

JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE AFTER THE EXILE. By T. K. Cheyne, M.A., D.D., Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford and formerly Fellow of Balliol College. Pages xxi and 205. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London, 1898.

This volume consists of a series of six lectures delivered in this country under the auspices of "The American Committee for Lectures on the History of Religion," which is doing much for the diffusion of religious knowledge among the masses of the American people. Professor Cheyne is well known to the theological world as a profound and earnest critical scholar. His commentaries on Isaiah, and on the Psalms, and on other portions of the Sacred Scripture, place him in the front ranks of biblical interpreters. But while he has been regarded as something of an iconoclast in respect of traditional theories of the Bible, no one suspects him of being unfriendly to the cause of religion. His object is not to diminish but to increase respect for the Bible, and cause it to be better known to the masses of Christian people. In this connection we quote his own language as found in the preface to the volume before us: "Should any friends of religion suspect the writer with a want of sympathy with them they will be almost more in error than those who may accuse him of critical arbitrariness. It is, indeed, in order to stimulate a more general appreciation of Jewish piety that these pages have been written. Such an appreciation cannot be without a beneficial influence on popular religion."

Two general effects will follow a careful study of Jewish religious life after the exile as portrayed in the pages of Professor Cheyne. The first will be a correction of the current conception of the history of Judaism during the centuries after the exile. That conception has been that there was a short period of intense religious enthusiasm among the returned Jews, during which the latest Biblical books were written; but that this period came to a close with Malachi, the last inspired prophet, about the middle of the fifth century before Christ. During the four centuries following the spirit of inspiration and revelation had withdrawn, no sacred literature was produced and the life of the Jews was merely a secular life like that of other nations. The short period of the Maccabees was a time merely of patriotic and humanitarian excitement, during which there was no genuine divine inspiration, and no real progress of religious development. But now all this is changed in consequence of the modern literary criticism of the Bible, to which Professor Cheyne himself has contributed no small share. We now know that the men who

returned from Babylon, like Ezra and Nehemiah, were not so entirely free from the dross of human infirmity and passion as they have commonly been believed to have been. And we know also that the process of the production of sacred literature did not have such an abrupt end as has been supposed. For example, we know that the books of Chronicles, including Ezra and Nehemiah in their present form, date from the Greek period, and probably from about 250 B. C.; Daniel from the age of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B. C.); Ecclesiastes, according to Cheyne, not improbably from the age of Herod the Great; Ruth and Jonah from a time subsequent to Nehemiah, and Job from the early Greek period. Many of the Psalms also were composed during the Persian and Greek periods and incorporated with the Hymn Book of the orthodox Jewish community founded by Ezra. It will thus be seen that a considerable portion of the canonical writings of the Old Testament dates from the same time as the Apocrypha. In fact, some Apocryphal writings are older than some canonical books. This fact will necessitate a re-study and re-statement of the theory of the canon as well as of the theory of inspiration.

But a second error of the popular conception of Jewish history, corrected by such works as this of Professor Cheyne's, is that Jewish religious thought, if it had any development at all, was entirely unaffected and uninfluenced by contact with other religious systems. Everything in the Jewish canonical Scriptures, it used to be supposed, was there by direct communication from heaven. The development of religious life and thought in Israel, and in Judaism, if indeed there was any development at all, was occasioned, not by any pressure of an earthly, human environment, but solely by the pressure of the Divine Spirit. But now this view is no longer tenable. Jewish religious life and thought were not thus isolated. Jewish religious thought, however it may have been affected by the breath of the Spirit of God, and however different it may therefore have been from the religious thought of other nations, was yet not wholly untouched by contact with foreign religious thought. There are ideas in the later Jewish Scriptures which must be traced to foreign sources, and others which must be supposed to have been essentially modified by foreign influences. The doctrines of angels and of demons must be classed among those doctrines which were much affected by contact with foreign, especially Babylonian and Persian, ideas. The Satan of the later books of the Old Testament was probably a creation of Persian thought, although the idea was considerably modified under the influence of Jewish monotheism. The ideas of immortality and resurrection, according to Professor Cheyne, were also inherited by the Jews from the Persians. It is a well-known fact that these ideas are very vague, if they are traceable at all, in the earlier books of the Old Testament. Professor Cheyne examines a number of passages in the older Psalms and

in the older portions of the book of Job, in which the doctrine of personal immortality has been supposed to be taught, and finds that, for a fair exegesis and with a correct text, this doctrine is not there. The doctrine of a resurrection of pious Israelites was accepted in the Maccabean period, and that of a general resurrection a little later. One more example may be referred to, namely, that of the *personified wisdom* in the book of Proverbs and in the Apocryphal book of the Wisdom of Solomon, which stands in such close relation to the later Logos doctrine of Alexandrian Judaism and of the Gospel of John. In regard to this Professor Cheyne says: "I am not so bold as to assume that the conception of the heavenly wisdom which was the earliest of Ahura Mazda's creations was taken over directly by the author of the Prologue of Proverbs, and simply hold that the more advanced religious philosophy of Zoroastrianism stimulated the growth of a new Jewish religious philosophy, which centered in the belief in an all-wise and therefore not, strictly speaking, all-powerful Being, the Creator and Governor of the world of nature and of man."

But we cannot go further into particulars, and we must content ourselves by saying that Professor Cheyne, in the volume before us, brings out very forcibly the importance for Christianity of the post-exilic history of Judaism. Many of the most familiar ideas of the New Testament have their origin in that period. This is true of the ideas of demons and of demoniacal possession, of Satan, of the resurrection of the dead and of the kingdom of God and the character of the Messiah, which were current at the beginning of the New Testament age. These ideas, besides others, may be traced in the well-known apocraphal books of the Old Testament and in the not so well-known Apocalyptic literature of the same age, contained in the Psalms of Solomon, the Book of Enoch and the Sybilline Oracles. Professor Cheyne has made it plain that this literature, together with the history of the period in which it originated, must be thoroughly studied in order to a complete understanding of the teaching of the New Testament. And this is a field which has not yet been thoroughly cultivated, and in the cultivation of which laurels are to be won by younger and persevering scholars. It is a field, however, into which only those may safely enter who are willing to do hard and careful work. None but scholars are wanted in this field, and those who do not possess this qualification should not presume to sit in judgment on the work of scholars. Those who are desirous of acquiring some real knowledge of the subject here under consideration will find an important help in these lectures by Professor Cheyne, which, it should be remarked, however, are designed to be of a somewhat popular character, and, therefore, well calculated to meet the wants of beginners, while advanced scholars will want additional helps.