

*THE RELIGION AND WORSHIP OF THE SYNAGOGUE.*

*An Introduction to the Study of Judaism from the New Testament Period, by W. O. E. Oesterley and G. H. Box. Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1907.*

A TRUSTWORTHY handbook to modern Judaism, written from the Christian standpoint, has long been a want felt acutely by scholars, and by others interested in the Jewish race. Those who desired to obtain information about the doctrines and practices of Jews in this twentieth century have been obliged to read either books written by Jews (as, for example, on the Orthodox side, Mr. Michael Friedländer's *Jewish Religion*, 1891, and on the Reformed side, Mr. Morris Joseph's *Judaism as Creed and Life*, 1903, both able books from their own standpoint), or to hunt up separate articles, whether in that storehouse of information, the Jewish Encyclopedia, or in magazines and reports issued by missionary societies. Mr. J. Allen's *Modern Judaism* (1830) and Dr. Moses Margoliouth's *Fundamental Principles of Modern Judaism Investigated* (1843), though valuable in their day, are not up to modern requirements; while Dr. McCaul's *Old Paths* (1st edition 1835) never pretended to do more than describe and refute the opinions of extremely Orthodox Jews in Poland.

In truth no book has been published of recent years that deals in a comprehensive and scholarly way with the beliefs and practices of this strange Semitic nation which is to be found in every civilized country, and is of growing influence in each, save, of course, those of times contained within the Canon of the Old Testament. We therefore heartily welcome this present attempt to satisfy a very legitimate demand.

The authors divide their work into three parts—Introductory, Dogmatic, and Practical. In the first they deal chiefly with the Sources of Judaism, by which they understand, of course, not only the Canonical books of the Old Testament, to which they only allude, but also later writings. Thus they describe briefly, with dates, the Apocrypha and the pseudepigraphic writings, and rightly, if, as it seems, these played an important part in the development both of Christianity and of Judaism. They give summary information about the Targums and the Talmudic

literature of various kinds, indicating the best editions, whether of the original texts or of translations. For their book is intended even more for ordinary readers than for Hebraists or Talmudists. They also state the various methods by which such books are usually quoted, conscious of the fact that there are many pitfalls here, into which, it may be remarked, most commentators of the Bible fall. We hope, by the bye, that in the second edition, which must, we should suppose, soon be demanded, the learned authors will note that the Palestinian Talmud is quoted at least as often by the pages and columns of the first edition (Venice, 1523), copied at Cracow (1609) and Krotoschin (1866), as by the chapters and Halachoth. A wise man, however, quotes by both methods, for he has learned by experience that thus the exact passage required can frequently be found more quickly. Then follows an excellent chapter on the Midrashim and the Prayer Book, the rationale of the latter finding a place in the Third Part. We observe with pleasure that the Authors have here added a few references to the great mediaeval Jewish thinkers and theologians, though the information given might well be amplified. Mention should have been made of the German translation of Bachya's *Duties of the Hearts*, for the advantage of those who are unable to read that remarkable and stimulating treatise in the Arabic or the Hebrew. This Part is fittingly closed with a brief account of the Jewish sects and parties, coming down to those of modern times, the Chassidim and the Reform Jews.

The Second Part, on Dogmatic Judaism, is bolder and more original, being an attempt in a hundred and thirty pages not only to state the chief doctrines of Judaism, but also to explain their origin and development. Naturally much use has been made of Weber's standard work on *Jüdische Theologie* for the later developments, and Bousset's *Religion des Judentums* (we wonder how many of his readers know how his name ought to be pronounced!) for the earlier. But nothing has been taken for granted, and almost every paragraph is marked by independent thought. At the same time it is the most tantalizing portion of the book; for it suggests the need not only of describing a doctrine, but also of weighing it in relation to Christian truth. This is hardly attempted. We should greatly like to see an exhaustive study of Jewish doctrine from this point of view made by Dr. Oesterley and Mr. Box. They have an absolutely

clear field before them, for no one has yet attempted it, at least in a serious and fitting way. We hope that they will carry it out, working, we may add, very slowly at a task of such importance, and therefore very surely.

The Third Part is on Practical Religion, and describes the education and life of the Jew, the Synagogue and its Calendar, the Prayer Book looked at from within (and Mr. Box, as is well known, has made a special study of this), the Sabbath, the Festivals and Solemn Days, with a closing chapter on some religious rites and ceremonies. In this last chapter we again have an attempt to explain the origin and development of the subjects examined.

It is poor praise to say that the book is unique. It is equally true to say that it is an extraordinarily able arrangement of trustworthy information about modern Judaism, with a great deal of original suggestion. It is, we hope, an earnest of a still more finished and judicial study of the doctrinal relation of Church and Synagogue.

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