

are in the distant past, its ramifications run in all directions; there are side currents as well as the main stream; higher and lower movements live side by side; early types of thought reappear at later stages; alongside of the higher attainments of inspired thought there are survivals of primitive conceptions. We cannot hope—in fact, we do not desire—to reduce the rich complexity of life to an abstract simplicity.

"Periods," then, are artificial and not real divisions, adopted for convenience in handling the subject. Some historical events, as the Coming into Palestine or the Exile, some stages in the religion, as the rise of the higher forms of preaching or the Deuteronomic Reform, may make a deep impression, but the thread of history is never absolutely broken; the current of life may seem to move more slowly at one time than another, but it never comes to a full stop. In Syria and Palestine to-day beliefs and customs may still be found similar to those of the pre-Mosaic times, while the OT message, in its manifold forms, has made for itself a place in the highest life of the world. Similarly, such labels as nomadic religion, agricultural religion, pre-prophetic religion, prophetism, legalism, need to be watched lest they become hard and mechanical. They remind us that the spirit of religion, the spirit that responds to God's call and expresses man's hunger and aspiration, is influenced in its *outward forms* by changing circumstances, economic conditions, intellectual culture, but they must not be too sharply separated, or treated as final explanations of the great reality. In the most primitive observances there were glimmerings of great truths expressed in symbolic forms by men of prophetic vision, and in the days of hardest legalism there was much personal piety and tender devotion.

*The Historical Setting.*—The Hebrew tribes came into Palestine in the thirteenth century B.C. The first period of two or three centuries, as reflected in the earliest parts of Jg., is one of restless struggle, partly of conquest and partly of assimilation. The foundation of the kingdom under David and Solomon is of great historical and religious importance. The disruption, some seventy years later, shows its lack of