

Gottes Volk und Sein Gesetz

R.F. Grau

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The fragmentary character of the essays of the late Prof. Grau, collected in this book and edited after the author's death by his colleague, Prof. Zöckler, scarcely interferes with the charm and suggestiveness to which Dr. Grau accustomed his readers in his previous works. The first chapter, "Shem, Ham and Japhet," was published separately before in *Beweis des Glaubens* upon the eve of the writer's death, July, 1893. It is an attempt to make a comparative estimate of the race-peculiarity of Hamites, Shemites and Japhetites in a religious aspect, for the purpose of explaining the divine choice of the Shemites to furnish the people of revelation. Dr. Grau rejects Renan's explanation of "the monotheistic instinct" on the ground that such an instinct would have made the Shemites immune against every infection of Polytheism, as its opposite ought to have made the other races incapable of adopting monotheism. On the other hand, he is just as little satisfied with Max Müller's appeal to a personal divine revelation as the only possible explanation of the difference. This, he thinks, is to make God the God of the *decretum absolutum* and lands us into *supernatural determinism*. To this we would say that undoubtedly the scientific inquirer is within his rights when putting the question: What mental predisposition did the Shemites possess for producing the people of revelation? But it is a naive misunderstanding of what Dr. Grau calls the *decretum absolutum* and *supernatural determinism*, to believe that the adoption of these principles will interfere in the slightest degree with the appreciation of any natural predisposition either the Shemites or any other race may have had for the role played by them in the history of redemption. No thorough believer in the *decretum absolutum* ever thought of introducing it at the single point of Abraham's election and excluding from it all the previous developments of race-history. In point of fact the problem which the author has tried to solve is absolutely indifferent to the question of determinism or indeterminism. If natural predispositions of the kind looked for can be pointed out, this will not disprove the *decretum absolutum*, and if the attempt to find them results in failure, this will not of itself prove their non-existence nor shut up any one against his will to the position of determinism.

The names Ham, Japhet and Shem Dr. Grau explains mythologically. The children of Ham are the children of the sun, i.e., the worshipers of the life of nature produced by the sun. Their religion is characterized by the sexual differentiation of the deity on the one hand, and its identification with the processes of birth and death on the other hand. Corresponding with these two features, the cult pertaining to this nature-religion has the two elements of sexual prostitution and of self-immolation. The children of Japhet are the sons of Japetos, the Titan of Greek mythology. They are the representatives of religious and ethical idealism. The sons of Shem are "the sons of the name," and this indirect way of naming themselves after the deity already indicates the peculiarity of the Shemitic religious consciousness, as consisting in the reverence with which it looks up to the deity as exalted above the life of nature, even to the extent of fearing to pronounce its name. The recognition of the holiness of the Godhead, in the wide sense of the word, distinguishes the Shemites from the children of Ham and Japhet. With this the recognition of the unity of the Divine Being is believed to have been given in principle. In the second chapter, which treats of the Polytheism of the heathen Shemites, this view is further elaborated in close dependence upon Baethgen's well-known treatise on the subject. But Dr. Grau thinks it necessary to go one step further than Baethgen. If the latter has clearly shown that the plurality of the heathen Shemitic deities is only a relative one

and nowhere completely obscures the sense of a deeper-lying unity, to which in fact it points back as to an earlier stage of belief, it is of even greater importance to distinguish this Shemitic monism from the Pantheistic monism of the Hamites. Now in reality Shemitic Polytheism is full of elements of nature-worship, and a monism of this type cannot have much predisposed the ancient Hebrews for becoming the people of revelation. This difficulty Dr. Grau has not failed to perceive, and he tries to meet it by ascribing all such features in the Shemitic cult to a corrupting Hamitic influence proceeding from Egypt or Babylonia. This explanation may be correct in itself and it may be quite possible to furnish it with an adequate historical basis, a matter of which we are not competent to judge, but the manner in which it is here introduced has too much the appearance of a begging of the entire question. If the specific character of the Shemitic religion is to be determined by induction, then all those phenomena must be allowed to count as Shemitic which cannot be historically shown to be foreign importations. Dr. Grau has not taken sufficient account of the fact that there are modern writers who explain as *ur*-Shemitic those very features for which he postulates rather than proves a Hamitic source.

The next chapter is on the Deity of the ancient Hebrews and contains a discussion of the names Elohim, Adon, Melech, of the theophoric proper names of the Old Testament, and of the general character of the Deity of the ancient Hebrews. This is followed by a chapter on the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in which a certain degree of trustworthiness is vindicated for the figures of the patriarchs, while at the same time it is admitted that the concrete form in which we possess the records of their lives is the work of a much later age (i.e., not the Mosaic but the prophetic period). The same free critical standpoint of the author also reveals itself on p. 45 in the statement that the Old Testament contains not a few traces of mythological lore, especially in the Book of Genesis. These are only two instances of several where a strict supernaturalism is mechanically combined with critical views capable of substantiation only on the principle of natural development. The significance of Abraham's faith as a step in advance of the ancient Shemitic religion, largely dominated by the sentiment of fear of the transcendent, is well brought out. It is a striking remark that in Phariseeism the Jewish consciousness reverted as it were to the most primitive form of Shemitic religion, thereby virtually wiping out the entire intervening development of the self-revelation of God as immanent and gracious.

With the chapter on the exodus the book enters upon the discussion of the Mosaic age. Both the historical and the supernatural character of the events are upheld. At the same time we are told that what enabled Moses to be the savior of his people was not the revelation of religious or dogmatic truth, but an ethical-religious education undergone by him, apparently a side-thrust at orthodox dogmatics and scholastic theology and strongly reminiscent of Wellhausen's well-known remarks on the point in question. A separate chapter is devoted to the origin and significance of the name Jahve, the explanation adopted being that of "the Creator of life"—i.e., in the soteriological sense. The four last chapters deal with the Decalogue, the Sabbath, the worship of Jahve and the cultus. With reference to the first we notice that the Mosaic origin not of the whole but of a kernel only is affirmed. The author's Lutheran standpoint shows itself in the emphasis placed upon the transitory character of the Decalogue as part of a typical system. The exposition of the single commandments contains much that is interesting, but also much that is fanciful. The other topics above mentioned are briefly treated; the last, that on the cultus, was left behind by the author in an unfinished state.

The appendix on the Book of Job endeavors to show that the writer of the book found the solution of his problem in the faithfulness of Jahve. "The children of God do not need to know why they are afflicted, provided only they be assured of the faithfulness and mercy of God." "The blessedness of the compassion and love of Jahve swallows up the enigma." Side by side with this the disciplinary purpose of Job's suffering and its typical significance, as pointing forward to the suffering of Christ, are recognized.