

# **THE RELIGION OF THE PSALMS**

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# THE RELIGION OF THE PSALMS

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## PREFACE

Books about the Psalms come and go; the Psalms go on forever. They belong to the permanent literature of the race. They express felicitously and adequately the great emotions of mankind. They display a faith that passes knowledge, an invincible confidence in the goodness of God that survived successive shocks testing it to the uttermost. The genuine, heartfelt religion of the Psalter has never failed to kindle the spirit of the faithful.

The aim of this book is to bring out the significance of the Psalms as indicative of the religious and moral standards of later Judaism. There is no attempt here to find in the Psalms spiritual nourishment for the life of today. The effort is rather to present the meaning of the Psalms as it lay in the minds of their authors and earliest readers. Probably no book has suffered more from a conventionalized interpretation than the Psalter. We need

frequently to return to the original source of the stream of interpretation and start afresh. No conventionalized Psalter can ever have the virility and freshness of the real Psalter.

It is because of this desire to preserve as much as possible the original atmosphere of the Psalter that the form "Yahweh" is used instead of "Lord." This is, approximately at least, the original pronunciation of the name more commonly known as "Jehovah." The latter form has gathered to itself a connotation that never attached to Yahweh and that interferes with any historical appreciation of the Hebrew God.

In the quotations of poetical passages from the Psalter and elsewhere, I have often ventured to use translations of my own. This has been done, not with the thought that they are better than other renderings, but with the desire to bring the thoughts and aspirations of these Hebrew poets before the reader's mind in a somewhat new and unfamiliar dress.

Thus they may more successfully challenge attention and secure respect and admiration.

Some of the chapters of this book have been used as lectures for general audiences. The favorable reception accorded them emboldens me to send them out to a larger circle. May they contribute something to the quickening of an intelligent interest in the religious poetry of Israel.