

**INQUIRY INTO THE  
CHRISTIAN LAW, AS TO  
THE RELATIONSHIPS  
WHICH BAR MARRIAGE**

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Inquiry into the Christian Law, as to the Relationships Which Bar Marriage by William Lindsay

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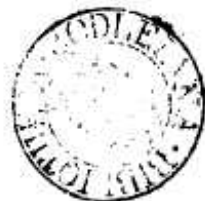
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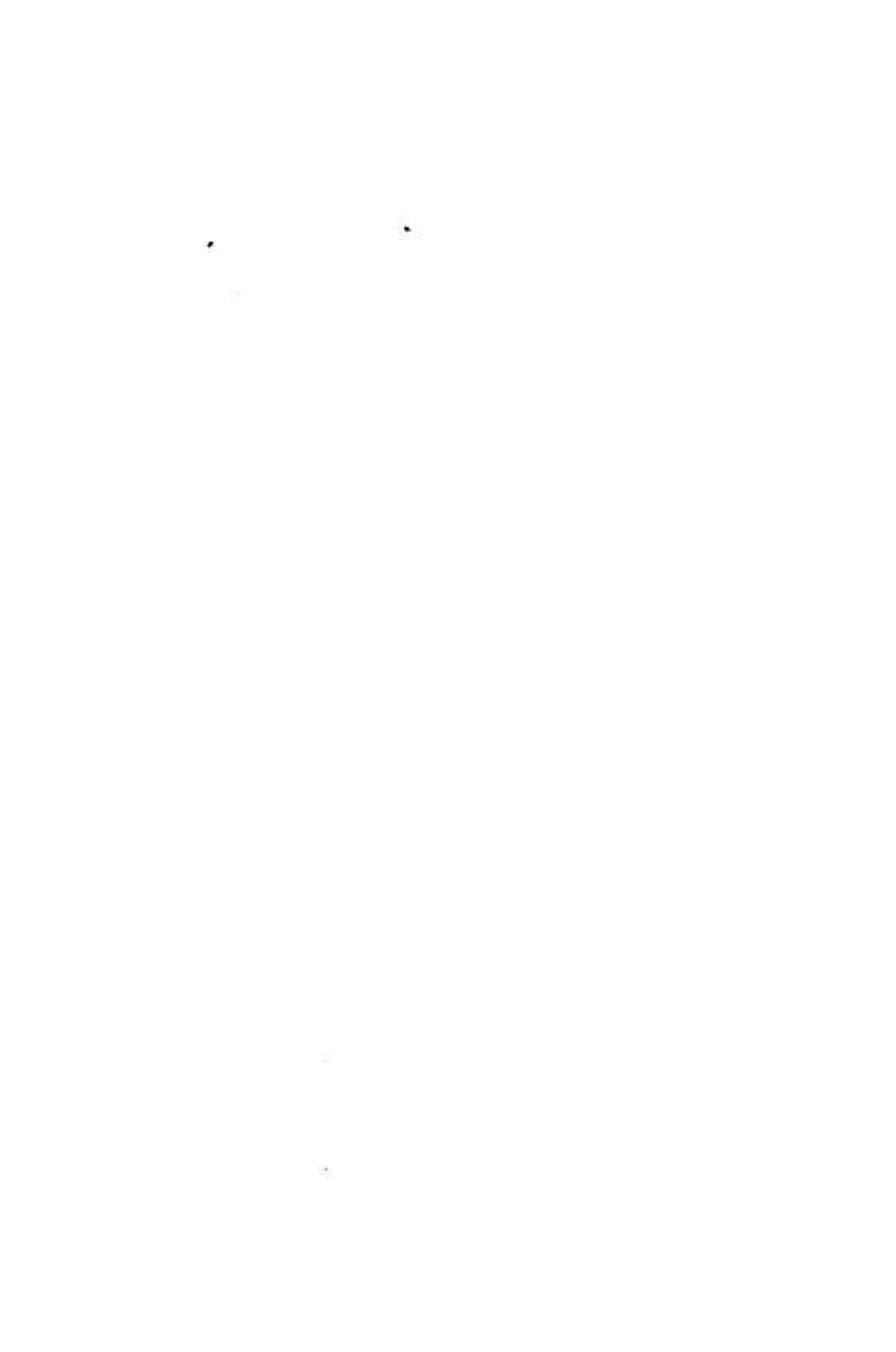
BY  
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RECOMMENDATORY NOTE TO THE  
PRESENT EDITION.

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THIS work from the pen of the late accomplished Dr Lindsay of Glasgow, which has now for some years been out of print, we regard as an altogether masterly one,—among the very ablest that have appeared on the theme of which it treats under the title of “Inquiry into the Christian Law as to the Relationships that bar Marriage.” The subject, of deep interest and importance at all times, has of late acquired an importance painfully urgent, from the attempts that have been persistently made to induce the Legislature to sanction marriage with the wife of a deceased sister, and thereby, as we are fully persuaded, unsettle the whole marriage law of the country, subverting the fundamental principle on which it is based. We believe that a great deal of ignorance prevails in Scotland, and still more in England, both of the merits of the question at issue, scripturally and

socially considered, and of the far-reaching consequences which it involves. We believe that, to render all attempts at a change of the existing law hopeless, nothing more is necessary than a more extensive and intelligent acquaintance with the subject. And in this view we venture in the strongest terms to recommend Dr Lindsay's work. The present edition has been issued under the careful superintendence of one of us. It is our earnest hope that it may be widely circulated, and extensively and carefully perused. Very seasonable at the present time, and in regard to the particular change of law now sought, the work is, however, of no passing interest, but of high and enduring value, as unfolding the great principles according to which marriage ought always and everywhere to be regulated.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE author of the following pages has not considered it advisable to augment their bulk by entering into historical details regarding the views which have been held in different ages upon the question which he handles. He does not undervalue authorities. It is always interesting, and, for the most part, it is highly instructive, to examine the conclusions which the men of past times have reached. And he is persuaded that an argument of no mean force might be grounded upon the unanimity with which, through long ages, almost all churches and Christian states have condemned those marriages which some parties are now seeking to legalise. But he has confined himself to a simple discussion of the question at issue. He has formed his own opinions after mature deliberation. He states them in the order which he considers best; and he supports

them by arguments which he is fully persuaded are perfectly adequate to demonstrate their soundness.

The subject of forbidden degrees is one of great importance. There are, indeed, sundry uninviting, yea, even repelling features about the question; but still it is a question which must be discussed. The extraordinary efforts which are made, by the gratuitous circulation of pamphlets and otherwise, to effect a change of the existing law, impose it as a duty upon those who are convinced of the scriptural authority and beneficial character of that law, to make corresponding efforts for its maintenance. And the author can truly say, that it has been a conviction of duty, rather than any special liking for the subject, which has impelled him to prepare the present work.

His attention was first drawn to the subject of improper marriages by a case which came before his own session. This case the session decided, as in duty bound, by the laws of the church; and the author, in defending the session's judgment before the supreme court, appealed only to the *Confession of Faith*. The supreme court, too, in affirming the session's judgment, grounded their decision upon the same authoritative document. This was

designated, in certain quarters, a placing of human creeds above the Word of God ; and it was said that the question ought to have been settled by the evidence of Scripture alone. The confusion of ideas apparent in such a statement is obvious. The question, What should be the law of the church ? ought, of course, to be decided only on scriptural grounds ; but, when particular cases of discipline are before a church court, the settlement of them must be determined by the rules and regulations which the church has adopted. There would be nothing but the confusion of Babel, if the propriety of these rules and regulations were made the subject of discussion every time it was found needful to apply them. Were an individual to appear before a session or a presbytery denying the divinity of Christ, the session and the presbytery would be deserting the post of duty if they allowed themselves to be drawn into a controversy respecting that doctrine. Whatever efforts they might make in private to convince the party of his error, by setting scriptural evidence before him, they could only, as a session and as a presbytery, proceed upon the principle that the divinity of Christ was a doctrine embodied in the standards