

. . . The history of doctrine, if we take the whole Divine Revelation from the Patriarchs to the Apostles as one, can hardly be rightly understood, if the important links furnished by the apocryphal books be omitted." This holds especially of the doctrine of God, of the Messiah, of Angelology, and of later Jewish beliefs concerning "the nature of man, sin, death, and personal immortality." The writer of the article just quoted from does not hesitate to say that "once set upon the track of the subject, no student who really desires to get all the light he can upon the history of the Divine Revelation which culminates in the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, will be likely to stop short till he has made himself fairly familiar with the period immediately preceding that advent, and the literature which illustrates and makes it known."

Note also that value of the Apocrypha to the minister is further seen by considering its literary interest. As literature, like that of the Old Testament, it has a rich variety of literary form. Unlike the former, the Apocryphal books show plainly the "modifying influence of Hellenic thought and culture." This, as well as the influence of inspiration, differentiates the inspired from the uninspired form of Jewish literature. But the general mold is the same. In both, we have poetry, history, gnomic literature or that of proverbial sayings. The literature of the Apocrypha has an intrinsic worth and the comparison it invites with that of the Old Testament is most instructive.

Certainly the narrative parts of the Apocrypha, whether they be found in the veritable history, as in the book of Maccabees, or in the legendary, as in the story of Bel and the Dragon, or in the charming story of Tobit, which has been described as a "Jewish domestic novel," will have a value for any man who delights in the more primitive literary forms. The pictures they give of Jewish life and manners in the age just before Christ will commend themselves to all who want to know what conditions of life prevailed in Jewry before the Advent. The simplicity and directness of the story have the unfailing charm which belongs to so much of the Old-Testament narratives.

So, too, the poetical strains in the Apocrypha must have interest for any one who delights in religious poetry. Take, for example, the "Song of the Three Holy Children." Of course it invites and suggests comparison with the Psalm cxlvi., of which it is an expansion. But any one who reads it will feel the glow, the uplifting power, the rich devotion of its verse. The best versions of Dr. Watts seem feeble and tame beside it. Or take, as another specimen, the description of wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon, vii. 22-viii. 1) of which Dr. Westcott has said:\* "The magnificent description of wisdom must rank among the noblest passages of human eloquence, and it would be per-

\* Quoted in *London Quarterly*, April, 1896.