The Lure of the Apocryphal

Between 350 BCE and 200 CE the Jewish homeland and Diaspora experienced a literary outburst that would transform not only the religious culture of the Jews, but ultimately the entire world. These books ranged from historical and wisdom literature to poetry and novellas, from the supernatural to the prosaic. Some looked back to the past, reviewing God's original plan for humankind. Others tried to comprehend how the divine intersected with personal lives and still others speculated on a near-future "Day of the Lord" when the world would have a new beginning.

The books written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek were called *hitzonim* in Hebrew – "the outside books" – since their topics extended beyond the scope of the Jews' sacred library – the Torah, the Prophetic/Historical writing and an anthology of Psalms – which had become authoritative around 400 BCE. When the Jewish homeland was absorbed into the empire of Alexander the Great in 333 BCE, like all of its subjects the Jews were profoundly influenced by its dominant Hellenistic culture. The new *hitzonim* reflected their new spiritual diversity in all its complexity.

With the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 CE that concluded the Great Revolt against Rome, a spiritual vacuum was suddenly created in Jewish life. To fill it, the Rabbis turned to the varied literary sources from among the *hitzonim*, and they selected 12 books which, along with the Psalms, became the third division of the sacred library. Now they were no longer outsiders, but in the innermost heart of Judaism. Thus the Jews became a bookcentered instead of a Temple-centered people, deriving guidance, inspiration and comfort from what they called the TaNaKh, the Hebrew acronym for Torah, Prophets and Writings.

The early church would later incorporate the TaNaKh into the Biblia, the Christian sacred library, renaming it "the Old Testament," and include some of the rejected *hitzonim*, now called the "apocrypha," the books hidden away by the Jews, a name subsequently applied to many books written under Christian auspices. In recent years the discovery of forgotten Jewish *hitzonim* among the Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian apocrypha in Egypt and elsewhere have aroused widespread interest in these ancient documents. These books maintain their allure to scholars and laity alike.

-Rabbi Bernard Bloom

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The Lure of the Apocryphal



The Kieval Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies at Siena College 24th Annual Colloquium

24th Annual Colloquium November 2 and 3, 2008 Siena College



Jewish-Christian Studies

Program Sunday, November 2, 2008 Roger Bacon Hall, Key Auditorium 2:30 p.m

Remarks.....Peter Zaas Director, Kieval Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies

Welcome	Fr. Kevin Mullen, '75, O.F.M. President, Siena College
Lecture	Martha Himmelfarb
Lecture	John Collins
Discussion	Audience welcome to participate

Monday, November 3, 2008 Serra Hall, West Dining Room 10:00 a.m.

Brunch and Discussion.....John Collins, Martha Himmelfarb

Moderator.....Rabbi Bernard Bloom

Greetings.....Bishop Howard Hubbard Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

About the Kieval Istitute

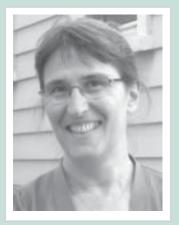
The Hayyim H. Kieval Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies was founded in 1983 and is named for its inaugural director, Rabbi Hayyim Kieval. An advisory board of Siena faculty and other area regional clergy and community leaders advises the Institute on matters of policy and program.

The annual colloquia are dedicated to bringing internationally-recognized scholars on campus to discuss matters of history, theology and current events pertaining to the continuing historical relationship between Jews and Christians. The events are free and open to the public.

Keynote Speakers



John Collins, Ph.D. Holmes Professor of Old Testament Criticism and Interpretation, Yale University



Martha Himmelfarb, Ph.D. William H. Danforth Professor of Religion, Princeton University

SAVE THE DATE

Colonie Jewish Association Lecture May 6, 2009 "Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Jazz"

The Lure of the Apocryphal

_ I shall participate in the Colloquium

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