The Biblical antiquities of Philo

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THE BIBLICAL
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Now First
Translated from the Old Latin Version

by

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INTRODUCTION

1. The book now presented to English readers has never been translated before: not only is this so, but the very existence of it has remained unknown to the great mass of students for over three hundred years, although it was printed no less than five times in the course of the sixteenth century.

What is it, and why is it worth reviving after so long a period of oblivion? It is a Bible history, reaching, in its present imperfect form, from Adam to the death of Saul. It has come to us only in a Latin translation (made from Greek, and that again from a Hebrew original), and by an accident the name of the great Jewish philosopher of the first century, Philo, has been attached to it. Let me say at once that the attribution of it to him is wholly unfounded, and quite ridiculous: nevertheless I shall use his name in italics (Philo) as a convenient short title.

Its importance lies in this, that it is a genuine and unadulterated Jewish book of the first century—a product of the same school as the Fourth Book of Esdras and the Apocalypse of Baruch, and written, like them, in the years which followed the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It is thus contemporary with some of the New Testament writings, and throws light upon them as well as upon the religious thought of the Jews of its time.
2. (a) The History of the Book, as known to us, can be shortly told. It was printed by Adam Petri in 1527, at Basle, in a small folio volume, along with the genuine Philo's *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim*¹ and a fragment of the *De Vita contemplativa* (called *De Essaeis*). These were followed by the *Onomasticon (de Nominibus Hebraicis)* ascribed in Philo, in Jerome's version, and a Latin rendering of the *De Mundo* by Guillaume Budé. The whole volume is in Latin, and was edited by Joannes Sichardus: for the first three tracts he used two manuscripts, from Fulda and Lorsch, of which more hereafter. In 1538 Henricus Petri (son of Adam) reprinted this collection in a quarto volume, which I have not seen, and in 1550 included it all in a larger collection of patristic writings called *Micropresbyticon*. In 1552 our book (without the accompanying tracts) was printed from Sichardus' text in a small volume issued by Gryphius at Lyons, under the title *Antiquitatum diversi auctores*, and in 1599 in a similar collection *Historia antiqua*, by Commelin, at Heidelberg, edited by Juda Bonutius.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Philo was read and occasionally quoted, e.g. by Sixtus Senensis in the *Bibliotheca Sancta*, and by Pineda in his treatise on Solomon: but the greatest critics and scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seem never to have seen it. J. A. Fabricius would certainly have accorded it a place in his *Codex pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti* if he had read it: and very little escaped his notice. He does speak of it in his *Bibliotheca Graeca* (ed. Harles, IV. 743, 746), but only from the

¹ A volume issued by Ascensius at Paris in 1520, edited by Aug. Justiniani, contained only the *Quaestiones et Sol. in Genesim*. 
point of view of the editions. It is not too much to say that the chance which kept it from him has kept it also from the flock of scholars who have followed him like sheep for two hundred years. The first investigator to pay any attention to it seems to have been Cardinal J. B. Pitra. In the Spicilegium Solesmense (1855, II. 345 note, III. 335 note, etc.) there are allusions to it: in the later Analecta Sacra (II. 321; 1884) he printed the Lament of Jephthah’s daughter from a Vatican MS. of it, treating it as a known work, and referring to the printed edition.

In 1893 I came upon four detached fragments in a manuscript at Cheltenham, in the Phillipps collection, and printed them as a new discovery in a volume of Apocrypha Anecdotae (1st series, Texts and Studies, II. 3). No one who reviewed the book in England or abroad recognized that they were taken from a text already in print. At length, in 1898, the late Dr. L. Cohn, who was engaged for many years upon an edition of Philo’s works, published in the Jewish Quarterly Review an article in which the source of my fragments was pointed out and a very full account given of the whole book, with copious quotations. This article of Dr. Cohn’s is at present our standard source of information. Nothing to supersede it has, so far as I know, appeared since. A few scholars, but on the whole surprisingly few, have used Philo in recent years, notably Mr. H. St. John Thackeray in his book, The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought.

(b) Can we trace the history of Philo further back than the printed edition of 1527 by means of quotations or allusions to it? The whole body of evidence is remarkably small. At the very end of the fifteenth century Joannes Trithemius, Abbot
of Sponheim, writes a book, *De Scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, printed at Paris in 1512. On f. 186 is a notice of Philo, derived principally from Jerome, and a list of his writings. Among these he includes *De generationum successu*, lib. I. (which is our book), and adds the opening words: *Adam genuit tres filios*, which shows that he had seen the text. It is the only item so distinguished in all his list. Then, going back and setting aside certain extracts from the text (of which we shall speak under the head of authorities), we find, in the twelfth century, Petrus Comestor of Troyes, in his *Historia Scholastica* (one of the famous text-books of the Middle Ages), making a single incorrect quotation from our book (V. 8). He calls his source ‘Philo the Jew, or, as some say, a heathen philosopher, in his book of questions upon Genesis’: the words show that he was quoting a manuscript which contained that work as well as our text. His quotation is borrowed by several later mediæval chroniclers.

In the catalogues of monastic libraries *Philo* is of rare occurrence. The Fulda catalogue of the sixteenth century has “Repertorii noni ordo primus, liber Philonis antiquitatum 36.” The number 36 is the older library number, perhaps as old as the thirteenth century, which was written on the cover of the volume. This was one of the two manuscripts used by Sichardus: we shall return to it.

In the twelfth century a monk writes to the Abbot of Tegernsee for the loan of the “liber Philonis.” In 831 the abbey of St. Riquier, near Abbeville, has in its catalogue “liber Philonis Judaei

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