

Die religiösen und sittlichen Anschauungen der alttestamentlichen Apokryphon und
Pseudepigraphen
Ludwig Couard

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The author of this book in the preface calls attention to the fact that, notwithstanding the intensive study devoted of late years to the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature of Judaism, and the prominent role this study has come to play in New Testament science, there has not hitherto appeared any compendious yet complete survey of the religious and moral conceptions embodied in these writings, he offers his work as an attempt to supply this desideratum. It is constructed after a stereotyped topical plan, as the headings of the successive chapters, God, The Angels, God in his Relation to the World, Man and Sin, Ethics, The Messianic Hope, Eschatology, indicate. This method of treatment has the advantage that it facilitates quick reference to any particular point of investigation, but perhaps the index would have sufficed to insure this. On the other hand, the pressing of the material into those fixed categories would have prevented the author from giving us an insight into the inner organism of the Jewish world of religious and moral thought and from clearly exhibiting its moving principles and interacting forces, even if it had lain within his plan to undertake this. As it is, the writer purposely refrains from such a task, and confines himself to the purely statistical one of ascertaining and grouping the facts. The only thing that goes slightly beyond these limits are the hints interspersed through the various chapters, as to the extent in which Judaism marks a modification of Old Testament belief either in the line of advance or retrogression. The greater and far more pressing problem of the influence of these documents and the movements of which they were the exponents on the rise of Christianity is nowhere touched upon. Quite exceptional is a remark as that found on p. 100: "Out of the wisdom of Pseudo-Solomon grew the Johannine Logos." If thus the book lacks the interest attaching, e.g., to Baldensperger's brilliant constructions, it is for that very reason a safer guide for the ordinary student who needs above all else to have the bare facts placed before him. With reference to the pending debate as to whether the characteristic developments appearing in this literature are an indigenous Jewish growth or of foreign origin, on which hinges the even more important question in how far such foreign influences indirectly contributed towards the shaping of Christianity, Couard does not profess to render any formal decision. Where the question emerges in a concrete form he usually contents himself with rendering a verdict of not-proven. So in regard to predestinarianism and its alleged Babylonian origin (p. 80), the derivation of the demon-name Asmodaeus from the Persian Aëshma-daeva (p. 72), the hierarchy of archangels (p. 58), the hypostatizing of wisdom (except in so far as in the description of its all-penetrating character in Sap. 7:22 a Stoic influence is recognized), the combination of the cosmical aspect of the Messianic figure with the Indo-germanic myth of Yima, the "Ur-man" (p. 216), the alleged Persian origin of the doctrine of a universal resurrection (p. 231), the tracing back of the idea of a final world-conflagration to the same source (p. 227). Still the author's refusal to commit himself to these modern theories is not due to dogmatic prepossession, for in regard to other less problematical points he freely grants the presence of foreign influence, e.g., in regard to the representation of the body as a prison and burden (Platonic, p. 102), the pre-existentialism of Sap. Sol. (Platonic-Pythagorean, p. 108), the Stoical coloring of the ethics of 4 Maccabees (p. 154), the Platonic influence perceptible in the ethical views of Sirach and Sap., the eschatological war of the constellations (Oriental Mythology, p. 227).

Perhaps the book would not have suffered if the author had reduced its contents to still narrower limits. To quote for half a page the references for the occurrence of ο υψιστος as a divine name, as is done in Ch. 1, § 6, would seem to be a work of supererogation. The recapitulations of O.T. doctrine in cases where no essential difference between it and the standpoint of Judaism appears, is equally superfluous. Besides these faults of excess there occur blemishes in the line of inexact or unclear statements. What is said (pp. 34, 35) about the quasi-hypostatizing of the name of Jehovah fails to give a true account of this remarkable phenomenon. How “in the name of God” can possibly mean “to his honor”, as it is proposed to render in Ps. Sol. 11:8, En. 61:13, and possibly Sir. 45:26, the author has not even made an attempt to explain, and after Heitmüller has so thoroughly discredited this and similar vague renderings, it would seem time that they were relegated to oblivion. A sentence like the following: “To antiquity the name is not a mere combination of letters but an integral part of the individual; it represents its bearer,” only covers up the problem, which consists precisely in this, how the name comes to be “an integral part of the individual”, for between this and the conception that the name represents the person there is a great difference. The author’s reasoning, confused and inconsequential as it is on this point, certainly does not warrant the summary rejection of the hypothesis that the name of God appears occasionally as a sort of hypostasis side by side with God, as a duplicate of the deity. Confusing also is the distinction implied on p. 95 between “personification” and “*dichterische Einkleidung*” unless by “personification” be meant downright hypostatizing, which the author obviously does not intend, since he affirms that Baruch, Sirach and Sap. Sol. advance from the “personification” of wisdom found in Proverbs and Job to a hypostatical conception of the same, and yet maintains that the “personifying” in Prov. 1-9 is more than a poetical form of representation. Where the two-fold conception of the Messiah as Son of David and as a preexistent heavenly being are compared the query ought to have been more distinctly put, whether these two are incompatible or may perhaps have been reconciled in the mind of theological Judaism, either through the idea of an incarnation or through the assumption of a preexistence in the form of an embodied spirit. Even though such questions admit of no definite answer, it is necessary to raise them or to indicate the pretended solution they have received at the hands of others, e.g., Harnack and Dalman, who deny that the preexistent Jewish Messiah was capable of human birth.

The one erratum we have noticed occurs on p. 228, where “früher” stands for “später”.