

ON THE VALUE OF INTERTESTAMENTAL JEWISH LITERATURE FOR NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

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Many evangelicals working in Biblical studies live with a discomfiting uneasiness that we usually hold only at the fringes of consciousness. As serious, responsible professionals we want to stay close to the cutting edges of our discipline and to contribute to its ongoing development. But, committed as we are to the once-for-all character of Biblical revelation, we are haunted by questions of the appropriateness of seeking to discover the new in what we believe to be timeless, changeless, self-sufficient and eternally relevant. On the other hand we are convinced that even conservative scholarship cannot stand still. Although our "givens"—God, his truth and expectations as revealed in Scripture, and the basic nature and needs of man—do not change, there is constant motion in both the human and scholarly dramas of which we are a part.

Emphases, approaches and points of primary concern change from generation to generation. New discoveries, re-evaluations of data, reassessment of assumptions and of long-accepted methods make possible the correction or readjustment of previously assumed interpretations or attitudes and the discovery of new and clarifying insights into the spiritual truths committed to us.

Philosophical and methodological assumptions and cultural, societal pressures recently have caused major disruptions in the field of Biblical theology as a whole.¹ The after-shocks still rattle windows and collapse walls even within the evangelical world. No longer is Biblical theology automatically assumed to be a collecting agency for the data of systematics. A glance at the table of contents of some newer works reveals radical departures from approaches taken in the past by traditional Biblical theologians. There are now differences in the kinds of questions being asked, in the ways in which material is presented, and in the emphases being made. Contemporary circumstances and conditions have forced attention upon issues once not viewed as problem areas or, if so recognized, seldom raised because it was assumed that there was generally a settled conservative consensus on them. Thus a generation ago problems involving life-style and conduct codes, cultural customs and expectations, humanitarian activities and social justice, liberation and revolution within a Christian context, male-female roles, proper forms of expression for corporate Christian life and worship, missionary and evangelistic strategies, or the relation between Christian theology and the social sciences, if considered at all, received what to modern students appear as superficial attention and simplistic solutions.

In the realm of methodology, Biblical theology is subject to influence from

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¹Cf. B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); K. Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *IDB*, A-D, 418 ff.; J. Barr, "Biblical Theology," *IDBSup*, 104 ff.; G. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (second ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

developments in the study and application of hermeneutics.² In the realm of the data of the framework within which the evangelical NT theologian must approach the Scriptures, it seems to me that significant benefit is to be derived from developments being made in the study of literature from Second Commonwealth or intertestamental Judaism.

This opinion is of course based on certain presuppositions about both hermeneutics and the nature, function and methodology of Biblical theology in general and NT theology in particular. I believe there is a genuine Biblical theology. It distinguishes itself from other theological disciplines by focusing attention on God and his requirements as he reveals himself and acts within history. Furthermore, although there is within Biblical theology a rich diversity of emphasis and expression, I believe there is also a unified, divinely inspired, authoritative revelation of "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."³ Therefore at least the initial task of the Biblical theologian is to lay bare within its original context the meaning intended by the divine and human authors.⁴

The NT theologian, then, must begin with a descriptive task. In this enterprise historical considerations play at least a twofold role. History is the setting and framework for Biblical revelation and is also a part of that revelation itself. As the Biblical theologian wrestles with the historical data of Scripture he is not describing merely ordinary happenings at a particular time and place. His attention is focused on the events through which God made himself known and performed his mighty works. Within the Biblical record, history and theology are inseparable.

Historical considerations must also provide a safeguard for minimizing the human propensity for reading one's own ideas into the text, for *eisegesis* rather than *exegesis*. If the interpreter allows his own historical and cultural circumstances, the issues of his own day, subjective needs, relational goals, or his own philosophical and psychological orientations to determine the force of the Biblical text, he has no control against so modernizing it that the divine intent is lost. But within the providence of God the words and deeds in Scripture took place and were recorded in specific historical and cultural settings. Because of the passage of time these settings are now "frozen." Through research we are able to reconstruct at least the general features of Biblical times and cultures. Thus it is possible to ask and, to a limited extent, answer the question, "What did these words of the Bible mean to those who wrote them and to those who first read them in their own times?"

It is only after wrestling with the content, implications and methods of applying the Word of God in its original setting that a second phase of the task of the Biblical theologian may commence. Then, and only then, may he seek to speak of the meaning and implications of the Bible for his own time and place.⁵

²Cf. J. J. Scott, Jr., "Some Problems in Hermeneutics for Contemporary Evangelicals," *JETS* 22 (1979).

³*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, answer to question 3.

⁴There is disagreement as to whether it is possible, proper, or desirable to seek a single valid meaning in a literary text. I agree with E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (*Validity in Interpretation* [New Haven: Yale, 1967]), that the interpreter must seek the meaning intended by the author. For criticism of this position see R. E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1969).

⁵I recognize this to be a controversial statement. Traditionally, Biblical theology has been considered

Second Commonwealth Jewish literature must play a significant role as the theologian seeks to understand the NT as first given. Through it the modern world may touch the ancient. Here the society, customs, issues and world views assumed by Biblical writers are illustrated and clarified. Here the nature of "the hopes and fears of all the years" that were met in Bethlehem on that first Christmas night begin to change from shades and shadows into substantive forms.

The literature of which we here speak is varied and complex. Its general categories include the LXX, apocrypha, the so-called pseudepigrapha,⁶ QL, inscriptions, official and private documents, the writings of Philo and Josephus, and parts of the rabbinic literature as well as the NT itself. Even if we limit consideration primarily to the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha and some of the QL, we still face a bewildering maze of categories, interrelationships and introductory questions.

Second Commonwealth Jewish literature comes from a broad span of time within which such events as the beginning of the threat from Hellenistic culture, the Maccabean revolt, the beginning of Roman rule and the overthrow of the Jewish state in A.D. 70 introduced significant changes. The literary forms include history, psalms, wisdom, legends, apocalyptic prophecies, poetry, apology and more. Some of these writings reflect the views of a fairly broad mainstream of Jewish life and thought, while others betray sectarian concerns. The outlooks or world views behind these writings range from a fairly optimistic, practical preoccupation with the here and now of some wisdom writers to the futuristic, otherworldly speculations of some apocalypticists. Some books appear to have been composed by a single author, while others came into their present form as previously independent units were brought together over a long period of time.

Within the purely Jewish writings from the intertestamental period, those springing from traditional Semitic outlooks may be distinguished from books showing an influence from Hellenistic thought. Some ostensibly Jewish writings contain apparently Christian interpolations. Some documents from the later parts of this period may have been written from a Jewish outlook by Christians, making it difficult for modern students to determine whether the writing is more Jewish than Christian or vice versa.⁷

Utilization of intertestamental Jewish literature by NT theologians will obviously be facilitated by clarification of the critical questions surrounding them. But utilization need not await the resolution of these issues. The specific date, provenance, genre and intent of a particular writing may remain in doubt. Yet such intertestamental books as those in the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha and QL

solely a descriptive discipline. The application of its data to present situations has been regarded the province of systematic theology. Existential Biblical theologians and some devotional writers are concerned only with the present meaning and application of the Scriptures. I believe the Biblical theologian has the obligation to attempt to apply to the contemporary world the eternal spiritual and moral principles distilled from a study of the Bible in its original historical setting. For a fuller statement see Scott, "Problems."

⁶On the problem of defining and detailing the list of titles of the pseudepigrapha see J. H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 17-25; L. Rost, *Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976) 30 ff.

⁷R. A. Kraft summarizes the critical problems encountered in a study of the pseudepigrapha in "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity" (unpublished paper read before the meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies at Duke University, Durham, NC, August 1976).

remain, individually and collectively, windows through which we may catch glimpses of various aspects of that bygone world and culture into which God sent his Son, "when the fulness of time came" (Gal 4:4).

Modern scholarly attempts to use the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha in the study of the NT seem to have begun during the last half of the nineteenth century. Considerable stimulus was provided by the publication of collections of some of the basic documents in the present century.⁸ Much of this early activity sought to identify parallel words, phrases, or thoughts between the Jewish documents and the NT. Another line of investigation focused on the doctrines in the Second Commonwealth Jewish writings that were assumed in some way to be closely related to NT teachings.⁹ The significance attached to this data—and interpretations drawn from it—differed widely. Frequently it was assumed that the Jewish documents represent some sort of previous developmental stage for NT writings or sources from which their authors freely borrowed concepts and terminology.

Recent scholarly investigation has sought to clarify methodology, to face critical-introductory questions and to guard against the dangers inherent within excessive "paralleomania."¹⁰ There now seems to be a more holistic approach to the study of the historical backgrounds for the origin of Christianity. Documents are searched for clues to an understanding of the various aspects of the many-faceted nature of intertestamental Judaism. Evidence from each writing is treated as part of a mosaic, only the broad outline and limited details of which have begun to emerge.¹¹

The evangelical may interpret and evaluate some of the texts in ways other than do scholars with different presuppositions. He will certainly reject some theories and claims arising from current studies. Yet one committed to the interpretation of the Scriptures in their original grammatical-historical-literary context will certainly benefit from much that is being done.

An acquaintance with intertestamental Jewish literature may assist the student with a specific problem text. Through it he will gain familiarity with the language, verbal images and literary genres through which the NT writers express themselves. Here too he may meet first-hand the interests, concerns, desires and frustrations of the NT world. A general acquaintance with pre-Christian Jewish writings will be of special value to the NT theologian and keep before him the broad but complex society within which Christianity had its origin. It is to some of these more general contributions from studies of Second Commonwealth Jewish literature that I believe to be of special importance for NT theology that I now turn.

⁸E. Kautzsch, *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1900), 2 vols.; in English by R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2 vols. For a brief appreciation and commentary on Charles and his work see W. F. Howard, *The Romance of New Testament Scholarship* (London: Epworth, 1949) 105 ff.

⁹See, e.g., R. H. Charles, *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (London: Black, 1896) lxxvi ff.; *The Book of Jubilees* (London: Black, 1902) lxxxii ff.; *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (London: Black, 1908) lxxxvii ff.; and especially *The Book of Enoch* (second ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1912) xcvi ff.

¹⁰Cf. S. Sandmel, "Paralleomania," *JBL* 81 (1962) 1 ff.

¹¹On some of the new directions in pseudepigraphical research see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*; Kraft, "Pseudepigrapha"; M. E. Stone, "Pseudepigrapha," *IDBSup*, 710-712.

The intertestamental documents provide inescapable evidence of the variety that characterized first-century Judaism. There was a common Jewish religious-historical heritage based on the OT. But through four eventful centuries numerous groups arose with different understandings of the OT and whose conceptions and practical expressions of religion were at variance with each other.¹² So widespread was the diversity within Second Commonwealth Judaism that it is almost impossible to speak dogmatically about *the* pre-Christian Jewish view of anything.

As Jews from the various segments of Judaism entered the Christian faith, their diverse backgrounds could not but affect their understandings of Christianity. These differences undoubtedly led to conflicting evaluations of the significance of the appearance of the Messiah, differing concerns and emphases within which the implications of the new faith were worked out, as well as the formation of sects or parties within Christianity itself.¹³ Some understanding of the nature and influence of the conglomerate character of pre-Christian Judaism can assist the NT theologian as he wrestles with unity and diversity within the NT.

Another benefit to be derived from an acquaintance with intertestamental Jewish literature is an appreciation of the significance for both Judaism and Christianity of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Jewish state in A.D. 70. I am convinced that the crucial developments of Christianity had taken place before this event. Thus although the tragedy shook Jewish Christianity to its core, the theological effects of the fall of Jerusalem on the Church at large were minimal.¹⁴ Yet the psychological and demographic results on the emerging Church were considerable and must be taken into account by any theologian seeking to assess his data within an historical framework.

The fall of Jerusalem brought the Second Jewish Commonwealth to an end. The rabbinic Judaism that succeeded it was quite different, a difference graphically demonstrated by a comparison of the literature of the two periods. The Targums, Talmuds, midrashim and other rabbinic writings certainly contain traditions and relate conditions from the time of Jesus. But the codification of these documents came afterward. The present form and much of the content of these writings came from a time when and reflect conditions present while Judaism was attempting to adjust to a situation in which it had no national identity or temple and was undergoing a process of standardization. Thus knowledge of in-

¹²Cf. E. Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976) 55-145; M. Simon, *Jewish Sects of the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); L. Bronner, *Sects and Separatism During the Second Jewish Commonwealth* (New York: Bloch, 1967).

¹³Cf. W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth* (London: Mowbray, 1954); S. L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church* (second ed.; London: SCM, 1964).

I attempted to demonstrate some of the effects of the variety within pre-Christian Judaism on first-century Jewish Christianity in my "The Church of Jerusalem, A.D. 30-100: An Investigation of the Growth of Internal Factions and the Extension of Its Influence in the Larger Church" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation; Manchester, England: University of Manchester, 1969); see also my "Parties in the Church of Jerusalem as Seen in the Book of Acts," *JETS* 18 (1975) 217-227.

¹⁴This is the position for which I argue in "The Church of Jerusalem, A.D. 30-100." For opposing views see S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (second ed.; London: SPCK, 1957), and E. B. Bratcher, "The Effect of the Fall of Jerusalem on the Early Christian Church" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1953).

tertestamental Jewish literature will protect the NT theologian from using Talmudic and similar writings uncritically and assuming for the NT era concepts and practices that arose centuries later. It is just such a methodological error that limits the reliability and usefulness of Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.¹⁵

Second Commonwealth Jewish literature also documents Albert Schweitzer's contention that the NT world was alive with eschatological hope and ferment.¹⁶ But a wide reading of the writings from this period introduces at least two notes of caution. Although there is at least an underlying eschatological orientation in the world view behind much of the pseudepigrapha and the QL, the interpreter must beware of assuming that this was the case throughout all intertestamental Judaism. In Philo, most of the apocrypha and Josephus there is almost a complete absence of eschatology as presently understood.

Furthermore, the documents show a variety of eschatological expectations. Most Second Commonwealth Jewish eschatology is nationalistic and Torah-centered in its emphasis. But some is primarily concerned with cultic, social, spiritual-moral or cosmic renewal. Apocalyptic features characterize much pre-Christian eschatological writing, but not all. In some documents that contain apocalyptic elements these features may be only superficial. The list of differences between eschatological events in various intertestamental books, or even within the same book,¹⁷ is virtually endless.¹⁸ Some speak of the coming of a single individual—the Messiah, Son of Man, Prophet, Elijah or others—while other writers make no reference to an individual expected to appear during the end time. Some books speak of the expectation of several eschatological figures. Some writers hold the possibility that Gentiles may share God's future blessing; others see only annihilation or damnation for all non-Jews. Some writers believed that the messianic age would be eternal and that the new world would appear immediately with its inception. Others speak of a period of undetermined but limited duration, or of a time of four hundred, a thousand, or two thousand years to be followed by "the world (or age) to come."

One point of at least general agreement within eschatological documents of the first and preceding centuries is illustrated by 4 Ezra 6:6 ff., where God says, "The end shall come through me and not through another." This prompts Ezra to

¹⁵Third edition (1886; reprint Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953). The problem is how to distinguish between information in the rabbinic writings that is a genuine reflection of pre-A.D.-70 Judaism from that which reads later developments back into that period. Statements credited to first- or second-generation rabbis are usually assumed to be acceptable sources for the period. Quotations from later rabbis, and sayings and opinions from unnamed authorities, must be used with great caution or rejected to guard against anachronisms. See C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, eds., *A Rabbinic Anthology* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960) 709-737.

¹⁶Cf. A. Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (London: Black, 1910).

¹⁷Cf. Charles' discussion of differing eschatological elements in the various sections of 1 Enoch: *Enoch*, xlvii ff.; ciii ff.

¹⁸For general discussions of pre-Christian Jewish eschatology with specific references see E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1885), 2. 2, 126-187; J. Bonsirven, *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Christ* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) 175 ff.; Ch. Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1939) 135 ff.; Scott, "The Church of Jerusalem, A.D. 30-100," 86-98.

ask, "What will be the dividing of the times? Or when will be the end of the first age and the beginning of the age that follows?" Here and elsewhere in eschatologically-oriented documents we have the assumption of a succession of ages differentiated by the direct intervention of God and resulting in radical changes in the God-man relationship.¹⁹ No NT theologian can afford to ignore the fact and implication of this expectation, especially in view of Jesus' announcement that with his appearance "the crisis time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God has just arrived" (Mark 1:15) and the early Christians' belief that they were in fact living in the time of fulfillment (cf. Acts 2:16; Gal 4:4; Heb 8:13; 9:25). In short, the theology of the NT assumes that in some way the future, although not yet fully consummated, is—from a Jewish perspective—present.²⁰ As a result, for the NT Christian all things—OT Jewish institutions, covenant, law, temple, cleanliness ritual, government, attitudes toward Gentiles, and so on—had in some way been altered.

A study of the eschatology of the literature from the Second Jewish Commonwealth benefits the NT theologian at numerous other points. The sense of urgency of the NT is paralleled by an awareness of living near the end in 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the QL and other documents. Various aspects of Jewish notions about the kingdom of God, a concept of paramount importance in the synoptic accounts of Jesus' teaching, are illustrated in the Testament (Assumption) of Moses, Psalms of Solomon, various sections of 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, and so forth. The fact and strength of the traditions combining political and spiritual deliverance that permeated the expectation of the personnel of the gospels from Zechariah (Luke 1:16 ff., esp. v 74) to the Emmaus travelers (24:21) is well attested by noncanonical writings, especially those coming from the period of Roman occupation.

Recent studies of Jewish hermeneutical principles, procedures and practices²¹ offer the hope of considerable help for the student of the NT. It has long been recognized that some difficult passages and concepts are clarified when the modern interpreter is able to identify the rabbinic methods with which the author worked.²² Of even greater significance is the fact that the way some NT writers handle the OT often provides important clues toward an understanding of their theology.²³

¹⁹Cf. H. Sasse, "aiōn," *TDNT* 1, 202-208; W. L. Lane, "Ages," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (ed. E. H. Palmer; Wilmington: National Foundation for Christian Education, 1964), 1, 98-100.

²⁰Cf. O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (second ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962).

²¹Cf. M. Meilziner, *Introduction to the Talmud* (fifth ed. [1894]; New York: Bloch, 1968) 17 ff.; H. L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1931) 93 ff., and Gentile writers such as F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1886) 47 ff.

²²Cf. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (rev. ed.; London: SPCK, 1955); R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978). See the latter volume by Ellis for additional bibliography.

²³Cf. C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nesbit, 1952); *The Old Testament in the New* (Facet Books; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963); B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London: SCM, 1961); R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); F. F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

Recognition that the Qumran sectarians employed interpretative methods different from those of the rabbinic writings has opened the door to further studies of the hermeneutics of various pre-Christian groups.²⁴ I am not aware of any extensive, completely satisfactory study of interpretative procedures used by apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writers.²⁵ I suspect that continuing work in this area may reveal important insights into the thinking behind the way NT writers interpreted not only the Hebrew Scriptures but also the life and ministry of Jesus and other events in which they were involved and which they understood as parts of God's revelation within history.

Finally, the affirmation that the student finds within intertestamental Jewish literature numerous specific points of contact and the general background against which the NT is to be understood leaves the story only partly told. Familiarity with these writings demonstrates the uniqueness of Christianity as well. Jesus entered his world as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. His ministry conformed to the program of no single contemporary Jewish group. In his own person he gathered all previous constructions and expectations and molded and reshaped them to fit his Father's eternal purpose. He smashed walls of religious legalism, externalism and particularism to build instead a new order of salvation by grace, worship of God in spirit and truth, available to whoever believes—Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. Thus the NT theologian must take into account that, as the perfect pearl sparkles upon the dingy ocean floor, so Christianity shines as a gem of great price among the now dead shells of the Judaism within which it grew.

CONCLUSION

A by-product of the discovery of the QL has been the increased attention attracted to other writings from the Second Jewish Commonwealth. At the turn of the century Emil Schürer listed and discussed only about fifty Jewish writings of all sorts from this period.²⁶ In 1913 R. H. Charles published 32 documents as *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Fresh discoveries have been made, and additional intertestamental writings are being identified. In 1976 James H. Charlesworth was able to list sixty different books, fragments and authors (some of whose writings are now lost) of the pseudepigrapha alone.²⁷

There is now available an abundance of intertestamental Jewish literature. As yet only minimal ore has been taken from this rich lode. All too often, ignorance of content, baffling critical problems, prejudice against or fear of ancient non-canonical writings, abuses by scholars with antisupernatural biases or destructive intents, or simple lack of concern and misplaced priorities have caused many Biblical students, especially evangelicals, to leave this material in largely unworked mines.

I suspect that as the time span between the present and Biblical periods

²⁴F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

²⁵But see D. Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics in Palestine* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975); cf. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 19-50, 186-204; Sanders, *Paul*.

²⁶Schürer, *History*, 2. 3.

²⁷Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*.

lengthens, God in his providence has allowed more and more clarifying light on those times to become available. Evangelical scholars have generally dealt quite credibly with the QL material. We must now face the challenge and responsibility of coming to grips with the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha and other Jewish sources through which new and clarifying insights may be gained into the cultural institutions, world views, tensions and aspirations of those groups that were parts of the milieu of Jesus and the early Christians. We must learn to deal not only with the findings of those already at work in this field but also with the texts themselves. Our NT theologians may find help in doing exegesis of a particular passage. Even more, we must seek to formulate and utilize an accurate, overall view of the complexities of the socio-religious climate of first-century Judaism as it is portrayed in the sources from that period. The Biblical theologian must seek to interpret the NT as a whole against this background, the historical-cultural context within which "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21).