

THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL

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Preliminary Statement.—The aim of this article is to give in mere outline the history of Hebrew religion as a living movement, which reveals to us one of the great threads of the Divine purpose, and prepares the way for the Christian faith. The books and subjects mentioned will be dealt with in the commentaries and other discussions; hence the main object of this sketch will be to give, as far as the writer is able, a connected view of the whole development. The problem is historical in its character. Our concern is with the life of a particular nation, and with the action of its leaders at a given period of the world's history, and not with abstract theological theories as conceived by the scholasticism of later ages. At the basis of our discussion there is a definite view of Israelite history and of the literature which tells the story of that life, and gives a record of the various stages of thought. This view is both critical and conservative; it has been built up by generations of loving toil, given to the study of the documents; it seeks to preserve all the real history contained in the sacred books, and to interpret sympathetically all the noble struggles and lofty aspirations that these record. The present aim is not directly *apologetic*; the facts, so far as we can recover them, must be allowed to speak for themselves. But the writer may express his opinion that the true apologetic of the OT is the frank recognition of an actual development, a God-guided organic movement, a revelation shining more and more unto the perfect day. It is not necessary for a Christian teacher to disclaim "mere naturalism," whatever that may mean. The word "development" in this connexion suggests to us a movement which is not fully explained by the genius of a particular people or their surroundings, by the work of any one teacher or generation of leaders, the final explanation lies in the purpose of the living God, who uses all these persons and circumstances as His instruments. Such development, being a matter of real life, is exceedingly complex; its roots