

century, both leaders of Rabbinic opinion in Babylon, would have refused their consent, though the emphasis put on the one or the other doctrine may have differed widely as a result of changed conditions and surroundings. On the other hand, a careful study of the Agadic sayings, for instance, of R. Akiba and R. Meir of the second century, will sufficiently prove that there is little or nothing in the dicta of these great teachers which would have prevented them from subscribing to the same general theological beliefs that inspired the homilies contained in the *Seder Elijah* and the *Agadath Bereshith* compiled in the seventh or in the eighth century, if not much later. Indeed, many statements in these books appearing at the first glance as new can often be traced as mere amplifications of teachings occurring in some older collection of the second and third century in a less diffuse form.

It was in view of this fact that I did not consider it necessary to provide the quotations given from the Talmud and the Midrash with the date of their authors, assuming that as long as there is no evidence that they are in contradiction to some older or even contemporary opinion they may be regarded as expressive of the general opinion of the Synagogue. Such a treatment of the subject was, I thought, the more justified as it did not lie within the scope of this work to furnish the student with a history of Rabbinic theology, but rather, as already indicated, to give some comprehensive view of a group of theological