

left the least trace in Jewish literature, and it is most probable that none of the great authorities we are acquainted with in the Talmud had ever read a single line of them, or even had heard their name. The same is the case with other Apocryphal and Apocalyptic works, for which Rabbinism is often made responsible. However strange it may seem, the fact remains that whilst these writings left a lasting impress on Christianity, they contributed — with the exception, perhaps, of the Book of Ecclesiasticus — little or nothing towards the formation of Rabbinic thought. The Rabbis were either wholly ignorant of their very existence, or stigmatised them as fabulous, or “external” (a milder expression in some cases for heretical), and thus allowed them to exert no permanent influence upon Judaism.

Passing from the Mishnah to the Talmud proper (the Gemara) and to the Midrash, the same fact meets us again. They, too, are only compilations, and from the defects of this, their fundamental quality, we frequently suffer.

There is, for instance, the interesting subject of miracles, which plays such an important part in the history of every religion. Despite the various attempts made by semi-rationalists to minimise their significance, the frequent occurrence of miracles will always remain, both for believers and sceptics, one of the most important tests of the religion in question; to the former as a sign of its superhuman nature, to the latter as a proof of its doubtful origin. The student is accordingly