

## INTRODUCTION

I offer you this compilation of writings, to show that:

- 1) in the Church, there has been an understanding of Jesus' descent into Hell and the importance of what He did there.
- 2) in the Church there has been concern for the fate of those who died without access to the gospel.
- 3) in the Church there has been considerable thought given to the doctrine of salvation in Hell.

I do not imply that these writings are canonical or of equal worth with those writings accepted in the canon of the Church. I do not argue their authenticity. I simply present them as a resource for information in the Church's study of this topic.

The existence of so much material on this topic, throughout the history of the Church, demonstrates that a concern for the unreached souls in Hell is not a new invention.

I have tried to include the complete text of these documents, as they were available to me in the public domain. I realize that it could be a lot to wade through if you are only interested in the references which are specific to Jesus' descent to Hell. For that reason, I have included subheadings in the index which will lead you directly to such references in the text without scrolling through the entire document.

There is more to these texts than just references to the topic I have chosen. There is more treasure hidden there than I have seen. Search for yourself. Who knows what you will learn.

### The Apocrypha is not Apocryphal

When Martin Luther began his translation of the Bible into German, he chose to collect the books referred to as the Second Canon (Deutero-Canonicals) into a separate section at the end of the Hebrew Tanakh<sup>i</sup> or Proto-Canon. He labeled this section the Apocrypha. The books were of Jewish origin, although written in Greek, during the period between 300 B.C. – 100 B.C..

These books did not enjoy universal acceptance throughout the Church and were usually considered as secondary material to the Tanakh. They were not given equal status but they were regarded as profitable for the faith of the Church. Their placement in a separate section, a ghetto, led to their rejection by many Protestant sects because they did not support their 'sola-fide' - faith alone doctrines. And since they were all in one place rather than scattered throughout the text, it was easy for publishers to leave them out of future printings.

It is worthy of note that there were also New Testament books that were called apocrypha – meaning not universally accepted. These were the books: Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle of James, 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle of Peter, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Epistle of John, Epistle of

Jude and Apocalypse of John or Revelations. Where would our present-day Bibles be without those books? Their acceptance is no longer questioned.

At the Council of Florence in 1442, the Church included in the list of books to be accepted and read in the churches seven books which Martin Luther labeled Apocrypha. I have a much fuller discussion of these books in my book 'The Stolen and Forgotten Books of the Church' so I will not repeat that here.

### Meaning and Connotation of 'Apocrypha'

Apocrypha is a Greek word which simply means: secret or hidden things. The controversy concerning the books labeled 'the Apocrypha' by Luther has led to the connotation of the word apocrypha becoming synonymous with fake or falsified religious writings. In fact, there is an entire genre of writings known as apocryphal books. I do not include the Deutero-Canonical books in this category. I believe that they are truly worthy of meditation and study by the Church.

The genre of apocryphal books includes a very large number of texts. Many of those texts are written under the name of some famous Biblical person who was long dead when the books were written. Many of these works seem fanciful, confusing or downright silly to the modern reader.

In this book I want to introduce to you and make available to you for study some books of this tertiary (3<sup>rd</sup>) source of religious insight. I do not suggest that any of these books be added to the Bible canon. I just want to add them to your library.

### Tabloid Religion

These books reflect the concerns of the common people. They are comparable to our present-day tabloids. They demonstrate the same interest in angels, famous people, UFOs and the End of the World (apocalyptic writings) that manifests in our time. These topics are still followed religiously today by people at the supermarket checkout line just as they were in the centuries before and after the birth of Jesus.

I want to give you access to some of these writings which show that there was a lively interest in what happened to Jesus when he went to Hell. This is known as the Descent to and Harrowing of Hell. There is information to be gleaned from these works about what happened. I do not plan to define for you how much of that information is 'true'. That is not my point. I don't want to argue. I want to inform.

I have shown in the three Hellrazer's Bibles that the first and second canon of the Bible contains a wealth of information on the topic of the Harrowing of Hell and even salvation in Hell. I present these writings to you as supplemental to that.

These Apocryphal writings demonstrate a lively concern among common people to know more of what is hidden (apocrypha) about Hell and the future. There is a principle of teaching that is taught in the Passover ritual. "When your child asks -say". the principle is simply that we need to answer the questions people are asking if we want them to be interested in what we are teaching.

People are interested in death, Hell, the future, judgement and justice. They are not concerned with which religious sect is correct about love and truth when they spend their time throwing shade on each other. Only people who want to play with religious theological toys care a hoot about doctrine. The people want to know if God is good, if God likes them and what will happen to them when they die.

What Jesus did to Hell and the whole question of salvation in Hell have a lot to do with what common people are concerned about. If death can prevent God from giving people the chance to decide whether they will accept the offer of salvation through Jesus, then death is stronger than God and God is not very good. Actually, God is pretty incompetent, if He never considered that some people might not get a chance to hear the Gospel before they died.

People in the checkout line don't care who said that there is no salvation after death. All they care about is themselves and the fact that religions are so confusing and so hypocritical that they find it almost impossible to make up their minds about who or what to believe. So, they look for answers in the tabloids to the questions most interesting to them.

Let me introduce you to the tabloids from 300 B.C. to 300 A.D.. They belong to the category of Apocryphal books but don't let that convince you that they are fakes not worth studying. I believe there is a lot to be learned from them.

Some of these books are written under the name of a famous person (pseudonym). Some are Jewish writings that were later added to by Christian writers (interpolation). These were common literary practices in those times.

We are looking for what has been hidden. It is there to be found if we do the work to dig it out and determine its value. We might find treasure buried in these fields.<sup>ii</sup> Sometimes you have to think like a detective to ferret out the nuggets of truth. In other instances, the treasure you can find is in the general interest of the subject which is demonstrated by the frequency of its mention. These texts are valuable for their corroboration of what is revealed in the accepted Biblical scriptures.

## The Apocryphal Texts

In the sections which follow I will provide you access to texts of the Apocryphal genre which have reference to Jesus' descent into Hell and his Harrowing of Hell. I will add subheadings to the index highlighting the relevant passages and then provide the complete text of the work so that you can examine it for yourself. You can follow the index if you want a faster way through the text.

Some of the works are difficult to follow. Remember, you are dealing with an ancient mindset very unlike your own. That does not mean the writings are pointless or silly. They arise out of a context you are unfamiliar with. The ancients had no cell phones or automobiles so they would find modern writings incomprehensible too.

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<sup>i</sup> The Tanakh is made up of the Masoretic texts of the Hebrew scriptures. Many Protestant Bibles use translations of the Tanakh as the entirety of the Old Testament.

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 13: 44