

careful to attribute their temporary triumph not to inadvertence, but to foresight, on His own part.<sup>1</sup>

In his *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, Milton continually makes the same sort of appeal, and only falls back upon the irresponsibility of God's government in cases where such an appeal is impossible. We could sometimes wish that he had abstained from making it; as when, *e.g.*, in the course of his defence of the doctrine of transmitted penalty, he appeals to the "recognised rights of war" over innocent women and children!<sup>2</sup> Might not the Scripture which he presses so literally and so remorselessly itself have given him pause? For we find it written, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern

<sup>1</sup> P. L. x. 616-637.

<sup>2</sup> *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, chap. xi.

between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"<sup>3</sup>

The faith of our own day is, for the most part, not Milton's. It is less clear-sighted, less confident, perhaps less vigorous. Milton declares that we may know GOD in His attributes, though not in Himself: I am not sure that we shall venture to say as much. But at least we dare not attribute to the Creator motives and desires lower than the highest we know. If we believe with Milton that "the King can do no wrong," we do not hold that our wrong is right for Him, but rather that our very right looks wrong in the light of His transcendent goodness. If His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways, it is because no utmost reach of human love or wisdom can avail to fathom theirs. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts, and My ways than your ways."

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<sup>3</sup> Jonah iv. 10, 11.

## The Divine Library of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup>

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It may be to some extent a misfortune, that the literary criticism of the Scriptures has fallen so much into the hands of those who are more scholars than practical Christian teachers. On the other hand, the circumstance has not been without its advantages, for those looking at a subject from the outside and coming to it with no preconceptions often see the truth, or at least some truths, regarding it better than those who from their training and prepossessions have become accustomed to look at it from a fixed point of view. Nevertheless the critics have not always been sufficiently conscious or have failed to express clearly that their operations are a means and not an end. They too often seem to say when their literary criticism is concluded, Now we have done with the Bible. It is a good sign when scholars like Professor Kirkpatrick feel that the present age has brought new responsibilities to the teacher, and that, besides imparting scientific truth to

students in his class-room, he has to mediate between science and the common Christian mind. Few appear so well fitted for this work as the author. Nothing could be more perspicuous and informing than these lectures, nothing more candid, for the author extenuates no attained results,—some will think that in his fourth lecture he goes very far,—and nothing better fitted to give the mind the right point of view from which to look at the questions and the issues. The extreme lucidity of the lectures is due to the writer's own mind rather than respect to his audience, for his hearers were clergy and educated laymen; and the gravity with which he handles the subject arises from his sense of its importance and the feeling that the things he is teaching will necessarily produce a certain disquietude in men's minds before they can accommodate themselves to the new situation. It is to be wished that his work could find extensive circulation at the present time.

The title of the book indicates the nature of its contents. The good right of criticism is first shown, mainly by pointing out the Hebrew method of writing history. In those days the historian did

<sup>1</sup> *The Divine Library of the Old Testament: its Origin, Preservation, Inspiration, and Permanent Value.* Five Lectures by A. F. KIRKPATRICK, B.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, Cambridge London: Macmillan. 1891.

not digest his documents and materials, and then compose a new work out of his own mind, he excerpted his documents or placed them with little change side by side. The Books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings are all composed, more or less, of separate elements, and the Chronicler often refers to his sources. From this, the author proceeds to infer that the Pentateuch is also composite. A subsequent lecture deals with the Text of the Old Testament and its preservation. The traditional idea that the care of the scribes was at all times so scrupulous that the text might be considered virtually faultless is shown to have no sound historical foundation. From the time that the text was fixed, in the first century or beginning of the second of our era, great care was used in transcription, but previous to that time MSS. were subject to the usual vicissitudes, and considerable differences of reading prevailed. Two concluding very thoughtful lectures are devoted to the questions of the inspiration and value of the Old Testament to the Christian Church. The author lays down such principles as these: that the Bible is a means and not an end; that Inspiration worked upon primitive traditions and purified them in a religious sense; that it treats all history, past and present alike, from a religious point of view, *i.e.* it shows how God and His purpose of grace ruled the history and was in it. This is an exceedingly important point to be had in view when we read Old Testament history. This method of the writers of seeing God in the history and regarding it all as His operation leads us to fancy that to the agents in it it must have appeared supernatural and divine just as it did to the prophets. But, no doubt, men lived and acted then just as they do now; life was as human then as at present, and there was not the consciousness of any divine interference more than now. It was only the religious eye, when it was opened, that saw God moving on slowly toward His purpose of establishing a universal kingdom of God upon the earth. Further, the author teaches that inspiration does not involve independence of existing materials, or of current literary methods—and some of these methods may be uncommon among ourselves, and at first sight not to our liking; that it does not guarantee immunity from error in matters of fact, science, or history; and that it does not exclude imperfection, relativity, and accommodation. These positions, stated barely, may seem ad-

vanced, the whole lecture must be read to see them in their proper relations.

One good result of modern discussions will certainly be to recall men's minds to what Scripture is. Used as it has been for many generations exclusively for purposes of moral and religious teaching, we have the feeling that the Bible was given at first hand to us in our present circumstances. But, though for our learning also, God spake unto the fathers primarily, and to us only mediately and in an indirect way, because we and they alike belong to His historical Church. It often occurs to one to ask, Has the written word of God any higher or other qualities than the word had when spoken of old? Less lofty qualities it cannot have, but when we look into the Prophets we see that the spoken and the written word are really identical. The written prophecies are but condensations of the spoken word, and whether in their speech or writing the prophets set a single aim before themselves, to persuade men to live unto God and to teach them the way. In all other things they leave the people as they find them, with their superstitions, their credulities, their customs, and their thoughts, except where these might conflict with a true knowledge of God and holy living to Him. If they refer to nature and the material world it is to say that it is the work of God's creative power and is in His hand, just as mankind, whether men or nations, are in His hand, and that the universe in all its parts is a moral constitution. To draw edification from the Bible happily needs little knowledge, but to understand it as a whole we need constantly to remember its historical character; and perhaps we should best learn to comprehend it by studying the oral communications of the teachers of Israel. The methods and aims which they pursue are the methods and aims of the Bible as a whole, and the things which they neglect, the Bible as a whole neglects.

Among the uses of the Old Testament enumerated by Professor Kirkpatrick, there is one that deserves special emphasis—the firmness of voice with which the Old Testament says “God.” It utters little but one word to men, but this is the word. The eyesight of the generation of to-day is so impaired by the fumes of the laboratory that the far sight of Isaiah is lost, “I saw the Lord sitting on a throne.” God has become a wavering light whose outlines will not fix. In the Old Testament He is more clear and defined than the sun.