

in pointing out the distinction between the vital and the formal elements in those preconceptions—these, with other modifications of this sort, would not indeed have spared him the attack of the ultra-conservatives, but would have increased his own following, secured for him still more numerous allies, and put him in a position of greater advantage, without sacrificing the principle which, as we have already said, is really the matter at issue. We must, however, be allowed to affirm, without regard to very considerable disagreement with Mr. Newton's opinions, that one of the chief duties of those who at this day take the position of leaders in religious thought is, beyond all question, to train their congregations—in the frank, honorable, loyal spirit which, as we cannot doubt, has animated this one—to a calm and expectant attitude toward all critical discussions about the Bible, assured that through discussion will come a fuller apprehension of the truth, and that truth is not merely stronger, but also better, than even the most venerable error.

"The Book of the Beginnings." *

THE most important question suggested by this volume, in view of the facts recalled to us by its preface, is, not whether its positions are wholly true, but whether its discussions are legitimate—not whether Mr. Newton offered his congregation the real solution of the difficulties by which the traditional theories about Genesis and the Pentateuch are encompassed, but whether it is permissible for a Christian minister to suggest to a Christian audience any considerable modification of those theories. It will certainly appear to most disinterested and well-informed persons that it is folly to stifle discussion on a matter so fundamental as this. The uproar occasioned by Mr. Newton's lectures was probably not at all due to the fact that he presented in them one particular set of recent critical theories rather than another, but to the fact that he broke loose, and invited his hearers to break loose, from the opinions which have long been current in the Church. In so far as this is true, his opponents are certainly on the losing side. We pronounce no opinion on the interruption of the course, though the request of an ecclesiastical superior. We are not prepared to say that this was not, under all the circumstances, a judicious request, and that it will not, in the long run, prove to have been of great service to that freedom of inquiry of which Mr. Newton has become to some extent the champion. For the number of those is certainly increasing in the Protestant Episcopal Church, as elsewhere, who will refuse to have investigation stifled, and the results of it concealed. When these shall be in the majority, then the crisis is past. Meantime, those who have raised the chief outcry against Mr. Newton, and who seem to belong to the reactionary element of that Church, have only themselves to blame, if the very respectable body of men, young and old, within their communion, who perceive how much is imperilled if any earnest voice is silenced on such a ground, forget the differences of opinion which separate them from Mr. Newton, and rally about him, as they have already begun to do.

It is not possible here to pass in review the positions which Mr. Newton has taken in these lectures. They seem to us, on many points, extreme and indefensible. The author appears to have drawn his materials too exclusively from one school of critical works, and to have proposed for acceptance many views which have yet to be submitted to the test of careful examination—some, even, which have already been condemned by that test. Nor can we regard his mode of statement as in all cases well-chosen, in view of the extreme sensitiveness which is prevalent among large numbers of those whom his words were designed to reach. Less advocacy, and more of the judicial temper; less hasty acceptance of new views, and more patient and even cautious presentation of the necessity for some change in the old views; a more delicate touch upon the—not wholly groundless—preconceptions of hearer and reader, and greater care

* *The Book of the Beginnings. A Study of Genesis, with an Introduction to the Pentateuch.* By R. Heber Newton, Rector of All Souls' Protestant Episcopal Church. \$1. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.