

regard to it. This opinion can easily be ascertained from Rabbinic literature, which permits of no doubt that the belief in the advent of the Messiah in its general and main features was a firmly established doctrine of Rabbinic Judaism. The main outlines are given by Scripture and tradition, but it is history which furnishes the details. These appear sometimes in the form of apocalypses, reflecting the events of their age, whilst the prolonged suffering of Israel, and the brooding of the nation over the wrongs inflicted upon the people of God, have the unfortunate result that fancy and imagination busy themselves more with the anti-Messiah and the punishment awaiting him than with the Messiah and the bliss coming in his wake. To such an extent does this proceed that in some of these apocalypses the universalistic features of the Kingdom are almost obscured, although, in truth, Israel never abandoned them even amidst the worst distress.

Notwithstanding, however, all these excrescences which historic events contributed towards certain beliefs and the necessary mutations and changes of aspects involved in them, it should be noted that Rabbinic literature is, as far as doctrine and dogma are concerned, more distinguished by the consensus of opinion than by its dissensions. On the whole, it may safely be maintained that there is little in the dogmatic teachings of the Palestinian authorities of the first and second centuries to which, for instance, R. Ashi of the fifth and even R. Sherira of the tenth