

Richard Bauckham – James R. Davila – Alexander Panayotov (eds.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Volume One (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2013). Pp. xl + 808. Hardcover. \$90.00. ISBN 978-0-8028-2739-5

### HENRYK DRAWNEL

Institute of Biblical Studies  
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin  
email: hdrawnel@kul.pl  
ORCID: 0000-0003-4425-315X

The volume is the first in the projected two-volume collection of the Old Testament pseudepigrapha in English. As suggested in the foreword written by James H. Charlesworth and according to the introduction of the editors (xvii-xxxviii), the collection of the Old Testament pseudepigrapha edited in the volume can be seen as a continuation of the two volumes by the former scholar published in 1983 and 1985 (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983-1985]). The terminology (“Old Testament” and “pseudepigrapha”) has been retained, with many *caveats*, though, while most texts published in the volume were not included in the previous comprehensive editions by J.H. Charlesworth or H.F.D. Sparks (*The Apocryphal Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon 1984]) or in other recent collections of this sort. The omission of the article in the title (*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*) by the redactors is purposive and stresses the indefinite character of the whole collection for, as they claim, there is no canon of Old Testament pseudepigrapha so that future research may lead to additional discoveries that will certainly produce additional volumes complementing the present project (p. xxvii).

The temporal lower limit for the inclusion of the texts in the volume is the advent of Islam at the beginning of the seventh c. AD. The redactors abandon, along with Sparks, the idea of a collection of works that constitute a “background literature”. They include into the collection the works whose content is attributed to an Old Testament character(s) and indigenous polytheistic texts about pagan figures, such as Hystaspes or the Balaam text from Deir ‘Alla, which were “adopted” into the biblical tradition by Jews or Christians. Having set an extended temporal limit for the composition of the texts included (early 7th c. AD), the redactors exclude thematically coherent or traditional collections of works that, although fall within the indicated time span, must be treated separately. Thus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Hekhalot literature, Nag Hammadi gnostic corpus and some

other mystical and magic collections have been left out, with some exceptions. The Qumran fragmentary documents, such as Aramaic Levi, Hebrew Naphtali traditions, Davidic exorcistic compositions, the Book of Giants, known also from later medieval traditions, have been included in the whole project. Another exception is granted for the Cave of Treasures and the Palaea Historica and some other Hebrew and Aramaic texts containing visionary material together with the Hebrew Treaty of the Vessels. Although known from the manuscripts dated considerably later than the early seventh century AD, these documents are claimed to have preserved some earlier material.

While the list of the works to be included in the second, forthcoming volume is quite impressive (p. xxxvii-xxxviii), the first volume of this collection arranges the pseudepigrapha in two parts. In the first one, the compositions are ordered according to the name of the biblical character in the traditional chronological order as found in the Old Testament just as in Fabricius (1713) and Sparks (1984). To the second, thematic part of the volume, were relegated the Cave of Treasures (A. Toepel, 531-584) and Palaea Historica (W. Adler, 585-672), two compositions that cover a long period of biblical history. In the same part were included a separate section containing quotations from lost books of the Hebrew Bible (J.R. Davila, 673-698) and Hebrew Visions of Hell and Paradise (H. Spurling, 699-753).

The first part of the volume contains thirty-five compositions translated by different scholars. Each text is prefaced by an introduction where the reader can find detailed information about research history, available manuscripts, the date of provenance, literary characteristics and copious bibliography. The length of the introduction depends on the length and importance of the pseudepigraphon being treated. Shorter texts, like the Book of Noah translated by Martha Himmelfarb (pp. 40-46), or the Apocryphon of Eber translated by James VanderKam (pp. 47-52), are preceded by notes about their contents, origins, and relations to other pseudepigraphic or biblical texts.

An example of the meticulous approach of the editors in collecting ancient pseudepigraphic texts is the Apocryphon of Eber, of which neither the title nor the text survives. Basing his claim about the existence of a text containing the story of Eber on five patristic comments about the son of Shelah (Gen 10:24), Gilles Dorival („Le patriarche Héber et la tour de Babel: un apocryphe disparu?”, *Poussières de christianisme et de judaïsme antiques* [eds. A. Frey – R. Gounelle] [Lausanne: Zébre 2007] 181-201) claims that there existed a Jewish apocryphal text that is no longer extant. Following Dorival's proposal, J. VanderKam translates the short notes about Eber by Diodore of Tarsus, Epiphanius of Salamis, St. John Chrysostom, and Pseudo-Eustathius of Antioch. They deduce the name of the Hebrew language from the name of son of Shelah who purportedly did not participate in the building of the tower of Babel. Since the evidence on which the existence of such a text is posited is indeed slim, one may question calling it

“apocryphon,” a term that assumes an independent literary composition whose text is actually preserved.

In a similar methodological manner, the existence of a composition “The Dispute over Abraham” (translated here by R. Bauckham [p. 58]) is assumed, without having any portion of such a text, except for a note by Origen (*Hom. Luc.* 35.3) that neither expressly cites the text nor gives its title. The modern title “Dispute over Abraham” denotes one sentence in which the Alexandrian exegete reports the dispute of the angel of righteousness and the angel of wickedness over the salvation or perdition of Abraham. While Józef T. Milik (“4QVisions of ‘Amram et une citation d’Origène,” *RB* 79 [1972] 77-97) cites the Qumranic Visions of Amram as the source of the citation, Klaus Berger (“Der Streit des guten und des bösen Engels um die Seele,” *JSJ* 4 [1973] 1-18) ascribes it to a larger pseudepigraphic tradition, not necessarily linked with the Visions. The fact stands, that the sentence cited in the homily on Luke’s Gospel is not a literal citation, but a report of the story written in a text not authoritative for Origen’s Christian readers.

The next text in the collection, “The Inquiry of Abraham,” translated by R. Bauckham (p. 63) has been given a telling subtitle “A Possible Allusion to the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.” The text, in fact, cited by Niceta of Remesiana in *De Psalmodiae Bono* 3, amounts to one sentence only where its author resumes the content of what he calls “The Inquiry of Abraham,” in which, after the crossing of the sea, Moses, animals, springs of waters and the elements sang. However, the meagre evidence of earlier Jewish(?) texts these three examples contain, they once again prove what has been well known and understood from the inception of the pseudepigrapha studies, namely that the early Christian Church read, copied, commented, and reflected upon these traditions in the context of theological reflection on the data given in the Old Testament.

Concerning the methodological approach of the whole collection, it would have been an intelligent move to separate between the pseudepigrapha actually known and preserved in ancient manuscripts whose text is unquestionably given and those known in approximate citations, resumés, or short excerpts, often without a title or expressed author. They might have been published in one place, together, perhaps preceded or followed by “Quotations from Lost Books in the Hebrew Bible,” a section that lists lost books whose title only is cited in the Old Testament, without giving any text thereof but rather a resumé of what they contained.

In this context it is worthwhile noting that the term “Quotations” understood in modern literary parlance as an excerpt from a composition can be applied to the books cited in the Old Testament with some difficulty only. One may also wonder to which extend the subsection “Other Sources Cited in the Hebrew Bible” (pp. 681-683) listed under the heading “Quotations from Lost Books in

the Hebrew Bible” (pp. 673-684) belongs to the collection of “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha” rather than to a purely exegetical endeavour on the redaction of the text of the Hebrew Bible. A similar objection can be raised against the inclusion of the Deir ‘Alla plaster inscription mentioning Balaam, a non-Jewish story written in Aramaic, dated to the eighth c. BC and related to Numbers 22–24 (E.M. Cook, 236-243). As the editor concedes (p. 236), the epigraphic text is not an Old Testament pseudepigraphon and the narrative it contains is independent from the Pentateuchal text. Cook’s statement contradicts Bauckham and Davila’s opinion (p. xx) which says that “the earliest surviving Old Testament pseudepigraphon is the *Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla*.”

While the Balaam Aramaic narrative has a bearing on the interpretation of Numbers 22–24, its inclusion into the collection of the “Old Testament” pseudepigrapha does not appear to the present writer as justified for the reasons mentioned by Cook. The extremely large formula adopted by the editors of the volume stretches the methodological issues to the limits of reasonable argument. The early date of the Balaam inscription actually sets the upper temporal limit for the whole collection, not expressly indicated as such in the Introduction that generally speaks about pre-exilic pseudepigraphic texts (p. xx). If this temporal boundary was indeed intended by the compilers of the volume, most biblical compositions that are in fact “pseudepigraphic” could very well qualify for the inclusion in the volume as well. In fact, the authors of the Introduction seem to use the label “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha” anachronistically, claiming the composition of the latter in the pre-exilic times, “presumably at the time when some of the Old Testament itself was being written” (p. xx).

In addition to the compositions mentioned above, the first part of the volume also contains the following pseudepigrapha: “Adam Octipartite/Septipartite” (G. Macaskill – E. Greenwood, 3-21); “The Life of Adam and Eve (Coptic Fragments)” (S. J. Hathercole, 22-27); “The Book of the Covenant” (J. VanderKam, 28-32); “The Apocryphon of Seth” (A. Toepel, 33-39); “The Story of Melchizedek with the Melchizedek Legend from the *Chronicon Pasquale*” (P. Piovanelli, 64-84); “The Syriac History of Joseph” (K.S. Heal, 85-120); “Aramaic Levi” (J.R. Davila, 121-142); “*Midrash Vayissa ‘u*” (M. Himmelfarb, 43-159); “The Testament of Job (Coptic Fragment)” (G. Schenke, 160-175); “The Tiburtine Sybil (Greek)” (R. Buitenwerf, 176-188); “The Eighth Book of Moses” (T.E. Klutz, 189-235); “Eldad and Modad” (R. Bauckham, 244-56); “Songs of David” (G.W. Lorein – E. van Staaldune-Sulman, 257-271); “The Aramaic Song of the Lamb” (C.T.R. Hayward, 272-286); “Exorcistic Psalms of David and Solomon” (G. Bohak, 287-297); “The Selenodromion of David and Solomon” (P.A. Torijano, 298-304); “Questions of the Queen of Sheba and Answers by King Solomon” (V.S. Hovhanesian – S.P. Brock, 326-345); “The Nine and a Half Tribes” (R. Bauckham, 346-359); “The Heartless Rich Man and the Precious

Stone” (W. Adler, 360-366); “Jeremiah’s Prophecy to Pashhur” (D.D. Hannah, 367-379); “The Apocryphon of Ezekiel” (B.G. Wright III, 380-392); “The Treatise of the Vessels (*Massekhet Kelim*)” (J.R. Davila, 393-409); “The Seventh Vision of Daniel” (S. La Porta, 410-441); “A Danielic Pseudepigraphon Paraphrased by Papias” (B. Lourié, 435-441); “The Relics of Zechariah and the Boy Buried at His Feet” (W. Adler, 442-447); “*Sepher Zerubbabel*: The Prophetic Vision of Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel” (J.C. Reeves, 448-466); “Fifth Ezra” (T.A. Bergren, 467-482); “Sixth Ezra” (T.A. Bergren, 483-497); “The Latin Vision of Ezra” (R. Bauckham, 498-528).

The translation of Aramaic Levi by James Davila (133-142) incorporates the new Genizah fragment discovered by Gideon Bohak (“A New Geniza Fragment of the *Aramaic Levi Document*,” *Tarbiz* 79 (2011) 373-383 [Hebrew]; *From Cairo to Manchester: Studies in the Rylands Genizah Fragments* [eds. P.S. Alexander – R. Smithuis] [JSJSup 31; Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013] 101-114 [English]). The new addition to the fragmentary text of the Levitical composition evidently makes part of the Cairo Genizah codex whose three leaves were discovered at the beginning of the 20th century. Its location by G. Bohak between cols a and b of the Cambridge bifolium is based on the content that makes part of the exegetically developed account of Genesis 34. Although the text of this important priestly composition has been studied and published by several scholars, there still remain many disputed points that result not only from the fragmentary state of its manuscripts. The setting in life, apocalyptic visions and predictions, sapiential and didactic character of Levitical priesthood, and many other features set this theologically developed text apart from what is known now about the vision of the Jewish priesthood preserved in the Pentateuchal traditions as well as in later texts of the Second Temple period.

The volume edited by Bauckham, Davila, and Panayotov continues the long tradition begun by Fabricius in the 18th century of providing the interested reader with a collection of pseudepigraphic writings that remain in a more or less explicit connection with the Old Testament. Most of the texts included in the volume under review were of minor importance in the Christian circles usually responsible for their transmission, and in some cases for their composition. Yet, the volume already published and the one which is about to see the light by the same editors contribute in a substantial manner to the understanding and divulgation of Jewish pseudepigraphic literature in the period of a heightened interest in this type of literary works in modern scholarly research. By gathering recently identified texts together with those known from earlier publications, the editors give to students of either the New and Old Testament a useful tool for further research into traditions that creatively rework earlier texts and mould them into new forms and narratives that deserve to be studied on an equal standing with what is called “biblical literature.”

