

The Doctrinal Teaching of the Apocrypha.¹

BY THE REV. W. O. E. OESTERLEY, D.D.,

Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of London ; Warden of the " Society of the Apocrypha."

THE books of the Apocrypha contain only part of the doctrinal teaching of the literature from which they have been quite arbitrarily distinguished. It is not possible here to consider all the works which must be consulted for a complete study of the period with which we are dealing ; but in restricting ourselves to the Apocrypha there is this compensation—that the more important of its books were recognized by official Judaism as containing good orthodox teaching, so that they supply a useful foundation for further study of the development of doctrine. In some cases, however, recourse must be had to the Apocalyptic Literature, for though the books of the Apocrypha afford a general criterion as to orthodox Jewish teaching from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100, they are in some respects inadequate.

It must be emphasized that the Old Testament is not the sole background of the Apocryphal books in the domain of doctrine ; there have been marked Persian and Greek influences in certain directions. The main current of Palestinian Judaism was affected by these, while the Judaism of the Dispersion in its turn was influenced by both Persian and Greek thought, and the effect of all this is traceable in the Apocrypha. The teaching of the various books must also be followed in chronological order. There are differences of opinion as to actual dates, but there is approximate unanimity as to the centuries to which the books, in almost all cases, belong. In some instances different parts of a book belong to different times.

The doctrine of Wisdom must be considered separately. Here we have to deal with the doctrines of God, of the Law, of Sin, of Grace and Free-will, of the Messiah, of the Future Life,

¹ A summary of the chapter on "The Doctrinal Teaching of the Apocrypha" in an important volume ("The Books of the Apocrypha") just published by Mr. Robert Scott. Price 16s. net.

of Angels, and with Demonology ; these cannot always be kept separate, as one leads into another. Only cursory mention will be made of those points where the teaching is identical with that of the Old Testament, though even in these cases the characteristic form in which a doctrine is exhibited will be noted. The main object is to show in what respects the books of the Apocrypha show an advance, or it may be a retrogression, in doctrine as compared with the Old Testament.

(a) THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.

Ecclesiasticus treats of the Unity of God, the Creator of all ; His eternity and omnipotence ; His activity in nature ; His wisdom, holiness, justice, loving-kindness, and mercy ; His Fatherhood of Israel, and sometimes of all flesh (see xlii. 15 to xliii. 33). Here the inspiration is drawn largely from the Psalms ; but in xlii. 16 and xliii. 28-32 Ben-Sira seems to go beyond anything to be found in the Old Testament. No book of the Apocrypha has such a variety of names for God as Tobit, which is also distinguished by a doctrine of angelic mediation and a universalistic spirit which is in marked contrast to Judith. In the Prayer of Manasses great stress is laid on the Divine compassion. In the secondary text of Ecclesiasticus, which is a Pharisaic recension of the work, the great characteristic is that religious individualism which did so much to foster spiritual worship. The heightened expression of the close relationship between God and His pious ones, which the more ardent religious temperament of the Pharisees demanded, can be illustrated by a comparison of i. 12 and xvii. 20 with the lines which immediately follow in either instance. This spirit reappears in the Psalms of Solomon.

In the original text of 1 Maccabees all mention of the name of God is deliberately avoided ; once or twice, as in iii. 18, a true faith in the omnipotence of God is expressed, and not infrequently there is trust in God as the God of Israel, Who will help His people against their foes. In all three of the documents which make up Baruch stress is laid on God's guidance

of Israel's destiny, and in the portion, iv. 5 to v. 9, the Divine compassion is constantly recalled. 2 (4) Esdras represents the best of the Old Testament teaching concerning the doctrine of God: the Unity of God, His Creatorship without any mediatorial agency, Israel as the chosen nation with which God has entered into a covenant relation, are all insisted upon by the writer, whose faith in God, and conviction that His love is for His people, remains, though he is presented with problems which are insoluble for man. In the Book of Wisdom the religious atmosphere is to a large extent alien to that of Palestine; the presentment of the doctrine of God is entirely different in its two parts, whether these are by two different authors or by one writing at different times in his life. The first part (ii. to xi. 1) is more Greek than Jewish. The idea of God is that of Greek philosophy: a transcendent God Who has no immediate contact with the world, but performs His will through an intermediary, who is Wisdom. In the second part God is again and again spoken of as interfering personally in mundane affairs; and in other respects also the Old Testament doctrine is represented, as in the need of right worship, and the mercy and justice of God.

(b) THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAW.

The stress laid in Ecclesiasticus on the importance of the Law, from both ethical and ritual points of view, shows this work to be a valuable link between the Judaism of post-exilic times and Rabbinical Judaism. The Law is eternal and Divine, and its pre-existence is implied in its identification with Wisdom. So far as is known this identification occurs here for the first time, but the way it is taken for granted shows that it cannot have been wholly new. The insistence on the need of observing the Law is characteristic of this book, as is the teaching on the spirit in which the precepts are to be carried out. In chap. xxiv. 7 *et seq.* the Law is only for Israel. In Tobit an earnest zeal for the Law is combined with deep devotion. This book indicates a development of legal observances;

prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, are strongly advocated, particularly almsgiving. The laws of tithe, marriage, honour to parents, keeping the feasts, purifications, and others, are inculcated. This love for the Law, combined with worship, offers a fine illustration of the truly pious Jew at this period. The teaching concerning the Law in Judith is strongly Pharisaic; while everything depends upon trust in God and obedience to Him, both are shown by keeping the Law. Only the practical observance is taught; there is no abstract conception. The observance of Sabbaths, new moons, and feasts, is emphasized. Reference is made to the sacrificial system and the gifts of the people, and in the poem xvi. 2-17 the right spirit in offering is the really important matter. In 1 Maccabees there is reflected the earnest zeal for the Law on the part of the patriots. In 2 Maccabees much stress is laid upon legal observances, and the whole attitude towards the Law is that of the Pharisaic school of about the first century B.C. onwards. This also applies to 1 (3) Esdras.

In the document Baruch iii. 9 to iv. 4, where the Law and Wisdom are identified, exiled Israel is told that the reason of his punishment is the forsaking of the commandments of life—*i.e.*, the Law. The Law endures for ever, and is apparently for Israel alone. Of the different portions which make up 2 (4) Esdras the most important in the present connection is the "Salathiel Apocalypse," which forms the bulk of the book (iii.-x.). Here it is said, in accordance with later Rabbinical teaching, that the Law had originally been given to other nations, by whom it was rejected, while Israel alone had accepted it. In the other portions of the book the main stress is laid on veneration for the Law. In the Book of Wisdom there is very little on the subject to be noted, but the foreign rulers are denounced for not keeping the Law.

(c) THE DOCTRINE OF SIN.

In Ecclesiasticus the prevalence of Sin in one and all is often noted, and there is much said about its origin. Here

Ben-Sira finds a problem too difficult for him. He implies, though he hardly goes so far as to make the definite assertion, that the origin of sin is due to God (xxxiii. 13-15), but in one important passage he strongly combats this (xv. 11-13). He traces it back to the fall of Eve, but no further. He speaks sometimes of Sin as originating within man, sometimes as being external to him. Like the later Rabbis, he becomes involved in inconsistencies as soon as he tries to construct a working theory on the subject. In his teaching on the atonement for sins he shows a great advance on the Old Testament, adding almsgiving and fasting as means of atonement, and foreshadowing the idea that Death also may be one. This last idea became of ever-increasing importance with the growth in later Judaism of the belief in the Resurrection. There is little that calls for notice in Tobit except a reference to the atoning efficacy of almsgiving; and nothing in Judith, or the Additions to Daniel; but in the Prayer of Manasses we find the thought that the Patriarchs were sinless—an idea developed in the later Rabbinical Literature in connection with the "Treasury of Merit" of the Fathers—and a deeper realization of sin than is to be found in any other book of the Apocrypha. In 2 Maccabees there is a strangely particularistic doctrine of retribution for Sin. The teaching in 1 (3) Esdras and Baruch is that of the Old Testament, but the doctrine as to the merits of the Fathers is expressly repudiated in Baruch. 2 (4) Esdras is important; especially, again, the Salathiel Apocalypse. Here the origin of sin is traced to Adam, though its connection with him is not explained; but Sin is regarded as universal, each man clothing himself with the evil heart. In the Book of Wisdom there is a belief in an original state of good, which is so decidedly contradicted by a later passage (xii. 10, 11) as to emphasize belief in a different authorship for the two parts of the Book: on this point, as on the subject of Death, it is the first part that is important for us, the second offers nothing new.

(d) THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE AND FREE-WILL.

A true balance between these two is kept in Ecclesiasticus ; they are shown as complementary, not contradictory, thus continuing the teaching of the Old Testament concerning the omnipotence of God and the responsibility of man. Similar teaching is found in Tobit. The rest of the books belonging to this century have nothing that calls for particular notice, but in the secondary text of Ecclesiasticus the same balance is found as in the first. In 1 Maccabees much more emphasis is laid on Free-will than on Grace, owing to a growing disinclination to ascribe action among men directly to God, because of His inexpressible majesty. In the Additions to Esther, on the contrary, there is throughout insistence on the Divine activity, while human free-will is scarcely taken into account ; there can be no doubt that the one-sided emphasis in either case was prompted by the particular subject-matter of the book. In 1 Maccabees there is very little to note under the present heading, though stress is frequently laid upon the idea that the Jews are under special protection and guidance. In 2 (4) Esdras it is again only the Salathiel Apocalypse that claims attention ; here the writer is driven by his deep sense of sinfulness and his conviction of man's inability to acquire justification by the works of the Law, to look to Divine Grace where human will-power was helpless. In the Book of Wisdom the main emphasis is on Free-will, though the other side of the truth is not left out of sight.

(e) THE DOCTRINE OF THE MESSIAH.

The didactic character of Ecclesiasticus accounts for the meagre reference to this doctrine ; there is belief in a Messiah who is to be purely human and of the House of David, but it is vague in the extreme. The conceptions of a Messiah were largely regulated by the historical circumstances of any given period, and during the time of Ben-Sira these were not of a nature to call forth Messianic hopes. In Tobit the Messiah is never mentioned, but the renovated Jerusalem and the ingather-

ing of the dispersed Israelites, and also of the Gentiles, give a picture of what corresponds to the Messianic Kingdom. No other books offer teaching on the subject until we come to 1 Maccabees, where "a prophet" is looked for; in one passage he is to be of Hasmonæan lineage. In 2 Maccabees there is no reference to the Messiah, though there is to the Messianic Kingdom. The only other book is the important apocalypse 2 (4) Esdras, and here the teaching is full, and, as the book is of composite authorship, various. In the Salathiel Apocalypse (iii.-x.), the Messiah is regarded as purely human, and only in this portion are the signs which are to precede the Messianic Kingdom mentioned. In the eagle vision (xi.-xii. 29), and the vision of the man rising from the sea (xiii.), and in the Ezra legend (xiv.), the pre-existence of the Messiah is taught. The Messianic Kingdom itself is to be of limited duration, and, in the eagle vision, Gentiles as well as Jews are to enjoy it, but in the vision of the man from the sea the Gentiles are to be wholly destroyed by the Messiah, and His kingdom is only for His own people. In the Book of Wisdom there is no doctrine of the Messiah, nor is there a belief in a Messianic Kingdom in the Jewish Palestinian sense, but the traditional Jewish eschatological conceptions are utilized by the author and a glorious future is believed to be reserved for the Jews.

(f) THE DOCTRINE OF THE FUTURE LIFE.

In Ecclesiasticus the teaching on this subject is substantially of the normal Old Testament type; the corruption of the body is looked upon as the end of man, though the annihilation of the spirit as well is evidently not contemplated.

Once or twice death is spoken of as a rest. The development in this doctrine which is known to have taken place during the second century B.C. is reflected by some additions. It is of particular interest to note that in one or two cases the Greek shows signs of some development of conception where in the Hebrew the normal Old Testament position is maintained. It is very noticeable that a kind of technical sense has become

attached to the word "worm," as in Mark ix. 48. In Tobit the normal Old Testament doctrine is taught. In Judith the only reference is an important one, as it witnesses to a development of the thought of Hades as a place of punishment. There is something similar to this in the Prayer of Manasses. In the Pharisaic recension of Ecclesiasticus words added here and there show a development of thought as to the Future Life. The next book which contains references to this is 2 Maccabees, and here an immense development has taken place; Hades is a place of punishment for the wicked; but only a temporary abode for the righteous, since the Resurrection is reserved for them; and the Resurrection is not only of the spirit, but of the body also. For the wicked there is no resurrection. In Baruch there are two isolated references; and in both the teaching is that ordinarily found in the Old Testament. In 2 (4) Esdras there is an extraordinary wealth of material, mostly confined to the Salathiel Apocalypse. Here the doctrine of the resurrection is not altogether consistent, and the writer's thought is not quite easy to understand; he seems to have believed that the material body became wholly annihilated at death, but the soul, when released from it, assumed a non-material body in the Intermediate state, and that this, being incorruptible, did not undergo any further change at the Judgment. The Resurrection apparently takes place immediately after death. It is uncertain whether the wicked rise as well as the righteous. Minute details are given as to the lot of the wicked and that of the righteous in the Intermediate state, but none as to the duration of this. At its close comes the Judgment. Here there is the same ambiguity; the writer's mind is not clear whether the age of incorruption and eternity is to begin immediately after death, or only at the Judgment. But there is no want of definiteness as to the happiness of the righteous and the torment of the wicked; both will be enormously increased at the Judgment, and then no intercession of the righteous for the wicked will avail. In those portions of the book which have probably been added by the Redactor there is some important teaching as

to a general resurrection and a reunion of soul and body, which is to take place at the beginning of a new age seven days after the close of the Messianic Age. This is part of a new eschatological scheme, quite different from that of the Salathiel Apocalypse, and seeking to combine the eschatology of the individual with that of the nation. In the Book of Wisdom there is no resurrection of the body; the only immortality is that of the soul, and it begins on this earth. Judgment takes place immediately after death, and there is no Intermediate state. The bliss of the righteous and the torment of the ungodly are of a purely spiritual kind. It seems as though the author were acquainted with more than one Jewish eschatological scheme, and used them without recognizing their inconsistency. He says nothing as to where the scene of the Judgment will be laid; he is not ignorant of the Palestinian Jewish belief, but, being of an Hellenic cast of mind, he cannot accept it.

(g) THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS.

In Ecclesiasticus there are but few references; in xlii. 16 the "holy ones" are unable to recount God's marvellous works, though strength is given them to stand in His presence. In Tobit the angel Raphael plays an important part; he binds Asmodeus, and appears as guardian angel to Tobit on his journey. The angelic host is referred to in viii. 15. There is no mention of angels in Judith, but in the Additions to Daniel the angel of the Lord appears in each of the stories. The angelic host is spoken of in the Prayer of Manasses, and a guardian angel in the Epistle of Jeremy, and there is an incidental reference to angels in the Additions to Esther. A somewhat fantastic representation of the activity of angels is given in 2 Maccabees in the stories of Heliodorus and of the rider leading Israel to battle and of the "reliable dreams" of Maccabæus. No other books refer to angels till we come to 2 (4) Esdras, and here in the Salathiel Apocalypse a greatly developed angelology appears. At the head of the angelic host stand seven archangels, and God communicates with the seer by

means of the angels. In the Book of Wisdom the place of these is taken by the Word or by Wisdom, the development of doctrine having here eliminated angelology altogether.

(h) DEMONOLOGY.

It is doubtful whether there is any reference to demons in Ecclesiasticus ; there may be one in xxxix. 18 to 31. In Tobit there is an evil demon who slays men. The only other reference is in Baruch ; but in the Book of Wisdom, though there is no demonology in the ordinary sense, there is a belief in the devil.

