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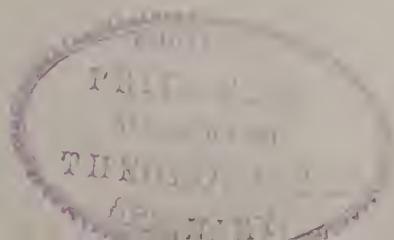
By Whom, all things; for Whom, all things.

FIFTY-SIXTH YEAR.

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RATIONALISM IN THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

THE debate in which the Free Church is engaged is not altogether a matter of the "higher criticism;" for perplexing as this may be, there are ecclesiastical principles which underlie and condition the whole discussion, and these must be judicially considered by those who would interpret the prosecution of Professor Smith as in any sense reflecting the present state of theological opinion in Scotland. It is important that the operation of these principles should be clearly exhibited not only as a matter of justice to the men in Scotland who are engaged in the debate, but also, and more particularly, in order that it may be seen how prematurely men in this country are beginning to look upon the trial of Professor Smith as the exponent of a great anti-confessional drift. For it is not to be denied that Presbyterians in America are watching the discussion in Scotland with deep interest, and that the final adjudication of the case will influence the churches of Presbyterian order on this side of the sea. But in a wider sense this case belongs to Christendom at large; for it raises an important inquiry concerning the relations of the church to Christian scholarship. Can she pour the new wine of biblical learning into the old bottles of the Reformation creeds, or must she face the possibility of being obliged to reconstruct or construct anew the symbols of her faith?

Great movements do not come suddenly. Thoughts spring up in the minds of individuals here and there, and for a time are held as esoteric beliefs and are whispered in confidential circles until by and by some "secretary of the age," as the great thinker has been called, articulates them and puts them down

in words. Let us not forget, however, when we study the history of opinion, that Truth is often the unformulated mean between the formulated extremes, and that her path is that of the compromising diagonal. It will be useful to remember also that a single case of theological unsoundness may be only indicative of a prevailing tendency, and that the problem with which a church is required to deal is not solved when a specific heresy can be described as an importation from Holland or Germany. The Free Church might issue a manifesto against Continental study on the part of her divinity students, or the works of Kuenen might be placed on some *Index Expurgatorius*. But this would only be forgetting the peculiar conditions of the case. Until lately one would have looked for the spread of yellow fever in Scotland as readily as for an outbreak of Kuenenism. But the times are changed—the disease, they say, is in the air. And whether he is the wise physician who takes his stand on a rigid and absolute system of theological quarantine, or he who, seeing that the epidemic is prevailing, tries by proper sanitary regulations to prevent its assuming a malignant form, is not so manifest that every one, whether he has studied the subject or not, is capable of giving a valuable opinion regarding it. But none can doubt that the Free Church of Scotland has reached a crisis which calls for the exercise of great wisdom, and in which she needs divine guidance. Much thought, much study, much mutual forbearance and brotherly kindness, and much prayer as well as deep conviction and fearless devotion to duty, are the requirements of those who are called to lead the church through the perils of the present.

The immediate occasion of the present controversy was the publication of Professor Smith's article "Bible" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. "That article," it is too hastily said, "is the offspring of Kuenenism;" and Kuenenism, we all know, is the doctrine of evolution applied to the Bible. It is not strange that so interpreting the matter some should already begin to regard the law's delay in the final settlement of the case as in itself a pretty strong indication of a rationalistic drift. Reserving for a later stage of the discussion the consideration of this point, it may be well to remind those who are inclined to take a discouraging view of "the situation" that even if matters were

as bad as they fear, there would be enough to justify the expectation that the church will come out of this discussion with a larger, stronger, and more settled faith in the Bible as the Word of God than she has ever had before. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the fixed and the variable are competing elements in the church's life. This cannot be otherwise; for turn where we may, an interrogation-point stares us in the face. The universe is to be explained. The moral and material worlds are of a piece, and unity is the goal of thought. It is irrational to suppose, therefore, that religion can escape investigation. And since in a sense the Bible is the codicil of the older testament Nature, it is fair to expect that the more we understand the one the better we shall appreciate the other. Indifferent to current discussion the church cannot be. She may stand polemically related to it and make war against doctrinal innovation; or in an apologetic spirit she may insist that though all the critics say were true, she is still possessed of her divine credentials; or waiting till scientific hypotheses have been catalogued as established facts, she may then give them dogmatic standing in her system of theology. But this truth, which, properly guarded, no Christian can properly deny, may be stated in a misleading form. The church must not appear in this debate as the advocate of a foregone conclusion; neither must she appear as the creedless upholder of a provisional theology. Without adopting the "antipathetic" or the "sympathetic" attitude in relation to current discussion (to use Principal Rainy's form of expression), it is quite easy for one to say: "I believe that our doctrinal system is God's truth, yet I do not shut my eyes lest I see something that militates against it; nor do I promise to defend it in spite of evidence that may convincingly disprove it." A readiness to abandon a belief if convincing testimony should be brought against it is a very different thing from the uncertain tenure of beliefs that are unchallenged or unaffected by argument. If then there may be open questions in theology, what relation does creed-subscription sustain to unfettered inquiry? The question is relevant here, for it is manifest that the defenders of Professor Smith are defenders of a principle as well. It will be a sad day for Scotland, they suppose, when a veto is put

upon free inquiry. Yet it is a liberty of discussion within the area left undefined by the Confession of Faith for which they contend, and not a liberty, as might easily be supposed by many on this side of the Atlantic, which throws open the whole territory of theology. Professor Smith is explicit on this point when he says: "I do not for a moment deny that I am liable to the censure of the church if I have advanced opinions contradictory to the teaching of our standards.¹" The men who plead for free inquiry in Scotland are not complaining because the church has no honors for those who deprave her standards or invent new heresies. Their latitudinarianism is a very different thing from the latitudinarianism of those in this country who report the stages in this famous trial as so many steps toward emancipation from the bondage of confessionalism. The "ethics of creed-subscription" is a subject that has its difficulties, but it is a mild statement of the case when it is said that a minister who publishes opinions that contradict the creed of his church does so at his own risk, and that in the judicial treatment of the case in the ecclesiastical courts he has no right to expect that kindness to him should go the length of sacrificing the principles of the church. But it may be said that this is a matter with which only specialists are competent to deal. Some have said this in Scotland,² and some on this side of the water (as Dr. Schaff) have expressed a doubt as to the wisdom of attempting to adjust critical difficulties through the agency of the ecclesiastical courts. Suppose, however, that all who are not Hebrew specialists were to decline to vote on the merits of this case. This would amount to committing the fate of the church's creed into the hands of a few Semitic students. But the Free Church has not made "salvation by scholarship" her motto yet, and it is to be hoped she never will; although some of the pretentious references to recent "Pentateuchal investigations" which have been made during the progress of this discussion look in that direction. Yet on the other hand it may be asked, What value is to be assigned to the opinion of a man who does not know the Hebrew alphabet when the debate turns upon some nice point in Old Testament criticism? It may be replied that the business of the court is not

¹ Answer to the Forms of Libel, p. 5.

² Lange's Com. Numbers-Deut., Preface.

to say whether the results of the "higher criticism" are true, but whether they harmonize with the Confession of Faith. But this would hardly meet the point; for it would be a poor triumph after all to prove by English grammar that Professor Smith had contradicted the Confession of Faith if Professor Smith were to prove by Hebrew grammar that the Confession is all wrong regarding Deuteronomy. The difficulty presented here is not so great as it may seem. Mere scholarship must not displace old faiths, although the church must acknowledge her indebtedness to specialists. The critics may claim a special interest in the facts of their science, but they have no monopoly of the logic which bases conclusions on the facts. It takes a little time for a new question to become the rallying-point of the general intelligence of the church, but it is not difficult to believe that in the course of three years the average minister and elder might be able to form a very intelligent opinion respecting the relation of the famous article "Bible" to the Confession of Faith and even to modern Pentateuchal investigations.

The consideration of these preliminary questions would not be complete if nothing were said concerning the area of tolerated divergence from the Confession of Faith; for though this subject has not been discussed in the course of the prosecution of Professor Smith, it is easy to see that it is an undefined element in the case; indeed it was urged as an argument in favor of more pacific measures in the last Assembly that "there is such a division among us as to what is and what is not within our confessional liberty."

It is important to ask, What is meant by subscription to the Confession of Faith? for this settles the question, What is an offence? Here the practice in Scotland differs from the custom in America. It is not understood that our ministers subscribe to the Confession of Faith *in ipsissimis verbis*. They "receive and adopt" it "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Word of God." Hence in an ecclesiastical trial the question whether a given departure from the Confession is an offence would be debatable. But it is not denied in the case of Professor Smith that it is an offence to contradict the Confession of Faith; it is only denied that his utterances can be construed as inconsistent with its teaching. But both in Scotland and America it is con-

ceded that only some forms of heterodoxy "infer deposition;" that is to say, there is an area of tolerated divergence from the confession. What is it, and how is it to be determined? How is it to be decided whether an error strikes "at the vitals of religion" or is "likely to do much injury"? It would seem at first as though there might be some formulated principle by which such questions could be decided. Thus, to use a form of expression current among us, it might be said that nothing shall be tolerated which impairs the integrity of the Calvinistic system. But any one who has attempted by means of that formula to mark out the area of divergence from the confession which ought to be tolerated knows that he has undertaken a difficult task. By the provisions of our own Book of Discipline, it would seem that in determining a question of heresy there is a fixed and a variable element, and that it is the living and possibly the changing voice of church that must tell us whether this or that anti-confessional doctrine is a heresy that "infers deposition." In the nature of the case, therefore, there can be no guarantee that important parts of the Confession of Faith will not gradually come under the category of dead-letter law; and there can be no assurance that a church may not abandon every distinctive tenet, though, for the sake of vested rights, it may continue still to profess its ancient creed and wear its ancient name. This only shows, however, that great responsibility rests upon those who, as the interpreters of the church's faith to-day, are making the precedents that will be cited in all time to come. And this explains the interest with which conservative thinkers in America are watching ecclesiastical movements in Scotland. They see that the tide of scepticism is rising, and the more they see it the more earnestly do they hope and pray that the Free Church may be able to keep the mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch above high-water mark.

Do the published utterances of Professor William Robertson Smith respecting the authorship of Deuteronomy contradict the Confession of Faith? And if they do, what censure should the church inflict upon the author of them? Stripped of ecclesiastical terminology there are practically the two questions that are before the ecclesiastical courts. This article is not intended to furnish an answer to these questions. But they must

be kept in view in attempting to form any judgment whatever concerning the course of this protracted litigation; and they must be kept before the mind when the effort is made to form a just estimate of the article "Bible." That article is not what one would have expected from the pen of a Free Church professor, and though Professor Smith expressed surprise when he was told that it would give trouble, it would have been very strange indeed if it had passed without notice. The author begins by saying that the Bible gives us the "gradual development of the religion of revelation." This is perhaps the most explicit statement that is made respecting its divine inspiration. But the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch must be abandoned, for "facts are decisive" here. The Jewish religion was a growth, and "there was no doctrine of finality with regard to the ritual law." Deuteronomy was a "prophetic legislative program" which the author "put in the mouth of Moses, not in pious fraud, but simply because his object was not to give a new law but to expound and develop Mosaic principles in relation to new needs." We are told that "there is no reason to think that a prophet ever received a revelation which was not spoken directly and pointedly to his own time," and hence that Zech. ix.-xiv. and Isa. xl.-lxvi. are to be attributed to unknown authors. "In the Book of Job we find poetical invention of incidents attached for didactic purposes to a name apparently derived from old traditions;" and a similar opinion is generally entertained, we learn in the next sentence, regarding the Book of Jonah. The author tells us that every book in the New Testament, except the four great Epistles of Paul, is at present more or less the subject of controversy; but then it is a comfort to know that, "on the whole, external testimony is as strong as can fairly be looked for." The Tübingen criticism is then described, and it is said that the issues involved in it resolve themselves into four questions. These are very clearly stated, but one is left utterly in the dark as to the proper answers that should be given them. It is true that Professor Smith was writing his article from a purely literary point of view, yet one would think that he might easily have been dogmatic enough to affirm his belief in the divine authorship and inspiration of the Bible, and apologetic enough to furnish the outline of an answer

to the objections with which he saw fit to confront his readers in every quarter of the globe. It is but fair to say that Professor Smith has expressed regret that he was not more careful to guard against being misunderstood, yet even had he been as cautious as he wishes he had been, his article would still have been a most unfortunate publication; and allowing explanation to exert its proper modifying effect upon the judgment, still "true it is and of verity" that his dogmatism is offensive, his statements are rash, his reasoning is inconclusive, his utterances are misleading, and the tendency of his whole article is to awaken doubt and undermine the faith of men in the Word of God. Indeed it is much easier to *see* that this must be the legitimate effect of Professor Smith's publications here and elsewhere than it is to *show* that Professor Smith himself holds opinions that are contrary to the standards, and yet it is a difficult thing, apparently, to frame a libel so as to make "tendency" an offence, though, as Professor Smith very candidly admitted, it may very properly be urged as evidence in proof of an offence. It must appear, however, that the gravity of the case consists very considerably in this element of tendency, and that when it is eliminated and the prosecution reduced to a charge of heresy the proof of the libel becomes a more difficult, as in the eyes of many it becomes a less important, matter. As the libel was drawn it was pretty difficult to meet the objections to its relevancy which were very acutely urged by the defence; and though the tendency and strain of his writings have to do very materially with the question of Professor Smith's competency to fill a professor's chair, and may perhaps be dealt with in some "paternal" way as one expressed it in the last Assembly, it is not to be wondered at that the Assembly resolved to depart from that portion of the libel that referred to the unsettling tendencies of Professor Smith's utterances and instruct the Presbytery of Aberdeen to confine their attention to the published opinions of Professor Smith concerning the post-Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, which the Assembly regarded as by far the most serious offence with which the Professor had been charged. It should not be conceded, however, that the evil "tendency" and "unsettling" effect of a minister's spoken or printed words may not properly be urged in support of some general charge; and it

is safe to say that the Free Church of Scotland did not mean by its action in reference to that part of the libel which deals with "tendency" to put herself in a helpless position for all time to come with reference to the most insidious and most pernicious forms of error.

The views of Professor Smith stand in immediate relation to the recent discussions in Germany respecting the five books of Moses; and this famous trial is bringing into prominence the names of men who but for it would in all likelihood never have been heard of to any great extent outside of the circle of Old Testament specialists. It is important to a proper understanding of this case that the position commonly taken by the critics of to-day should be stated in outline. According to Wellhausen, the Pentateuch—or, as he often calls it (including Joshua), the Hexateuch—is composed of three portions: the Jehovist (=Genesis-Exodus), Deuteronomy and the Priest-codex (=Leviticus-Numbers). It is not believed by the writers to whom reference is made that Moses wrote any of the books that are commonly called by his name, but it is quite generally agreed by the critics of this anti-conservative school that Deuteronomy is of later origin than the so-called Jehovist, and that it contains internal evidence of being much older than Leviticus and Numbers. In support of these positions there are two favorite points that are dwelt upon by all Pentateuchal critics. One is the central altar of Deut. xii., which shows, they say, that it is a later book than Genesis-Exodus, for no such regulation was contemplated in Exodus xx. 24; and the other is the undifferentiated functions of the priests and the Levites in Deuteronomy which proves that Deuteronomy is a much earlier book than what is called the Priest-codex (Leviticus-Numbers). It should be said that the statement that Deuteronomy teaches that there was no distinction between the priests and the Levites is not conceded by evangelical critics, and that the assumption upon which the whole criticism proceeds has been most satisfactorily refuted. But there is no room in this article for an outline even of this most interesting discussion.¹ It is not difficult to see that there is a philosophy behind the criticism. Assuming that

¹ See Dr. Curtiss' "Levitical Priests" and Lange's Com. Deuteronomy; Schroeder's Introd. and Gosman's Appendix.

the history of Israel is one of gradual development, under the operations of natural influences that at first an Israelite worshipped God wherever he felt disposed to build an altar, and that gradually the religious sentiment developed in a national religion with a central system of priests and sacrifices; assuming that the priesthood is a matter of growth, and that the hierarchic distinctions came about in a long course of development, it could not be otherwise than that the critics should look upon the traditional belief concerning the Mosaic system as a violent anachronism, and that they should feel forced to adjust their literary criticism of the Pentateuchal documents to the hypothesis of evolution. It would not be right to say that all Pentateuchal criticism of the kind proceeds upon the philosophy of evolution. But there can be no doubt that this is the philosophy of Kuenen,¹ for he avows it in so many words. And it is just as clear that it is the presupposition and postulate of Graf² and Kayser.³

This is not saying by any means that the modern conclusions in regard to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch are not defended on purely critical grounds, or that they may not be adopted by men who have no sympathy whatever with the materialistic philosophy of Kuenen. And it is particularly important that Professor Smith should not be regarded as holding this philosophy, for he has most unequivocally expressed his utter abhorrence of it. If the philosophy of evolution requires men to give up the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, it will require them to repudiate the miraculous facts of Christianity. But if the critical conclusions regarding the Pentateuch are reached only and purely as the result of an application of the laws of literary criticism, there is no logical necessity which will impel one to come to similar conclusions regarding other portions of Scripture. It is due to Professor Smith, but what is more important still it is due to the interests of sacred truth, that this distinction should be kept in mind, and that Professor Smith should not be suspected of sympathizing with a philosophy which he professes to abhor.

¹ Religion of Israel, vol. i. p. 6.

² Die geschichtlichen Bücher, s. 1.

³ Das vorexilische Buch, s. 197.

According to the critics, Deuteronomy xii., describing the central altar, must have been written later than Exodus xx. 24, which contemplates more altars than one. The central altar, it is affirmed, was not known in the time of Samuel, and if the law respecting it was in existence in Elijah's day there is palpable proof that he ignored it. But in the reign of King Josiah "the book of the law" was found "in the house of the Lord," and it is easy to identify it with Deuteronomy. So, say the critics, Deuteronomy dates from the eighth century before Christ. Kuenen does not hesitate to say that the book found in the house of the Lord was simply a "fraud," and the narrative in the second book of Kings would certainly produce that impression upon the mind of one who did not believe as the Christian world believes (and will continue to believe until some evidence to refute it is adduced), that it was the veritable law of Moses. But when were Leviticus and Numbers written? They are of later date than Deuteronomy, for they give us a fully developed priestly cultus. The "bridge" between the middle and last portions of the Pentateuch is the forty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel. There we see a portion of the Levites degraded and the beginning of the system which, in its developed form, it is safe (so the critics say) to assign to the time of Ezra. The post-exilic origin of Leviticus and Numbers, at least in their complete and present form, is thus a fair conclusion.

But were there no critical difficulties in the way of the modern theories of the Pentateuch, what can be said of them more than that they are plausible explanations of facts which are capable of other explanations as well? Or that, starting with a certain theory of the universe, they are the only satisfactory explanation of the facts which, viewed under another conception, may or must be otherwise accounted for? If the doctrine of atheistic evolution is true, if miracles are impossible, if there is no such thing as prophecy, if laws are of slow growth and a religious system a thing which requires a long time for its development, then the critics were bound to reach just such conclusions as they have, and it must be conceded that they have stated their case with great plausibility. When they tell us Exodus xx. 24 gives us a glimpse of the undeveloped religion of Israel; that Deut. xii. with its central

altar corresponds to a state of things in the later period of the monarchy; that the law of the king in Deut. xxxi. is a reminiscence of Solomon's reign; that Ezekiel is the connecting link between Deuteronomy and Leviticus, and that the Aaronic priesthood instead of being instituted by Moses belongs to the period of the Restoration—it cannot be denied that their hypothesis is consistent, and that from their point of view much can be said in its behalf. But looking at the question from the standpoint of theism, and believing that the Bible is the record of a Revelation, there is nothing in the Pentateuch which cannot be explained on the hypothesis of its Mosaic authorship. Assuming that the central books of the Pentateuch were already in existence, the discrepancy respecting the law of the tithes admits of very easy explanation. Assuming that Moses was inspired, the law of the king can be very readily explained, and without doing violence to the context. Assuming that Deuteronomy was written just before the occupation of Canaan, the provision for a central altar is only what we might expect, and the apparent neglect of this law by Samuel and Elijah is explained by the lawlessness of the times, the divorce between the ark and the tabernacle, as well as by the principle that the exception proves the rule. Assuming that Deuteronomy was “the people's book” written by Moses just before his death, its Egyptian reminiscences, its exhortations, its informal and incomplete references in a popular way to laws which were elsewhere more formally stated and are all natural and easily accounted for. And if it is allowed that in the final redaction of the book the expressions that imply a previous occupation of Canaan were parenthetically inserted or substituted for the original text, the difficulties of Deuteronomy practically disappear. From the standpoint of naturalism the theory of the critics is plausible. From the standpoint of supernaturalism the “ecclesiastical” theory, as Kuenen calls it, is the only one that is plausible. But Professor Smith's theory is not plausible. He has repudiated the philosophy of the critics, and this is to the credit of his piety; but he has adopted the conclusions of the critics, and here he has made shipwreck of his consistency. Professor Smith does not say whether he adopts the conclusions of those who say that Leviticus and Numbers are later than

Deuteronomy. But it is very evident that he inclines in that direction. And it would be too much to say perhaps that these conclusions are absolutely incompatible with the idea that the Pentateuch is the record of a divine revelation. It is *possible* that God has committed to writing the books which professedly teach us that the Aaronic priesthood was instituted in the wilderness, though they really testify to the gradual development of the Jewish hierarchy and its culmination in the time of Ezra; it is *possible* that God would put the stamp of infallible inspiration on the Old Testament canon and yet bury an anachronism of a thousand years in the very bosom of the Pentateuch; it is *possible* that he would continue to reveal his will to apostles and prophets in terms that imply that historical truth of Deuteronomy; it is *possible* that the New Testament would speak of Moses as it constantly does in terms that necessarily suggest that he is the author of the legislation that goes by his name; it is *possible* that our Saviour, though he knew the circumstances connected with the authorship of Deuteronomy as well as Kayser and Wellhausen profess to know them to-day, should refer to Moses as he did in passages which we all remember: all this is *possible*; but it is *impossible* to resist the feeling that this is exceedingly improbable. And so we are brought to the heart of the question that must be considered by the ecclesiastical courts in Scotland. Can the critical opinions of Professor Smith be harmonized with the Confession of Faith? The Confession does not say that Moses wrote Deuteronomy, but it says that it pleased God after revealing his will "to commit the same wholly unto writing," and that all the books of the canon "are given by inspiration of God." Professor Smith believes in the inspiration of the Scripture, and declares that the doctrine is not affected by his critical opinions. Much depends, of course, on what is meant by inspiration. Thus Schultz,¹ as Dr. Curtiss has pointed out, maintains that the presence of mythical elements in the Old Testament is not incompatible with inspiration. But by inspiration he means only the filling of the sacred writer "with the spirit of the true religion." "The

¹ Alttestamentliche Theologie, s. 36.

spirit of revelation illumines the moral and religious life and gives knowledge of the divine will." But he does not correct the errors of experience or purify our sense-perceptions or prevent an author from mistaking a legend for history. But in the case under discussion it is to be considered whether Professor Smith's opinions regarding Deuteronomy can be harmonized with the Confession of Faith which teaches the divine authorship of the Bible. Professor Candlish maintains that they can, through the principle which gives the title to his ingenious pamphlet, and which is the main ground of his argument, must be regarded as thoroughly untenable. Adopting the words of the Confession that the "Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very Word of God," he concludes that our belief in the authority of Scripture is "independent of criticism; both the 'lower' or textual and grammatical, whose functions it is to ascertain what is the original and correct reading and the real meaning of the sacred writers, and what is called the 'higher' or historical criticism, which aims at an understanding of the various parts of Scripture and their historical connections."¹ Suppose, however, that it were ascertained by means of the 'lower' criticism that all the passages which teach the doctrine of infallibility and inspiration were spurious or improperly rendered; and suppose that in the sphere of the higher criticism it were conclusively proved that the Pauline Epistles are forgeries, and that the Gospels were not written until the third century. Should we continue to believe that those Scriptures were inspired, and that they were committed to writing by the Lord as it pleased him? It is hardly possible that we should believe any such thing. Professor Candlish's principle is clearly wrong. It will not do to suppose that we can dispense with the testimony which the Scriptures give to their inspiration and continue to maintain and defend the doctrine of inspiration, on the ground of the "witness of the Spirit." The very wholesome doctrine of the Confession is put to very bad use when it is

¹ Authority of Scripture independent of Criticism, p. 1.

made to support Professor Candlish's theory; for it must not be forgotten that the subjective and the objective testimony are not "independent:" they are correlative and mutually corroborative. Besides, it seems to be forgotten that the "witness of the Spirit" is as properly a subject of psychological inquiry as the Pentateuch is of critical dissection, and that corresponding to a naturalistic criticism of the Bible there is sure to be a naturalistic philosophy of religion. Professor Candlish argues far more effectively when he shows from the church's experience in the past that it is possible to adopt opinions respecting portions of the Bible very different from those which were once entertained without thereby invalidating the belief in the Bible's divine inspiration. The citation of these examples, however, furnishes no principle under which the proposition for which Professor Candlish is contending can be subsumed. For granting that we may believe in the inspiration of the Book of Job though we held it to be a dramatic composition, it would not follow that we can likewise believe in the plenary inspiration and divine authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy if, in spite of what it professes to teach and of what our Lord has said, we have come to the conclusion that it belongs to the reign of King Josiah. Dr. Bannerman recognizes this distinction in a passage quoted by Professor Candlish, and which may be italicized here: "*It depends very much on the form in which these theories as to the origin of some of the sacred books are advocated whether they do or do not in reality contradict the doctrine of plenary inspiration.*"

It would have been a better defence of Professor Smith's doctrinal harmony with the Confession to have said that inasmuch as the Old Testament canon as it existed in the time of our Lord and his apostles was quoted and referred to by them repeatedly as divine, authoritative, infallible, and inspired, therefore, whatever opinion we may be forced to adopt respecting the authorship of Deuteronomy, the inspiration of the book as part of the canon is beyond dispute. But even then it would possibly be said in reply that if we have been so mistaken regarding the words of our Lord and the teachings of the New Testament respecting the authorship of the Pentateuch, why may

we not have been equally mistaken as to the scope of the passages which have heretofore been supposed to teach inspired infallibility? And here is seen one of the special difficulties by which this problem is beset. If it were only through Deuteronomy that we knew the inspiration of Deuteronomy, unquestionably the critical conclusions that are under discussion would be regarded as incompatible with its inspiration. But we are placed in a position where on the one hand, if the critics are correct, we feel that inspiration must be given up, and where on the other hand our belief in the New Testament makes us confident that whatever the critics may prove, the inspiration of the book is indubitable. What then is to be done? Shall it be said in an *a priori* way that the critical conclusions must be wrong, for they are incompatible with inspiration? or, remembering the errors of *a priori* reasoning in former times, shall it be said that the best way to know what is compatible with inspiration is to ascertain by rigid inductive inquiry what is really true respecting the contents and origin of the Scriptures? Were there no great interests involved, did the church not feel the great responsibility that rests upon her as the guardian of sacred truth, no doubt the latter view would find more general support. But as the case now stands the question just raised is one about which the wisest and most conservative men may not unreasonably differ, and the perplexities of the case ought not to be forgotten by those who wish to regard it with judicial fairness. But it can be argued, and with a degree of force that should not be overlooked, that these critical conclusions regarding Deuteronomy are only hypotheses; that they are adopted in explanation of facts which can as well be explained on the supposition that Moses wrote the book that goes by his name; that they have not received the general support of evangelical critics; that they are naturally affiliated with an anti-Christian, if not an anti-theistic philosophy; that they are hard to reconcile with the utterances of our Lord; that they do not appear consistent even though it may not be possible to prove that they are inconsistent with the doctrine that the Book of Deuteronomy was by God himself reduced to writing and was given by his inspiration; that if adopted they would tend to weaken belief in the "infallible truth and

divine authority" of the book; and that therefore they cannot be regarded as otherwise than out of harmony with the Confession of Faith.

But with many minds a stronger objection to these modern views of Deuteronomy than that they conflict with the doctrine of inspiration will be that they conflict with the teachings of our Lord. Professor Smith does not feel that the words of our Saviour can be held as deciding the question of authorship, and he distinctly says that if he did he would "feel himself to be on very dangerous and untenable ground." Those who adopt the modern views of the Pentateuch will be obliged to say that our Lord did not refer to Moses as a person but as a system. But by the vast majority of evangelical scholars the words of Christ are held to be unequivocal affirmations of Mosaic authorship, and therefore as one of the strongest arguments against the conclusions of recent criticism. There are few evangelical thinkers who will not assent to the words of a recent writer who says: "A thorough sifting of the chief passages in which Moses and the law are mentioned by gospel critics leaves no doubt on the truth of the following positions: *First*, that Moses is spoken of as a *man* and not as a *system*, precisely as David and Solomon are spoken of; and *second*, that the Hebrew law as a whole, in other words the Five Books, are ascribed to him."¹ The critics are wrong, or Christ is wrong, or the words of Christ do not mean what they would naturally be taken to imply. These are the alternatives that Pentateuchal investigation places before the world. It may be too much to say that a church should impose a particular meaning upon the words of our Lord and make the adoption of it a condition of ministerial standing. Yet no one can fail to see that exegetical difficulties will spring up in other portions of the Scriptures if it is allowed that these words have always been misunderstood. It is not wise for men to say, as some have said, that the prosecution of Professor Smith is a mere matter regarding the authorship of a book. It is about the authorship of a book, but it is also about questions that lie very close to the Christian's heart.

¹ Deuteronomy, the People's Book, p. 282.

If the foregoing remarks have in any degree served the purpose for which they were written, they have shown that the case which is in progress in Scotland is not the best that could be imagined for testing the devotion of the Free Church to the Westminster symbols. There being no explicit contradiction of the Confession in what Professor Smith has said, but only an inferential one based on the logical effect of what he has said, and that inference being of different degrees of strength in different minds, it is easy to see that there is not the opportunity of testing the church's loyalty to the Confession and the value that is attached to the doctrine of inspiration that there would be if the case were one where the Assembly was to be brought to a vote in regard to a plain and unmistakable denial or contradiction of the Westminster doctrine of inspiration.

It would be vain to deny that the leaven of modern thought is at work in Scotland. In every church there is likely to be a Broad Church party, a Narrow Church party, a High Church party, and a Low Church party. These parties belong to all countries and all denominations, and it is useless to ignore the fact that the relative strength of the Broad Church party is somewhat on the increase. It is in America; there is every reason to suppose that it is in Scotland.

Dogmatic theology does not seem to be in great favor in Scotland at the present time. This, however, would indicate an indifference to doctrine rather than a tendency to doctrinal aberration. Systems of theology have not been produced in Scotland for many a day. The age is critical; and when a theological question is dealt with it is very apt to be treated from the standpoint of historical development, and according to a method borrowed from apologetics. The method that formerly prevailed of culling proof-texts from all quarters, without reference to the connection in which they are found, does not find as much favor as it once did; and it is likely that the critico-historical methods of the present day will leave their mark upon the dogmatic theology—not its matter, but its method—of the future. And this suggests that in view of the peculiar phases of current discussion, the distinction should be clearly made between the dogmatic and the apologetic aspect

of the doctrine of inspiration. The statements of the Westminster Assembly on the subject of inspiration are admirably clear, and the minister who cannot subscribe to them can have no proper home in a church that makes the Westminster the symbols the term of ministerial fellowship. Speaking of Confession's doctrine of inspiration Dr. Martin well says: "Very singularly it is its glory and perfection to be at once the *minimum* and the *maximum* of what is required in the matter on hand. As an office-bearer in Christ's church, I will not profess less, and I will not consent to be bound by more." No doubt it would seriously affect the system of Christian theology if the doctrine of inspiration were abandoned. But it is too much to say that to give up Inspiration is equivalent to giving up Christianity. In these days of doubt the minister of Christ is more than likely to meet men who are not satisfied that a verse of Scripture is the end of argument, and who may not be able to overcome certain difficulties of belief pertaining to particular portions of Scripture, while they have no difficulty or little difficulty in receiving as true the historical facts of the New Testament, and in believing in the divine nature and atoning work of the Son of God. It will not do to say that all these difficulties of belief must be disposed of before the inquirer is told to give himself to the Saviour in whose supreme divinity and sympathetic manhood he already believes; and it is by no means a belittling or disparagement of inspiration to say that a man may love and honor his Saviour, whose views on this subject would not accord with the Westminster standard of orthodoxy. And in the debate with scepticism, it is not good generalship to put forward the argument for inspiration, and affirm that Christianity stands or falls with it. Nor should the Christian advocate fail to take advantage of the fact that he has an *a fortiori* argument in the defence of Christianity; for if Christianity as a divine system can be proved as it can be proved on historical grounds, much more can be proved when it is shown that the historical evidence that supports it is itself part of a divine revelation. Friends of the Bible are therefore taking a wrong method of meeting the views of Professor Smith when they say that to give up the Mosaic

authorship of Deuteronomy is practically to give up Christianity. The conclusion is not warranted, and it does injustice to the invincible position which the Christian religion occupies in the world.

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