

# JAMES MONTAGUE RHODES

OLD TESTAMENT  
LEGENDS

Montague James

**Old Testament Legends**

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# **M. R. James**

## **Old Testament Legends / Being stories out of some of the less-known apocryphal books of the Old Testament**

### **PREFACE**

If you read the title-page of this book—a thing which young persons very seldom do—you will see that it (the book) contains stories taken "out of some of the less-known apocryphal books of the Old Testament." You will very possibly not understand what that means; but if you will read this preface—another thing which young persons do even seldomer than they read a title-page—you will find the best explanation that I can give.

I have to begin by talking about the word apocryphal. The newspapers are fond of saying that a statement made by the Prime Minister (or the leader of the Opposition, according to which side in politics the newspaper takes) is apocryphal. By this, the newspaper means to say that the statement was untrue. Or, you will read that someone obtained money or goods by saying that he possessed large estates abroad; and that the estates turned out to be apocryphal. By this is meant that they did not exist. But when you read of a book being apocryphal, something rather different is meant: either that it is "spurious," i.e. that it pretends to be written by someone who did not write it; or that what is in it is fabulous and untrue, like the stories of King Arthur; or both.

Now this word apocryphal is specially used, and perhaps most often used, in connection with the Bible. Probably you have at least heard of something called "the Apocrypha," even if you have not read it, and even if you have mixed it up in your mind with another word, Apocalypse, which has nothing whatever to do with it. Well, what is "the Apocrypha"? It is to be found in many Bibles, bound up between the Old and the New Testaments. It is a set of books, looking just like the other books of the Bible, with chapters and verses. Some of it is read in church as weekday lessons in the months of October and November, as you may see by looking at the Table of Lessons in any Prayer Book. Now, are all these books of "the Apocrypha" fabulous or spurious? No. Some of them are. The Second Book of Esdras (that is, Ezra) was not written by Ezra; The Book of Baruch (the companion of the prophet Jeremiah) was not written by Baruch; The Wisdom of Solomon was not written by Solomon. These and some others are spurious. Also, the books of Tobit and of Judith are fabulous stories. On the other hand, the book Ecclesiasticus was really written by Sirach (who is mentioned in the Preface), and The First Book of Maccabees is a true and valuable history.

Then why, if apocryphal means fabulous or spurious, or both, are these books, some of which are true and genuine, lumped all together and called "Apocrypha"? I am sorry to disappoint you, but I cannot go through the whole history. It is long, it is difficult, and though it interests me, I am inclined to think it would not interest you unless I spread it over a great many pages, and filled it out with stories; and for this I have no time. Let me tell you what strikes me as being the important thing to bear in mind. Nearly all of these books have been at some time or another read in church and treated as Scripture. Nearly all of them are now treated as Scripture by the Roman Church, but not by most of the Protestant, or Reformed, Churches. They are on the borderland of the Bible. From having been so long kept together in a group by themselves, they have come to be thought of as being all of one uniform kind. But they are not so; they are of very different sorts and merits.

Let us keep the old name for them and call them "the Apocrypha." It will be convenient to do so, because I have now to speak of other apocryphal books, which have never been bound up

in our Bibles, but in older times, before Bibles were printed, were (some of them at least) read in churches and thought to be sacred books. There are a great many of these: perhaps, if they were all put together, they would make up a volume as large as the Old Testament itself; but at present there is no book in which they are all printed together. Some are stories, others are visions like those in the Revelation of St. John, others are psalms and prophecies. But all of them, I think, may fairly be called either fabulous or spurious, or both.

I can give you an example from the Bible itself to show that there were such books as long ago as the times of the Apostles, and that they were read and valued. In the 9th verse of the Epistle of Jude, you read something very curious about Satan contending with Michael about the body of Moses. Ancient writers whom we may trust tell us that this is taken from a book called *The Assumption of Moses* (that is, the story of Moses being taken up out of this world at the end of his life).

We have pieces of this book still, but we have not got the whole story of the dispute between Satan and Michael. However, we know that it was represented as having taken place when Michael and the other angels were burying the body of Moses among the mountains in a place which was kept secret from all men, and that Satan said that though the soul of Moses might belong to God, the body belonged to him; and, moreover, that Moses was a murderer, because, long before, he had killed an Egyptian (as we read in Exodus ii. 12); whereupon Michael answered Satan in the words, "The Lord rebuke thee," and Satan fled. That is one example. Another is in the 14th verse of the same Epistle, where it is said that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of the coming of the Lord to judge sinners. This verse is taken out of a long book of prophecies and visions called *The Book of Enoch*, which still exists, and we may read the very words in it.

In this present book, I am only concerned with the apocryphal stories; with the prophecies and visions and psalms I have nothing to do. Now, how and why did the stories come to be written?

It is likely enough that after reading some history in the Bible you may have wondered whether there was anything more to be known about the people of whom it told you. You would have liked to find out what happened to Adam, or Joseph, or David, besides the things which are written in the Bible. It was just so in ancient times—the times when our Lord was on earth, and even long before that. The Jews naturally thought a great deal about the people who are mentioned in the Old Testament; and just as there are a great many stories about the heroes of English history—such as that of King Alfred and the cakes—which, we are told now, are not true, so stories grew up about the great men of the Bible. Perhaps they were invented, some of them, in answer to questions which had been asked. Some of them were certainly made up in order to explain parts of the Bible which were difficult to understand. I will give an example of this. In the Book of Genesis (iv. 23, 24) you are told how the patriarch Lamech spoke to his wives and said, "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt." Nothing is said in explanation of this; we are not told whom Lamech had killed. So a story was made up—no one knows when—which gives this explanation: Lamech was blind, and he used to amuse himself by shooting birds and beasts with bow and arrow. When he went out shooting, he used to take with him his young nephew Tubal; and Tubal used to spy the game for him and guide his hands that he might aim his arrow right. One day, when they were out together, Tubal saw, as he thought, a beast moving in the thicket; and he told Lamech, and made him aim at it, and Lamech's arrow smote the beast and killed it. But when Tubal ran to see what kind of beast it was, he found that it was not a wild beast at all. It was his ancestor Cain. For after Cain had killed Abel, and God had pronounced a curse upon him, he wandered about the earth, never able to remain in one place; and a great horn grew out of his head, and his body was covered with hair; so that Tubal, seeing him in the distance among the trunks of the trees and the brushwood, was deceived, and mistook him for a beast of chase. But when Tubal saw what had happened, he was terrified, and ran back to Lamech, crying out, "You have slain our forefather Cain!" And Lamech also was struck with horror, and raised his hands and smote them together with a mighty blow. And in so doing he struck the head of Tubal with his full strength, and Tubal fell down dead. Then Lamech returned to his house, and

spoke to his wives the words that are written in the Book of Genesis. This story, a very ancient one, as I said, was invented by the Jews to explain the difficult passage in Genesis; and the early Christian writers learnt it from the Jews, and it passed into many commentaries which were written in later times; so that you may still see representations of it carved in stone in churches, both in England and elsewhere. In England it may be seen on the inside of the stone roof of Norwich Cathedral, and on the west front of Wells Cathedral; but you have to look carefully before you can find it.

There are other stories which pretend to explain texts that do not seem so difficult. For instance, in the 18th Psalm there is a verse, "Thou hast made room enough under me for to go." And about this there is a long tale of how King David went to fight the giant Ishbi-benob, and was nearly killed by him; for the giant took David and cast him to the ground, and put a heavy wine-press upon him, which would have crushed him, but that the earth beneath him suddenly became soft and yielded room for his body, and thus room was made under him.

Then again, there are others which are like parables.

At this point I will put in two short stories of the parable-kind, neither of which I think you are likely to have seen. One of them is certainly taken from an apocryphal book which is lost; and the other I suspect to have been taken either from the same book or from one like it.

First I will tell the one about the source of which I am not certain.

In the days of King Hezekiah there was in Israel a rich man who was a miser and gave nothing to the poor. But one day it happened that he took up the book of the proverbs of King Solomon; and his eye fell upon the place where it is said, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and look what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again." "So," thought he to himself, "this is a good security!" And forthwith he sold all that he had, and distributed the price among the poor, keeping for himself only two pieces of money. But, to his disappointment, he did not only become poor himself by this means, but he remained poor. The money he had given away did not come back, and no one else would give him any. So he was reduced to despair, and said, "I will go straight to Jerusalem, and demand of God why He has deceived me, and induced me to give away all my possessions by promises that are false." And he set forth. And on his way, not far from Jerusalem, he saw two men fighting, and said to them, "Brethren, what is your quarrel?" And one said, "We were journeying together, and I saw a shining stone lying in the road, and pointed it out to this man; and because he was swifter on his feet than I, he got to it first. And now he says he will keep it for himself, but I say it belongs to me, for I saw it first." Then said the traveller, "What is the value of the stone?" They said, "We do not know." And he said, "Will you take these two pieces of money for it and let me have it?" And to this they consented. So when the man got to Jerusalem, he took the stone to a jeweller and showed it to him; and no sooner had the jeweller seen it than he fell on his face and gave thanks to God. And then he said to the man, "Where did you find this? For three whole years all Jerusalem has been ransacked for this stone. Go quickly to the High Priest and give it to him, and see what he will give you!" At the same hour there came an angel to the High Priest, and said to him, "Within a few moments there will come to you a man bringing the gem which three years ago was lost out of the breastplate of Aaron the priest. Receive it at his hands, and give him for it a great sum of gold; and when you have given it, smite him lightly upon the cheek and say, 'Be not distrustful in thy heart, and slow to believe the word which says, 'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord.' For thus saith the Lord, 'Have I not now in this present world repaid thee many times over that which thou didst lend to Me? And, if thou have faith, thou shalt in the world to come receive a recompense yet many times greater than this.'" And when the man came, the High Priest did and said as he had been commanded; and the man's heart was moved, and he left in the temple all that great sum which had been given him, and for the rest of his life put his whole trust in the promises of God.

The other short story is taken out of an apocryphal book under the name of the prophet Ezekiel, and is a parable of the soul and the body of man at the day of judgment.

There was a certain king, it says, who made a marriage feast for his eldest son, and invited all his soldiers to his palace to share it. Now every one of his subjects was a soldier and served in his army, except only two, one of whom was blind and the other lame; and these two were not invited to the feast, but remained in their huts—which were near to one another—very angry and disappointed. After a while the blind man called to the lame man, "It is a shame that we are not sitting down to the feast along with the rest! I should like to treat the king as ill as he has treated us." "How can we?" said the lame man. "You know his garden," said the other; "let us go and spoil it!" "All very well," said the lame man, "but how are we to get there? I cannot walk." "Neither can I see; but we will contrive a way." So they devised a plan. The lame man plucked the grass that he could reach, and plaited it into a string, and threw one end to the blind man, who guided himself by it to the lame man. Then he took the lame man on his back, and carried him to the king's garden, and there they did all the mischief they could, trampling down and tearing up plants and flowers; and they went back to their houses and remained there. When the rest of the people came out from the banquet into the garden, they were appalled at the sight of the damage, and were much perplexed, saying, "Were not all the soldiers of the king bidden to the feast? and is not every man in the kingdom a soldier? Whence then are these tracks in the garden, and who has wrought this mischief?" After a while the king bethought him of the blind and the lame man; they were brought before him, and he said to the blind man, "Have you been into my garden?" He answered, "Alas, sire! you see my infirmity, and that I have no eyes wherewith to find my way!" Then said the king to the lame man, "And you, have you been into my garden?" And he answered, "Surely my lord has forgotten my infirmity; it cannot be that he desires to hurt my feelings by mocking me!" So the king was perplexed, and went apart to consider how the two could have contrived the business—for he was sure that they were guilty. At last a thought came to him, and he set the lame man on the blind man's shoulders, and scourged them both together. Then indeed did they cry out, and the lame said to the blind, "Did you not lend me your feet to take me to the king's garden?" And the blind to the lame, "Did you not lend me your eyes to show me the way?" And in like manner at the judgment the soul will say to the body, "I could not have sinned if you had not given me the limbs with which I did evil." And the body to the soul, "But it was you who thought of the evil which I carried out." Thus one will try to throw the blame on the other; but is either of them free from guilt?

Others of these apocryphal books are designed to show how important some special virtue, or how dangerous some particular sin, may be. Thus, there is a book called *The Testaments* (or *Last Words*) of the Twelve Patriarchs, in which each of the twelve sons of Jacob, when he comes to die, calls his children to him and tells them about his own life, and warns them against his own besetting sin, or shows how he has been helped by practising some good habit: Simeon speaks about envy, Issachar about simplicity, Zebulun about kindness, and so on. And many others there are which are merely, one would say, meant to tell us more about the lives and deaths of the great men of the old times than we can learn from the Bible.

Perhaps I have now said enough to show of what sort the tales are that are told in this book—some of them told for the first time in English. They are not true, but they are very old; some of them, I think, are beautiful, and all of them seem to me interesting. In case anyone should wish to know more about them, I will put down here the names of the books from which I have taken them.

The first part of the story of Adam is shortened from Mr. S. G. Malan's translation of *The Book of Adam and Eve*, and from Dillmann's German translation of the same (*Das christliche Adambuch des Morgenlandes*). The second part is from the Greek *Revelation of Moses* (in Tischendorf's *Apocalypses Apocryphae*), and from the Latin *Life of Adam*, edited by W. Meyer.

The first part of the story of Abraham is from *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, translated from Slavonic by Professor N. Bonwetsch; the second part is from *The Testament of Abraham*, edited by me in *Texts and Studies*.

The story of Aseneth is from the Greek History of Aseneth, edited by Batiffol in *Studia Patristica*.

The story of Job is taken from The Testament of Job in my *Apocrypha Anecdota* (ii).

That of Solomon is from The Testament of Solomon as printed by Migne at the end of the works of Michael Psellus.

That of Baruch from The Rest of the Words of Baruch, edited by Dr. J. Rendel Harris.

That of Ahikar principally from the French edition by the Abbe F. Nau, with some few touches borrowed from that by Dr. J. Rendel Harris.

One last word. Not all of the stories in this book are equally old. The oldest is most likely that of Ahikar. Lately some pieces of it have been discovered in Egypt in a very ancient copy. Next, probably, comes the second part of the story of Adam. In each of the others there are some parts which are derived from early Jewish tales, but the books in which we have them now were put into their present shape by Christians. Still, there is not one that is less than fifteen hundred years old.

## OLD TESTAMENT LEGENDS

### ADAM

When Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, they were as helpless as little children. They knew nothing of day or night, heat or cold; they could not kindle a fire to warm themselves, nor till the ground to grow food. They had as yet no clothes to wear and no shelter against rain or sun. As long as they were in the garden, it was always light and warm, and their bodies were so fashioned that they had no need of food or sleep or of protection against the burning of the sun; but since they had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, they had become like us. Moreover, all the beasts and birds were friendly with them; but now they knew that it was not so, and that they had no defence if any fierce animal chose to attack them; and, more than all, they knew that they had a cruel enemy lying in wait for them outside the garden, even Satan, who had hated them from the first, and had brought about their fall by means of the serpent. And so it was that when they came out of the gate of the garden and saw the earth stretched out before them, covered with rocks and sand, and found themselves in a strange land where there was no one to guide them, they fell down on their faces, and became as dead, because of the misery and sorrow which they felt. But God looked upon them and sent His Word to raise them up and comfort them; and showed them a place not very far from the garden where there was a cave; and told them that they were to live there. Now this was the cave which was afterwards called the Cave of Treasures.

When first they entered into the cave, they did nothing but weep and lament: not only because they had lost the garden, but also because for the first time the sky was hidden from them by the roof of the cave; for as yet they had never been in any place where they could not see it. But when the sun set and there was darkness outside the cave as well as inside, they were frightened beyond measure; for they said, "It is because of what we have done: the light is gone out of the heavens, and will come back no more." Then the Word of God spake to them and said, "Be comforted; it is only so for a few hours, and the light will return to you." And they remained praying and weeping in the cave until the darkness began to grow less. After that the sun rose, and Adam went to the mouth of the cave, and it shone full upon him, and he felt the burning heat of it on his body for the first time, and thought that it was God who had come to afflict and punish him; and he beat upon his breast and prayed for mercy. But God said, "This sun is not God; it is created to give light to the world, and every day it will rise in like manner, and travel over the heavens and set, as you have seen it. *I am God, who comforted you in the night.*"

Then Adam and Eve took courage, and came out of the cave, and thought they would go towards the garden; and when they came near to the gate by which they had been driven out of it, they met the serpent. Now before it tempted Eve and became accursed, the serpent had been the most beautiful of all the creatures. Its head was of all the colours of the most beautiful jewels; it had eyes like emeralds, and a melodious voice; it had slender and graceful legs, and it fed on perfumed flowers and delicious fruits. Now it was loathsome to look upon; it wriggled on its belly in the dust, and all creatures spurned and hated it. And when it saw Eve it was enraged to think of the curse that had come upon it through her, and it raised itself up and darted at her, and its eyes became blood-red with anger. Then Adam, who had nothing in his hand wherewith to defend Eve, ran and caught it by the tail, but it turned upon him and coiled about him and Eve with its body and began to crush them; and it said, "It is because of you that I am compelled to trail in the dust and have lost my beauty." And they cried out for fear. But God sent an angel who caught hold of the serpent and loosed them, and smote the serpent with

dumbness, so that thereafter it could only hiss. And a great wind came and took it up, and cast it away upon the seashore of India.

And when Adam and Eve had a little recovered themselves from their fear, they went on towards the garden; but at the gate of it there stood a great cherub holding a sword of fire; and when they were able to look upon his face, they saw that he was angry and that he frowned upon them, and raised his sword as if he would smite them with it; but he said nothing. So they were in great fear, and turned from him and went back in great sorrow of heart, wandering they knew not whither, until they found themselves standing on the top of a rock, and before their feet was a precipice. And Adam was so miserable that he desired to live no longer; and he cast himself down from the top of the rock, and lay on the ground below without moving; and Eve thought that he was dead, and said, "I will not live after him; it is through my fault that all these evils have come upon him." And she also threw herself down from the top of the rock; but though both of them were torn and bruised, they were not wounded to death. And after a long time they came to themselves.

Then they bethought them that they had done wrong in trying to put an end to their own lives before it pleased God to set them free from this world. Therefore Adam took stones and piled them up in the shape of an altar, and then they gathered leaves from the trees and wiped off the blood that had been spilt upon the face of the rock, and gathered up the dust that was mingled with their blood and laid it upon the altar, and prayed to God to forgive their trespass. And this was the first offering that they made to God. And God looked upon them with pity and forgave them, and said, "As you have shed your blood, so after five thousand and five hundred years have passed will I take your flesh upon Me and shed My blood for you and for your children; and it shall have power to quench the flame of the sword which is in the hand of the angel, and you shall enter again into the garden, and dwell there until the time when I shall make a new heaven and a new earth."

But when Satan saw that God had pity upon Adam and Eve and accepted their humble offering—for he was all this time keeping watch to see what would become of them—he was filled with dismay and hate, and began to contrive means by which he might lead them astray and put an end to them; for he thought, "If these creatures were destroyed, the earth would remain to me and to my hosts, and I should reign over it alone." He called therefore for some of his host, and made them appear like angels of light. And when they were all disguised in this fashion, they rose into the air and flew towards the cave, from which Adam and Eve were just coming out, meaning to go once again towards the garden. When they caught sight of these bright ones in the air, they stopped and raised their hands towards them, thinking that they were angels coming to them with a message. Satan called to Adam, "Adam, we are angels come from God; He has sent us to bring you to the lake of pure water that is on the north side of Eden, that you may wash yourselves in it and be cleansed from your sin, and return once more to the garden. Come therefore and follow us." And they turned and began flying towards the north; but Adam and Eve were glad beyond measure, and followed the troop of angels as quickly as they could, till they came to the mountain on the north side of Eden which overhung the lake. Then Satan lighted on the ground, and guided them to the top of the mountain, which was very steep. And when they were at the summit, they stood for a while and looked down upon the waters of the lake; and while they were doing so, Satan vanished away silently, and all his host with him; so that when Adam and Eve looked round, they found themselves left alone and in great peril. And they saw that they had been brought into this danger by Satan, and that he had deceived them once again. And they cried aloud for help.

Then God had pity on them, and commanded the angels Sariel and Salathiel to bear them in their arms and carry them back to their cave. And when they were come there, Adam prayed to God that, if they might not be permitted to go into the garden any more, He would at least give them something for a remembrance of it to comfort them. So God commanded the archangel Michael to go as far as the Sea of India, and fetch thence some gold, and dip it in the water that flows from under the Tree of Life, and give it to Adam. Likewise He commanded Gabriel to speak to the cherub that kept

the gate of the garden, and go in and fetch some frankincense; and Raphael to bring myrrh also from the garden. And they did so. And Michael brought seventy rods of gold, and Gabriel twelve pounds weight of frankincense, and Raphael three pounds of myrrh; and these were all laid up in the cave where Adam and Eve lived: wherefore it was called the Cave of Treasures. And when the appointed time was fulfilled, and the Word took upon Him the flesh of the sons of Adam, three kings came from the East to do Him honour, and offered to Him that same gold and frankincense and myrrh, which had come down to them through many generations.

After some days, Adam and Eve made a vow that they would go, one of them to the river Tigris and the other to the river Euphrates, and would wade into the water up to the neck, and stand there for forty whole days and nights, praying earnestly that they might be forgiven; for even yet they went on hoping that, if they accomplished some great act of repentance, they might be permitted to return into Eden. They separated, therefore, and stood in the water of the river, fasting and praying. But Satan suspected that they had made such a vow, and it frightened him, for he did not feel sure that God would not change His purpose and forgive them; and he said to himself, "I will take care that they shall not keep their vow." Accordingly, on the thirty-fifth day, as Eve stood praying in the water, she heard a voice as of an angel praising God, and she looked and saw one in bright raiment coming to her, and he called to her and said, "God has forgiven Adam! All is well. I have just now brought the good tidings to Adam, and he bade me come and tell you; and lest you should doubt of the truth, he said, 'Remind her of the sign which was given to us in the cave: how the angels brought the gold and laid it on the south side, and the incense on the east, and the myrrh on the west.'" Then Eve was sure that the messenger spoke true, and she rejoiced greatly, and came, as well as she could, out of the water, and followed him. But when they came in sight of the river Euphrates, she saw Adam still standing in the water praying, and she knew that she had been deceived; and at that moment Satan vanished away, and Eve fell upon the ground, for she was stiff with the cold, and weak with fasting. As for Adam, when he saw her, he cried out and smote upon his breast, and sank down into the water, and would have perished but that God sent His angel and drew him up out of the water. And he showed Adam that he could not by these means gain admittance to the garden before the time appointed was fulfilled.

After these things God showed Adam and Eve the things that were necessary for their life. For as yet they had eaten nothing since they came out of the garden; because the food which they had when they were there was heavenly food, and it sustained them through all these many days. Neither had they any clothes. Therefore God told them to go to the seashore, and there they should find the skins of some sheep whose flesh had been devoured by lions, and these skins they should take and make them into raiment. But Satan heard the words of God, and immediately went to the place where the skins were, with intent to throw them into the sea, or burn them with fire; only, just as he was about to seize them, God spake a word, and Satan was bound there immovable, in his own hideous form. And when Adam and Eve came to the place, they saw him crouching beside the skins; and they were afraid at the horrible look of him. Then the Word came to them, saying, "This is he who promised to make you as gods. What have you gained, think you, by hearkening to his words?" And Satan was cowed, and fled away in shame.

Adam and Eve therefore took the sheep-skins, and there came an angel who showed them how to sew them together with palm-thorns and sinews, and they made them into raiment.

Again, God showed them a land where corn was growing, and told them how they might use it for bread; for it was ripe, and they gathered the ears and made an offering of the first ears. And Satan came and burnt part of the corn; but the angels drove him away.

Many other times also did Satan try to destroy Adam and Eve, coming to them disguised as an angel and enticing them into the wilderness; and again, when they were sleeping on the side of a mountain outside their cave, he loosened a great rock above them that it might fall and crush them; but the angels of God caught it and fixed it like a roof over the heads of Adam and Eve, and when

they awoke they were astonished. And once he fell upon Adam and smote him in the side with a sharp stone so that he almost slew him. Nevertheless, in all these perils Adam and Eve put their trust in God, and He protected them and healed them. And after a time Satan perceived that he would not be able to destroy them by injuring their bodies, and that they would not listen to him when he tempted them to disobey God. So Satan's war against Adam was defeated.

This is the first part of the story of Adam, as it is told in an old book called *The Conflict of Adam and Eve*. It is only part of the story; I have left out a great deal. The second part of the story is taken from a Greek book called *The Revelation of Moses*, and a Latin one called *The Life of Adam and Eve*. It tells how Adam died and was buried.

## THE DEATH OF ADAM AND EVE

Adam lived for 930 years; and there were born to him thirty sons and thirty daughters. And when he was 930 years old he fell sick, and sent for all his children, and for their children also, saying, "Come and let me see you before I die." They all gathered together therefore at the door of his dwelling, saving Cain, who was a wanderer upon the face of the earth; but Seth was the eldest of those that came, and he was the most beloved son of Adam and Eve.

And Seth said to his father, "Father, what is the matter with you?" And Adam answered, "Great pain and sickness is upon me." And his children said, "What mean you by pain and sickness?" For as yet no one had died upon the earth except Abel, whom Cain slew. Then said Seth, "Father, is it because you long after the garden and desire the fruit of it? If it be so, command me, and I will go to the gate, and cast dust upon my head, and weep and pray; and God will send His angel, and it may be He will suffer me to bring you some of the fruit of the garden, and you shall eat it and recover." Eve also wept and said, "My lord Adam, give me the half of your disease, and let me bear it for you; because it is through my fault that this evil has come upon you." Then said Adam, "I will tell you what you shall do, even you and my son Seth: you shall go to the garden and pray there as you have said, and ask the angel to give me some of the oil of mercy that flows from the Tree of Life, and bring it to me that I may anoint my body with it, and be eased from my pain."

So Eve and Seth departed and went towards the garden; and as they were going through the woods, a wild beast leaped out and attacked Seth. And Eve was terrified and cried out, "Alas! alas! what will become of me at the last day? Surely all that have done evil will curse me, saying, 'Woe unto Eve, because she kept not the commandment of God!'" And she cried out upon the wild beast, "How wast thou not afraid to fight against the image of God? How is thy mouth opened against Him? Dost thou not remember that God put thee in subjection to us?" And the beast spake with a man's voice and said, "What have we to do with thy weeping and complaints? How was it that thy mouth was opened to eat of the fruit? Accuse me not, lest I begin to accuse thee." Then said Seth to the beast, "Shut thy mouth: be silent: dare not to touch the image of God." And the beast answered, "Thee will I obey, O Seth." And it fled and left him wounded, and went back to its den.

So Eve and Seth went on to the garden and wept before the gate, beseeching God to send them the oil of mercy for Adam. And God sent Michael the archangel to them, who said, "Seth, thou man of God, weary not thyself with making supplication for the oil of mercy, for it cannot be given to thee now. But when the times are fulfilled, then shall come One who shall anoint thy father with that oil, and he shall rise up and return to the garden, he and all his seed; and the evil heart shall be taken from them, and a new heart shall be given them to understand that which is good, and God shall dwell in the midst of them, and they shall be His people. But now go back to thy father, for his end is near, even within three days, and tell him these words; and watch what shall come to pass when he is taken from thee." They returned therefore to Adam, and told him; and he groaned and said, "Alas! O Eve, what is this that thou hast done, to bring upon us the dominion of death? Now therefore call together our children and our children's children, and tell them concerning our sin, from first to last." So, when they were assembled, Eve spoke to them, and told them the whole story of how Satan came to the serpent and taunted it for paying homage to Adam and Eve, forasmuch as they were neither so beautiful nor so wise as itself; and he persuaded the serpent to let him speak through its mouth; and at the hour when the angels go up to the heavens to worship God, the serpent slipped over the wall and found Eve by the Tree of Knowledge; and of what happened after that, until the time when they were cast out of the garden. And when she ceased speaking, her children departed.

Then she went in to Adam, and said to him,

"How can I live when you are dead? and how long will it be before I also die? Tell me." Adam answered, "Trouble not yourself; for you will not tarry long after me, and I believe that the same

grave will hold both of us. But now, when I die, leave me alone, and let no one touch me until the will of God is made known concerning me. For I am sure that God will not forget me, but will visit the creature which His hands have made. Now therefore go and pray to Him until I give up my spirit to Him that gave it; for we know not how we shall meet Him, whether He will yet be wroth with us, or whether He will turn and have mercy upon us." She went out therefore and fell upon the ground and prayed a long time.

## THE DEATH OF ADAM AND EVE

And at last the Angel of Mankind came to her and said, "Rise up, Eve; for Adam thy husband is departing out of this life, and is going to meet Him that made him."

Eve therefore arose and looked up into the sky; and she saw a chariot of light coming, drawn by four shining eagles, and angels on either side escorting the chariot. And when it came above the place where our father Adam lay, it stayed. And the angels came bearing censers, and they stood about it and lighted their censers, and the smoke of the incense rose up and hid the firmament; and the angels bowed and worshipped, saying, "Holy One, have mercy, for he is Thine image and the work of Thy hands."

Also Eve beheld two great and fearful ones standing in the heavens, and she was afraid and called upon Seth, saying, "Rise up, O Seth, and come to me, and behold that which no eye of man hath looked upon." So he came to her, and she said, "Seest thou the seven heavens open, and thy father Adam lying upon his face and the holy angels interceding for him?" She said, moreover, "Who are the two dark ones that stand praying for thy father?" And Seth answered, "They are the Sun and the Moon, who are entreating the Most High for my father Adam." And Eve said, "Where then is their light, and why is their aspect black?" And he said, "They cannot shine in the presence of the Light of all things: therefore is their light departed from them."

Now as Seth was speaking to his mother, behold, the angels blew with the trumpets, and fell on their faces, and cried with a loud voice, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord over all His works; for He hath had compassion upon Adam, the work of His hands." Then came one of the Seraphim, having six wings, and caught up the soul of Adam and bare it to the lake of pure water which is on the north side of Eden, and washed it before the face of God. And the Most High commanded him to deliver it unto Michael the archangel, that he should bear it into Paradise until the day of the visitation of all things.

After that the holy archangel entreated the Most High concerning the body of Adam. And God commanded all the angels to come before Him, every one in his order; and they gathered themselves together, bearing censers and trumpets and vials full of odours. And the Lord of Hosts went up, and the great winds before Him, and the Cherubim flying upon the winds, and the angels of heaven round about Him. And they bore up the body of Adam and carried it into the garden. And all the trees of the garden bowed and swayed and gave forth their odours. And because of the greatness of that sight, and of the sweetness of the odours of Paradise, all the sons of Adam, and all that were on the earth, were cast into a deep sleep, saving Seth only.

Now as the body of Adam lay in Paradise, God said, "O Adam, why didst thou transgress My commandment? For if thou hadst kept it, they that persecute thee would not have rejoiced against thee. Nevertheless I say unto thee, that hereafter I will turn their joy into sorrow, and thy sorrow into joy."

Then the angels brought shrouds of silk and fine linen, and God commanded Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael, and they wrapped up the body of Adam therein, and anointed it with sweet odours. And the Lord said, "Bring hither also the body of Abel." For since the day when Cain slew him, the body of Abel had not been buried: because Cain often sought to hide it, but the earth would not receive it, until the dust that was first taken out of her and made into a body, that is, the body of Adam, should be restored to her.

So the body of Abel was brought and wrapped in grave-clothes like that of Adam; and they were both of them buried in the place from which God took the dust when He formed Adam at the first, and the angels dug the grave and covered it in.

And when this was done, God called to the body, saying, "Adam, Adam!" And the body answered, "Here am I, Lord." And the Lord said, "I said unto thee, 'Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.' Behold now I promise thee that in the last days I will raise thee up yet again out of the

dust, even thee and all thy seed with thee." And God sealed the tomb that no man should touch it until six days were fulfilled, and the rib which was taken out of Adam should be given back to him.

After these things Eve awoke out of her sleep, and was troubled because she knew not what had become of the body of Adam; and she prayed, saying, "Lord, as Thou didst make me out of the flesh of Adam, and as I was with him in the garden, and after we were cast out I was never parted from him, so now, I beseech thee, suffer me to be buried with him, and let no man part us asunder." And on the seventh day after the death of Adam, Eve was thus praying; and when she had ended her prayer, she looked up into heaven and smote her breast and said, "Lord God of all things, receive my spirit." And so she gave up her soul to God.

And immediately the angels came and took her body, and buried it in the place where the bodies of Adam and Abel were laid.

## ABRAHAM

Abraham was the son of Terah, and Terah was a maker of idols which he sold to the people round about him. Now this is the story of how Abraham came to believe in the true God; and in the ancient book the story is put into the mouth of Abraham himself, and he tells it in this way:

I was troubled in my mind because I desired to know who was in truth the strongest of all the Gods. And one day when I was attending to the gods of my father Terah, gods of wood and stone, gold and silver, iron and brass, I went into the temple where they stood, and found that one of them, the god named Marumath, who was carved out of stone, had fallen over and was lying at the feet of the god Zucheus. When I saw that, I was alarmed, and thought that I should never be able to put him back in his place by myself, because he was so heavy; so I went and told my father, and he came, and the two of us could hardly manage to move him; but as we were doing so, the head of the god broke off in my hands. At that my father said, "Abraham", and I said, "Here am I, bring me the chisels out of the house." And when I had done so, he fashioned another Marumath out of stone, without a head, and fixed the head that had come off the first Marumath upon it; and the rest of the old Marumath he broke in pieces.

After that he made five more gods, and bade me take them and sell them in the streets of the city; and I saddled the ass, and put them upon it, and went to the river to sell them; and there I found merchants coming from Fandana in Syria with camels, on their way to Egypt to bring papyrus from the Nile. And as I was talking with them one of their camels belched, and the donkey took fright and ran off, and the gods fell off its back, and three of them were broken, and only two remained whole. But when the Syrians saw what had happened, they said, "Why did you not tell us that you had gods to sell? We might have bought them before the donkey took fright, and they would not have been destroyed; at least we will take the gods that remain, and pay you the price of them all." And they did so; and the broken gods I cast into the river Gur, and they sank and were seen no more.

But as I returned home, I was bewildered and divided in my mind. I said to myself, "What an evil trade is this that my father practises! Is not he in truth the god of his own gods which he makes with his chisels and lathes and his skill? Ought they not rather to worship him than he them? Surely it is all deceit. Look at Marumath, who fell and could not get up again, and these five other gods which could not punish the donkey for running away with them, nor keep themselves from being broken and thrown into the river."

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