

8 RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

closed in the fifth century, it is now acknowledged, even by the most conservative Old Testament critics, that portions of it, such as Daniel and the Maccabean Psalms, belong to the second century B.C.; while progressive scholars are more and more recognising that late elements are to be found in the Old Testament in a far larger degree than had hitherto been surmised. Old Testament criticism has, therefore, narrowed down the so-called "period of silence" to something under two centuries. But recent research has shown that no such period of silence ever existed. In fact, we are now in a position to prove that these two centuries were in many respects centuries of greater spiritual progress than any two that had preceded them in Israel. The materials for such a proof are to be found in a minor degree in the Apocrypha (see chap. vii.), but mainly in the Pseudepigrapha (see chap. viii.)—that not inconsiderable body of literature which was written between 180 B.C. and A.D. 100 and issued pseudonymously, *i. e.* under assumed names, which are always *the names of various ancient worthies in Israel* anterior to the time of Ezra.¹

Owing to the efforts of Ezra and his spiritual

¹ There are, of course, pseudepigraphic works in the Old Testament, such as Ecclesiastes and Daniel.