



Type: Book Chapter

Whose Apocrypha? Viewing Ancient Apocrypha from the Vantage of Events in the Present Dispensation

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Source: *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*

Editor(s): C. Wilfred Griggs

Published: Provo, UT; Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University,
1986

Page(s): 1-18

Abstract: No abstract available.



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Whose Apocrypha? Viewing Ancient Apocrypha from the Vantage of Events in the Present Dispensation

Robert J. Matthews

When I was invited to participate in this symposium on the subject of apocryphal literature, my first inclination was to decline. This was a conference for experts trained in the biblical languages. But after some reflection, I changed my mind because I think there is a place for variety, and there might even be an advantage in having a paper from a non-linguistic point of view. And so, although I do not know Greek or Hebrew, I *have* had considerable exposure to Church history, and I am familiar with the formation of several books of scripture and non-scripture. This is especially true as pertaining to the books that are used by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereinafter labeled the LDS church) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (hereinafter called the RLDS church). And I think there are some parallels between the development of books in the Church anciently and development of books in the Church in modern times.

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What I say today I alone am responsible for. This is not an official Church position, nor even that of BYU or of Religious Education. I am speaking my own viewpoints, but I believe them to be correct.

TEXT AND CANON

In order to view the subject properly today, we must first realize that there is a difference between the *accuracy* of a book and the *authority* of a book. That is, there is a difference between *text* and *canon*. Scholars deal with text; councils and persons of ecclesiastical authority deal with canon. Making decisions about what is canon and, conversely, what is not canon is a “people-oriented” thing often influenced by taste, preference, and traditions. The scholar in his cloister laboring over manuscripts may be primarily concerned with details of translation, transmission, and text, but it is the councils and individuals of authority who decide what is to be popularly accepted as the rule of faith. Thus, text may be the business of the linguist, but canon is a subject of Church history. When we use the word *apocrypha* we generally have reference to writings of a bygone day, but I believe there is a parallel between the way Church councils have operated in this dispensation in choosing and rejecting documents and the way councils in former times made similar decisions. And this business of choosing and rejecting is what causes some books to be known as apocrypha and some to be known as canon.

The word *apocrypha* has a magical and almost a mystical aura to many Latter-day Saints. I suppose this is because we are less familiar with apocryphal writings than we are with our current scriptures. Names such as Tobias, Judith, Ben Sirach, Maccabees, and Esdras are not sounds that most Latter-day Saints utter every day, or even once a year—maybe not even once in ten years.

DEFINITIONS

Before proceeding further we must more thoroughly define some of the basic terms needed to discuss this subject. First, let us look at *apocrypha*, and after that, *canon*. *Apocrypha* is a Greek

word and is formed by the combination of *apo* (away) with *kryptein* (hide). Thus it connotes the idea of “closed” or “hidden.” (In this sense *apocrypha* is in contrast with *apocalypse*, which means “opened,” “revealed,” or “uncovered.”) *Apocryphon* is the singular noun, *apocrypha* the plural noun, and *apocryphal* the adjective. These words are used to describe the character of a certain class of religiously oriented ancient writings.

However, like many other words, the term *apocrypha* has experienced a major change in meaning through the centuries, and especially when applied to these ancient books. The word *apocrypha* began as a term of dignity and respect, but has degenerated into a term of disrespect. An apocryphal book was—originally—one too sacred and secret to be in everyone’s hands; it was to be reserved for the spiritually mature. Because of excessive abuses, and the writing of extremely erroneous material which was palmed off as sacred, the falsity of spurious books was readily recognized. As M. R. James has noted, in about three centuries of transition the word *apocryphal* came to mean “spurious, false, to be rejected and, probably, disliked.”¹ Thus the current use of *apocrypha* is inconsistent with the original sense of the word. James continues, “There is, then, some confusion here, and the existence of that confusion has led scholars in recent years to use the long word *pseudepigraphic* (= falsely entitled) when they wish to describe a really spurious book.”² Thus, at first, the books called apocrypha were too good for public use; now they are not good enough—that is, they are considered secondary, questionable, heretical, or of doubtful authorship.

As I have examined the subject, it appears to me that the original distinction between apocrypha and canonized scripture emphasized primarily the content, although it now applies to authorship and origin. As a result of this change in meaning, the feeling is very strong today, even among Latter-day Saints, that apocryphal works are dubious and should not be trusted.

The other term we must define is *canon*, it being the name given to indicate the standard, the rule, the measuring stick. Things “canonical” are those that are judged to be safe and reliable as statements of doctrine and faith. Apocryphal literature is therefore called “non-canonical” or “extra-canonical.”

I expect that through the experience of this symposium we will become familiar enough with the literature and the issues to feel that there are documents popularly assigned to each category that are of uneven spiritual value, and some probably even misnamed. Items regarded as canon by one group might not be by another, and some writings now called apocrypha may be regarded by some as canon.

In the narrow sense, “the” Apocrypha (with the definite article) are the fourteen additional books found in some versions of the Old Testament. The Vulgate or Latin Bible used by the Roman Catholic Church from the time of Jerome (fourth century) contains these books, as also does the Septuagint, or Greek Old Testament (third century B.C.). Several early versions of the Bible in English (including the King James Version) also contained these books. Although Hebrew versions of the Old Testament do not contain the Apocrypha, these additional books were accepted by Hellenist Jews, as evidenced by their inclusion in the Septuagint. The Greek portion of the Christian church seems to have at least nominally accepted these books by the fourth century as part of the Septuagint which they were using. I think we have no record or evidence of what the true Church said about these books in the first century, but by the fourth century Christianity seems to have accepted them.

With regard to the arrangement of these books in the Bible, there is a significant difference between the versions of the Old Testament that were prepared by and for the Catholic church and those prepared by and for Protestant churches. In Catholic editions of the Bible the apocryphal books are *interspersed* among the other Old Testament books, since they are all considered canonical. However, in Protestant Bibles, when the Apocrypha appear at all they are in a separate block at the end of the Old Testament. This difference in format says something about their relative acceptance by the two groups. The first English editions of the Bible were nominally Catholic editions, and had the apocryphal books interspersed. In later editions, including the King James Version, they were placed in a block, and finally they were omitted completely.

The differing views of the Catholic and Protestant churches are also evidenced on the title page of the respective Bibles. The

title page of a Bible having an official Catholic imprimatur simply states that it contains the Old and New Testaments; no mention is made of the Apocrypha, since these books are assumed to be a natural part of the Old Testament. In the increasingly rare instance of a Protestant Bible containing the Apocrypha, the title page explicitly states that the volume contains the Old and New Testaments "and the Apocrypha." The edition of the King James Version which the Prophet Joseph Smith used in making his inspired translation of the Bible contained the fourteen apocryphal books, and as a result we have section 91 of the Doctrine and Covenants, containing a revelation about the Apocrypha. That these books were in a block can be seen from the Prophet's statement that he had "come to that portion of the ancient writings called the Apocrypha." He would not have said it that way had they been interspersed. I have seen that Bible, anyway, and know that they are in a portion by themselves, placed at the end of the Old Testament. They have a separate heading and are even in a different style of type, and are very much set off by themselves.

The order and sequence of the various books in a collection becomes a more important issue when the book-like or codex arrangement is used. When each document is on a separate scroll and loosely put in a box with other scrolls, order and sequence are not particularly urgent. However, when the various books of the Bible were about to be placed in codex form, sequence and order took on a new dimension. To intersperse the apocryphal books among the other Old Testament books is to say something different than to put them as a unit at the end. Hence a decision had to be made when these were published in codex form, and this raised deep questions that were perhaps only lightly thought of before. In many ways a codex is preferable to a scroll because it is much more convenient than a scroll form, just as microfiche provides easier access to information than does microfilm. And so progress calls for a decision.

A WIDER DEFINITION

In the widest sense, the word *apocrypha* (usually without the definite article) can mean all of the ancient non-canonical or

extra-canonical writings of both Old and New Testament association. Among these are the books of Jubilees, Enoch, Melchizedek, Adam, and many others. Most of these writings have probably never been included in a "canonized" collection, although some of their literary "ancestors" may have been included at one time by the choice of one council, then dropped at another time because they underwent an evaluation by councils with a different set of values. Thus, what is termed apocryphal by one group may be canonical to another, or even to the same group at a later or an earlier time.

THE COUNCIL OF JAMNIA—A.D. 90

The selection process is demonstrated by the work of the council of Jamnia in about A.D. 90. The need for this council was occasioned by the presence of new sacred writings composed by the Jewish Christians. These Christians also accepted the Old Testament. At first the Christian church was regarded by both Jews and Gentiles simply as a Jewish sect, but when Christians produced what they claimed to be their own authoritative and canonical writings (writings in addition to the Jewish Old Testament), the Jewish leaders countered by making their own list of canonical books which naturally did not include the Christian writings. The Jews were in apostasy at this time, and so could not appreciate the worth of writings about Jesus. The decisions were made by Jewish leaders at councils held in Jamnia in western Judea. Not only did they reject the Christian writings, but in considering the Old Testament books they labored over the Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) with doubts about its spiritual value, but finally accepted it as an allegory of God's love for Israel. At this time, of course, the Jews did not have the priesthood or the gospel or the guidance of the Holy Ghost. They were, in a word, in apostasy, and so made their decisions on the basis of their learning, their traditions, their prejudices, and their lack of spiritual understanding.

The Christians continued to look upon their own writings as authoritative, and were undaunted by the fact that the apostate Jews did not accept their writings about the Savior, written by

Matthew, Peter, Paul, John, and others. Decisions were not made in a single meeting, in a single conference, or even in a single century, but eventually the New Testament took its present form of twenty-seven books—although questions lingered in the minds of some, especially about the books of James, Hebrews, and Revelation. However, the Christians by then were also in an apostate condition, and also wrestled with several things, including the appropriateness of the Song of Solomon. They decided to retain it on the same allegorical basis as did the Jews, but to them it represented the Lord's love for the Christian church rather than for the house of Israel. It was during these early two or three centuries that the word *apocryphal* began to change in meaning, as we have already discussed.

APOCRYPHAL OR CANONICAL ACCORDING TO WHOM?

In making his revelatory translation of the Bible, the Prophet Joseph Smith also gave serious consideration to the Song of Solomon. He simply declared that “the Songs of Solomon are not inspired writings,”⁴ and hence this book is not included in the editions of the Holy Scriptures known as the Joseph Smith Translation.

In 1924 M. R. James (a non-LDS scholar) produced a book bearing the title *The New Testament Apocrypha*. The extensive collection is impressive, and some parts are even interesting. Of special interest to us, however, is the explanation in James's introduction regarding what is canon and what is apocrypha. He agrees with the wisdom of the earthly councils, and explains that one can tell simply by reading the material whether or not it is worthy to be included in the canon. He extolls the virtues of the present canonical books of the New Testament and contrasts their superior content with what he calls the inferior content of the apocryphal books. And in a sense, he is generally correct in my judgment. But he then writes, “The . . . apocrypha are spurious and we would view them the same as we would the Book of Mormon and the writings of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy.”⁵ It would be our conclusion that, whatever the tests or criteria may

have been that led Dr. James to conclude that the Book of Mormon is an apocryphal book unworthy of the designation of canon, his testing procedures were lacking something. And if his judgment is that bad regarding the Book of Mormon, he may have missed something also about the New Testament. We would probably conclude that his evaluation tools were inadequate, or that he did not read the Book of Mormon before he assigned it to apocryphal limbo, or maybe both.

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS— A MODERN PARALLEL

The published collection of revelations known as the Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a standard work, or a canonized book of latter-day scripture. It was begun in the early years of the Church and was first published as the Book of Commandments in 1833. It was enlarged and published as the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, enlarged and revised in 1844, enlarged again in 1876, revised in 1921, and so on through the years until the present.

At first there was just one LDS church, but in 1860 a formal division occurred (the roots of separation had been growing for years) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was formed. These two groups had fundamental theological and doctrinal differences. For a few years both churches used the same Doctrine and Covenants, but as the years passed and perceptions changed, each felt a need for changes in the content of its official doctrinal book, though each continued to call it the Doctrine and Covenants. Each church added certain documents that were not included, and in some cases not even possessed, by the other. Some major points of doctrinal difference between the two groups at the beginning were the practice of baptism for the dead, the ceremonial endowment, and eternal marriage, all of which are closely allied with the purpose of a temple and are performed for both the living and the dead. The LDS church accepted these items, but the RLDS church did not. As time passed, the LDS church has made its edition of the Doctrine and

Covenants even stronger on these points, whereas the RLDS church has made its Doctrine and Covenants weaker on these matters.

The LDS church, headquartered in Salt Lake City, added in 1876 what is now identified in the LDS edition of the Doctrine and Covenants as section 2, which is about the coming of Elijah. Elijah has strong association with temples and temple ceremony. This section contains words spoken by the angel Moroni in 1823, and hence was available to both churches, but this subject is of no particular theological interest to the RLDS church, and hence it has remained outside of their canon.

Also in 1876 the LDS church added to its Doctrine and Covenants what is now section 110, detailing the visits of the Savior, Moses, Elijah, and Elias to the Kirtland Temple. In 1981 the LDS Doctrine and Covenants was expanded to include a revelation involving a vision of the Father, the Son, Adam, Abraham, and others, and setting forth doctrine which is basic to salvation for the dead and the salvation of children. This vision occurred in the Kirtland Temple in 1836, and is now section 137. These two visions occurred in 1836, so they should be available to both churches, since at that time the two churches were one. However, the material has never been included in the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants, probably because these revelations do not lend themselves to the RLDS theological position. Some RLDS scholars and historians even postulate that some of the miraculous events chronicled in sections 2, 110, and 137 never really occurred. Hence, these sections, which are so significant to the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, could be said to be apocryphal (or at least non-canonized) in the estimation of RLDS members. And the whole of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism would judge all versions of the Doctrine and Covenants as apocryphal and spurious.

But there is more to the story.^{*} A modern example of the process by which a document is given the status of canon or judged otherwise is seen in a 1970 decision of the Missouri-based RLDS church to separate the contents of its Doctrine and Covenants into two categories: (1) *revelation*, which for our purpose

we will call canonized, and (2) *historical writings*, being factual, interesting, and useful, but not revelatory and not binding on the church.

To appreciate this, we will have to look at a little more background. In 1844 the LDS church added to its Doctrine and Covenants what are now identified as sections 127 and 128, dealing with baptism for the dead. They are of an early date (September 1842) and were authored by the Prophet Joseph Smith. These two documents were also part of the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants all through the years (sections 109 and 110) until the 1970 decision, but at that time they were relegated to a secondary position at the end of the collection, in a block apart from other more favored sections. (Notice that, much like the Apocrypha in some Protestant Bibles, these writings were no longer interspersed among the canonized revelations but were now in a block by themselves.)

Yet another document of the same general category is of such special character that we will consider it individually. Dealing with temples, endowments, and other matters involving the First Presidency of the Church, it was written by the Prophet Joseph Smith in January 1841 and was placed in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1844 as section 103. Eventually this section was assigned number 124 in the LDS publication, and 107 in the RLDS edition, and there it remained for many years. In 1970, by the action of the delegates of a conference of the RLDS church (referred to above), a motion was passed to remove this document and several others from the revelatory (binding) portion and to place them in the historical (non-binding) portion of the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants. The historical accuracy, authorship, and origin of these sections were not questioned, but their spiritual value *was* questioned, and hence these documents lost their once-favored place by the judgment of a council that felt differently about the subject matter contained therein than did the earlier councils which placed them in the Doctrine and Covenants.

The diminishing value and authority of these RLDS sections was not sudden; it was the result of a gradual change in perspectives and values. The following explanatory note has appeared in all editions of the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants since 1970:

Appendix A Section 107

This statement was removed from the main body of the book by the action of the 1970 World Conference. Its subject is primarily concerned with arrangements for the construction of a boarding-house in Nauvoo and with the practice of the ordinance of baptism for the dead. It will be noted that several paragraphs are devoted to references to such practices as “washings,” “anointings,” and “memorials for your sacrifices” and matters which “have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” (paragraphs 10, 11, 12, 13).

Concerning such esoteric practices the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints declared as early as April 9, 1886, that “we know of no temple building, except as edifices wherein to worship God, and no endowment except the endowment of the Holy Spirit of the kind experienced by the early saints on Pentecost Day.” And also, “that ‘baptism for the dead’ belongs to those local questions of which the body has said by resolution: ‘That the commandments of a local character, given to the first organization of the church, are binding on the Reorganization only so far as they are either reiterated or referred to as binding by commandments to this church.’ And that principle has neither been reiterated nor referred to as a commandment” (Conference Resolution 308, paragraphs 2, 3).

Instruction to the church bearing on this matter is contained in a revelation through W. Wallace Smith on April 5, 1968, referring to temple building in which the church is told that “there is no provision for secret ordinances now or ever” and that one temple function is priesthood education (Doctrine and Covenants 149A:6).

This section is retained in the Appendix for its historical value in relation to the development of ordinances for the dead and other ordinances for which the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints *finds no justification* either in the historical scriptures or in the documents approved by the church as latter-day revelation.

This explanation by the official councils of the RLDS church reminds one of the evolution of the word *apocrypha*. At first the expression was applied to writings that were considered very sacred, but later these same writings were judged by other groups as unfit for canonization. The RLDS statement says that the church knows of “no endowment” and finds “no justification” for temple ordinances.

This same kind of scriptural reevaluation in the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants has also occurred with the revelations known to LDS readers as sections 127, 128, and 135 (RLDS 109, 110, and 113), as can be observed in any of the RLDS editions since 1970.

THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

The book of Abraham was translated from some Egyptian papyri by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He obtained the papyri in 1835 and first published the translation in the Church magazine *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo, Illinois, beginning in March 1842. During the next few years, the material was published in several journals and newspapers in America and England. In 1851 it was placed in a collection of LDS materials called the Pearl of Great Price. In October 1880 the Pearl of Great Price was accepted by a Church council in Salt Lake City as a standard work of the LDS church. This process, of course, canonized the book of Abraham, and it still holds that high station in the LDS church today.

The RLDS church does not accept the Pearl of Great Price as a standard work. It does accept some of the materials contained therein, such as the writings of Moses and the Articles of Faith, but today it rejects the book of Abraham. This has been a gradual demise. When the RLDS church was organized in April 1860, it also inaugurated its official magazine, called *The True Saints Herald*. An early issue, July 1862, carried the entire book of Abraham as a lead article, seemingly with full acceptance. However, later articles in the *Herald* which discussed the book of Abraham expressed some doubt as to its value as scripture, and within a few years the RLDS church had repudiated the book of Abraham altogether.⁶ The RLDS church does not doubt the book's authorship but questions its spiritual value, thus maintaining that it is not scripture and not binding upon the church. This represents a gradual decline of interest in and respect for, and eventually a complete repudiation of, the book of Abraham.

The foregoing comparisons between the official literature of the LDS and RLDS churches have been presented only to demonstrate that what is judged as canonical or as apocryphal does not depend so much on authorship, or even on early dating,

but primarily on *content*. As we have noted, the earliest use of the term *apocrypha* was content-oriented and referred to the secret “in-group” teachings reserved for the spiritually mature. It is in this sense that we might see a parallel between ancient times and our present dispensation. Those things which one church holds to be among the most sacred connections and associations on earth, the sealings and covenants and the temple endowment designed to save both the living and the dead, and which are reserved only for the temple, are declared by the other church to be “not known.” They “have made no provisions” for them and see “no justification” for them, and hence these teachings are relegated to a secondary position in their canonized version of the Doctrine and Covenants.

VALUE OF APOCRYPHAL WRITINGS

If our comparison of ancient and modern procedures has been accurate, we can assume that in the bringing together of our current Old and New Testaments, some important and valuable items have likely been overlooked—or deliberately misplaced by councils who had a different set of values than did those of the New Testament church when it was led by Apostles and prophets and was in full fellowship with the Lord and the Holy Ghost. As apostasy crept into the Church, things once held sacred to the inner circle of believers were likely rejected by those who held to a different set of beliefs. If this is so, then our present Old and New Testament canon, being selected in times of apostasy, is no doubt quite incomplete. Perhaps the most secret teachings, meant for the most spiritually mature, have been omitted by councils who did not understand them.

JOSEPH SMITH AND THE APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE

During the period of time when the Prophet was completing his translation of the Bible, he received a letter from Elders W. W. Phelps, Edward Partridge, and others in Independence, Missouri, asking “a number of questions.” The Prophet responded with instructions about the proposed publication of the Book of Commandments, the manuscript of the Book of Mor-

mon, the printing of the Bible translation, and other matters. Among his instructions were the following:

We have not found the Book of Jasher, nor any other of the lost books mentioned in the Bible as yet; nor will we obtain them at present. Respecting the Apocrypha, the Lord said to us that there were many things in it which were true, and there were many things in it which were not true, and to those who desire, it should be given by the Spirit to know the true from the false.⁷

The Apocrypha to which the Prophet referred were the fourteen Old Testament books in the copy of the King James Version which he possessed, and did not have direct reference to the vast numbers of non-canonical writings known to biblical scholars today, although I think the statement could be applied to the others. The other comment, however, concerning the book of Jasher and the other “lost books” of the Bible enters into the wider area, and holds some promise that the time may come when those “lost books” may be obtained.

Nearly three years earlier (in December 1830), the Prophet had written:

Much conjecture and conversation frequently occurred among the Saints, concerning the books mentioned, and referred to, in various places in the Old and New Testaments, which were now nowhere to be found. The common remark was, “They are *lost books*,” but it seems the Apostolic Church had some of these writings, as Jude mentions or quotes the Prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam. To the joy of the little flock . . . did the Lord reveal the following doings of olden times, from the prophecy of Enoch.⁸

This prophecy of Enoch was revealed to Joseph Smith as he was translating the fifth chapter of Genesis in December 1830, and is included in chapters 6 and 7 of Genesis in the Joseph Smith Translation. (Chapters 6 and 7 of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price contain the same material.)

THE VALUE OF SOME OTHER APOCRYPHAL WRITINGS

Writings about Abraham. The Old Testament known to Jews and Christians alike contains no hint that Abraham had written a

personal record, yet Joseph Smith produced from the translation of Egyptian papyri a document known as the book of Abraham, which is put forth as having originated from Abraham's own hand. This record says several things about Abraham that the biblical Genesis does not say. For example, it states that Abraham had the Urim and Thummim, and also that he was knowledgeable in astronomy. We can also learn those things about Abraham from non-canonical Jewish writings.

In 1968 a Rabbi Nissim Wernick completed a Ph.D. dissertation at Brigham Young University entitled "A Critical Analysis of the Book of Abraham in the Light of Extra-Canonical Jewish Writings." The rabbi pointed out that the particulars of the book of Abraham not found in the Old Testament (i.e., the Urim and Thummim and astronomy) have parallels in non-canonical Jewish writings—apocryphal writings, we would call them. Perhaps these Jewish writings are based on more perfect records that once contained the original meaning of these precious and sacred things.

The book of Enoch. There is nothing in the Old Testament to suggest that Enoch ever wrote a sacred record. In fact, there is very little at all about Enoch in the Bible: a brief passage in Genesis 5:18–24, and two short verses in the New Testament. As we noted earlier, the book of Jude excerpts a prophecy uttered by Enoch, which probably presupposes that his words were written; but there is no clear-cut, forthright declaration in the Bible that there was a written record of Enoch. However, in the LDS standard works there are at least two direct declarations of a written Enoch account. First, in Moses 6:46 Enoch himself is represented as saying, "For a book of remembrance we have written among us, according to the pattern given by the finger of God; as it is given in our own language." Secondly, Doctrine and Covenants 107:57, after several verses telling of an ancient meeting involving Adam and the early patriarchs (including Enoch), states, "These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time."

It is well known that there is a substantial stock of apocryphal writing about Enoch. Among the writings extant today which are called the "Book of Enoch" are an Ethiopic version and a portion of a Greek version.⁹

The references in LDS scriptures to extra-biblical writings should stimulate in us a desire to become acquainted with this ancient literature. Some scholars who are familiar with the apocryphal book of Enoch feel that there is a considerable similarity between its contents and the New Testament. R. H. Charles once wrote that “the influence of Enoch in the New Testament has been greater than that of all the other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books taken together.”¹⁰

Raphael. The figure Raphael is not mentioned in our present Bible, but he does appear in Doctrine and Covenants 128:21 as an angel who visited the Prophet Joseph Smith along with Michael and Gabriel and other heavenly beings. Is it mere coincidence that there is an angel Raphael mentioned in the apocryphal book of Tobit (Tobias)? I have not yet felt that the book of Tobit in its present form is an authentic book, but its author seems to have had access to something authentic, missing from our present Bibles, for at least he knew about the angel Raphael.

The same could be true of the apocryphal books about Melchizedek, Enoch, Adam, and Moses. In their present form they are faulty, but they are probably based on records that are authentic. Since Adam, Enoch, and Melchizedek are such prominent men in the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and so little has been retained in the Bible about them, we might well look with renewed and continued interest for the day when more will come forth about these ancient patriarchs. It is exciting to know that many of the persons as well as some of the events and doctrines included in the revelations of Joseph Smith, while missing or dim in the Bible, are prominent in the apocryphal literature.

I do not think the full restoration of the lost scriptural records has come yet, but it is partially seen through the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, which focuses heavily on Adam, Enoch, and Melchizedek. Since Joseph Smith did not have access to the apocryphal books about these historical figures, his emphasis on them as part of his Bible translation can be regarded as evidence that he indeed received divine revelation. It should be noted that the known apocryphal literature of today is a poor transmission from earlier, more correct sources; we will have to wait until

these earlier sources are discovered and made available—perhaps by a prophet—before we can drink from the pure spring. In the meantime, from latter-day revelation we can catch wonderful glimpses of what the ancient prophets knew and what they wrote. And we can obtain similar insights from the non-canonical writings, although these will be less reliable. However, both of these sources, latter-day revelation and apocryphal writings, exceed in many ways what the Bible presents.

The Book of Mormon tells us of some books once in the Old Testament collection that are no longer there. They seem to be completely lost to the present world of scholarship and to manuscript collections both canonical and apocryphal. These are the writings of Zenos, Zenock, and Neum. We know that they are of Old Testament times (earlier than 600 B.C. and are of the house of Israel (the tribe of Joseph), and we know that their writings were upon the plates of brass which Lehi and his descendants brought to the Western Hemisphere. For some reason unknown to us they are no longer available or even spoken of in any other texts. The chances seem good that if manuscripts of any or all of these writings were found, they would be judged interesting but spurious by textual critics, labeled apocryphal, and published as pseudepigrapha and apocrypha. Thus it is evident that only by the Spirit (the Holy Ghost) can one tell whether or not a purportedly scriptural book or any part thereof is correct.

CONCLUSION

Our conclusions from all of this are:

1. That the selection of what is apocryphal and what is canonical varies with the person or group making the decision.
2. That there is much interesting and useful reading in the apocryphal literature, and one can often decide what is correct and what is not if he is guided by the Holy Spirit; otherwise he may make a colossal error and reject very good material.
3. That the presence in latter-day revelation of ideas and names not found in the Bible but found in apocryphal writings should quicken our interest in these ancient writings.
4. That much apocryphal literature is obviously spurious.

5. That the evolution in the meaning of the word *apocrypha* seems to parallel the developing apostasy of the Jews and of the Christian church during its first three centuries.

Notes

1. M. R. James, *The New Testament Apocrypha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. xiv.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1951), 1:331. Hereafter cited as *HC*.

4. Joseph Smith Translation, OT ms. 3, p. 97.

5. James, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, p. xviii.

6. See Richard P. Howard, "Question Time," *Saints Herald*, vol. 114, no. 8 (April 15, 1967), p. 278, which states that Joseph Smith never intended the book of Abraham to be scripture.

7. *HC* 1:363.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 132–33.

9. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 2:163–281, 425–69.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 180. Pages 180–85 outline the similarities between the book of Enoch and New Testament doctrines.