

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

THE following twelve books are biographies written between 107 and 137 B. C. They are a forceful exposition, showing how a Pharisee with a rare gift of writing secured publicity by using the names of the greatest men of ancient times. "There were intellectual giants in those days" and the Twelve Patriarchs were the Intellectual Giants!

Each is here made to tell his life story. When he is on his deathbed he calls all his children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren about him, and proceeds without reservation to lay bare his experiences for the moral guidance of his hearers. If he fell into sin he tells all about it and then counsels them not to err as he did. If he was virtuous, he shows what rewards were his.

When you look beyond the unvarnished—almost brutally frank—passages of the text, you will discern a remarkable attestation of the expectations of the Messiah which existed a hundred years before Christ. And there is another element of rare value in this strange series. As Dr. R. H. Charles says in his scholarly work on the Pseudepigrapha: its ethical teaching "has achieved a real immortality by influencing the thought and diction of the writers of the New Testament, and even those of our Lord. This ethical teaching, which is very much higher and purer than that of the Old Testament, is yet its true spiritual child, and helps to bridge the chasm that divides the ethics of the Old and New Testaments."

The instances of the influence of these writings on the New Testament are notable in the Sermon on the Mount which reflects the spirit and even uses phrases from these Testaments. St. Paul appears to have borrowed so freely that it seems as though he must have carried a copy of the Testaments with him on his travels.

Thus, the reader has before him in these pages what is at once striking for its blunt primitive style and valuable as some of the actual source books of the Bible.

TESTAMENT OF REUBEN

The First-Born Son of Jacob and Leah.

CHAP. I.

Reuben, the first-born son of Jacob and Leah. The man of experience counsels against fornication and points out the ways in which men are most apt to fall into error.

THE copy of the Testament of Reuben, even the commands which he gave his sons before he died in the hundred and twenty-fifth year of his life.

2 Two years after the death

of Joseph his brother, when Reuben fell ill, his sons and his sons' sons were gathered together to visit him.

3 And he said to them: My children, behold I am dying, and go the way of my fathers.

4 And seeing there Judah, and Gad, and Asher, his brethren, he said to them: Raise me up, that I may tell to my brethren and to my children what things I have hidden in my heart, for