H. Martin

Letters
to
Marcus Dods

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A SEQUEL TO

"The Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture."

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MARCUS DODS, D.D.

BY

HUGH MARTIN, D.D.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON: J. NISBET & CO.
EDINBURGH: MACLAREN & MACNIVEN AND ANDREW ELLIOT.
GLASGOW: D. BRYCE & SON. ABERDEEN: A. & R. MILNE.
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PREFACE.

FOR the sake of those who may have the First or Second Edition of the "Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture," I think it right to reproduce here what I have said in a Preface to the Third Edition, published since the rising of the General Assembly :—

"I have very seriously considered whether I might not, in this edition, suppress the Prefatory Note, and it would have given me pleasure to find that to be my duty. But so long as the extract from the College Committee's Special Report on Professor Smith's case, on which my Prefatory Note is founded,* abides among our Church documents, without a word of disapprobation on the part of the Assembly or the Church, I cannot possibly cease to bear resolute witness against it. It is a very serious thing for any Committee of this Church to take it upon them to tell us what is "the technical ground in the Confession that must regulate ecclesiasti-

* Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture, p. 5.

cal procedure," even though they should set it forth correctly. The Courts of the Church will judge of that for themselves, on each occurrent case, as providence may require. It is still more serious when they set it forth incorrectly, and with such trenching on the perfection of our confessional relation to the great doctrine of Inspiration as I have felt it my duty to point out. There are names on that Committee for which I have such regard, that I am entitled to the sympathy of my brethren, instead of any breath of blame, for having undertaken the ungrateful duty. It was more imperatively called for, than, perhaps *even yet*, has become quite apparent.

"But I wish to put on record, and call particular attention to, the fact that neither the Assembly nor the Church is in the least degree committed to the extract which I have criticised. It has met with no approval, and with even no defence. What took place at the Assembly, in this regard, was as follows:—(1.) Dr Rainy intimated, on Tuesday, 29th May, that the Convener of the College Committee had telegraphed to him to table the Special Report; and that, in the Convener's absence, he would do so without a word. (2.) Dr Wilson's motion, which founded itself on that Report, was content with quoting from it so much as it needed and no more; and the usual phrase,—"receive the Report and approve of the same,"—was conspicuously

absent. (3.) On Monday, 4th June, the Convener gave in the General Report, and stated that, as the Special Report had been given in by Dr RAINY, he would make no allusion to it. (4.) In moving the adoption of the General Report, Dr ELDER was careful to point out that it did not include the Special Report, and made it very plain that he was not moving the adoption or approval of *it*.

"All this is so far satisfactory, except, of course, that it is negative. But as the extract abides where it was, without one tinge of positive disapprobation attached to it, so must my Prefatory Note abide where it was. The duty of writing and publishing it, at whatever risk of any man's displeasure, was urgent, and was not discharged without some gentleness as well as much consideration. I pondered long, for instance, whether I would not put another name than COLERIDGE'S on page 8, to bring out the same distinction; and I refrained from fear, as the saying is, of putting mischief into people's heads. Alas, I rather think now that the mischief is in some people's heads already. I refer to the 'New Preface' to Dr MARCUS DODS'S third edition of his Sermon on 'Revelation and Inspiration,' where, patently, he 'cordially accepts,' and takes refuge behind, that very position which I felt it to be my duty to demolish. Unfortunately it was astonishingly *fitted* (no man believes *intended*) to protect such errors as his. But

it is now a ruin. And it is certain that it will not be rebuilt. The best that can be said of it is, that it was an *obiter dictum* on the part of the pen that may have written it; and, amidst the mass of matter demanding their attention, passed with only too much facility by the Committee, who have never asked any approval of it. But as I am (almost simultaneously with these lines) sending off to press, in the shape of 'LETTERS to Dr DODS,' a somewhat full and detailed reply to that sorrowful document, the 'New Preface,' I need not say more on the matter here. I content myself with saying that, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the doctrine of the divine authorship, inspiration, and authority of the Old and New Testaments is now raised and imperilled in the Free Church of Scotland.

"H. M."

MONTROSE, 14*th June* 1877

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LETTERS

TO

MARCUS DODS, D.D.

I.

The Apologetic Element.

MONTROSE, 11*th June* 1877.

MY DEAR SIR,

I greatly regret that you have issued a third and unchanged edition of your sermon on "Revelation and Inspiration," and that the "New Preface" cannot, in any respect, be considered as having improved the situation.

You begin by complaining that justice has not been done to the apologetic element in your discourse: "In the first place, I should have expected intelligent readers to apprehend that the sermon was written as an apologetic attempt." Now, waiving all about "intelligent readers," I have a distinct recollection of recognising the apologetic element in your pages; but my criticism of your sermon being incidental and by no means the main object of my pamphlet, my aim was to produce, not an exhaustive reply, but merely stricture sufficient, in my view, to lead you to reconsider your

position. Save for this, I would certainly have set myself to bar you out from finding shelter in the 5th section of the 1st chapter of the Confession,—an attempt which I see you repeat in reference to "Paul bringing light to your spirit." And, undoubtedly, I would have done what you now, not very wisely, I think, challenge me to do. How, then, is it possible for me, in meeting your challenge on this point to avoid asking, What hinders you from conducting a sound and valid apologetic in defence of Divine Revelation without injuring Inspiration? For that last is really what you have to reply to. Why have you injured the doctrine of Inspiration? Till you vanquish my arguments, I am entitled to say (and, of course, I must say it now more strongly than before), that I have proved that what *you* call inspiration was "not something designed to secure the supreme divine authorship of the writings concerned; that, in fact, it may be defined as being just everything *except* what would secure that result."* In short, you have spirited out and rationalized away everything that the Church Catholic, and not the Westminster Divines only, have counted precious in their idea of Inspiration, leaving in it nothing distinctive, and denying all that is supernatural.

And can you possibly mean to say that you have done this in the service of apologetic? Can you assert, maintain, and defend the supernatural in revelation, only at the expense of surrendering the supernatural in the record of revelation? Can you not teach geometry without

* See "Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture," page 35

staining the honours due to quaternions? Can you not expound plain algebra without laying lance in rest against the differential calculus, or hunting Bishop Berkeley's imaginary "ghosts of departed quantities"? These are fair analogies. For, what is there in the superadded and cumulative glory of the fact that the record is divine, to hamper you in your apologetic in behalf of the truth that the revelation is divine? No honest mind will refuse you liberty to disentangle the two things. For myself, I had rather assisted you. I had not entirely overlooked this topic. I had said: "Inspiration presupposes revelation, and is concerned with the recording of it, or with (in the language of the Confession) the committing of it to writing; and the argument concerning inspiration presupposes that the argument on the evidences of Divine Revelation—the old phrase for what is now called apologetics—has been led and closed" (page 24). If this is not clear enough, take the excellent statement of our brother, Mr Stevenson Smith:* "In arguing about Inspiration, we do not deal with infidels, but with believers in the Word of God. What, therefore, the Holy Scriptures say about their own Inspiration we must receive as the truth of God, otherwise we disallow them as a Divine Revelation." And you are not yourself without the perception of this old-fashioned truth, if you would only wield it consistently, instead of being off and on with it in alternate sentences.

* See his admirable pamphlet, "A Study of Scripture Inspiration, *By Rev. Stevenson Smith, Free Church, Sanquhar.*" Edin.: Maclaren & Macniven.

For instance, you say: "The Revelation first lays hold of him (the rational sceptic), and afterwards he constructs his theory of Inspiration." I would say, Makes up his mind concerning the *doctrine* of Inspiration; for I know of no theory. But let that pass. Again you say: "My main object was to indicate that, so far as the historical contents of Scripture are concerned, revelation stands firm, although there should prove to be no such thing as Inspiration;" a legitimate enough aim or object, not only in reference to "the historical contents of Scripture," but to the entire Scripture, on the understanding that you mean that the argument for revelation stands firm, prior to any attempt to prove that there is such a thing as inspiration. But, then, when you go on to say in your next sentence: "It will not be disputed by any ordinarily informed person, that a large amount of the current scepticism * is due to the mixing up of these two things," that is another matter. Waiving once more, all about "ordinarily informed people," I really am not aware that a large amount of current scepticism

* There are sceptics and sceptics. There is the honest and sorrowful sceptic, who is to be treated on the principle of the Apostolic command, "Let not that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed." And there is the dishonest and bitter-hearted sceptic, who is to be treated on the principle of the Lord's own injunction, "Cast not your pearls before swine." I do not know that I have ever read anything better on the point than the following: "There are many cases to be found, in which uncertainty as to fundamental truths is to those who are perplexed by it a matter of deepest seriousness and concern. But there are other cases in which the profession of scepticism has very much the character of a pastime; those who indulge in it seem to have no higher object in view than their own amusement and the perplexity of others; this is a course of conduct which cannot be too strongly reprobated."—*Free General Assembly's Reports*, xx. p. 4.

is due to this cause, for I do not know that this cause is to any serious extent in operation. If it is, I cannot imagine who the parties are that are mixing up revelation and inspiration. It may possibly be some of those impoverished retrogressionists (demonstrably so) who, to the scandal of all modest minds, are calling themselves "advanced thinkers." It cannot possibly be any wise and faithful vindicator of the Westminster Confession. Indeed, the Church of Christ, generally, has been accustomed to tell the sceptic that the doctrine of inspiration is a revealed truth, which we believe on the testimony of God; and until he come to acknowledge the reality and credibility of a divine revelation, and of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the genuine and authentic record thereof, we never dream of requiring him to form any judgment upon the subject. It is a topic on which we do not trouble *him*: and it is a topic on which—why should he trouble *us?* I think you do allow yourself, most unnecessarily, and with no possible advantage, either in the meantime or in the end, to be troubled on this topic by sceptics, when you admit that a large amount of their scepticism is due to the mixing up of these two things. And even if it be true, disentangle the two things. Withdraw the topic of inspiration out of his reach, and leave him, in the meantime, face to face with revelation only. And surely you can do that, without injuring inspiration, and without throwing out sinister hints that inspiration is very likely to injure *him*. Surely that is the proper course to follow. But instead of that, you seem to me

as if you would say to the sceptic: "Ah! poor fellow; you are greatly to be pitied. There is that 'staggering' ogre of inspiration ready to seize you as soon as you get within the gates of revelation. I really don't wonder though you stay out in the cold in preference." Exactly, for all the world, as if, in order to get him in at the door, you would throw inspiration out at the window! Changing the figure, I shall take the liberty of hinting to you a more excellent way. When a sceptic pules to you about "his scepticism being due to the mixing up of these two things;" look him in the face, and "tell that fox," that it cannot possibly be Inspiration, poor lamb! that is muddling the water. For there never was a clearer case of the fable.

When you say that "if revelation is to be conserved, it must not be bound up and made to stand with a special theory of inspiration," I reply that the Westminster Confession gives no special theory of inspiration, and, indeed, no theory at all. It asserts its conviction evidently that inspiration has resulted in the divine authorship of the record of revelation: and how *that* could be adverse to "revelation being conserved" is inconceivable. Really you seem hard to please. You are interested in revelation being "conserved." These divines say that, exactly "for the better preserving of it, the Lord committed it wholly to writing." And yet you are no better pleased than before! You add, "My aim was to show that of these two distinct things, Revelation is by far the more important;"—a very presumptuous attempt, I *must* say; and directly in the face of that

same Westminster Confession (yours and mine), which, after affirming the divine authorship, goes on to say, "*which* maketh the holy scripture to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto His people being now ceased." So that of the two things which you thus contrast, that which by implication you count "by far the *less* important," is by these divines counted the very crown, and completion, and permanent replacement of what you count "by far the *more* important." How can you possibly count *that* by far the more important, which, without the other, must, at the mercy of human tradition, have passed away as a summer brook? Certain it is that that divineness of the record which you call "not indispensable," the Confession calls "most necessary."

All this is in regard of the historical writings. But then you proceed to say that even "in the case of the prophetical and apostolical writings, the revelation of truth to the mind of the writers was the matter of prime importance." Yes; to the prophetical and apostolic *writers;* for their own soul's instruction and salvation. But as concerns "the prophetical and apostolic *writings*" (and it is of them you speak); as concerns the bearing of the *writings,* and their value to the Church in all ages; the statement seems sheer infatuation. And, in short, I do not think that paragraphs, which begin with statements like that, and end with the expression of your desire to imitate Paul in "allowing the *inspired state* of the human mind to fall back into a secondary place" ought to detain me any longer in replying to them.—I am, &c.

II.

The Rationalising Element.

My Dear Sir,

Since, to my mind, "this point of view" does not improve matters in the very least, but rather requires an apologetic for itself, instead of being able to render any, I fail of course to see how you can justly appeal to it against those who take exception to your statement, "I do not believe what Paul says, because I first believe him to be inspired; but I believe him to be inspired because he brings light to my spirit, which can come only from God." (Pref. p. 5.) You, however, "reading the sermon from this point of view, do not see how any one can justly take exception to that statement." But it is just *because* we have read the sermon, that we take exception to this sentence, in consecution to many more. Had it stood alone; and, more particularly, could we have considered it as indicating nothing but a commonplace little bit of natural history of the state of mind of a sceptic passing from darkness to light; I venture to say no body would have ever troubled you about it. But, my dear Sir, the very serious thing is, that even when you *do* "believe Paul to be inspired, because he brings light to your spirit which could come only from God," the inspiration which you are thus led to attribute

to him, is something wholly different from what the Catholic Church, and in particular the Westminster Divines, have ever regarded as that divine inspiration which secures the divine authorship and authority of the Word of God. In the face of this, it is mere trifling to tell us, what it needs no ghost surely to tell,—namely, that "no rational sceptic first comes to believe in inspiration, and from that belief passes on to belief in God," and that "no man believes in inspiration until he believes in Christ as able to give the Spirit." I am thrown back, therefore, even on the first half of your sentence, in which you say, "I do not believe what Paul says because I first believe him to be inspired," and I am compelled to ask: Is the Inspiration which in the end you attribute to him, such that you can say, "I *do* believe what Paul says (though not because I *first* believe him to be inspired, yet) when now *at last* I believe him to be inspired"? Can you say that? Dare you say that, with what I am now to quote from your next page? "I accept him," you say, "as authoritative because his claim is consistent. I may not be able at once to accept all he teaches. I cannot accept it merely because it comes to me with authority." Can you not? Why can you not? He has brought light to your spirit. You "believe he has received a revelation, because to you it is a revelation." And because of this revelation and this light to your spirit, you believe him to be authoritative and inspired. But you cannot imagine this to be supernatural inspiration and divine authority, and then say you cannot accept it *merely* because it

comes to you under the hand and authorship of the Holy Ghost, and on the authority of the Divine Being! You cannot possibly make a wild and daring statement like that! What then follows, but that whereas you "do not believe what Paul says, because you *first* believe him to be inspired," neither do you believe what he says because you even *in the end* believe him to be inspired, your view of Paul's inspiration being such that it does not bring you into contact with the living God, as the Supreme Author of what you read in his Epistles, for then his divine authority would gloriously overpower you; and so you do not count these Epistles part of what it is right and warrantable to say, "It pleased the Lord to commit wholly to writing."

Is not that a demonstration? But really it needed not. The demonstration was clear and plentiful enough already, that your view of inspiration is something so very low as not to enforce the obligation of unconditional acceptance of that to which it imparts its authority.

Hence you have nothing to complain of, if any one has said you "should in consistency accept as inspired every one who brings light to your spirit." I am not aware of having insisted to that effect myself; but I do not admit that you are right in calling it a "childish deduction." I can see no difficulty whatever in your admitting that any man who brings light to your spirit is inspired—considering what a very poor thing after all the inspiration which you traffic in, is. And, most certainly, your cause will not be improved by cutting it

off, and tying it on, time about, to the external evidences, and burying it in the intervals in a semi-quaker inward experience and light of your own.

I really did not think you could have penned such a sentence as this: "I can only accept in doctrine that which fits in with my previously received ideas and my stage of mature growth." The sinfulness of rejecting in Scripture what does not agree with our preconceived—or "previously received"—ideas, is such a common-place among evangelical divines, and the full-blown Rationalism which it implies is so patent, that I am almost compelled to seek something different from the obvious meaning of your words. Is it possible, I have thought, that you can be tacitly dealing with Augustine's beautiful expression, *Credo ut intelligam*, "I believe that I may understand;" and that in all this it is not the *credo* that you are meaning when you speak of "accepting" doctrine, but the *intelligam;* not the *faith*, but the spiritual appreciation? Is that it? No doubt there is a great and sore work of "assimilating"—(you use that word once, over and above "accepting")—the glorious riches of revelation to the beginnings of holy, gracious acquirement which, through the tender mercy of our God, we may have been enabled to make. And the fitting in of one divine truth after another into an inward embodiment, in the soul, of the mind of Christ, till that soul becomes an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men—this, certainly, is not to be achieved by the mere utterance of authority, as the dead may be raised at the crack of doom. If something like this has been running

in your mind in pages 6 and 7, then say so. Speak, for I desire to justify you; though even then I shall wonder at the confusion of thought by which you are vexing both yourself and your friends. But, surely, even then, you will not say that the only reason why you "accept the doctrine of the Trinity" is, that you "find in it the root which the facts of redemption require"? Surely you will not deliberately declare that, even after receiving scripture writers as coming to you with "authority," and "bringing light to your spirit," you could not, apart from the leading facts of redemption, "accept the doctrine of the Trinity on whatsoever authority announced"? What! not even though one rose from the dead? Blessed be God, it is usually in connection with the facts of redemption that the persons of the Sacred Three, and their infinitely gracious and distinct personal interpositions, are revealed. Is that any reason why you should say, that revealed in other implications, you could not believe the revelation on whatsoever authority—not even the authority of these three Divine Persons themselves? The question is not, whether this would be "at your own risk." It is, what would be your duty? your duty as a reasonable being, when God hath spoken. And pardon me when I say, that in the strange sentences I have criticised, you have gone very far out of your duty indeed; your aberration springing from an attempt,—as I believe, and from which I would still implore you to resile—an attempt, in plain terms, to *rationalise* the doctrine of inspiration.—I am, &c.

III.

How do you make up your Canon?

My Dear Sir,

But you are not done with your defence of the sentence; "I do not believe what Paul says, because I first believe him to be inspired; but I believe him to be inspired, because he brings light to my spirit, which can only have proceeded from God." You are "curious to know how those who object to this statement make up their canon."

Make up our canon! You surely don't think we do it once a week, like merchants with their ledgers? And you don't think that we have, each of us, a canon to himself? Even the disorderly Corinthians were not so bad as that. Every one of them "had a psalm, had a doctrine, had a tongue, had a revelation, had an interpretation." But a canon? No. In that case they would have required more than ever the apostolic injunction, "Let all things be done unto edifying." Seriously, it was by way of obtempering that command that I devoted two pages of my pamphlet to the topic of the canon, saying all that I thought necessary in order to quiet distressed Christian souls. For I abhor to see God's humble, honest children tormented with hints—hints sinister and hints dexterous—to the effect that, if they

had only enough of critical learning and antiquarian church history, they would find a good many things to make them rather anxious about the grounds of their faith! I am no despiser of learning. But I have a sense of bounding joyousness in telling my Church that there is not one believing child of God within her borders, from end to end, that need sleep one moment less of the sleep God giveth to his beloved, because of any risk to the ark of God from questions of criticism, or questions about the canon.

Make up our canon, indeed! I thank God that that has not been left to us individually to do—not left even to this whole generation to do. God has committed that task to His church. And we are not, merely because the church has been caricatured by Rome, to be frayed away from saying, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." No; nor have we any doubt about her dutifulness concerning "the oracles of God," or about God's providence and grace in enabling her to discriminate, recognise, and set her seal to canonical Scripture. The canon has been made up already, and the golden cord which binds its parts into an unapproachable unity is divine authorship, secured by divine inspiration, and therefore securing divine authority (Westminster Confession, i., 3, 4).

That golden cord you have broken. And can you wonder if I am curious to know how *you* make up *your* canon?

The canon! Had I not proved* that your views of

* See "Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture," pp. 34-37.

inspiration are such as to deprive you of all right so much as to speak about the canon? At least until you reply to my argument, am I not entitled to say so? Why have you not met my proof that "it would be perfectly hopeless, on such a scheme (as yours), to define the words 'canonical' and 'apocryphal;' and impossible to secure a fixed and honourable application of them: If inspiration is not a thing of thorough distinctiveness, but of measure and degree, in which others besides the writers of the Scripture have shared, then there is and can be no sure enclosure, railing in certain books as canonical, and barring out others as apocryphal?" With the inspiration expounded in your Sermon, and still defended in your New Preface, you are helpless in the grasp of that little argument—that short and easy method with a rationaliser of inspiration.

Canonicity follows divine inspiration: "The books commonly called apocrypha, not being of DIVINE INSPIRATION, are no part of the CANON of Scripture" (Conf. i., 3, *first clause*). Moreover: authority follows inspiration and canonicity—divine authority, of course. Hence, the books commonly called apocrypha "are of no AUTHORITY in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than any other human writings" (Conf. i., 3, *second clause*). Still further: authority rests on authorship, divine authority on divine authorship: "The AUTHORITY of the Holy Scripture dependeth wholly upon God, the AUTHOR of it" (Conf. i., 4). And thus in the close of its fourth section, that remarkable chapter of the Confession, with its simple

and unsophisticated recognition and affirmation of God as the "author" of Holy Scripture, returns upon and reduplicates upon its initial statement of that same beautiful doctrine, namely, that "it pleased the Lord to commit the same wholly to writing." Thus, in every point of view, it is obvious that *divine authorship* is that one unapproachably glorious consideration which constitutes the unity in which true canonicity consists—that one golden cord which binds the various documents (written by different men, known and unknown, written in different ages, different languages, different countries) into one—a "one" which the church calls the "canon," and whose unity the Westminster Divines recognise (little wonder), the moment they have affirmed divine authorship. For having said, "It pleased the Lord to commit the same wholly to writing;" their very next utterance is this,—"which maketh THE HOLY SCRIPTURE to be most necessary."

This golden cord, I repeat, you have broken. Doing that, you have lost all right to the Church's canon. You have a canon of your own to make up. And "I am curious to know how you make up your canon"!

Certainly it will not be by taking up the books of Scripture, one by one, and committing them upon the fortunes of an experiment to see whether they will "bring light to your spirit such as can come only from God." That bears too close a resemblance to Mr Tyndal's proposal about prayer, and savours too much of tempting the Holy One of Israel. Besides: since Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and

since it is your duty to try the spirits whether they be of God, what objective test have you in the meantime, whereby to detect false light and verify "such light as can come only from God"? Such a test you need, and simply must have, else you are into quakerism at once: and I need not say, that test you can have none, save just those canonical Scriptures, whose canonicity you have in the meantime flung away. So that you will probably find ere-long that you are very exactly in the circumstances of the unreasonable old gentleman, who, having lost his spectacles, insisted that he required to *have* them, in order to *find* them!

But you expatiate on this subject of the canon through a whole page notwithstanding. You speak of "subjective considerations," hinting somewhat obscurely at the self-evidencing power of Scripture, as if that were identical with what you propound in the proposition, "I believe Paul to be inspired, because he brings light to my spirit, which can only proceed from God." But by that proposition you mean your belief that *he* was under a certain gracious influence which you call "inspiration," and of which we have your unretracted description in your Sermon. Whereas the self-evidencing power of Scripture is that intrinsic glory which proves *it* to be of divine authorship—the very doctrine which you never affirm and practically deny. You then introduce to our notice, and in your own defence, "Calvin, Luther, and Œcolampadius," with a flourish about their "boldness and firmness of hand" as being fitted to "be very astound-

ing to this generation." But however relentless it may seem, I am compelled to ask, What right have *you* to refer to Calvin, Luther, and Œcolampadius, in relation to the canon of Holy Scripture?—*you*, who have lost all right to refer even to the canon, and parted company with the Reformers most fatally as to what even canonicity implies? With *them*, as with the Westminster Confession, canonicity was identified with divine authorship. The claim of any document to scriptural canonicity, in their view, signified its claim to rank among those writings of which God is the author. For the word has the same unsophisticated application here, as in the cases of mere human literature. If the canonicity of "the Tempest" is undoubted, that just means that the authorship is undoubted: the play is certainly Shakesperean. Even so, scriptural canonicity is just divine authorship: and until you admit that, you have no right so much as to name, on this theme, the names of the Reformers. They would have repelled with indignation, the inspiration which your sermon describes, and which you bring forward their honoured names to defend. They held, in the plain and unsophisticated meaning of the term, that the Lord God is an "author,"* and that the Holy Scripture is his published works—that the Bible is divine—the divine record of a divine revelation. When asked to state the strongest proof that Scripture is divine (not that Scripture has divine things in it, but *is* divine), they answered, Scripture itself. Divine light and glory shine in it, and he that is born

* Westminster Confession, i. 4.

again of the word and Spirit of God, hears the voice of the Spirit in the word which is His own: "he that is of God, heareth God's words;" he that is of the light seeth the light. The sphere of this light (self-revealing, self-evidencing, of course) was in their view just the sphere of Holy Scripture, considered as a gloriously unapproachable unit—its unity, amidst multifarious diversity, consisting in this, that every page of it claimed God for its author. And when men said,—How can that be, seeing that evidently various human authors contributed to write the book? their answer was,—The authorship is still one and divine; because, through the instrumentality of human authorship, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." That was what Calvin, Luther, and Œcolampadius believed concerning inspiration. And were they "looking up" in these days of "advanced thought," and told that they had been called in to witness to the correctness of your views of that great doctrine, their characteristic distinctions of disposition would doubtless become manifest—not to speak of their "boldness and firmness of hand"—in a manner that would be "very astounding" to *you!* They would not leave much for me to say, either about your Sermon or your New Preface to it.

The Reformers held a doctrine of inspiration which enabled them to consider the whole Bible as "the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him." Apart from this, their Lord's prophetic office would have been to them an uncompleted, uncrowned, unsuccessful

effort—a broken pillar—a miserable ruin. But counting the whole Scripture to be *one*, they never hesitated to apply to it in its entirety, the awful words which occur in that closing book, whose title (just quoted) so strikingly expresses the verity concerning the whole Scripture: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. xxii. 18, 19). 'Tis the last utterance of Emmanuel, save one—the promise, "Surely I come quickly." Consider it, if you will, as having application solely to the closing book, more technically called "the Revelation of John." Had it been "the Revelation of John" merely, can you imagine overawing comminations like these pronounced over everything like tampering with it? But the solution is easy if "the Revelation of John" is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ." The whole problem of inspiration is in a nutshell there. The two authorships, supreme and subordinate, are there; and inspiration harmonises them. Jesus Christ writes his own Revelation by inspiring John to write the Revelation of John:—John, by inspiration, writes the Revelation of Jesus Christ. 'Tis the same throughout the Scripture generally; and the fact of divine authorship affords most justly, in reason's esteem, the same terrific guarantee of protection to it all.

Before passing from this, let me entreat you not to

think that, in making light of the argumentative value of your expression, "I believe Paul to be inspired because he brings light to my spirit, which can come only from God," I disesteem any "outstanding fact of mental experience,"—far less that I disparage the fifth section of the first chapter of the Westminster Confession, towards which your appeal to experimental light seems to point. I will yield to none in my admiration of that magnificent sentence—casket, as it is, of so many dazzling jewels of blessed propositions, whereamong one knows not how to select the most beautiful or brilliant, and dreads to mar the setting which these cunning artificers—as if Bezaleel's and Aholiab's gifts and spirit had come upon them—have given to the beauteous whole. Hence, as, were I alluding to Milton's description of his blindness, I would do nothing short of reverently quoting in full, so must it be here and now :—

"We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the holy scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God ; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the

Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." (West. Conf. i. 5.)

Grieved am I to say that your right to appeal to this most powerful and most eloquent utterance is, in the meantime, in abeyance, as well as your right to speak of Calvin, Luther, and Œcolampadius; and for the same reason, namely, because you have burst the golden cord of canonicity. This most precious section of our Confession recognises the canon, by recognising the true canonicity, that, namely, which rests on divine authorship, and which communicates to the Scriptures their divine unity. Hence at once it speaks of "*the* holy scripture." Moreover, it speaks of this "scripture" abundantly "evidencing itself to be the word of God:"—unity again; "*the* word of God:" not a miscellany containing words of God; but itself "the word of God." And it is of "the infallible truth and divine authority" of this "word of God," throughout and throughout (and not of the infallible truth and divine authority of parts of it here and there), that "the inward work of the Holy Ghost" gives "full persuasion and assurance." Poor inference yours, from Paul bringing light to your spirit; to wit, that *he* was inspired! Glorious inference from the fact that the Holy Ghost gives divine light anywhere within the sphere of this unity called "the scripture;" to wit, that *it*, the scripture, is a sphere of divine light all round and round, and from circumference to centre,—that it is what we may hold our face up to the heavens to tell the angels we have found it,—and what we may bend our lips to the little ears we love to tell

it has been to us,—"God's Book, my darling!" For it is a proposition simple enough for the child to begin intelligently to apprehend, and, at the same time, too glorious for principalities and powers in heavenly places to exhaust.—I am, &c.

IV.

An "Explosion!"

My Dear Sir,

The remainder of your Preface need not now detain us very long. Your "cordial acceptance of the statement of the Confession, that all the books that compose our Bible are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life," is no voucher for your views on inspiration. It implies nothing more than that you consider the Bible to be composed of the books mentioned in the Confession of Faith,—that is to say, that your canon, however you "make it up," is identical with that of the Confession. This is all that you can be admitted as "cordially accepting:" little thanks to you! Your cordial acceptance of the phrase, "given by inspiration of God," as applicable to the whole Bible, or to "all Scripture," vouches nothing for your doctrine of Inspiration, because it is simply a Scripture proposition in Scripture terms; and your acceptance of it no more proves that you hold the real doctrine, than a Socinian's acceptance of the whole Bible proves his belief in the Godhead of our Lord Jesus. And as I believe, and tried to show (as yet without an answer), that you "evacuated the term Inspiration" in your Sermon, you will excuse me from accepting your challenge to investigate

whether you evacuate it again by "distinctly denying" a certain sentence from Dr A. A. Hodge. I can quite see how that sentence might be understood in a sense that should contradict certain distinctions I thought it necessary to make among the multifarious contents of Scripture in their varying measures of relation to the phrase "the word of God." I refer more particularly to pages 41 to 45 of my little tractate. And I admit that I see no great felicity in distinguishing between the "verbal expression" and the "matter" of this Divine Book, more than in the case of any book. But let that pass. You are under no bondage to Dr A. A. Hodge; and the judgment of concurrence, or "distinct denial," which you may form in reference to what you quote from him, has no material bearing on the question whether or no you "evacuate the term Inspiration." You must, therefore, let me put my pen through all that you say concerning Dr A. A. Hodge. The only other fraction of what you "cordially accept," is the statement that all the books of our Bible are given "*to be* the rule of faith and life." But you do not really accept that. It is a mere *obiter dictum* when you say you do. For the real state of the case comes out in your last sentence: "I believe the Scriptures *contain* an infallible rule," &c.; not "*are*" but "*contain*." The "to be" is gone, you see. And here, most certainly, if ever, is that saying true,—"To be, or not to be, that's the question."

May I point out to you the extraordinary nature of your penultimate sentence, as condensing all that you contend for into two negatives! "All that I contend for

is an inspiration which does not preclude the necessity of acquiring information by the ordinary means, and which does not involve infallibility, as defined by Dr Hodge." You cannot mean that that is all you contend for and teach concerning inspiration. And if not, what do you mean? What sort of inglorious termination of our collision of intellect were this?—supposing it had been to terminate here, to which you see I could not consent. After reading my tractate, you say that all you contend for is summed up in these two gaunt negations! Where does the Westminster Confession require you to believe that inspiration precluded the necessity of the inspired writers obtaining information by the ordinary means? Why, I won't affirm that, any more than you: and I won't be bound to express myself in Dr Hodge's language, any more than you. Yet you actually count that "the knot of the whole matter!"

No. That is not the knot of the whole matter. That would not have evoked shrieks of delight from the secular press. That would not have awakened anxiety and sorrow in the hearts of kind and tender friends, more numerous, perhaps, than you are aware of. That would not have made sceptical young men clap their hands at the release from the divine authority of the holy scripture, which they have understood that Dr Marcus Dods is announcing as the latest discovery among young Free Church critics and scholars of "advanced thought." No! there is a great deal more in it! There is what you call an "explosion" in it; and though not an explosion of what you think, yet the noise of it

has been quite loud enough, and the danger, I fear, not imaginary. The knot of the whole matter is that you affirm in Holy Scripture, "errors,"—"inaccuracies,"—the absence of "strict accuracy,"—"Paul occasionally wrong in a date,"—indications of "imperfect information," and indications of "lapse of memory." These, you tell us, are "trifling;" "so trifling as in no appreciable degree to damage the historicity or trust-worthiness of scripture." It is still a historical and trustworthy record of divine revelation. But a divine record of a divine revelation? Ah! that's another matter. "Trifling," in the sense of being powerless to destroy the record, they are sufficient to destroy its character as a *divine* record! Is not that your meaning when you say, "trifling" in the one point of view, "but sufficient entirely to explode the averment of *literal* infallibility"? Why did you put in the attenuating word in italics—"*literal*"? You were afraid, were you not? to announce your "explosion" of infallibility, pure and simple. It would have been too shocking. And so you put in the word "*literal*." But it meant nothing: no! nothing at all. How do I know that? Because you have most distinctly told us, that it meant nothing. Your next utterance is this: "What is infallibility, but incapacity to err?" And the answer could be of no use to your argument, if "*literal*" had really meant anything. If "*literal*" had meant anything, your question would have been, "What is *literal* infallibility?" *Don't you see?*

So that it is the "explosion" of the infallibility of Holy Scripture that you announce! And that on the

averment of unspecified "inaccuracies"! Precisely as if you ran into all our churches on the Lord's day and cried "Fire"! without saying where; but on being questioned, admitted that it was "trifling," *and* had produced an "explosion"! An explosion of the infallibility of God's Word!

An explosion, I repeat, which you accomplish by means of "unspecified inaccuracies,"—unspecified! And that is a great aggravation of your offence.

But do not misunderstand me. Not in deference to the allegation even of *specified* inaccuracies will I consent, nor will the Free Church of Scotland consent, to put in abeyance for one moment the doctrine, nor what is due to the doctrine, of the Divine Authorship of Holy Scripture. We assert and maintain it to be a revealed doctrine (and fact) which we believe on the testimony of God that cannot lie. That we have for it the testimony of God that cannot lie, we are at all times prepared to prove by a prodigious confluence of evidence. Seventeen pages in my former pamphlet, "indicating the line of proof," present, in themselves alone, abundantly sufficient demonstration of it; and yet they are but the scantlings and the first fruits of what a faithful labourer in this field may reap. Call this great truth a doctrine, or a fact (and it is both), it sitteth in the centre of a circle of divine light; and the attestations of its right to sit there, are as numerous as the radii that may be seen pouring down upon it from all points in the circumference. We will not shift it from its centre and derange everything—in other words, we will not alter the true

status questionis,—to please you. Or, change the figure. 'Tis a perfectly impregnable citadel, this glorious truth: and I refuse, either inside of it, or outside of it, to discuss the *status questionis* which you substantially propose. A very simple dilemma, that I am now to give you, will justify my refusal.

You are either, with me, inside this citadel, or you are outside. If you are *outside*, I will not come out to discuss your alleged errors and inaccuracies, even though you specify them; for, on the supposition that this doctrine is not admitted to be true, what, in the name of human reason, would there be to discuss?—the fact, forsooth, that there are errors and inaccuracies in a document of mere human authorship! That's a little too absurd. Take, now, the other horn. If you are *inside* this impregnable position, surely I may well ask, not in the name of human reason only, but of God's sacred fear, How dare you discuss your errors and inaccuracies in the language you have employed, and with the effect of such "explosion" as you have announced?

Or, put the dilemma about the discussion you invite, and I refuse, more briefly; thus. This doctrine of divine authorship is either true or false. If true; *how dare you?* If false; *what matters it?*

Oh! most hopeful discussion! when the very announcement of the thing to be discussed places the disputants in such relation towards each other as that pair of little alternative queries reveals! Allow me, please, to have some respect for the understanding which God hath given me.

And here I count myself released from further argument, for I hold it proved that you have denied the divine authorship of the Holy Scripture. With that, its authority is also sacrificed. For "the *authority* of the holy scripture dependeth wholly upon God the *author* thereof" (Conf. i. 4). Of course also Inspiration, in the shape of anything particular, is gone; for nothing specific, needing to be called inspiration, or by any other name, can find place, when it is no longer indispensable in order to reconcile the two facts of subordinate human authorship and supreme divine authorship. Of course, also, still farther, the canon is gone; and Dr Andrew Thomson's Apocryphal Controversy was a great absurdity, or (more exactly) a gross paralogism; for it is on account of "being of divine inspiration" that any document forms "part of the canon of scripture" (Conf. i. 3).—I am, &c.

V.

Divine Authorship—Anything or Nothing.

My Dear Sir,

Possibly, however, you may attempt to excuse yourself by the allegation that "divine authorship" is a very vague phrase, and that you are in no way bound to it. Pardon me: the affirmation of it is distinctly in the Confession (i. 4), though no doubt only incidentally, yet none the less ineradicably there;—"God, the author thereof:" while it is a directly and immediately affirmed proposition in the first section, in those striking words I have so often quoted, as I shall yet again have to insist unquailingly. Still it has been said, "*divine authorship* is a term you may make anything or nothing of." To which I answer; Not at least without such remonstrance as shall make the Free Church of Scotland ring from end to end. As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, no man shall make "anything or nothing"—ducks and drakes—of "divine authorship," any more than of "divine moral government," if by the grace of God I can help it. But I am nothing. Fifty spears as good as yours or mine shall flash to the sunlight at the strange suggestion, and vow their deathless fealty. Taste mine, till they come.

The terms, "divine authorship," and, "divine moral government," beyond a doubt, deserve exactly the

honour due to the propositions,—"God is an Author," and, "God is a Moral Governor." Now I can understand a man denying either of these propositions; but I cannot understand a Christian man disparaging either of them. But if it must be so, choose which of these propositions you will begin upon, to "make anything or nothing" of it. And if you are wise, take the one that is not relevant to this discussion; for, in the face of your assembled Christian countrymen, you will find it far easier to escape with a sophistication of the proposition, "God is a Moral Governor," than of the proposition, "God is an Author." The majority of them may have vague ideas of the former; but they have very exact conceptions of the latter. Oh! they are very good reasoners indeed, the truly pious of the Scottish peasantry. What do we mean when we say, God is an Author? What do we mean when we say, Marcus Dods is an author? Do you think we know what we mean concerning Marcus Dods, and do not know what we mean concerning God? We know very well what we mean; and *you* know very well what it is that we mean. Marcus Dods is a father, and should not his children honour him? Marcus Dods is a master, and should not his servants obey him? Marcus Dods is an author, and should not his readers be thankful to him when he instructs them? We know very well what we mean in saying these things. Then let all flesh be silent before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation. "Thus saith the Lord, A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a father, where is mine honour?

and if I be a master, where is my fear?" Thus saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O ye priests! Perhaps we cannot argue with scholars like you: but we think Himself will not be displeased, if we think we hear Him also saying, If I be an author, where is the unconditional faith and obedience of my readers? And in all these we understand very well what the Lord saith; and you see we cannot let you make anything or nothing of divine authorship, any more than of divine fatherhood and divine moral government.

Will that do? That, substantially, is the answer of Scotland's piety,—the piety which has so greatly sharpened Scotland's intellect.

Who, that has any reputation, either as a theologian or a *litterateur*, will risk it on the audacious allegation that the Westminster Confession has left its doctrine of "divine authorship" vague, or in such a state as "that you may make anything or nothing of it;" when he reads in it (i. 4), that "the *authority* of the Holy Scripture dependeth wholly upon God the *author* thereof"? I am not at present insisting on the truth of that proposition. I am calling attention to the light which it casts on the kind of authorship it ascribes to God, and the clear and crystalline exactitude of definition in which it presents the same, rendering the imputation of vagueness impossible to an intelligent and honest mind when asked to look at it. For, very obviously it means this,—That, exactly as I have Dr Dods's authority for it, that the doctrine of holy scripture's infallibility is "exploded," he being the author of that state-

ment; so have I God's authority for it, that "Grace reigns," and that "God's Word is very pure, even as silver seven times purified, therefore do his servants love it,"—God being, in the same simplicity, expressness and fulness of meaning, the *author* of these statements, as Dr Dods is of that in which (as I believe) he ignorantly and unintentionally but very directly contradicts his Maker!

Oh! my dear sir, can you not join with your pious countrymen in giving due honour to the proposition, "God is the author of the Scriptures," and *then* set to the study of the proof of it? Surely you have been unkind to me (to put the matter on no higher ground), in that you have not even touched my "line of proof" (pp. 46-63). But that is nothing, if even now things could come right—as why should they not? Let your difficulties about "inaccuracies," about "lapses of memory," and all that sort of thing, alone; and study, unprejudiced, the proof that is proffered for the divine authorship of the word of God. Then, if convinced, deal with your difficulties as all wise men do with difficulties in reference to what they have believed on its own sufficient evidence, especially (as in this case) when the evidence is the testimony of God. What hinders you, even yet, taking the course which I do affectionately counsel you thus to take? It would gladden many hearts. And what sweet reasonableness, yourself being judge, there will be in the result when you reach it! The divine record of a divine revelation: God's own record of God's own revelation! What could be more reasonable? Take up such a

common-place thing as a volume of Minutes of Presbytery. What is it? A record of the Presbytery's transactions? Yes. But more than that: it is the Presbytery's record of the Presbytery's transactions. No doubt the clerk writes the minutes, but not one of them can be founded on till the Presbytery has sanctioned it, and made it their own. Who would potter about the fact that the Presbytery did not write it, but the clerk wrote it? The Presbytery makes its own record. And, more than that: the making of its record forms part of its transactions, and is even recorded as forming part of its transactions; and the book is the Presbytery's record of the Presbytery's transactions. Is not the *tertium comparationis* perfect? Would it be anything for you, in one view, to wonder at, if you were finding a place in your heart and your faith for the doctrine that the Old and New Testaments are God's record of God's revelation? Would you think it a hard thing to have to believe that God can take as much care at least of His transactions as a Presbytery can take of theirs? And do you not see that just as their recording of their transactions forms part of their transactions, so God's committing His revelation wholly to writing is itself revelation—the continuation and crown of revelation; even as a man's shining face, "the human face divine," is at once the crown of the temple of his body, and the seat and mirror of his mind? Even so, a divine scripture—a scripture of divine authorship—is it not to us as the face of the divine mind, whereon the divine Spirit flitting, and sometimes tarrying in His sovereign love (2 Cor. iii. 18),

causes us to see behind the Face into the Heart (Is. lv. 8), and really answers our petition; "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us" (Ps. lxxvi. 1).

Terribly deep cuts the great falsehood, that the Scripture is not, in the plain unsophisticated meaning of the term, of divine authorship. If you cannot part company with that great falsehood, its ravages will soon be seen upon you. And my soul shall weep for you in secret places: indeed, it has done that already.—I am, &c.

VI.

"It pleased the Lord to commit the same wholly to writing."

My Dear Sir,

I have been blamed for the emphasis I put upon the Confession's initial statement, by saying, "It pleased the Lord [Himself] to commit the same wholly to writing." In the third edition I have removed the bracketted word, being anxious to avoid stumbling any man unnecessarily. But the argument that sustained the blame was groundless; being to the effect that the Westminster divines did not say "the Lord [Himself], because that would have brought God as close to the record as to the revelation, and that they believed would be a mistake." Nevertheless it is the thing which they have done. They *have* brought God as close to the record as to the revelation. They have done so in two ways. *First*, They use exactly the same phraseology in the one case as in the other; "it pleased the Lord to reveal Himself;" and, "it pleased the Lord to commit the same wholly to writing." It pleased the Lord to give the revelation, and it pleased the Lord to give the record. It did not please the Lord to permit a naturalistic revelation of Himself to take place: that is all that the anti-supranaturalistic school admits concerning

the revelation: It pleased the Lord Himself to give the revelation. And because you believe in a supernatural revelation, you will not blame me if I say, God *Himself* revealed Himself. In like manner, it did not please the Lord to permit a naturalistic record of His revelation to arise, exercising merely a providential superintendence over it: that is all that the anti-supranaturalistic school admits concerning the record: It pleased the Lord Himself to give the record. And if you believed in a supernatural record, as you do in a supernatural revelation, you would give me the same right to say, "God Himself gave the record," as you give me to say, "God Himself gave the revelation." Certainly the Westminster Divines give me that right; for, by their very language, they bring God as near to the record as to the revelation. But, *secondly*, they have another way, still more unanswerably demonstrable, of doing the same thing. They make the record itself, as I have had occasion already to show, a part of the revelation, the crown and immortality, and presently subsisting glory of it,—saying, "The holy scripture is most necessary, those *former* ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased." Could they do that, and not bring God as close to the record as to the revelation? If there is any difference, indeed, I unhesitatingly decide in favour of the record. God dwelleth in His Word unto perpetuity. And thereby it comes to pass that we sing no dead history, but perpetual, present, living, glorious fact, when in terms borrowed from Immanuel's land, we sing—true at Drumclog, and true now to spiritual worship-

pers, wheresoever the Father hath such to worship Him,—

> In Judah's land God is well known,
> His name in Israel's great;
> In Salem is his tabernacle.
> In Sion is his seat.

Give us a divine scripture, and let the gracious Lord give us His divine Spirit as He has promised (Prov. i. 23), and we have the God of Israel at least as close to the record of revelation as ever He was to the revelation itself while it was in its actual historical transpirancy. There are those in Scotland who would die of sorrow if they could no longer believe this, and who will therefore die with gladness for the truth of it.

I have been asked why I cling so closely to the phrase "divine authorship," and why I make so much of the initial proposition on the subject, "It pleased the Lord to commit the same wholly to writing."

I shall give a short series of answers to these two questions (which are substantially one), and though I cannot now develop the lines of thought they open up, I would earnestly commend the whole subject to my younger brethren, as a gloriously recompensing one to study, bursting with life on every side of it, along every edge and at every corner of it. I have been pledging "fifty spears," and from among the younger ministry I expect a goodly number of them, of fresher lancewood and more sparkling points than our somewhat battered weapons! But to my reasons. They are these, and such like:—

I. Because no logical mind can hesitate for a moment between the value of the phrases, "divine authorship," and "divine inspiration." The former is the root thought; the latter comes in as an explanation, rendered necessary by the fact that there is a certain implication of human authorship in the matter. Besides: "divine inspiration" is a Scriptural expression (2 Tim. iii. 16) occurring only once (ἅπαξ λεγόμενον): "divine authorship," is the result of an enormous induction of Scriptural expressions, propositions, and even lines of thought.

II. Because my experience, in making use of it, as the ruling notion on this theme, has been both very profitable and very pleasant.

III. Because I have a keen sense of the beauty of the proposition:—"It pleased the Lord to commit his revelation of himself and his declaration of his will wholly to writing." And a thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

IV. Because I consider it the best (perhaps the best possible),—whether for purposes of *statement*,—or of *exposition*,—or of *demonstration*,—or of *detection*,—or of *defence*.

V. Because I am persuaded no enemy of the great Catholic doctrine of the Inspiration of Holy Scripture will dare to look at it, or touch it—except in the way of trying to *rationalise it away*. And we will no more tolerate *that*, in our Church, in reference to the divine record, than we will in reference to the divine revelation. For, only in a divine record can a divine revelation be crowned and glorified, and made to live for ever.

VI. Because, were I shut up to the use of *one* proposition—like the Westminster Divines before they have got opportunity for a second—I would say, "It pleased the Lord to commit the same wholly to writing."

VII. Because (and this carries on the last thought) it is in consecution to this beautiful propositiou, that all other propositions, relevant, can be best brought on. I must tarry here for a little to illustrate—taking the illustration from the Confession itself. (1.) The divineness of the record, exactly as of the revelation, is first affirmed. (2.) Such a characteristic as "divine authorship" is seen to be so intensely unifying a principle, as may well make documents written on different continents, in different millenniums—anywhere in space, anywhen in time—*one*. Hence, immediately they are called "*the* holy scripture." (3.) Well may this make them indispensable: it "maketh the holy scripture most necessary." (4.) Having distinguished between the revelation and the record, exactly at the right point, for purposes of apologetic, these wonderfully fine and advanced thinkers, at the right point, again conjoin them for purposes of spiritual life and piety; and the record appears now as itself a divine revelation, "those *former* ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased"* (5.) But where and what are the documents entitled to this "name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written"? They are "all the books of the Old and New Testaments." (6.) But human authorship is perfectly obvious there. How account for *that*, when

* Conf., I., 1.

you have affirmed divine authorship? They themselves account for that, and reconcile the apparent contradiction. They were "all given by inspiration of God." (7.) It must have been for some great end? Yes; "to be (not merely to contain, but to be) the rule of faith and life."* (8.) The ideas of canonicity and apocryphism now come into view, their contrasted relations to "divine inspiration" being obvious; and an "apocrypha controversy" is justified as being magnificently full of meaning, repelling a daring claim to divine authorship on the part of that which having no divine inspiration is of authorship exclusively human, and therefore of "no authority in the church of God."† (9.) For, on what can authority rest, when it is the authority of documents, scriptures, writings, but on the authorship thereof? And how, in respect of such documents, scriptures, writings, can you have divine authority, if they own not divine authorship? Therefore "the authority of holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth wholly on God the AUTHOR thereof."‡ Am I not justified in calling that beautiful initial proposition the root-thought? And is it not a fertile root? Do not break off these branches from it, and present them as a handful of dead twigs. Growing here, on their own living root, they form in their completeness the really essential and fundamental truth, which it is vital, on this doctrine, to maintain. And no man, who has the *root* of this in him, will have any difficulty about the branches. He

* Conf. I., 2. † Conf., I., 3. ‡ Conf., I., 4.

will delight in this rich fertility, as he would in his own vine or fig-tree.—But I must go on with my reasons for clinging to this proposition. I cling to it,—

VIII. Because the call for the reception of it seems to me to make the least possible demand, or strain, on a mind affected towards the truth concerned as yours at present is.

IX. And, finally, Because it is on this scheme of thought that such residuary difficulties as gather round the words "accuracy" and "infallibility" (which it is ridiculous to suppose could ever explode a truth that rests on the testimony of God, and yet may be difficulties for all that), can be best considered, expiscated, mitigated, and finally rendered comparatively easy of endurance to reverential and believing minds;—their total abolition, especially to unbelieving minds, being hopeless, and the attempt at it neither dutiful nor wise. "For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

I implore you, my dear Sir, to reconsider your position: and do not say that I have given you no reasons for complying with my entreaty. I have dealt respectfully with your understanding, serving you to the utmost of my power with the earnest exercise of my own. The brethren, I think, will acknowledge that I have shown a greater desire to gain you, than a victory over you. May the Lord give light, and cause the light to triumph.—I am, my dear Dr Dods, yours in kind regard,

HUGH MARTIN.

Montrose, 15*th June* 1877.

VII.

Eleven Years Ago.

My Dear Sir,

I must resume my pen, it seems. In the spring of 1866, you wrote and delivered, in Glasgow, a Lecture on *Scripture in relation to Theological Science and Creeds.* I am disposed to think that the Lecture must have been a good one, and loyal, in the main, to the Westminster Confession; for in a review of it now before me,—the fairness and average competency of which I have no reason to doubt,—I find your reviewer declaring it to be "worthy of the most careful perusal," "concurring in by far the larger portion of its statements and reasonings," and speaking with peculiar pleasure (as the manner of anonymous reviewers is, when, poor fellows, they can get a chance) of the statements and reasonings "being very much in harmony with some remarks" he had recently been making somewhere himself!

I am sorry that I have not your Lecture before me—for I have for some time been writing at a distance from my books. But, very strangely, the very day after I sent the preceding letters to the printer, the volume containing your reviewer's kind and discriminating estimate of it, was sent me by post; and from it I can gather what must have been, eleven years ago, giving you a good

deal of anxiety. You were then greatly distressed—if I judge rightly—in contemplating the havoc which Broad Church theories were making of two of the greatest doctrines of Holy Scripture, after that of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word,—the doctrines, namely, of the Atonement and of Inspiration. And not believing the Westminster Confession perfect,—and not finding in it such clauses as seemed to you sufficient to face down, condemn, and cast out those modern views which rationalize away all Scriptural doctrine on the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and the divine authorship of the Word of God,—you expressed an earnest desire to have the Confession modified, not in the interests, certainly, of modern thought (impudently so called), but of ancient and well-attested truth most firmly believed among us.

I find, however, that your reviewer, giving you credit for good and loyal intention, demurs to the wisdom of your suggestion, and to the necessity of any such change as you suggest. I find him saying :—

"Especially in reference to the doctrine of the SACRIFICE OF CHRIST, we have no idea that any one of the Broad School evasions of that doctrine demands the slightest change in the Westminster Standards, in order to confront and condemn and exclude them. No language which the lips or pens of men could use could more expressly and powerfully set forth the *substitutionary, propitiatory, expiatory* nature and design of Christ's death, than Chap. viii., and Chap. ix. Sect. 3, of the Confession—not to speak of the questions on the Priestly Office in the Catechisms. And that all the Broad School varieties of doctrine anent the sufferings and

death of Christ are most expressly and most completely met and excluded by these views of it in our Standards, Broad School men show that *they themselves see*, just by the miserable caricatures of these views, and the intemperate rage against them, in which they are constantly indulging. The Scriptural doctrine of Christ's death is, that it is a *propitiatory sacrifice*. Broad Church evasions of this, are constantly altering their form. They make it self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-surrender, sympathy, and so forth. But they all embody a real Socinianism. That doctrine (of Socinianism) in all its essence is completely met and excluded by the venerable documents we speak of. And that they should be tampered with and changed in any measure, in order to take notice of the futile evasions and denials of the Broad School, is what, as at present advised, we are far from being prepared to admit."

Thus your friendly reviewer gave you very little countenance in your proposal to alter the Confession's utterances on the Atonement, accounting them to be impregnable ramparts against all those miserable substitutes for the doctrine of the Cross, which are continually changing their futile forms, because of the continual proof of their futility. He considered them abundantly well shut out by the Westminster Confession as it stands. And I find him of the same mind when he turns to consider your zeal for the doctrine of Inspiration. Concerning it, I find him saying :—

"The other doctrine which Mr (now Dr) Dods indicates as likely to warrant, by its modern history, a modification of statement in the Westminster Confession,

is that of INSPIRATION. We freely admit that the Reformers did not subject, and were not in circumstances calling on them to subject, this topic to the same kind of express and full discussion which they devoted to other vital questions. But we do not admit that the Westminster Standards are so deficient in respect of clear utterance on this topic as seems to be supposed. No doubt the Shorter Catechism affirms that 'the Word of God is contained in the Scriptures;' and this affirmation, *taken by itself*, does not exclude certain views with which we have no sympathy. But the Larger Catechism expressly affirms, that 'the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments *are* the Word of God,' and then goes on to show 'how it doth appear that they are so.' And the Confession affirms, in its first sentence, that 'it pleased the Lord to commit' His revelation 'wholly to writing;' not to leave men to write something in which His revelation would be found to form a part; but Himself 'to commit the same wholly to writing.' And then it goes on to identify the 'writing' of which God is thus affirmed to be the *writer*, with 'the holy scripture,' which is thus rendered 'most necessary,'—God Himself being thus both the Revealer and the Writer.

"We have no idea that we entertain any illiberal or narrow views in reference to the doctrine of Inspiration. But we feel very deeply convinced that if the Scriptures are admitted to be God's writings; if He is the Writer, the real Author—(perfect scope being left inside this fact for all that can be desired in respect of the individuality and free intellectual and emotional action of the minds of those whom He wielded as instruments in the compo-

sition of His divine volume),—all is secured which the real doctrine of Inspiration demands. And all this we find in the expressions made use of in our Standards. Hence, on this point, also, we are at issue with Mr (Dr) Dods, in respect that we do not in the least desiderate anything in the Westminster Confession to enable us to confront or exclude modern error on this most important topic."

Is not all this most remarkable? For I suppose you have recognised the identity of your reviewer of 1866 with your critic of 1877. It was fortunate for *me* that my memory was refreshed just in time, for otherwise I might have been charged with plagiarism! Even now I can hardly call it plagiarism from myself; for it had wholly escaped my recollection. But who could possibly have imagined that your zeal for our confessional relation to the doctrine of Inspiration could have led you, eleven years ago, to demand precautions which a brother thought unnecessary then, and finds unnecessary now, even when you yourself have gone over to the foe? Who could have foreseen that it would be in refutation of *you*, that I would, eleven years afterwards, have to prove "that we do not in the least desiderate anything in our Confession to enable us to confront and exclude modern error on this most important topic,"—the divine authorship, inspiration, authority and infallibility of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

I am, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

HUGH MARTIN.

MONTROSE, 20*th June* 1877.

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