

THE OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHS by J.M. Charlesworth (ed.):
Volume 1 Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments. Darton, Longman and Todd,
London, 1983. pp. i, 995. £30.

The term pseudepigrapha, meaning writings with false superscriptions, is no longer a satisfactory term for identifying the writings in this volume (or those to be presented in Volume 2, which will contain expansions of the 'Old Testament' and other legends, Wisdom and philosophical literature, prayers, psalms and odes, as well as fragments of lost Judeo-hellenistic works). For want of a better it is used here to include writings, mostly originating between 200 BCE and 200 CE, which belong to the Jewish or Jewish-Christian traditions prompted by the OT, often attributed to ideal figures of Israel's past and purporting to contain God's word. However popular some of these writings may have been in various Jewish and Christian communities, they failed in the end to establish themselves in what later became the scriptural canons. Because of their date of origin they have long been regarded as important aids to the interpretation of the NT; but modern scholarship tends to study them in their own right as evidence of 'the rich vitality and diversity of Judaism during the early centuries'.

Since these writings hide behind the obscurity not only of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin texts, but worse still, of Syriac, Arabic, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Old Slavonic and Rumanian texts, most of us must read them in translation. English readers have depended since 1913 on R.H. Charles' *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (due to be replaced, it is said, by an edition edited by H.F.D. Sparks whose *Apocryphal Old Testament* was recently announced). Charles produced a splendid pioneering volume, and his researches became a dominant influence especially in the study of apocalyptic. But in seventy years a great deal has happened: discoveries of documents, improvement in linguistic knowledge and critical techniques, an expanded knowledge of the ancient world, and a massive accumulation of research. To cope with these changes, Professor Charlesworth, himself a notable authority in this field, has surrounded himself with twenty-three contributors: fifteen from U.S.A., two from Holland, and one each from Australia, Canada, Greece, Israel, Poland and U.K.

For each writing there is a standard scheme: texts available, original language, date, provenance, historical importance, theological importance, relation to canonical books, relation to apocryphal books, and cultural importance. The scheme is applied flexibly. Indeed the introductions are rather variable. The thirty pages introducing 3 Enoch provide a major discussion of this source of Merkabah mysticism. The introduction to the extant Sibylline Oracles, and the introduction to the several sections of them, at last make it possible to sort out what is important and where it is important in those tiresome writings. On the other hand, the eight page introduction to 1 Enoch is less informative than it might be, too much taken up with discussing Milik's venturesome suggestions, and not revised to take account of Knibb's 1978 edition. This is a document that cannot fail to interest the exegete of the Gospels since in chapters 37–71 it contains the Similitudes which use the expression 'the' or 'that son of man'. At least it does in the oldest Ethiopic manuscript of 150. There are Greek MSS of 4 and 6 C, quotations in writings of 2 or 3C, and Aramaic fragments from 2 to 1C BCE. Not a single one contains anything from chapters 37–71. Yet E. Isaac, the editor and translator, does not make that information easily available or explain why he is convinced that 1 Enoch contained the Similitudes by the end of 1C CE.

It must also be said that his notes to the text are confined to textual and translational variants. It is not easy to discover what he thinks Son of Man means in Ethiopic, why he was persuaded to adopt 'Son of Man' when he prefers a different translation, and what he means by saying that 'son of man' is to be distinguished from 'Son of Man' (notes on pages 34, 43, 49, 50). Professor Charlesworth says that he has asked his contributors to aim at faithfulness to the transmitted text by means of literal renderings. But in many texts there is no such thing as a literal rendering unless the

translator has made up his mind about the context and the world of discourse. Hence in a collection of translations such as this, the reader is dependent on the editor to give as much information as possible. In 1 Enoch it is too sparse, though elsewhere there is a wealth of information, as in 2 Enoch by F.I. Andersen and in the Treatise of Shem by Professor Charlesworth himself. These all fall in the first and major section of 'Apocalyptic Literature and Related Works'. The second section of 'Testaments' begins with the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs by H.C. Kee, whose notes are also instructive, though it is a pity that his edition could not be revised to take account of de Jonge's edition of 1978.

This new edition will contain everything that appeared in Charles except Pirke Aboth (which belongs to Mishnah) and the Zadokite Document (which belongs to Qumran). It includes in full what Charles included in shortened form: the Martyrdom of Isaiah, 2 Enoch, all extant Sibyllines, and the full text of 4 Ezra. Twelve writings appear in English for the first time, or for the first time in full version. Of the seven that appear in this volume, none is dated earlier than 2C CE, some as late as 9C—which is a little disappointing when the collection is supposed to be contained between 200 BCE and 200CE. There is possibly a temptation for someone who discovers, shall we say, a 19C Ruritanian MS of a Jewish effusion about the patriarchs to argue that it must have been a copy of an earlier writing which, because it contains echoes of Revelation, may even have been as early as the first century. Nevertheless this volume undoubtedly contains writings, not yet very well known, from the beginning of our era, viz. the Treatise of Shem, the Apocryphon of Ezekiel, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, the Testaments of Job, Abraham and Moses—none of which is in Charles. Students and scholars will therefore be grateful for this collection, even if they are wearied before they have read all of it. It is difficult to judge the quality of each contribution without working carefully through each document, asking exegetical questions, and attempting to discover the internal presuppositions of a writing and its coherence with other parts of the tradition. All in all, this is a necessary addition not only to theological libraries but also to the book-stock of all students who prefer original sources to secondary writings. Professor Charlesworth and his colleagues are to be congratulated and thanked for their work.

K. GRAYSTON

PRIESTLAND RIGHT AND WRONG by Gerald Priestland *Collins*. 1983, Pp 208.

Gerald Priestland must be an almost perfect example of the compassionate middle-class Englishman. So he speaks with the voice of a dominant element in our culture, and therefore most of what he says seems familiar and unremarkable. The thirteen-part television series on which this book is based was a response to public demand after the successful 'Priestland's Progress'. Using Priestland's undoubted skill at communicating his ideas and feelings with liveliness, honesty and warmth, the aim is to make ethical debates alive and approachable for ordinary people. Each chapter corresponds to one of the programmes, and each deals with a different topic, for example, war, politics, money, sex, religion, pleasure, medicine, etc. So treatment of each is necessarily superficial, with a rambling conversational style which it is better to hear than to read. The only justification for publishing this book is the popularity of its author. The publishers hope it will bring encouragement to many, and it will certainly do so for the Priestland fans. When a kindly authority shows he shares one's deepest beliefs and dilemmas, then one is bound to be encouraged. And Gerald Priestland is an authoritative figure, in spite of his unassuming style. His is the self-conscious authority built up by his education at Charterhouse and Oxford, his years abroad as a BBC correspondent, and now his identity as a genial, slightly self-mocking patriarch.

For those, like me, who do not share his assumptions, it will be apparent that this is in fact a very political book. He is promoting a Christian Centre position committed to