

RELIGION AND CONSCIENCE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

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Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt by W. M. Flinders Petrie

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IN ANCIENT EGYPT

LECTURES DELIVERED AT
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

BY

W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE
D.C.L., LL.D., PH.D.

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PREFACE

THESE lectures, though based on the literature of the Egyptians, cover also some general considerations which are equally applicable to the Religion and Conscience of other nations. They are intended as an attempt to indicate lines of study, and to observe what actually is the construction of human thought, as shown in some of the oldest and most continuous records. It may be said that the relation of these to certain standard views in ethics and religion should have been treated; and that some more logical and systematic ideas are needed to start from. But my object was to see what really is, and not to try to fit that in with any theories, however highly supported, or any views, however orthodox. Treating the divagations of human thought as if they must have been systematic and logical has been the bane of all theories; and many a

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house of cards has been built to match one single fact or principle which has been grasped. I do not touch the larger questions here, but only deal with what we can readily see and prove; and in this place I no more attempt to enquire what lies behind the growth of ideas here traced, than the biologist enquires what lies behind the comparison and nature of the structures which he unravels. We each try to see what actually exists; usually a safe and needful course before attempting to account for its results or its causes.

I need hardly say that these are mere sketches, intended to suggest a mode of looking at the subject; and any one who might expect from the title to find a full account of matters so vast and complex, will be disarmed when he sees what a mere note-book this volume is.

The Religion lectures are arranged as first used; but the Conscience lectures seemed better to be here re-arranged into three, rather than two as originally delivered. The final notes deal with matters too lengthy for the scale of the lectures.

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