings of biblical texts (see Rewritten Bible) that share much in common with books like *Jubilees* but are not included in the Pseudepigrapha.

The phenomenon of pseudepigraphy is complex. R. H. Charles sought the origin of the practice in the rise of a monolithic Jewish orthodoxy based on a closed canon of Law and Prophets, which would not permit authors to claim inspiration in their own name. The image of a normative Judaism before A.D. 70 has largely been refuted. Perhaps more useful is S. Cohen's suggestion that Jews in the Second Temple period perceived themselves as living in a postclassical age: this awareness led authors to connect their work with some figure from the classical (preexilic or exilic) period. In the case of apocalypses, the phenomenon may be even more complex, with authors identifying, in some ecstatic experience, with the figure of the past and giving new voice to the ancient worthy. The choice of pseudonym may indicate a conscious attempt to link one's own work with the "received tradition of teaching" related to that name (Stone). Evans echoes this view with approval, extending it into the period after the apostolic age, during which authority was mediated only through the classical figures of the church's first generation and pseudepigraphy again became a common phenomenon.

Scholars have noted the limitations of both terms. First, apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are not equal terms. One derives from canonical debates and usage; the other from a peculiar literary characteristic. Apocrypha is an especially problematic term for the historical study of these documents, since decisions about canon are much later than the period in which the texts were produced and often come only centuries after a document has been in use and exercising an important influence (cf. Charlesworth; Nickelsburg). By using pseudepigrapha to refer to a body of texts outside the Protestant canon and the Apocrypha, we obscure the pseudepigraphic nature of many texts within these bodies of literature (Nickelsburg; Russell). C. T. Fritsch adds rightly that some pseudepigrapha are anonymous rather than pseudonymous (e.g., 3 and 4 Macc), and that, even where the label is correct, it "unduly emphasizes a feature of minor importance."

Problems with both terms lead many scholars to treat Jewish literature not by these often value-laden or anachronistic categories but by genre, geographic derivation or period (New-some, Nickelsburg, Schürer, Kraft and Nickelsburg, Stone). Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha appear side by side under the categories of wisdom literature, historical writings, liturgical pieces, and the like. Fritsch and Russell advocate using the term *apocrypha* to cover all Protestant noncanonical texts, following the usage of the modern synagogue ("exterior books"), although this suggestion, too, betrays a certain canonical bias.

Despite these difficulties, there is some value in retaining the terms (Charlesworth). The consideration of the Apocrypha as a collection bears witness to the early church's selection of certain Jewish writings that, although they did not belong to the Hebrew canon, were nevertheless held to be of special value and inspiration and exercised an important influence on the church from its inception. As long as one recognizes that these categories could remain somewhat fluid (witnessed by Jude's use of 1)

Enoch and As. Mos. and the inclusion of 3 and 4 Macc in many LXX codices), the terms remain valuable as a prioritizing of the vast wealth of Jewish literature that has come down to us.

## 2. Contents and Leading Ideas.

Although there is significant overlap between [p. 61] the two collections, this article will survey them separately for the sake of clarity and definition.

2.1. Apocrypha. The two historical books, 1 and 2 Maccabees, provide essential information about a series of events that shaped Jewish consciousness during the later Second Temple period. The forced hellenization program of the high priests Jason and Menelaus (175–164 B.C.), the rise of the Hasmonean family as the saviors of Israel and the combining of the high priesthood and kingship under that one dynasty had long-lasting ramifications for the period. The ethos of the later Zealot movement (see Revolutionary Movements), the notion of a military messiah (see Messianism) and the aversion toward lowering the boundaries between Jew and Gentile (e.g., Jewish resistance to Paul's mission) all have strong roots in this period. It was also during this period that the major sects within Judaism took shape—frequently in reaction against (e.g., Qumran Essenes, Pharisees) or in support of (Sadducees) the Hasmonean administration of the temple. Second Maccabees also provides an important early witness to the belief in the resurrection of the righteous and to a growing angelology.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira, written in Jerusalem in about 180 B.C., supports commitment to Torah as the only path to honor and as the way of true wisdom. It contains instruction on a wide array of topics, but its teachings on prayer, forgiveness, almsgiving and the right use of wealth have left an indelible impression on later Jewish ethical instructions and on the early church. Wisdom of Solomon, a product of Egyptian Judaism from the turn of the era, also promotes the Jewish way of life, emphasizing the eternal importance of God's verdict on one's life, the rewards and nature of wisdom and the actions of God on behalf of God's people, Israel. The author takes the personification of Wisdom to its highest level, and this became very influential for the early church's reflection on the divinity and preexistence of Jesus. Wisdom of Solomon helps Jews remain dedicated to Torah also through a demonstration of the folly of Gentile religion, much of which is paralleled in Paul's attacks on Gentile depravity and on idolatry. Here we might mention also the Letter of Jeremiah, which reinforces Jews' conviction that idols are nothing and that Gentiles are alienated from true religion (see Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah, Additions to).

Although it is not properly a wisdom book, 4 Maccabees also promotes adherence to Judaism, assuring Jewish readers through a philosophical demonstration that strict obedience to Torah trains one in all the cardinal virtues so highly prized and regarded by the Greco-Roman culture (see Vice and Virtue Lists). Indeed, Jews trained by Torah surpass all others in the exercise of virtue, as the courage and endurance of the martyrs of the hellenization crisis (the subjects of the author's praise) show (see Hellenism). Particularly those commandments that separate Jews from people of other races—those laws that frequently occasion the contempt of non-Jews—are shown to lead to virtue and honor.

The Apocrypha also contains numerous edifying tales that provide useful windows into the piety of the period. Hebrew Esther was expanded to bring direct references to God and expressions of piety (prayer, dietary purity) into the story (see Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah, Additions to). Tobit, a story from the Diaspora and perhaps the oldest book in the Apocrypha, tells a tale of God's providence, the activity of angels and demons, the efficacy of prayer, and exorcism. The story promotes almsgiving and acts of charity within the Jewish community, as well as the value of kinship and endogamy (see Family and Household). Judith, possibly a Palestinian work from the Maccabean period, tells of a heroine who used her charm to trap and kill a Gentile oppressor. The story affirms the importance of prayer, dietary purity, the virtue of chastity and God's care for God's people in times of adversity.

Third Maccabees may also be classified as an edifying legend that provides a saga for Diaspora Judaism that parallels the story of 2 Maccabees. It affirms God's special care and closeness to Jews

living in the Diaspora and separated from the Promised Land, and it attests to the tensions between faithful Jews, apostate Jews and the dominant Gentile culture. First Esdras may be counted among this group, although it is more a rewriting of biblical books (2 Chron 35:1–36:23; Ezra; Neh 7:38–8:12). The only original portion of this book is a courtly tale about the wisdom of Zerubbabel (1 Esdr 3:1–5:6). Two tales featuring the hero Daniel (originally independent tales) appear in the expanded, Greek version of that book (see Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah, Additions to). The first, [p. 62] Susanna, like 1 Esdras 3:1–5:6, celebrates the wisdom of a Jewish leader. The second, Bel and the Dragon, demonstrates the folly of idolatry in Daniel's undermining of the credibility of an image of Bel and a living serpent as gods.

A number of liturgical texts are included among the Apocrypha. Psalm 150 recalls God's choice of David and David's triumph over the Philistine giant—surely a potent image for the place of Israel among the giant Gentile kingdoms that held sway over Israel throughout this period save for the time of the Hasmonean dynasty. Jewish poets were watchful for points in the biblical story that called for a prayer or a psalm but did not record them. Two additions to Daniel and the Prayer of Manasseh supply what the narratives lack: a prayer of repentance and call for help in the fiery furnace (Prayer of Azariah), a psalm of deliverance (Song of the Three Young Men) and another penitential prayer (Prayer of Manasseh) that affirms that no sinner is beyond God's mercy and power to forgive. Although essentially a pseudepigraphic prophetic book, Baruch also contains much liturgical material. The opening chapters (Bar 1:1–3:8) present penitential prayers affirming God's justice in bringing upon Israel and Judah the curses of Deuteronomy but also open the door to the hope of return as God is remembered and obeyed afresh in the land of exile. There follows a wisdom psalm, identifying wisdom wholly and exclusively with the Torah of Moses in a manner reminiscent of Ben Sira (Bar 3:9–4:4). The final sections take on a more prophetic cast, introducing oracles promising the gathering of the Diaspora Jews, the judgment of the cities that oppressed the Jews and the exaltation of Zion.

Finally, the collection includes an apocalypse, 2 Esdras (or 4 Ezra). The author writes in response to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and even more directly in response to God's slowness in punishing Rome, the instrument of destruction. In its negation of hope for this age, its hope for reward in the age to come, its visions of the many-headed eagle and the man from the sea, this text provides an important window into Jewish apocalypticism that offers instructive parallels for NT apocalyptic material.

Throughout this corpus, one notices the prominence of the covenant theology of Deuteronomy—the conviction, rooted in the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28–32, that the nation and the individuals who follow Torah will be rewarded, and the nation or individual who departs from Torah will be punished. During this tumultuous period, this view was frequently altered to seek that reward or punishment in the afterlife (whether by resurrection, as in 2 Macc, or in the immortality of the soul, as in Wis), but it was never abandoned. Much of the literature is vitally concerned with God's care for God's people, what it means to live as a faithful and obedient people and how to respond to the pressures that threaten that loyalty.

**2.2.** *Pseudepigrapha*. Among the Pseudepigrapha are found samples of a wide variety of genres: apocalypses, testaments, expansions of biblical narratives, wisdom literature, philosophical literature, liturgical texts, historical works, poetry and drama all have their representatives.

Many of the Pseudepigrapha fall into the genre of apocalypse. Of these the most important and accessible may be 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch. The oldest strata of 1 Enoch, which is a composite work, may date from the third century B.C. This work presents a journey to the places prepared for the punishment of the wicked and reward of the righteous, an advanced angelology based on the story of the "Watchers" (cf. Gen 6:1–4; see Angels of the Nations) and a scheme of history placing the recipients near the time of God's breaking into the fabric of history to execute judgment. The Similitudes (1 Enoch 37–71), composed perhaps during the first century A.D., bear witness to developments of the figure of the Son of Man and thus provide relevant material for the study of that title in the Gospels. The work as a

whole left its mark on Jude (which quotes 1 Enoch 1:9) and especially Revelation. Like 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch is an apocalyptic response to the destruction of Jerusalem. It also counsels renewed commitment to Torah as the path to God's vindication of the chastised nation, assuring readers of the nearness of God's deliverance and the certainty of the chastisement of Rome. Other apocalypses of note include 2 Enoch, the Sibylline Oracles, the Apocryphon of Ezekiel, the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Treatise of Shem.

Closely related to apocalypses are the texts that fall within the genre of testament. These are typically deathbed speeches by great figures of Israel's past, and they present a narrative review of the figure's life (often as a model for virtuous living), ethical exhortations and [p. 63] frequently eschatological predictions, closing with the death and burial of the hero. The most important of these are the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which preserve important examples of developments in angelology, demonology, the priestly and regal functions of the Messiah and ethics. The *Testament of Job* highlights once again the folly of idolatry but also provides important material for the development of the figure of Satan (see Belial). The *Testament of Moses*, essentially an expansion of Deuteronomy 31–34, attests to the regard shown Moses as prophet, mediator and perpetual intercessor, thus providing useful background for NT reflections on Moses. The stance of nonviolent resistance advocated by this book stands in stark contrast to more militaristic ideologies of the period, and the idea of a day of repentance that precedes the coming of God's kingdom parallels Jesus' summons to repentance as a preparation for God's coming (cf. Mk 1:14–15).

Of the expansions of biblical narratives, the most important are *Jubilees* and *Martyrdom of Isaiah* (see Ascension of Isaiah). Dating from the late second century B.C., *Jubilees* rewrites the stories of Genesis and Exodus and is of great value for its witness to the development of a theology of Torah. The law revealed to Moses is presented as an eternal law, written on heavenly tablets and obeyed even by archangels. The patriarchal narratives are retold to emphasize their obedience to the Torah, particularly ritual and liturgical observances. The book also reinforces strong boundaries between Jew and Gentile (especially Idumeans) and locates the origin of evil in the activity of Satan and his angels rather than in Adam's weakness. The author looks forward to an imminent renewal of obedience to Torah that will result in a return to primeval longevity. *Martyrdom of Isaiah* tells of the apostasy of Manasseh and the arrest and execution of Isaiah (he was sawn in two; cf. Heb 11:37) at the instigation of a false prophet, Belkira, a demon working to lead Jerusalem astray. In its present form, the *Martyrdom* has been thoroughly Christianized, presenting Isaiah as an explicit witness to Jesus and the history of the early church (*Mart. Isa.* 3:13–31).

Within this category we might also consider the *Letter of Aristeas*, written in Greek near the end of the second century B.C. This work is not directly based on a biblical narrative or character but is more of an edifying tale in defense of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the rational character of a life lived according to Torah. It tells of the wisdom of the Jewish scholars who translated the Torah into Greek and the compatibility of obedience to Torah with the best traditions of Greek ethical philosophy, and it upholds the reliability of the LXX. Other notable expansions of biblical narratives include *Joseph and Asenath*, *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, otherwise known as Pseudo-Philo.

Among the Pseudepigrapha are also found liturgical texts. The collection of the eighteen *Psalms of Solomon* reflects upon the corruption of the Hasmonean house in its final decades, the intervention of Pompey the Great (who besieged Jerusalem at the request of a claimant for the Hasmonean throne and entered the holy place of the temple) and the death of Pompey in Egypt. All these events are seen as demonstrating the principle of Deuteronomy that departure from the law brings punishment, but also that the Gentile instrument of punishment will not go free. The psalms speak of God's generous provision for all creation, promote the way of life of the righteous person, critique hypocrisy and pride, affirm the value of God's correction and depict the advent of the messianic age under the leadership of a Son of David, the Lord Messiah. Of special interest also are the Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers, which show the

blending of Jewish and Christian piety in the early church and which, stripped of their Christian additions, provide a unique view into the piety of the synagogue. Among these poetical texts may also be found several additional psalms of David and the *Odes of Solomon*, a Christian collection with close affinities to the Fourth Gospel.

A number of wisdom texts, often showing the degree to which Jews could adapt and use Greek philosophy, maxims and ethics, are also included in the collection, as well as literary works (poetry and drama), which again frequently show conscious imitation of Greek forms. Finally, the collection includes fragments of historians, which probe the early history of the Jews in a manner reminiscent of Josephus's *Antiquities* (see Jewish Literature: Historians and Poets).

## 3. Significance.

The period between the Testaments is not a silent age. The texts contained in the Apocrypha [p. 64] and Pseudepigrapha introduce the modern reader to many important and influential voices from the Hellenistic and Roman periods (see Jewish History: Greek Period; Jewish History: Roman Period). Without these texts our picture of the Judaism within which the church was born would be most incomplete. These voices demonstrate the diversity within Judaism during the Second Temple period, a view that has replaced early twentieth-century views about a "normative" (legalistic) Judaism before A.D. 70 (Charlesworth vs. Charles). It was a dynamic period of "ferment" within Judaism (Russell 1993), of wrestling with Jewish identity and covenant loyalty amid great social pressures and political upheavals.

The study of these texts leads to a deeper understanding of the Judaism and range of Jewish traditions that shape the proclamation of Jesus and the early church, and this is not the Judaism of the Hebrew Scriptures alone. The intertestamental voices highlight parts of the OT tradition that remained especially important but also attest to new developments, emphases and lines of interpretation that were not original to, but rather were assumed by, the early church. The cosmology, angelology, eschatology, christology and ethics of the early church owe much to the developments of this vibrant period. Some of these texts shed light on the ideology of those who opposed the Jesus movement or the Pauline mission. Many others were the conversation partners of founding figures within the church, and our full appreciation of the work of the latter depends on our acquaintance with the former.

See also APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE; DEAD SEA SCROLLS; JEWISH LITERATURE: HISTORIANS AND POETS; PSEUDONYMITY AND PSEUDEPIGRAPHY; RABBINIC LITERATURE; REWRITTEN BIBLE IN PSEUDEPIGRAPHA AND QUMRAN.

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D. A. deSilva, DNTB, s.v. "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," 58-64.

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