

PRACTICAL CHALLENGES IN PUBLISHING  
THE MORE OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA PROJECT

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The More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha project at the University of St. Andrews (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/divinity/MOTP/index-motp.html>) has assembled an international team of scholars to translate a new collection of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. The project is being headed by Professor Richard Bauckham and myself. I use the term "Old Testament Pseudepigrapha" to mean ancient books that claim to be written by a character in the Hebrew Bible or to be set in the same time period as the Hebrew Bible and to recount narratives related to it. Other retellings of biblical stories survive from antiquity, but there are far too many of them to be included in a single collection.

The corpus includes Jewish pseudepigrapha, Christian pseudepigrapha, and pseudepigrapha of indigenous polytheistic (i.e., "pagan") origins. They survive in a great many different languages, including Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, Aramaic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Greek, Hebrew, Manichean Iranian, Old Irish, Iron Age Jordanian (Northwest Semitic), Latin, Phoenician, Church Slavonic, Syriac, and Manichean Turkic. We currently have an international team of about 50 contributors who are editing more than 60 complete or nearly complete texts and about 35 additional quotations or fragments. We estimate that the project will produce two volumes of texts. The project has been supported by a generous research grant from the Leverhulme Trust.

Specialists in the study of ancient parabiblical literature have been engaged for some time in a debate on what such literature should be called and how it should be studied. There is little agreement on terminology apart from the conclusion that the term "pseudepigrapha" is entirely unhelpful and should not be used. More broadly, it is widely agreed that these texts should be liberated from subjugation to the biblical canon and treated as worthy of study in their own right. With the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project scheduled to send a volume to press in the coming months, these issues take on a practical urgency, since the editors must make many decisions about how to arrange the texts, how to present them, and how to refer to them.

Moreover, these decisions cannot be made in a vacuum. The production of collections of these texts goes back to the early eighteenth century with Fabricius's publication of *Codex pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti*, which also has the dubious honor of tying the term "pseudepigrapha" seemingly inextricably to this corpus. Additional major precedents include Kautzsche's German collection of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha published in 1900 and Charles's English collection of the Apocrypha and a collection of Pseudepigrapha somewhat larger than Kautzsche's in 1913 (updated and much expanded by Sparks in 1984). And the largest and most influential collection is of course the two volumes edited by Charlesworth in 1983-86, which contain translations of 48 substantially complete texts and another 16 texts that survive only in quotations or very fragmentary manuscripts. The Charlesworth volumes in particular are a giant upon whose shoulders the current project stands. They brought the

Old Testament pseudepigrapha into popular consciousness and generated and influenced an enormous amount of scholarly study. They also laid out implicit templates for how to organize and present the texts (e.g., arranging them by genre and showing a distinct tendency to find texts to be early and Jewish rather than later and Christian). The editors of the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project have to take this background into account in order to provide a publication that is intelligible both to specialists in cognate fields and to the general public, while advancing their understanding of the current state of the question and maintaining the integrity of the work for specialists in parabiblical literature. While appreciating the vast contribution of these earlier efforts, we set out not only to supplement and update them, but also to learn from their mistakes and move beyond their limitations. This paper discusses the practical problems encountered by the editors as we organize the project and prepare the texts for publication.

It is worthwhile at this point to reflect a little on the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, starting from first principles and attempting to understand them on their own terms, without the theological baggage and conventions in which they are mired today. I begin by observing that in antiquity there were a great many books about what we may call the "revelatory history" of ancient Israel, books either attributed to specific figures associated with the traditions about God's dealings with Israel or presenting events associated with those traditions. Presumably at least sometimes these attributions or descriptions of events were true, but that does not really matter for our purposes.

In the course of time some of these books became widely understood to have a special authority associated more or less with prophetic revelation. Many of those books came to be accepted as having this special revelatory authority by very widespread multiple faith communities. But for our purposes as historians the distinction between these authoritative or "canonical" books and the very many other ancient books devoted to the revelatory history of ancient Israel (i.e., what is now erroneously and irritatingly called the "pseudepigrapha") is only of tangential interest, chiefly for emic insights into the theologies of these faith communities. All of these books, canonical or not, are of historical value on some level, even if considerable work is required to appreciate that value. By the same token, few if any of these books provide the historian with raw material easily transmuted into a straightforward historical account. Moreover, there is simply no magic bullet (such as date of composition, authorship, genre, etc.) which allows us to distinguish between the two groups of books in a historical-critical rather than a theological way.

Those of us who work on the books outside the major scriptural canons (i.e., outside the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament Apocrypha) are faced with a number of challenges when we try to articulate to ourselves and to other scholars what we are doing. We must try to talk about these other books in a way that gives them their own integrity, but also takes into account the theological frameworks in which they remain embedded, not just for faith communities, but even for other scholars in cognate disciplines. We must communicate our research in a way that encourages these other scholars to use and talk about these texts in a way that they find useful (usually as background to something else) but that respects the texts as object of study in their own right. And we must gently and patiently explain what we are about to the members of those faith communities who are not scholars.

These are not simple challenges and none of them are solved! Much of our progress has been negative: we agree that "pseudepigrapha" is an unhelpful designation that should be dropped, yet we continue to use it because none of the replacements that have so far been suggested have commanded general acceptance. Indeed, the search for better terminology

may turn into an endless digression, like the search for terms and concepts to replace "magic" and "mysticism." The More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project cannot claim to have found entirely satisfactory solutions to these problems. Indeed, many of our solutions are kludges – short-term, practical, and not entirely consistent resolutions cobbled together so as to allow us to proceed with the work of making the texts more widely available, while sidestepping some important larger issues. In the short time available for this paper I focus on the practical issues of the title of the whole work, the principles for selecting the texts to be published, and the order in which the texts are to be presented in the final publication.

What to call the publication has proved to be a particularly interesting problem. Our working title for the project pleases no one, least of all ourselves. "Old Testament" is a theologically freighted Christian term; "Pseudepigrapha" is a condescending designation that is technically correct in that scholars agree that these texts are "fictional writings," but it ignores the fact that many books in the major biblical canons are also pseudepigraphic, so the term has no special relevance for our corpus. And publishers do not like "More" in a title, because it gives the book the air of a warmed-over sequel.

We took all of this into account in coming up with a working title for the volumes, nevertheless deciding to ignore most of it, for reasons I will explain. Our working title is "Old Testament Pseudepigrapha," with the subtitle "More Noncanonical Scriptures." Let me take this word by word. First, I note a missing word that distinguishes the title from the Charlesworth corpus: there is no definite article. We leave it off to make clear that this is not a definitive collection. Further delving into archaeological sites, museum and library collections, and old journals will doubtless uncover more texts that in all likelihood will result in someone publishing more volumes than the two planned by us at present. We retain "Old Testament," first, because combined with "Pseudepigrapha" it will evoke the Charlesworth volumes in the minds of a not insignificant slice of the public and provide them immediately with a familiar context. Second, the term "Old Testament" is, alas, more broadly known and understood by the public than "Hebrew Bible." Third, "Old Testament" is a more accurate designation in that many of the texts were either composed or transmitted by Christians and were thus regarded as relating to the Old Testament rather than the Hebrew Bible, and some of the texts retell stories from the Old Testament Apocrypha and so are not technically pseudepigrapha of the Hebrew Bible. We retain "Pseudepigrapha" because none of the proposed replacement terms (parabiblical literature, scripturesque remnants, etc.) yet commands general acceptance or is as widely recognized by the public. The "More" (which the publisher is prepared to endure in a subtitle) indicates that this is a supplement to the Charlesworth corpus, not a re-publication or a replacement. And "Noncanonical Scriptures" is an effort to make the volumes more comprehensible to those unfamiliar with the Charlesworth collection, on the theory that most of them have some idea what "Scriptures" are and that "Noncanonical" is the best single word to get across what the collection is about and, especially combined with "More," will likely be viscerally understood even by those who are not entirely sure what a "canon" is. The title is an unsatisfactory kludge, but anything more precise would be more cumbersome, less clear to nonspecialists, and would have to resort to jargon whose value remains debated. It goes without saying that the introduction to the publication will explain the issues clearly for both a nonspecialist audience and for scholars in cognate disciplines.

Our principles for the selection of the texts to be published are formulated in an attempt to understand them on their own terms and not just, in particular, as background to the New Testament. First, with a few exceptions to be noted, we are limiting the corpus to texts for which a reasonable – if not necessarily conclusive – case can be made for a date of composition before the rise of Islam in the early seventh century C.E. (As an aside, it is interesting to note that our oldest text is an Iron Age II inscription dating to around 700 B.C.E., the *Balaam Text* from Deir Alla.) The rise of Islam is one of the traditional cutoff points for the end of antiquity (the others are the fall of Rome c. 400 and the reign of Charlemagne c. 800) and we have chosen it mainly because the number of relevant texts rapidly increases after this and including them would make the corpus unworkably large. They are better dealt with as a corpus of medieval pseudepigrapha, a project we leave to others.

Second, as for provenance, we are including texts of any origin, including Jewish, Christian, or indigenous polytheistic (i.e., "pagan") works. The Charlesworth volumes focused on Jewish texts or texts that preserved "ideas possibly characteristic of Early Judaism," as Charlesworth notes in his Editor's Preface (xv). In his Foreward, George MacRae characterizes the corpus as "ancient Jewish and Jewish-Christian documents" (ix). And Charlesworth, in his Introduction for the General Reader characterizes them as revelatory writings "often attributed to ideal figures in Israel's past" and often based on Old Testament themes and narratives, which "with the exception of Ahiqar, are Jewish or Christian" and either date to between 200 B.C.E to 500 C.E or, if later, "apparently preserve, albeit in an edited form, Jewish traditions that date from that period" (xxv). The assumption seems thus to be that the texts usually contain at least somewhat nebulously conceived "Jewish traditions," whereas this is not a criterion for the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha corpus. The actual contents of the Charlesworth collection is not all that dissimilar to our collection, but we believe our characterization of it to be more descriptively accurate and less wedded to the use of the material as background to something else.

Some of the works in our corpus are already well known by specialists but not by the general public. These include, for example, *Aramaic Levi*, the *Book of Giants*, *Sefer HaRazim*, the *Cave of Treasures*, and the *Eighth Book of Moses* (PGM 13). Some texts were published some time ago but are not even widely known among specialists interested in such things. Examples are the the Greek *Apocryphon of Jacob and Joseph*, the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Arabic *Surid Legend* of the post-Flood building of the Egyptian pyramids, and the Syriac *History of Joseph*. (A translation of the latter in a secondary Ethiopic version was published by Ephraim Isaac in the *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* in 1990. The Syriac original had been published in the nineteenth century, but was only recently been rediscovered by Kristian Heal.) Some of the texts, but not many, were first published or even first discovered only after the Charlesworth corpus had been published. These include the Aramaic *Song of the Lamb*, the Hebrew *Vision of Gabriel*, a number of texts and fragments from the Cairo Geniza, and the very new and as yet unpublished Coptic fragments of *2 Enoch*.

Some of the texts in our corpus are included, frankly, on an *ad-hoc* and traditional basis. Books of Maccabees (at least so titled) have been included in past pseudepigrapha collections and so we add *6-7 Maccabees* and perhaps even an *8 Maccabees* to the total corpus. *Sibylline Oracles* – Jewish and Christian compositions based on the ancient Roman oracles – have also traditionally found a place in past collections and so we include one and possibly two Sibylline texts as well as the Hellenistic composition, perhaps of Zoroastrian origin, the *Oracle of Hystaspes*. And, although we avoid most sermons in our collection – for

their number is legion, we do include pseudo-Philonian ancient Jewish sermons on Jonah and Samson, preserved only in Armenian.

Third, for purely practical reasons we exclude for the most part texts that fit best in and survive only in other thematically coherent or traditional collections of works that have been treated (or deserve treatment) on their own terms. These include the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Library, the Hekhalot Literature, the Hermetic corpus, and the like. Most of these are already available in at least one good English translation. (I am currently working on a translation of the Hekhalot literature.) We do include one text from the Greek magical papyri, the *Eighth Book of Moses*, because, although the PGM corpus is available in an excellent English translation, we felt that study of this text would benefit from an introduction and translation that treated it specifically as a biblical pseudepigraphon.

Fourth, we are not including texts published already in the Charlesworth volumes unless we have important new manuscript data or we believe that the text was inadequately treated for other reasons. We draw on new or previously unused manuscript data for our publication of fragments of the *Treatise of Shem* (Aramaic and Judeo-Arabic), the *Ladder of Jacob* (Hebrew), the *Life of Adam and Eve* (Coptic), the *Testament of Job* (Coptic), *2 Enoch* (Coptic), the *Horarium of Adam* (Arabic, Georgian, Syriac), and the *Testament of Solomon* (the Greek Vienna manuscript, the earliest manuscript, which is of considerable interest on its own terms). We revisit the *Apocryphon of Ezekiel* and the *Assumption/Testament of Moses* with new fragments. We publish a longer and earlier version of the Latin *Vision of Ezra*. The short books of *5-6 Ezra* were translated by Metzger as part of *4 Ezra* in the Charlesworth corpus, but we include them treated as works in their own right. We also include a translation of Armenian *4 Ezra* as a work in itself, since it is of considerable interest for the history of the interpretation of this ancient apocalypse.

Fifth, we have included a number of texts that were written in the form we have them well after the early seventh century, but which clearly either preserve earlier material or have a close relationship with such material. These include the *Cave of Treasures*, the *Palaea Historica*, nine Hebrew and Aramaic texts containing visions of hell and paradise collected and translated by Moses Gaster in 1893 and retranslated for the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project, and the *Treatise of the Vessels*, a Hebrew work of undetermined date which purports to tell where certain leaders at the time of the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple hid the Temple vessels and paraphernalia and which has notable parallels to the Copper Scroll.

Finally we come to the problem of in what order to present the texts. There are two precedents in earlier collections. Fabricius and Sparks listed them by the name of the relevant Old Testament character in the traditional biblical chronological order, whereas Kautzsch, Charles and Charlesworth arranged them according to genre, then by name of character in the biblical order. For a number of reasons we have chosen to follow the precedent of Fabricius and Sparks. In practical terms this allows us to publish a volume when we have a sufficient number of contributions in hand, minimizing the not insignificant practical challenge of persuading contributors to turn their contributions in. This approach also leaves the number of volumes open ended, although at the moment we do not have plans to publish more than two. In theoretical terms, listing the texts this way sidesteps the problem of establishing the genre to which a text belongs and classifying texts whose genres are unusual or difficult to determine (e.g., due to their fragmentary nature).

This approach does not serve for thematic texts such as the *Palaea Historica* and the *Treatise of the Vessels*, which cover a long span of biblical history and deal with many characters. We have relegated these to their own separate section of the collection.

These then, are some of the major practical challenges we have faced as we bring the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project to fruition. As is readily apparent, they sometimes force us to come to terms with longstanding theoretical problems to which we could respond only with imperfect and *ad-hoc* workarounds rather than definitive solutions. We trust that the inherent value of the project for many fields justifies the interim solutions we have drawn on to hold it together. Our aim is to make these documents widely available with good English translations and accessible introductions so as to promote more scholarly study of them and to raise awareness of them among non-specialists as well. We plan to turn in volume one, containing about half the texts, to the publisher (Eerdmans) early in 2010.