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Sabine Fahl and Dieter Fahl with the assistance of Evgenij Vodolazkin and Tat’jana Rudi. *Die Kurze Chronographische Paleja, Band 1: Kritische Edition mit deutscher Übersetzung*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2019. ISBN 978-3-579-08059-8. Pp. 752. €198. Hardcover.

Dieter Fahl, Sabine Fahl, and Christfried Böttrich with the assistance of Michail Shibaev and Ivan Christov. *Die Kurze Chronographische Paleja, Band 2: Einführung, Kommentar, Indices*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus. ISBN 978-3-579-08060-4 2019. Pp. 812. € 240. Hardcover.

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The publication of a critical edition of the short *Palaea Chronographica* is an important milestone in the advancement of the study of the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha. The *Palaea* literature is one of the new frontiers in pseudepigraphal studies. Although key texts in Greek and Slavonic were published well over a century ago, its prominence was revived by William Adler’s English translation of the *Palaea Historica* in James Davila, Richard Bauckham, and Alexander Panayotov’s *More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.¹ The *Palaea Historica* (*Istoričeskaja Paleja*) was written in Greek in the ninth or tenth century, but it was translated into Slavonic more than once between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries. The Slavonic versions are extant in over thirty manuscripts. The other *Palaea* works—the *Palaea Interpretata* (*Tolkovaja Paleja*, approximately thirty manuscripts) and the *Palaea Chronographica*, in both shorter (*Kratkaja Chronografičeskaja Paleja*, six manuscripts) and longer (*Polnaja Chronografičeskaja Paleja*, ten manuscripts) recensions—are original Slavonic works produced in medieval Russia (the earliest manuscripts come from the fifteenth century). Scholarship has been predominantly published in Slavic languages. One of the significant achievements of the work under discussion is that it provides detailed information about the *Palaea* literature in a language that uses the Latin alphabet.

The title *Palaea* refers to the *Palaea Diatheke*—the Old Testament. All three *Palaeas* are biblical histories, albeit with different emphases. The *Palaea Historica* is a straightforward retelling of the Old Testament, amplified with apocryphal legends (such as the History of Melchizedek or the Legend of the Wood of the Cross) and liturgical material, including several references to the Great Canon of Andrew of Crete (d. 740). It is primarily a narrative work and has little in the way of exegetical commentary or interpretive asides. In this respect, it differs sharply from the *Palaea Interpretata*, which retells the same biblical history but includes typological explanations, patristic citations, and anti-Jewish polemics. It has never been fully translated into a Western European language, although all scholars of the Pseudepigrapha are undoubtedly familiar with a few of its apocryphal insertions, namely the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Ladder of Jacob. Texts known from other sources, including the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Chronicles of Moses (translated from Hebrew), are also woven into some manuscripts of the work.

While the *Palaea Historica* is not obviously related to the *Palaea Interpretata*, the latter is the major source for the short *Palaea Chronographica*, comprising about forty-four percent of its text. The *Palaea Chronographica* depends on the *Palaea Interpretata* until the reign of Solomon (chapter 21.1 of the present work), where that text breaks off. It then follows sacred history till the end of the biblical period and into the history of the Roman Empire, stopping in the tenth century with the reign of the Byzantine emperor

¹ William Adler, “Palaea Historica (The Old Testament History): A New Translation and Introduction,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Vol. 1, ed. by Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 585–672.

Romanos I Lakapenos (d. 948). Although it notes the conversion of Bulgaria, the *Palaea Chronographica* does not show special interest in the Christianization of the Slavs. Its perspective is strictly Byzantine, and the last section of the work depends on the Slavonic versions of Byzantine chronicles, especially those of John Malalas (d. 578) and George the Monk (d. 867, but extended into the tenth century with material from the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete). The *Palaea* ends in the tenth century because that is where the Byzantine sources end.

The first page of the introduction (Vol. II, p. 3) calls the *Palaea Chronographica* a cross between “History Bibles” (*Historienbibeln*) and medieval chronicles. This description is apt. History Bibles—sometimes also called “medieval popular Bibles” in English scholarship²—are summaries of sacred history, often in the vernacular, that recount the narrative portions of the Christian Bible (to the exclusion of the four P’s: precepts, poetry, prophecy, and Paul) and occasionally pour over into secular and ecclesiastical history. Examples are found in nearly every language of Western Europe, where they are often studied as the earliest example of biblical translation in a given language, even though they are not, strictly speaking, “Bibles.” Similarly, the *Palaea Chronographica* circulated before the compilation of a complete Slavonic Bible (the Gennadian Bible of 1499) but draws upon the Slavonic translation of the Octateuch. It is not a Bible, but it presents a cohesive account of biblical history from a Christian perspective.

This description of the History Bible should sound familiar to any scholar of Second Temple literature. The second page of the introduction (Vol. II, p. 4) even uses the phrase “Rewritten Bible” only to dismiss it, but I would not be so hasty. In terms of method, the *Palaea* literature is not very different from its Second Temple predecessors. Josephus’ *Antiquities*, although it recounts the entire narrative of the Hebrew Bible, is a historical work rather than an exegetical one. Moreover, it is not merely a “Rewritten Bible.” Josephus, like the *Palaea Chronographica* and some History Bibles, goes beyond the biblical story. Even Jubilees, despite its pretensions to scriptural status, is at base a historical work (and was used as one by Byzantine historians). Its very title refers to its chronological system and its attempt to precisely date important events in patriarchal history. It also “Judaizes” the book of Genesis in that it assigns the origins of Mosaic holidays to the time of the patriarchs.

Furthermore, the Second Temple texts are actually genetic ancestors of the *Palaea* literature. As documented by William Adler, Byzantine chroniclers had recourse to both Jubilees and Josephus for the biblical period. Sometimes they even conflate the two, attributing material from Jubilees to Josephus.³ The immediate sources of the *Palaea Chronographica* are the very chroniclers who used both Josephus and Jubilees: the aforementioned John Malalas and George the Monk but also George Syncellus (d. 810), George Cedrenus (c. 1050), Pseudo-Eustathius (after the fifth century), and Peter of Alexandria (c. 900). Many of the traditions shared between the *Palaea Chronographica* and the book of Jubilees—the creation of angels on the first day, the names of the sister-wives of Cain and Abel, the forty-year duration of the construction of the Tower of Babel, the introduction of idolatry in the generation of Serug, the death of Esau at the hands of Jacob—come from their chronicles.

² See Brian Murdoch, *The Medieval Popular Bible: Expansions of Genesis in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), and James H. Morey, “Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible,” *Speculum* 68 (1993): 6–35, who appears to have coined the term.

³ William Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and Its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 26 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989), pp. 188–193. He maintains that Byzantine chroniclers knew an interpolated text of Josephus. See also his “Parabiblical Traditions and Their Use in the *Palaea Historica*” in *Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Menahem Kister, Hillel I. Newman, Michael Segal, and Ruth A. Clement, *Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah* 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 1–39.

The sources of the *Palaea Chronographica* therefore reveal a dense network of interrelated texts, consisting of not only conventional chronicles but also “Rewritten Bibles” of the Second Temple period. A similar phenomenon is observable in Western Europe. The *Historia Scholastica* of Peter Comestor (d. 1187), the Latin equivalent of the *Palaea* literature and the fountainhead of many vernacular popular Bibles, relies extensively on Josephus and even, though to a much lesser extent, Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*. In other words, of the four “Rewritten Bibles” initially identified by Geza Vermes (Jubilees, Josephus, Pseudo-Philo, and the Genesis Apocryphon), the first three, the ones that were not buried at Qumran, were sources for Christian popular Bibles of the Middle Ages. The *Palaea* books and other medieval History Bibles are, in essence, a direct continuation of the Second Temple Rewritten Bible tradition.⁴

I mentioned that the present work is a critical edition of the short *Palaea Chronographica*. There is also a long *Palaea Chronographica*. The introduction (vol. II, p. 41) emphasizes that the short *Palaea Chronographica* is not a mere abridgment of the longer one. In fact, for the postbiblical section, where the primary source is George the Monk, the two texts are largely the same. Where they differ is their treatment of the *Palaea Interpretata*. The short *Palaea Chronographica* expunges the polemical material and many of the extrabiblical legends, sometimes replacing them with translations from the Octateuch. By contrast, the first half of the long *Palaea Chronographica* modifies and even adds material to the *Palaea Interpretata*. The Slavonic Chronicles of Moses, for example, is found in the long *Palaea Chronographica* rather than the *Palaea Interpretata* by itself. In the end, the *Palaea* literature can be divided into two major branches: 1) the *Palaea Historica*, in Greek and Slavonic; and 2) the *Palaea Interpretata*, also a key source for both recensions of the *Palaea Chronographica*. There is surprisingly little overlap between these two.

Unfortunately, while reading the short *Palaea Chronographica*, it becomes apparent that it is the least interesting *Palaea* from the perspective of the study of the Pseudepigrapha. The current edition has sections corresponding to both the Apocalypse of Abraham (6.2 and 6.4) and the Ladder of Jacob (7.4), but they contain little of the text found in the *Palaea Interpretata*. The first eight chapters of the Apocalypse of Abraham are pared down to a handful of paragraphs. The actual apocalypse is not even narrated. Similarly, this *Palaea* retains the introduction to the Ladder of Jacob but not the rest of text. The Testament of Reuben and several of the other Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs consist of a single sentence, noting that the given patriarch left a testament and then died. The extrabiblical elements in its account of the life of Moses come not from the Chronicles of Moses but from George Cedrenus and Pseudo-Eustathius.

Of course, my personal disappointment with the contents of the short *Palaea Chronographica* is not the fault of the editors, for whom the present work is clearly a labor of love. The work consists of two volumes, totaling over 1500 pages. The first volume (752 pages; “short” is relative) consists of the critical text, based on a revised version of the edition published by Evgenij Vodolazkin, with a German translation on facing pages. The German and Slavonic text (in modern Russian Cyrillic rather than the Gothic-looking Church Slavonic characters) are printed in an agreeably large font. The base manuscript is Pagodin 1434 from the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg. It is occasionally supplemented with readings from other manuscripts printed in a different font. The abridged Apocalypse of Abraham, for example, does not come from Pagodin 1434, a reminder that the Apocalypse is not “native” to the *Palaea* literature but an independent work that has been inserted into the text. The entire text has been divided into thirty-one chapters of varying length, from the very short (chapter 14, on the asylum cities, is less than a page) to the very long (chapter 29, Rome, and chapter 30, Byzantium, are both over 100 pages). Most chapters are divided into subsections, and every sentence is numbered. Since the translation is literal rather than literary, it is easy to follow the German and Slavonic simultaneously.

⁴ Moses Gaster made a similar observation in “The Bible Historiale and the Bible of the Poor,” in *Ilchester Lectures on Grecko-Slavonic Literature* (London: Trübner, 1887), pp. 147–208, long before Vermes coined “Rewritten Bible.”

The second volume (even longer, at 812 pages) includes an introduction of over 100 pages, a 600-page commentary on the entire text, a fifty-page bibliography, and a source index of approximately fifty pages. The lengthy introduction is itself divided into three parts. The first part is a discussion of the sources. It is a mine of information and was extremely helpful in resolving some basic questions about the *Palaea* literature that I have not been able to find elsewhere in Western European scholarship. The second part touches on the chronological system used in the text, which includes a discussion of its computation of the year *anno mundi* and its use of the solar, lunar, and indiction cycles. The last major section of the introduction is labeled as the “reception” of the short *Palaea Chronographica* but is better characterized as a detailed description of the six major manuscripts and their contents (an appendix by Michail Šibaev further describes two of the manuscripts, but it is written in Russian). The commentary, which is about the same length as the combined text and translation in Volume I, focuses mainly on source critical issues. Some notes consist of little more than a biblical citation. Others continue for several pages and contain lengthy citations of source texts such as Pseudo-Eustathius.

The present publication was intended to be part of a larger project about the place of the *Palaea* literature in the context of medieval *Historienbibeln*, a project that has now been abandoned due to financial difficulties.⁵ Still, the resulting volumes are impressive and will complement a few forthcoming projects related to the *Palaea* literature. William Adler, for example, has been working on a critical edition of the Greek *Palaea Historica* for Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum, since at least 2008,⁶ and Alexander Kulik is preparing an edition of the *Palaea Interpretata* with commentary.⁷ Małgorzata Skowronek has been working on the Slavonic *Palaea Historica* for several years now and has published an edition of the second Slavonic translation.⁸ The introduction is in English but the edition is not accompanied by a translation. This is an area where more English, French, or German scholarship would be appreciated, since, as the current volume reveals, the Slavonic *Palaea Historica* is not the same as the Greek version but adds and reworks material, such as the addition of a Jewish interlocutor (Vol. II, p. 13). There is, to my knowledge, no ongoing project related to the long *Palaea Chronographica*, but one hopes that Kulik’s edition of the *Palaea Interpretata* will take it into consideration. The holy grail is without doubt the *Palaea Interpretata*, since it is not only the main source for the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Ladder of Jacob but a potential window into contemporary Christian-Jewish relations, evidenced by both its anti-Jewish polemics and its translations from Hebrew.

On a final note, the two volumes of the present work are prohibitively expensive and, curiously, sold separately. Due to the high cost and the limited interest of the text itself (as opposed to the introduction, notes, and bibliography, which are all excellent), I cannot unreservedly recommend that specialists of Second Temple Judaism dedicate the money and the shelf space necessary to add the work to their private collections. Every research library, however, should have a copy.

⁵ A related conference volume was, however, published this year: Christfried Böttrich, Dieter Fahl, and Sabine Fahl (eds.), *Von der Historienbibel zur Weltchronik: Studien zur Palaea-Literatur*. Greifswalder Theologische Forschungen 31 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2020).

⁶ According to <https://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/n51nh301> (accessed 15 October 2020).

⁷ Alexander Kulik, “Slavonic”, in *A Guide to Early Jewish Texts and Traditions in Christian Transmission*, ed. by Alexander Kulik, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 71: “A critical edition (with commentary) of the *Palaea Interpretata* is under preparation by Alexander Kulik.”

⁸ Małgorzata Skowronek, *Palaea Historica: The Second Slavic Translation: Commentary and Text*, Series Ceranea 3 (Łódź : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016).