

**NOTES ON THE  
EARLIER HEBREW  
SCRIPTURES**

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Notes on the Earlier Hebrew Scriptures by G. B. Airy

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**G. B. AIRY**

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BY  
SIR G. B. AIRY, K.C.B.

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'There seems no possible reason to be given, why we may not be in a state of moral probation, with regard to the exercise of our understanding upon the subject of religion, as we are with regard to our behaviour in common affairs'—BUTLER.

'Men's moral probation may be, whether they will take due care to inform themselves by impartial consideration; and afterwards, whether they will act as the case requires, upon the evidence which they have, however doubtful'

BUTLER : quoted also by PALMER



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## PREFACE.

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THROUGH a long period, I have often been led to consider carefully the interpretation of several of the more obscure passages of the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. Some notes on these have been committed to writing many years ago, but without any view to publication. Lately, however, public events have occurred, which have induced me to refer to my manuscripts, to revise them, and to make additions to them. These events are, the publication of Dr. Donaldson's 'Book of Jasher,' that of the 'Essays and Reviews,' and that of Bishop Colenso's tracts on the 'Pentateuch'; and the controversies to which these works have given rise. In the face of these polemical discussions, I have thought that there might be advantage in collecting some speculations, formed in freedom of thought, but I trust not without reverence, and which, shaped as they have been in quiet privacy, may be expected to be, in great

measure, free from the exaggeration or the violence which may be induced by controversy.

In regard to the general tone of these notes, I will first remark that I have nothing to say on the subject of verbal inspiration. With those who entertain that doctrine, I can have nothing in common. Nor do I recognise, in the professedly historical accounts, any other inspiration which can exempt them from the severest criticism that would be applicable to so-called profane accounts, written under the same general circumstances, and in the same countries.

On the question of personal inspiration, at least, at special and important junctures, I am far from speaking so positively. It has been held by able metaphysicians, that every occurrence of a new thought to the mind may justly be considered an inspiration. And I am far from undertaking to say, that the Great Power who created Mind, with its incomprehensible mixture of involuntary thoughts and voluntary reasoning, may not on some fitting occasions, have strongly turned those thoughts in a definite direction.

I attach no importance to the citations in the New Testament, of names and events recorded, or



supposed to be recorded, in the Hebrew Scriptures ; beyond this, that the accounts to which allusion is made, were probably familiar to, and were received by, the persons to whom these citations were addressed.

It is scarcely necessary to say that I regard the ostensible familiarity of the historian with the counsels of the Omnipotent, as mere oriental allegories, expressing the religious profession of the writer, but possessing no other claim to attention.

As a general rule, I hold, that where any recorded event in the inanimate world can be explained by the ordinary phenomena of material nature (better understood at the present time, in reference to some instances, than in the time of the writers), or when any actions of men can be shewn to be compatible with the understood laws of human nature ; such events or actions are to be referred to their appropriate recognised laws, without the admission of miraculous explanation.



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