

Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
Wilhelm Bousset
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A book of the kind here offered by Prof. Bousset has long been a desideratum. During the last two decades New Testament Science, especially New Testament Theology, has increasingly drawn the religion of Judaism within its field of investigation. One may regret that too often this has been done with the avowed purpose of facilitating the naturalistic interpretation of the growth of New Testament truth on the principle of an evolution from its Judaistic environment. But, whatever the motive, the results brought to light are so important for a correct understanding of the milieu into which Christianity was born, that no New Testament scholar of the present day can afford to ignore them. *A priori* there can be no objection to the view that Christianity was to a greater or lesser degree influenced on the side of its production of truth by its Judaistic surroundings. The relation between the two surely cannot have been one of pure antagonism at every point. Judaism carried within itself a rich heritage received from Old Testament revelation. It is impossible to believe that this body of revealed truth affected Christian doctrine only as a literary deposit in the Old Testament Scriptures, and not at all through the medium of the contemporary living consciousness. After all, though the influence came through the channel of Judaism, it was an influence indirectly created by the Old Testament itself. And we can go further than this. It may in some points be admitted that Judaism influenced Christianity, even where the former went beyond the Old Testament in its teaching. Notwithstanding all its defects and excrescences and, worse than this, the wrong spirit which dominated it as its center, Judaism, doctrinally considered, must be classified as to a large extent a theological elaboration of Old Testament principles. As such it could hardly help developing in the right direction certain lines of truth and thus furnish elements of teaching fit for incorporation into the New Testament. There is enough truth in Judaism to justify the affirmation that it is a religious phenomenon conceivable only on the basis of Old Testament revelation.

The literature of Judaism in the New Testament times, fragmentary though it be, constitutes a body of respectable size which it is not given to everybody to study and master at first hand, even now that the sources have been made more easily accessible. Hence the need of competent guidance. The work of Gfrörer (*Das Jahrhundert des Heils*), published more than sixty years ago, meritorious for its time and still useful in parts, has as a whole been antiquated by the recent increase of documentary material. The same applies to Hilgenfeld's volume on Jewish Apocalypics, which, besides, confines itself to one branch of the subject. On the other hand Schürer discusses time religion of Judaism only as a subdivision of his more comprehensive treatment of Jewish life in the New Testament period in all its cultural aspects. Weber's work on the theology of the Synagogue takes too little account of the questions of antiquity and development in regard to the mass of doctrinal speculation embodied in the later Jewish writings. A separate discussion of this particular period of the religious history of Judaism from a distinctly historical point of view was certainly called for.

Bousset is well qualified for the task here undertaken. His previous work on the Apocalypse in the Meyer series of commentaries, as well as his study of the idea of the Antichrist, deal with subjects that lie close to the general problem of Jewish religion. Recent publications in the *Zeitschrift f. d. Neutest. Wissenschaft* and elsewhere prove how thorough has been the author's study of the literary documents on which the present volume is built. That the broader historical question of the relation

of Judaism to Christianity has also long been a subject of intense interest to the writer, we may infer from his treatise entitled *The Preaching of Jesus in its Contrast to Judaism*, published about a decade ago. The present book does not profess to deal with the religion of Judaism from the point of view of a comparison either with the Old Testament that went before or the New Testament that came after. Indeed the author finds one of the reasons for the inadequacy of previous work done in this field to be precisely this comparative spirit with which the subject has been approached. Hence he endeavors to interpret and judge of Judaism with no other categories than those of the general science of religion in mind. On the one hand this is apt to cause disappointment to the average reader, who will undoubtedly peruse the book with the comparative question uppermost in his mind. On the other hand it may be suggested that the restraint observed in this respect has in one sense enhanced the value of the work. In every comparison undertaken the nature of the judgments expressed will depend wholly on the dogmatic attitude of the writer toward the fundamental questions under debate in Old Testament and New Testament science. With reference to these issues Bousset's standpoint is such that his conclusions would have but little convincing force for many conservative readers who otherwise may find his book highly useful.

From the title of the last treatise above named it will be seen, that at the time of its writing the author himself conceived of the relation between Judaism and Christianity as mainly one of antithesis. The treatise served as a protest against the rising tendency represented by Baldensperger and others to look upon Judaism as largely contributory toward the origin of Christianity, indeed as explanatory of the latter in some of its most vital principles. In an interesting remark on page 52 of the present work Bousset confesses that in this former polemic against Baldensperger's one-sidedness, he himself fell into the opposite extreme of emphasizing too exclusively the contrast between the Jewish and Christian types of piety. Evidently the author's judgment of the religious value of Judaism has become in the course of time a milder one. In a recent review of Harnack's famous lectures on the Essence of Christianity Bousset even comes to the defense of the younger school, who for the solution of the problem of the origin of Christianity expect great things from the exploration of Judaism, and takes Harnack to task for having spoken rather deprecatingly of this line of study. With this accords that in a number of instances in the work before us the value of Judaism as a positive preparation for Christianity is recognized. And yet on the whole a careful perusal of the book leaves the impression that this positively preparatory influence is sought rather on the formal side, in the sphere of organization, than in the center of the religious consciousness as fixed by the conception of God and the ideal of religious approach unto God. Notwithstanding the confessed modification of his position, Bousset can hardly be called even on the present showing a very enthusiastic advocate of the hypothesis that Judaism is the mother of Christianity.

The book is divided into six sections entitled respectively: The Sources, The Development of Jewish Piety into the Church-Form, The National Determination of the Jewish Religion, The Individual Faith and Theology, Side-Forms of Jewish Piety, The Problem from the Point of View of the History of Religion. The first of these sections gives a rich and succinct statement of the present status of critical opinion concerning the literary production of the later Judaism. The inclusion of considerable parts of the Old Testament Canon—Daniel, Esther, Zechariah 9-14, Ecclesiastes, a number of Psalms, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles—within the late period dealt with, i.e., within the Maccabean age, shows how the controversy about the dependence of New Testament truth on the Old Testament, or on Judaism, to a certain extent loses its meaning from a standpoint like that assumed by the author.

On this standpoint Judaism made its contribution to and left its impress upon the Old Testament. Of special points we note the following: Schnapp's view about the Jewish base of the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs is adopted (cf. Bousset's article in the *Z. f. N. W.*, in which he endeavors by a comparison of the versions and manuscripts to prove it the Christian redaction of an original Jewish document). With Willrich the author questions the authenticity of the official documents contained in 1 Maccabees, although he does not follow Willrich in the latter's view about the late date of their collection. The well-known collection of spurious Greek verses attributed to the great Greek poets is dated from the Herodian period (not after 70 A.D.), whereas Schürer places them as early as 300 B.C., Elter as late as 100-200 A.D. A similar difference of critical opinion prevails with regard to the Epistle of Aristeas which Schürer would assign to 200 B.C., Bousset, following Willrich and Wendland, to the time of the Herods. Against Niese the inferiority of 2 Maccabees as a historical witness for the period it deals with to 1 Maccabees is maintained. A luminous survey of Philo's literary activity is given and the genuineness of the treatise *De Vite Contemplativa* upheld. Of the literature of the period after the destruction of Jerusalem, 4 Ezra is assigned to the reign of Domitian and the priority of this apocalypse to that of Baruch argued against Schürer, Wellhausen and Ryssel, who make 4 Ezra dependent on Baruch.

The second section describes the development of Jewish Piety into the Church-Form. In this Bousset finds the most characteristic feature of the entire religious history of Judaism and he makes it control the whole subsequent discussion of such important topics as the Law, the Canon, Tradition, Theology, the Church and the Laity, the Pious, Confession, Dogma and Faith, the Synagogue as an Institute of Salvation,—which topics represent the nine chapters into which this section of the book is divided. The author justifies his appropriation of this as a feature specifically proper to Maccabean and post-Maccabean Judaism by observing that only through the Maccabean uprising were the conditions created under which the Jewish religion could and did transcend the boundaries of the nation and become a missionary force. In accordance with this he is concerned to show that the Diaspora did not attain any considerable dimensions until this period. We confess to not having been quite convinced by the data quoted, that the wide extension and increase of the Diaspora stand in causal connection with the Maccabean events. In our opinion the causes for this remarkable phenomenon lie deeper and date farther back than the middle of the second century, and they continued to operate after the Maccabean impulse had long worked itself out. On the whole the author's determination to make a sharp division between what precedes and follows the Maccabean crisis seems scarcely justified by the facts. Most of the forces which contributed toward the "churchification" of the Jewish religion, or were exponential of this process, have their roots in the earlier period. Broadly speaking the ultimate source of the separability of nationalism and religion and of their actual separation at least in part when called for by the historical circumstances, lay in the subordination of Israel's national life to its religion, in what we call the theocratic character of the Old Testament religion. Where religion is a part of the national life it must needs perish with the latter. Where the national life is a part of religion the latter may continue to exist as a church even when the former disappears. In our view this theocratic character of Israel's constitution is as old as the age of Moses. But, if this should appear too antiquated a position, it certainly can be dated back by common consent of all Old Testament scholars to the time of the restoration after the exile. When Bousset ventures to express doubt with regard to the historical character of the figure of Ezra and intimates that this figure may be no more than a personification of later tendencies, we can only characterize this as a piece of extreme skepticism.

Undoubtedly the treatment of the great religious forces and institutions of Judaism as factors in a process of church-making is a fruitful one and tends to introduce light and order into a multitude of bewildering and frequently discordant phenomena. Especially interesting is the manner in which the development of the idea of faith on its cognitive side and the beginning of creed-formation can be traced in their dependence upon the denationalization of the Jewish religion. Among the many other things luminously treated and worthy of special attention in this second part of the book, we mention only the characterization of the defects of Jewish legalism (pp. 112-118), and the high estimate justly placed upon the religion of the synagogue as a first embodiment of the idea of a spiritual worship divested of all external ceremonial and essentially democratic in spirit. The closing words of the paragraph referring to this deserve quoting: "Whatever judgment may be passed upon the Jewish religion, it will have to be admitted that on this side it exhibits intense power, profound seriousness and extraordinary ability to sway the masses and pervade their common-day life. The Jewish Church created an atmosphere of religion for the people, from the influence of which it was not easy for any one wholly to escape. It developed permanent forms of religious life which have endured until the present day" (p. 161).

The third section brings the reverse side of the picture drawn in the preceding. Judaism bore a contradiction within itself. On the way toward denationalization and development into the pure church-form, it could not arrive at the goal because it did not succeed in emancipating itself from the principle of nationalism. It is important to observe that for Bousset this inward nationalistic determination of the religion of Judaism coincides with and finds its expression in its Messianic hope. According to Baldensperger, it will be remembered, this was precisely the lever by which Judaism began to raise itself above its legalistic limitations. Baldensperger assumes between the Jewish nomism and the Jewish Messianism a relation of polarity. In the Messianic apocalyptic expectations the religious consciousness sought an escape from the weariness of the law-service, and through the transcendental form which the development of Apocalypics assumed the whole eschatological hope was lifted to a higher level, and received a spiritual character which made it the precursor of Christianity. With reference to the former point Bousset reminds us that it would be wrong to construe any sort of antithesis in principle between the legal and eschatological types of piety. The Messianic spirit as such was intensely national and closely wedded to legalism. What was expected from the future and associated with the name of the kingdom was the reign of the people of the law over other nations. If the leaders of Pharisaism were not prominent in the cultivation of the Messianic theology, it was because they were too much preoccupied with the cult of the Torah, not because there was anything in the former inconsistent with or unsympathetic to their own legalistic standpoint. With reference to the other point Baldensperger and Bousset are not so far apart. For the latter himself admits that there is in the Jewish apocalyptic an entirely different current which brings to the surface not the contrast between the rule of the nations and of Israel, but the much grander and broader and more specifically religious and spiritual contrast between the present and the future man, in connection with which such valuable ideas as that of the universal individual judgment and the universal resurrection and a wholly transformed life spring up. To be sure, these higher ideas, in which the tendency of Judaism toward Universalism finds its eschatological expression, do not succeed in disentangling themselves from the lower mass of common Messianic expectations. In this as in other respects Judaism remains at contradiction with itself. The older and the newer forms of belief notwithstanding their heterogeneity continue to flourish side by side and

appear inextricably mixed. The best that Judaism proved able to do with them was to join them after a purely mechanical fashion, on the principle that first the old Messianic hope should be realized in a provisional intermediate kingdom, and after the close of this the later apocalyptic expectations should find their fulfillment in a cosmical crisis and a resultant life under totally new conditions. And yet even so an important difference remains between Baldensperger and Bousset. For according to the former this higher type of eschatology was the product of an immanent development of the older Messianic hope itself. Bousset, as we shall presently see, believes that outside influence was here at work. For our part we would side with Baldensperger, so far as the explanation of this grander apocalyptic from purely internal sources is concerned. Over against both, however, it should not be forgotten that while the New Testament undoubtedly received from and shared with Judaism this transcendental cosmical setting of its eschatology, it did far more than simply copy it. Even these noble forms needed to have a new spirit poured into them before they could become the adequate expression of the final truth of revelation. Not only, as Bousset well brings out, are the two types of eschatological hope equally prominent in the consciousness of Judaism, we must add that even the highest type is vitiated by the fundamental fault of the Jewish religion, its self-centered character.

In connection with the discussion of the apocalyptic ideas special interest attaches to the author's attitude toward the problem of the Son of Man. Bousset's position here is commendably conservative, so far as the recent hypothesis of a Greco-Christian origin of the phrase as a Messianic title is concerned. Over against the linguistic objection that in Aramaic no distinction could have been made between simply "Man" and "Son of Man," it is pertinently observed that, even if this be granted, the use of the word for simple man as a Messianic title does not lie beyond the range of possibility, since close analogies exist for such a procedure in Jewish theological terminology, e.g., when God is called "the Place." It is also rightly insisted upon that the Similitudes of Enoch, though in them the article should have no other force than that of a pronoun pointing back to the first introduction at the man-like figure, at least show how easily a formal title might originate from such repeated reference to the personage whose man-like character had been emphasized. On the other hand Bousset is not willing to find the main source of the conception in what he calls a misinterpretation of the famous passage in Daniel. He thinks it incredible that so important and influential an idea as that of the heavenly preexistent Messiah should have arisen simply out of a mistaken exegesis of an isolated statement. The author of the Similitudes knows much more about this "Son of Man" than can possibly have been inferred by him from Daniel. And Daniel himself seems to have artificially employed an antecedently existing figure of a mysterious "Son of Man" as a symbolic designation for the people of Israel. This mysterious figure which existed before Daniel, Bousset is inclined to identify with the Oriental idea of the heavenly "Ur-Mensch." To us this seems a very precarious hypothesis. If the figure of the coming with or upon the clouds and the role played by it in the judgment do not fit the people of Israel, then, instead of assuming that it was copied from some foreign conception of an Ur-Mensch, we should rather revise our exegesis and conclude that it was never intended as a designation for the people, except perhaps in so far as the heavenly preexistent Son of Man, whom it does designate, is the representative head of the people. This is a far simpler solution than the assumption that Daniel "artificially" employed a term which elsewhere denoted a person as a name for Israel. Finally we observe that, although acknowledging the antiquity of the title and protesting against the hypothesis of its late Greek origin, Bousset feels far from sure that Jesus used it as a self-designation in the manner and to the extent assumed in the Gospels. He believes that in numerous synoptical passages the title was subsequently introduced.

The fourth section deals with the Individual Faith and the theology of the period and is, with its thorough discussion of the whole range of the religious belief of Judaism, easily the most interesting and most instructive part of the volume for the purpose of comparison with the New Testament teaching. This will appear from the following list of the topics treated: Individualism, the Conception of God, Angelology, Dualism and Demonology, Speculation About the Hypostases, The Relation of the Pious to God, Anthropology, Ethics. Here, as might be naturally expected, the author's own theological standpoint most readily asserts itself in the judgments passed upon the religious value of the development reviewed. The point on which we would be inclined to dissent most vigorously concerns the low estimate placed upon the idea of the divine δικαιοσύνη as occupying the center of the Jewish religious consciousness. The way in which the author compares this forensic conception of righteousness with that one phase of the Old Testament idea in which it is equivalent to the grace and faithfulness of God, already shows that we here have to do with a one-sided accentuation of the love of God at the expense of His justice. Hence also the remark on a previous page that even with Jesus, and especially with Paul, can be found traces of the legalistic tendency for which this forensic δικαιοσύνη supplied the background. It cannot in our opinion be sufficiently reiterated that not the forensic principle of Judaism in itself was wrong and irreligious, but only the self-righteous, man-centered spirit with which this principle was exploited. It was only the latter, not the former, which Jesus and Paul protested against. What else but this principle of forensic righteousness underlies the profound moral earnestness with which the Jewish conscience faces the thought of the judgment, to which Bousset himself elsewhere in our volume justly pays his tribute of admiration?

We pass by without extended comment the fifth chapter, dealing with the Side Forms of Jewish Piety, in which the significance of Philo as a joint product of Judaism and Hellenism is admirably set forth and also the complex status of the Essenic problem succinctly exhibited. In regard to the latter the author casts his opinion with those who find in the order a Jewish growth on the whole, though not excluding foreign influence in single features.

Our main interest centers upon the concluding chapter, devoted to Judaism as a problem from the point of view of the history of religion. Here the author faces the question how the characteristic features of the formation of a church religion, of the rise of a cosmical eschatology, of the intrusion of a strong dualistic element in the sphere of demonology, of the withdrawal of God from the world and the substitution of intermediate beings, finally of the awakening of a pronounced religious individualism can be explained. Are all these developments direct offshoots of the religion of the prophets and psalmists or must an influx of manifold forces from the field of foreign religions be assumed to account for them? Bousset decides in favor of the latter hypothesis. The idea of the religious sterility of the Judaistic period when broached by the conservative side in Old Testament critical controversy used to be pronounced a mere dogmatic assertion: now we find it repeated from a totally different quarter in favor of the hypothesis of outside influence as the actual moving force in the religious development of this period. Side by side with the absence of creative power the inner disharmony of Judaism is believed to make its dependence on foreign influence plausible. Finally the general character of the times as a period of intermingling and fusion of ideas is appealed to.

When the question is put, which of the three religions that come under consideration here, the Assyro-Babylonian, the Hellenic or the Persian, played the foremost part in thus fructifying the later

Jewish faith, Bousset's answer points to the last mentioned. In his opinion the view of Darmesteter, according to whom the speculations contained in Avesta, especially in the Gatha's, date from the first century of the Christian era and consequently point to a dependence of Parsism upon Judaism, is utterly untenable. The Greek witnesses down to Plutarch show that to the Persian religion belongs the priority not only in matters of Apocalyptic and Eschatology, but also in the religious speculations about God and the divine hypostases. The point of contact for Parsism and Judaism was Babylonia. In general religious character as well as in concrete points of belief it is believed that a number of striking resemblances can be shown to exist, Still Bousset himself is willing to admit that all this does not necessarily carry us beyond the theory of a parallel development due in both quarters to identical causes without real interdependence. Also the question of deriving the forms of organization of the Jewish Church, such as the Synagogue and Canon, from Parsism, he declares for the present unsolvable owing to our ignorance with reference to the organization of the Persian religion during the period in question. Still further he would also exempt the specific province of the individual religion of the heart to which such peculiarities as the profound penitential spirit, the central place assigned to the forgiveness of sins, the legalistic tendency belong. But in matters belonging to the lower realm of popular superstition, in the province of ancient legendary lore attaching itself to primeval figures and events, such as the protoplasts, the flood, Seth, Enoch, Abraham, Nimrod, finally in the sphere of cosmogonical and cosmological speculation, as well as in that of the apocalyptic and the cognate dualistic ideas, an influence from the Orient upon Judaism is in Bousset's opinion not only possible but probable.

After reading the examples which the author quotes as in part at least "éclatant" demonstrations of the above thesis we must confess that they do not carry conviction to our mind. If there be scholars who doubt the connection between the Asmodæus of the Book of Tobit and the Persian Æshma Daeva, we do not see why other more general similarities should require any further explanation than that furnished by the theory of parallel development. That here and there real contact may have existed cannot of course be *a priori* denied. But that Judaism derived its religious signature in any comprehensive sense from Parsism we still feel compelled to regard as an unproven hypothesis. Bousset hardly attaches sufficient weight to the points of profound difference which Söderblom and others have shown to exist between the Jewish and Persian Apocalyptic, chief among which are the pessimistic character of the former in contrast with the optimism of the latter, and the absence of the idea of an Apokatastasis from the Jewish system. Would it not be strange, also, if the comprehensive cosmical setting of the later Jewish faith, on which so much depends for the theological formulation of revealed truth in its final form, was independent of the sublime Monotheism of the Old Testament, was in fact the product of a religion so essentially dualistic as Parsism? The cosmic universalism and Monotheism seem to belong naturally together. Old Testament criticism in its construction of the prophetic theology has so accustomed us to the thought that the world-wide outlook of Israel's faith is the fruit of its ethical Monotheism, that those who adopt the conclusions of this criticism should least of all feel the need of seeking explanations from any foreign quarter. So long as we do not feel inclined to bring down all apocalyptic, universalistic prophecy to the post-exilic period, it will certainly remain probable that not to the Avesta but to the ancient inspired oracles of an Isaiah and Ezekiel and others of the prophets we have to look for the ultimate roots of the luxuriant aftergrowth of Judaistic religion, in which so much sublime truth and so much grotesque fancy intermingle.