

**THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL:
POPULAR
SKETCHES FROM OLD
TESTAMENT HISTORY**

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The prophets of Israel: popular sketches from Old Testament history by Carl Heinrich Cornill & Sutton F. Corkran

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CARL HEINRICH CORNILL & SUTTON F. CORKRAN

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THE
PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

POPULAR SKETCHES FROM
OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

NO BRANCH of science, in the last generation, has undergone such a profound revolution as that of Old Testament research. In place of the traditional representation of the religious history of Israel has been substituted a rigorous historical mode of view, which discovers in the process in question an organic development, and assigns to each event its logical position in the whole, by reference to which all the facts are severally comprehended and explained. At first, even professional scholars received this organic view of the Old Testament with repugnance and distrust; for it was no light task to abandon a position that for two thousand years had been regarded as the absolute truth. But by that power of conviction which always inheres in what is intrinsically correct, it gradually increased its dominance over men's minds, and has, particularly since the brilliant and fascinating exposition of Wellhausen's *History of Israel* of the year 1878, been borne onwards in an irresistible and uninterrupted career of triumph.

For no part of the Old Testament literature has this change of view been more significant and momentous than for the prophets, whose real significance

could only now be understood and properly valued. Whilst according to the traditional view the prophets merely deepened and broadened in single points the religion of Moses, which he was supposed to have promulgated as a complete and finished system, it now appeared that the prophets had completely revolutionised the religion of Israel, that it was wholly through them that the national religion founded by Moses became a religion of the world, and that it was they who prepared and fitted the religion of Israel to become the parent of Christianity.

Truths of such importance, and so recently acquired, concerning things which affect every man's dearest interests, should not be restricted to a small band of scholars, as if constituting an esoteric doctrine; but every educated man and woman has a right to hear and to know about them. This is the purpose which this little book is designed to serve. It presupposes no special knowledge, but seeks simply to give a popular presentation of its subject-matter. It explains first the nature and import of Israelitic prophecy; indicating what in Israel's own view a prophet was; how prophecy is to be explained, and what position it occupies in the history of the religion of Israel; what its presuppositions are, and in what manner, thus, it sheds light on the period preceding it. To this is added an attempt at a historical valuation of Elijah, who occupies in so far a place apart as we possess nothing written from him. Next, the productions of the prophetic literature of Israel which have been preserved are examined in the chronological order established by Old Testament inquiry as the result of profound and laborious research. The historical conditions and the contemporary environment of the various

prophets are portrayed, their significance, their peculiar original achievements briefly characterised, and finally the attempt made to assign and establish for each prophet in the developmental process of the religion of Israel his logical and organic position—in what respect his influence was promotive, and in what respect reactionary; so that the little book may be viewed as a brief sketch, giving only the salient and important outlines, of the religious history of Israel from Moses down to the time of the Maccabees.

The book grew out of a course of lectures which I was invited to deliver at the *Freie Deutsche Hochstift* in my native city of Frankfort-on-the-Main, at the request of its indefatigable director, Prof. V. Valentin. I accepted this invitation with pleasure and gratefully seized the opportunity of presenting to cultured laymen some portrayal of this grandest event in the history of religion before Christ. The idea of making a book out of my unpretentious sketch, (it does not claim to be more, and the professional scholar will recognise in it at once Wellhausen, Kuenen, Duhm, Stade, Smend, and others,) never occurred to me, and I was at first firm in my refusal to publish it. But the solicitations became finally so pressing and kind that I found it impossible not to accede to them, and overcame my hesitation. It is my hope that the printed book will have as good results as the spoken word, and accomplish its purpose of affording to persons who are deprived of access to the latest works of Old Testament science, some insight into its results and into the spirit and purpose of its inquiries. In the passages which I have literally cited from the prophetic books I have, of course, complied with the requirements of textual criticism, and I hope that my readers will not