

In a similar way the old Rabbis seem to have thought that the true health of a religion is to have a theology without being aware of it; and thus they hardly ever made — nor could they make — any attempt towards working their theology into a formal system, or giving us a full exposition of it. With God as a reality, Revelation as a fact, the Torah as a rule of life, and the hope of Redemption as a most vivid expectation, they felt no need for formulating their dogmas into a creed, which, as was once remarked by a great theologian, is repeated not because we believe, but that we may believe. What they had of theology, they enunciated spasmodically or "by impulses." Sometimes it found its expression in prayer "when their heart cried unto God"; at others in sermons or exhortations, when they wanted to emphasise an endangered principle, or to protest against an intruding heresy. The sick-bed of a friend, or public distress, also offered an opportunity for some theological remark on the question of suffering or penance. But impulses are uncertain, incoherent, and even contradictory, and thus not always trustworthy. The preacher, for instance, would dwell more on the mercy of God, or on the special claims of Israel, when his people were oppressed, persecuted, and in want of consolation; whilst in times of ease and comfort he would accentuate the wrath of God awaiting the sinner, and his severity at the day of judgement. He would magnify faith when men's actions were lacking in in-