

F. F. Bruce

The Canon of Scripture

Chapter 1

AND

William Whitaker

Disputations on Holy Scripture

Chapters 1-3

CHAPTER ONE

HOLY SCRIPTURE

THE WORD ‘CANON’

When we speak of the canon of scripture, the word ‘canon’ has a simple meaning. It means the list of books contained in scripture, the list of books recognized as worthy to be included in the sacred writings of a worshipping community. In a Christian context, we might define the word as ‘the list of the writings acknowledged by the Church as documents of the divine revelation’.¹ In this sense the word appears to have been first used by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in a letter circulated in AD 367.²

The word ‘canon’ has come into our language (through Latin) from the Greek word *kanōn*.³ In Greek it meant a rod, especially a straight rod used as a rule; from this usage comes the other meaning which the word commonly bears in English—‘rule’ or ‘standard’. We speak, for example, of the ‘canons’ or rules of the Church of England. But a straight rod used as a rule might be marked in units of length (like a modern ruler marked in inches or centimetres); from this practice the Greek word *kanōn* came to be used of the series of such marks, and hence to be used in the general sense of ‘series’ or ‘list’. It is this last usage that underlies the term ‘the canon of Scripture’.

Before the word ‘canon’ came to be used in the sense of ‘list’, it was used in another sense by the church—in the phrase ‘the rule of faith’ or ‘the rule of truth’.⁴ In the earlier Christian centuries this was a summary of Christian teaching, believed to reproduce what the apostles themselves taught, by which any system of doctrine offered for Christian acceptance, or any interpretation of biblical writings, was to be assessed. But when once the limits of holy scripture came to be generally agreed upon, holy scripture itself came to be regarded as the rule of faith. For example, Thomas Aquinas (*c* 1225–1274) says that ‘canonical scripture alone is the rule of faith’. From another theological perspective the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), after listing the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, adds: ‘All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.’⁵ These words affirm the status of holy scripture as the ‘canon’ or ‘standard’ by which Christian teaching and action must be regulated. While the ‘canon’ of scripture means the *list* of books accepted as holy scripture, the other sense of ‘canon’—*rule* or *standard*—has rubbed off on this one, so that the ‘canon’ of scripture is understood to be the *list* of books which are acknowledged to be, in a unique sense, the *rule* of belief and practice.

The question to be examined in the following pages is: how did certain documents, and these only, come to receive this recognition? Who, if any one, decided that these, and no others, should be admitted to the list of the holy scriptures, and what were the criteria which influenced this decision?

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

Many religions have sacred books associated with their traditions or their worship. There was a once-famous series of volumes entitled *The Sacred Books of the East*.⁶ But Jews, Christians and Muslims have come to be known as ‘people of the book’ in a special sense. This is a designation given repeatedly in the Qur’ān to Jews and Christians. Among ‘people of the book’ the ‘book’ has a regulative function: conformity to what the book prescribes is a major test of loyalty to their religious faith and practice.

For Jews the ‘book’ is the Hebrew Bible, comprising the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (from the initials of these three divisions in Hebrew the Bible is often referred to among Jews as the *TeNaKh*).⁷ For Christians it is the Hebrew Bible, which they call the Old Testament (amplified somewhat in certain Christian traditions),⁸ together with the New Testament. Muslims recognize the Hebrew Bible, the *tawrat* (the Arabic equivalent of Heb. *tôrāh*, ‘law’), and the Christian New Testament, the *injil* (from Gk. *euangelion*, ‘gospel’), as earlier revelations of God, but these find their completion in the revelation given through the Prophet, the *Qur’ān* (literally ‘recitation’ or ‘reading’), the ‘book’ *par excellence*.

THE TWO TESTAMENTS

Our concern here is with the Christian Bible, comprising the Old and New Testaments. The word ‘testament’ in English normally means a will (someone’s ‘last will and testament’); but this is not the sense in which it is used of the two parts of the Christian Bible. Our word ‘testament’ comes from Latin *testamentum*, which similarly means a will, but in this particular context the Latin word is used as the translation of the Greek word *diathēkē*. This Greek word may indeed mean a will,⁹ but it is used more widely of various kinds of settlement or agreement, not so much of one which is made between equals as of one in which a party superior in power or dignity confers certain privileges on an inferior, while the inferior undertakes certain obligations towards the superior. It is used repeatedly in both Old and New Testaments, both in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and in the original Greek of the New Testament. It is usually rendered by our word ‘covenant’, and its most distinctive usage relates to an agreement between God and human beings. Here, of course, there can be no question of an agreement between equals.

In the earliest books of the Old Testament God makes a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen. 9:8–17), and again with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:18; 17:1–4). The external token of the covenant with Noah was the rainbow; the external token of the covenant with Abraham was the rite of circumcision. Later, when Abraham’s descendants (or at least one important group of them) had migrated to Egypt and were drafted into forced labour gangs there, God remembered his covenant with Abraham and

brought about their deliverance. Having left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, they were constituted a nation in the wilderness of Sinai. Their national constitution took the form of a covenant into which the God of their fathers entered with them, making himself known to them by his name Yahweh.¹⁰ The terms of this covenant were, very simply, ‘I will be your God, and you shall be my people.’ Yahweh undertook to make various kinds of provision for them; they undertook to worship him exclusively and to obey his commandments. These undertakings were recorded in a document called ‘the book of the covenant’. According to the narrative of Exodus 24:4–8,

Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to Yahweh. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that Yahweh has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.’ And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words.’

This narrative is summarized in the New Testament, in Hebrews 9:18–20, where the covenant thus ratified is qualified as ‘the first covenant’. This is because the writer to the Hebrews sets it in contrast with the ‘new covenant’ promised in Jeremiah 31:31–34. Over six hundred years after the ratification of the covenant of Moses’ day at the foot of Mount Sinai, the prophet Jeremiah announced that, in days to come, the God of Israel would establish a new covenant with his people to replace that which he had made with the Exodus generation when he ‘took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt’ (Jer. 31:31–34). That ancient covenant made the divine will plain to them, but did not impart the power to carry it out; for lack of that power they broke the covenant. Under the new covenant, however, not only the desire but the power to do the will of God would be imparted to his people: his law would be put within them and written on their hearts. ‘In speaking of a new covenant’, says the writer to the Hebrews, ‘he treats the first as obsolete’ (Heb. 8:13). And he leaves his readers in no doubt that the new covenant has already been established, ratified not by the blood of sacrificed animals but by the blood of Christ, a sacrifice which effects not merely external purification from ritual defilement but the inward cleansing of the conscience from guilt.

This interpretation of the promise of the new covenant is fully in line with Jesus’s own words. During the evening before his death, sitting with his disciples round the supper-table, he gave them bread and wine as memorials of himself. When he gave them the wine, according to Mark’s record, he said, ‘This is my blood of the covenant (my covenant blood), which is poured out for many’ (Mark 14:24). The echo of Moses’ words, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant ...’, can scarcely be missed. That the covenant associated with the blood of Jesus (his voluntary offering himself up to God) is Jeremiah’s

new covenant is implied; the implication is explicit in Paul's record: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood' (1 Cor. 11:25).¹¹

Each of these covenants—the ancient covenant of Sinai and the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus—launched a great spiritual movement. Each of these movements gave rise to a special body of literature, and these bodies of literature came to be known in the Christian church as 'the books of the ancient covenant' and 'the books of the new covenant'. The former collection came into being over a period of a thousand years or more; the latter collection has a more inaugural character. Its various parts were written within a century from the establishment of the new covenant; they may be regarded as the foundation documents of Christianity. It was not until the end of the second century AD that the two collections began to be described, briefly, as the Old Covenant (or Testament) and the New Covenant (or Testament). These short titles are attested in both Greek and Latin almost simultaneously—in Greek, in the works of Clement of Alexandria;¹² in Latin, in the works of Tertullian of Carthage.¹³

It has been suggested that the expression 'the New Covenant (or Testament)' is first used to denote a collection of books in AD 192, in an anti-Montanist work in Greek by an unknown writer, addressed to the Phrygian bishop Avircius¹⁴ Marcellinus, from which Eusebius quotes some extracts. This work speaks of 'the word of the new covenant of the gospel, to which nothing can be added by any one who has chosen to live according to the gospel itself and from which nothing can be taken away'.¹⁵ It is unlikely, however, that this is a reference to the New Testament in our sense of the term;¹⁶ the anonymous writer is a little disturbed by the possibility that his own work might be viewed as an addition to 'the word of the new covenant of the gospel'.

A CLOSED CANON

The words 'to which nothing can be added ... and from which nothing can be taken away', whatever they precisely meant in this context, seem certainly to imply the principle of a *closed* canon. There are some scholars who maintain that the word 'canon' should be used only where the list of specially authoritative books has been closed; and there is much to be said in favour of this restrictive use of the word (a more flexible word might be used for the collection in process of formation), although it would be pedantic to insist on it invariably.

Such language about neither adding nor taking away is used in relation to individual components of the two Testaments. To the law of Deuteronomy, for example, the warning is attached: 'You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it' (Deut. 4:2; cf 12:32). A fuller warning is appended to the New Testament Apocalypse: 'I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in

the holy city, which are described in this book' (Rev. 22:18 f.).¹⁷

The author of the *Didachē* (an early manual of church order) echoes the warning of Deuteronomy when he says, 'You shall not forsake the commandments of the Lord, but you shall keep the things you received, "neither adding nor taking away".'¹⁸ Around the same time (end of the first century AD) Josephus uses similar language about the Hebrew scriptures: 'Although such long ages have now gone by, no one has dared to add anything to them, to take away anything from them, or to change anything in them.'¹⁹ This language can scarcely signify anything other than a closed canon.²⁰

LITURGICAL RECOGNITION

The status of the scriptures is symbolically acknowledged in various traditions of public worship. Special veneration is paid to the scrolls of the law in a synagogue service as they are carried from the holy ark, where they are kept, to the *bimah*, from which they are read to the congregation. In the liturgy of the Orthodox Church the gospel book is carried in procession, and the reading from it is preceded by the call: 'Wisdom! All stand; let us hear the holy gospel.' The veneration thus paid to the gospel book is not paid to the materials of which it is composed not to the ink with which it is inscribed, but to the Holy Wisdom which finds expression in the words that are read. In the Catholic liturgy the gospel is treated with comparable veneration and the reading from it is preceded and followed by special prayers. In the Anglican communion service the people stand while the gospel is read, and when it is announced they commonly say, 'Glory to Christ our Saviour', while at its conclusion, when the reader says, 'This is the gospel of Christ', they respond, 'Praise to Christ our Lord'.

In churches of the Reformed order (such as the Church of Scotland and other Presbyterian churches throughout the world) the first formal action in a service of public worship takes place when the Bible is carried in from the vestry and placed on the reading desk. Someone, of course, must carry it (the beadle, perhaps, or 'church officer'), but the person who does so has no liturgical significance (even if, in earlier days, he thought it proper to 'magnify his office'); it is the Bible that has liturgical significance. The Bible is followed at a respectful distance by the minister. And why? Because he is the *minister*—that is to say, in the original sense of the term, the 'servant' of the Word. No letters indicating academic achievement or public honour can match in dignity the letters V.D.M., appended to the pastor's name in some Reformed churches—*Verbi Divini Minister*, 'servant of the Word of God.' When the time comes in the service for the audible reading of the Bible, this lesson is underlined by the introductory exhortation: 'Let us hear the Word of God.'

It is from the contents, the message, of the book that it derives its value, whether we think of the gospel in particular or the Bible as a whole. It is therefore important to know what its contents are, and how they have come to be marked off from other writings—

even holy and inspired writings. That is the point of examining the growth of the canon of holy scripture.

¹ R. P. C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London, 1954), pp. 93, 133; *cf* his *Tradition in the Early Church* (London, 1962), p. 247.

² See pp. 71, 78, 79, 208f.

³ The Greek word was probably borrowed from the Semitic word which appears in Hebrew as *qāneh*, 'reed, 'rod'. From the same origin come Latin *canna* and Eng. 'cane'.

⁴ See p. 150, 179.

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *On the Gospel of St. John*, Lesson 6 on John 21 (*sola canonica scriptura est regula fidei*, perhaps '... a rule of faith'); Westminster Confession of Faith, 1, § 2.

⁶ The 55 volumes, originally under the general editorship of Friedrich Max Müller, appeared between 1879 and 1924 (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

⁷ This word is an acronym, formed of the initial letters of *Tôrāh* ('law', 'direction'), *Nēbî'îm* ('prophets') and *Ketûbîm* ('writings'), the names given to the three divisions (see p. 29).

⁸ See pp. 47f.

⁹ See p. 181.

¹⁰ See Ex. 3:7–15.

¹¹ Paul's is the earliest written record we have (AD 55): it preserves the words of institution as he learned them shortly after his conversion. Mark's record (put in writing c AD 65) reproduces the words as they were transmitted along another line.

¹² See p. 188.

¹³ See p. 180.

¹⁴ Also spelt Abercius (Gk. *Aberkios*).

¹⁵ *Hist. Eccl.* 5. 16. 3.

¹⁶ At one time W. C. van Unnik thought that this might indeed be the earliest surviving instance of the phrase 'New Covenant' or 'New Testament' (Gk. *kainē diathēkē*) to denote a collection of writings ('De la règle mēte prostheinai mēte aphelein dans l'histoire du canon', *Vigiliae Christianae* 3 [1949], pp. 1–36, later, however, he had second thoughts on this ('*Hē kainē diathēkē*—a Problem in the Early History of the Canon', *Studia Patristica* = *TU* 79 [1961], pp. 212–227, especially p. 218).

¹⁷ It is immaterial for our present purpose whether this warning comes from the seer of Patmos or from an editor of his work.

¹⁸ *Didachē* 4.13.

¹⁹ *Against Apion*, 1.42.

²⁰ See p. 32. Similar language about neither adding nor subtracting occurs in the *Letter of Aristeeas*, 311 (see p. 44), where, after the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, a curse was pronounced, 'in accordance with custom, on any one who should make any alteration, either by adding anything or changing in any way whatsoever anything that was written or

leaving anything out'; also twice in Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, 4.33.8; 5.30.1.)—on the latter occasion as a warning to those who reduce the number of the beast (Rev. 13:18) by 50 so as to read 616 (perhaps the first, but certainly not the last misuse of the warning of Rev. 22:15 f. to inhibit the proper exercise of textual criticism). See also Athanasius (p. 79).

THE FIRST CONTROVERSY.

QUESTION I.

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN THIS WHOLE CONTROVERSY IS DISTRIBUTED INTO ITS PARTICULAR QUESTIONS.

WE will lay the foundation of this controversy in those words of Christ which are to be found in the fifth chapter of St John's Gospel at the thirty-ninth verse: *Ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς*, SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES. Christ had been commended to the Jews by the testimony of John the Baptist. That testimony was most true and honourable; and could not be despised by the Jews themselves, amongst whom John lived in the highest respect and estimation. Yet Christ declares that he had others greater, more certain and more august than the testimony of John. He enumerates three of them: first, the works which he performed; secondly, his Father who had sent him; thirdly, the holy scriptures themselves, which he calls his witnesses. The Jews, indeed, thought honourably of the scriptures, and supposed that eternal life might be found in them. Nor does Christ blame in the least that judgment of theirs concerning the scriptures, but rather praises it. He bids them go on to "search the scriptures;" he inflames in every way their zeal for the scriptures, and sharpens their industry. For he exhorts them not only to read, but search and thoroughly examine the scriptures: he would not have them content with a slight perusal, but requires an assiduous, keen, laborious diligence in examining and investigating their meaning, such as those apply who search with anxious toil for treasures buried in the earth.

Now since Christ hath bid us search the scriptures without exception, not this part, or that part, or the other, it is manifest that in these words we are commanded to search the whole of scripture; not to confine ourselves to certain portions of it, while we despise or overlook the rest. All parts give plain testimony to Christ. But the scriptures are praised by the papists, as well as

highly esteemed by us; nor is there any controversy, whether the scriptures are to be searched. But concerning the due manner of searching them, and who they are to whom that care appertains, and concerning the scriptures themselves, which we all unanimously affirm should be searched, there is a most important controversy, which I shall now attempt to explain. In order to effect this clearly and methodically, I think it may be all divided into six questions, after the following manner.

We are commanded to search the scriptures: and for that purpose we must first understand, what are those genuine books of scripture, in searching and turning over which it behoves us to be occupied. The first question therefore shall be, *Of the number of the canonical books of scripture.*

We are commanded to search the scriptures: and therefore we must next consider, to whom this precept is addressed; whether only to the learned, and those skilled in the ancient languages, or to all the faithful. The second question therefore shall be, *Of versions of the scripture and sacred rites in the vulgar tongue.*

We are commanded to search the scriptures: whence it appears that the scriptures enjoy a very high dignity and authority, since Christ himself appeals and refers us to them. The third question therefore shall be, *Of the authority of scripture;* whether it have this so great credibility and dignity of itself, and from the Holy Ghost its author, or from the testimony of the church.

We are commanded to search the scriptures: whence some hope appears to be shewn that we shall come to understand them, and gain much profit by the search, if we do as we are commanded. Therefore the fourth question shall be, *Of the perspicuity of scripture.*

We are commanded to search the scripture; that is, to seek and investigate the true sense of scripture, since the scripture lies wholly in the meaning. Therefore the fifth question shall be, *Of the interpretation of scripture;* how it is to be interpreted, and who has the right and authority of interpretation.

We are commanded to search the scripture: and under the name of scripture the written word of God is plainly understood. Here then we must consider whether we are only bound to search the scripture, or whether, beside the scripture, something else be commended to our investigations. Therefore the sixth and last question shall be, *Of the perfection of scripture;* which I shall

prove to be so absolutely complete that we should wholly acquiesce in it, and need desire nothing more, and that unwritten traditions are by no means necessary for us.

These questions I purpose to treat in the order in which I have proposed them.

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING THE STATE OF THE FIRST QUESTION.

THE books of scripture are called *canonical*, because they contain the standard and rule of our faith and morals. For the scripture is in the church what the law is in a state, which Aristotle in his Politics calls a canon or rule. As all citizens are bound to live and behave agreeably to the public laws, so Christians should square their faith and conduct by the rule and law of scripture. So, in Eusebius¹, the holy fathers accuse Paul of Samosata of departing from the rule (*ἀποστὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ κανόνος*), and becoming the author of an heretical opinion. So Tertullian, in his book against Hermogenes², calls the scripture the rule of faith; and Cyprian says, in his discourse upon the baptism of Christ: "One will find that the rules of all doctrine are derived from this scripture; and that, whatever the discipline of the church contains springs hence, and returns hither³." Chrysostom too, in his 13th

[¹ ὅπου δὲ ἀποστὰς τοῦ κανόνος ἐπὶ κίβδηλα καὶ νόθα διδάγματα μετελήλυθεν, οὐδὲν δεῖ τοῦ ἕξω ὄντος τὰς πράξεις κρίνειν. H. E. vii. 30. T. 3. p. 391. ed. Heinich. Lips. 1828. But it is most probably the Creed that is there meant.]

[² Whitaker most probably refers to the famous passage, c. xxii. "Adoro plenitudinem scripturæ," &c. cited below, Qu. 6. c. xvi., and produced also by Cosin (Scholastical History of the Canon, chap. i. §. 1.) in proof that the Church always regarded scripture as "the infallible RULE of our FAITH." Some, however, suppose that Tertullian refers to scripture, and not the Creed, in these words: "Solemus hæreticis compendii gratia de posteritate præscribere: in quantum enim *veritatis regula* prior, quæ etiam *futuras hæreses prænuntiavit*, in tantum posteriores quæque doctrinæ hæreses præjudicabuntur." Adv. Hermog. i. (*Opp. P. iv. p. 1.* ed. Leopold. Lipsiæ, 1841.) For the Creed contains no prediction of heresies.]

[³ This treatise, falsely ascribed to Cyprian, may be found in the works of Arnold of Chartres (Carnotensis) subjoined to Fell's Cyprian (Amstel. 1691). The passage cited is at p. 33: "Inveniet ex hac scriptura omnium doctrina-

Homily upon 2 Corinthians calls scripture the exact balance, and standard, and rule of all things." For the same reason Augustine affirms, that "whatever belongs to faith and moral life may be found in the scriptures¹;" and he calls the scripture *the scales*, in the following passage: "Let us not apply deceitful scales, where we may weigh what we wish, and as we wish; but let us bring God's own scales from the holy scriptures," &c.

So Basil calls the sacred doctrine "the canon of rectitude and rule of truth," which fails in no part of perfection: and Ruffinus, in his exposition of the creed, after enumerating the books of scripture, adds, "These are the books which the fathers included in the canon, and from which they willed that the assertions of our faith should be demonstrated²;" and then he subjoins: "From these fountains of the divine word our cups are to be drawn³." Aquinas too lays down, that "the doctrine of the apostles and prophets is called canonical, because it is, as it were, the rule of our intellect⁴." Hence it plainly appears why the scriptures are called *canonical*;—because they prescribe to us what we must believe, and how we ought to live: so that we should refer to this test our whole faith and life, as the mason or architect squares his work by the line and plummet. Hence, too, we may perceive that the scripture is perfect, since otherwise the title of canon or rule could hardly be applied to it; upon which point we shall have to speak under the sixth question.

Now these books, which are called canonical, are comprised in the old and new Testaments, and are therefore styled *Testamentary*. So Eusebius calls these books *ἐνδιαθήκους*⁵; and Nicephorus often uses the same term. Some also call them *διαθηκο-*

rum regulas emanasse; et hinc nasci, et huc reverti, quidquid ecclesiastica continet disciplina." But Arnold is not speaking of the whole scripture, but of the command to love God.]

[¹ See these passages cited more fully below. Qu. 6. c. 16.]

[² *Hæc sunt quæ patres intra canonem concluserunt; ex quibus fidel nostræ assertiones constare voluerunt. Ad Calc. Opp. Cypriani, p. 26, ut supra.]*

[³ *Hæc nobis a patribus, ut dixi, tradita opportunum visum est hoc in loco designare, ad instructionem eorum qui prima sibi ecclesiæ ac fidel elementa suscipiunt, ut sciant ex quibus sibi fontibus verbi Dei haurienda sint pocula. Ibid. p. 27.]*

[⁴ *Doctrina apostolorum et prophetarum canonica dicitur, quia est quasi regula intellectus nostri. Thomæ Aquin. in 1 Tim. vi. Lect. 1.]*

[⁵ *H. E. Lib. v. c. 25. οὐκ ἐνδιαθήκους μὲν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀντιλεγόμενος.]*

γράφους. The question, then, between us and the papists is, What books are to be esteemed canonical and testamentary. Concerning many, and indeed the principal ones, we are agreed: concerning some we are at variance. But, in order that the true state of this question may be understood, we must see, in the first place, what the council of Trent hath determined upon this subject. Its words are as follows: "The synod hath deemed it fitting that a catalogue of the sacred books should be subjoined to this decree, lest any should have occasion to doubt what books are received by it⁶." Then it recites the books which are truly canonical, and are received by us without any hesitation. But it subjoins others which we do not acknowledge as canonical. Such are these six books: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, two books of Maccabees. These are the books of the old Testament. Afterwards, it enumerates the books of the new Testament, all of which we receive without any controversy, although they were not always alike received in the church, as you shall hear in the sequel. Finally, the council concludes in these words: "Whoever does not receive these books entire with all their parts, as they are contained in the ancient Latin Vulgate, for sacred and canonical, let him be accursed⁷!" Here you have the decree of the Tridentine council, and the terrible sanction of that decree. From these premises it now appears that we are required by the Tridentine fathers, if we would escape their anathema, to receive as authoritative canonical scripture not only those six entire books which we have mentioned, but besides certain parts of and additions to the books, as Baruch, the Hymn of the three Children, the histories of Susannah and Bel and the Dragon, which are attributed to Daniel, and certain apocryphal chapters of the book of Esther: for it is thus that the Jesuits interpret the meaning of this decree. Now, therefore, the state of the question is this; whether these books, and these parts of books, should be received for sacred and canonical scriptures? They affirm: we deny. It remains that we should proceed to the discussion. I will first answer their arguments, and then proceed to the defence of our cause; which course I

[⁶ *Sacrorum vero librorum indicem huic decreto adhibendum censuit, ne cui dubitatio suboriri possit, quinam sint, qui ab ipsa synodo suscipiuntur. Concil. Trid. Sess. iv. Decret. 1.*]

[⁷ *Si quis autem hos libros ipsos integros cum omnibus suis partibus, prout in ecclesia catholica legi consueverunt, et in veteri vulgata editione habentur, pro sacris et canonicis non susceperit. . . Anathema sit. Ibid.*]

intend to follow throughout, because I deem it most suitable to the matter we have in hand, and I perceive that it hath been generally adopted by Aristotle. And since, as Nazianzen tells us, "every argument is designed either to establish our own opinion, or overturn the opposite¹," I will choose first to overturn the opposite opinion, and then to establish my own.

CHAPTER III.

CONCERNING THOSE HERETICS WHO WERE GUILTY OF SACRILEGE AGAINST THE SACRED AND CANONICAL SCRIPTURES.

BUT, before I proceed, I deem it necessary for you to censure the madness of certain ancient heretics, who impiously removed some certain and undoubted parts of scripture from the sacred canon. Such heretics, indeed, there were in great numbers, as we read in Irenæus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, Augustine, and others. I shall not endeavour to go through them all, but will enumerate for you the principal.

First of all, the Sadducees received no scriptures but the five books of Moses². This many suppose to have been the reason why Christ (Matt. xxii.) refutes the Sadducees denying the resurrection, by the testimony of the Mosaic scripture. Simon, following in their steps, declared that the prophets were not at all to be regarded; as Irenæus testifies³, Lib. i. c. 20. The Manichees rejected the whole old Testament, as proceeding from the evil God: for they imagined two gods, the one good and the other evil. Epiphanius has treated upon this subject, Hæres. lxvi. So Saturninus rejected the God of the Jews, and consequently the whole old Testament, as Irenæus tells us, Lib. i. c. 22⁴. The impious Marcion insulted with a load of reproaches the God who is preached in the law and the prophets, and held that Christ had come to dis-

[¹ Διττοῦ ἑντος λόγου παντός, τοῦ μὲν τὸ οἰκείον κατασκευάζοντος, τοῦ δὲ τὸ ἀντίπαλον ἀνατρέποντος. Orat. xxxv. p. 562. A. Nazianz. Opp. T. i. Colon. 1690.]

[² This common notion is reasonably doubted by many. See Jortin's Remarks, B. xi. Appendix 1, on the Sadducees, Vol. i. p. 439.]

[³ Prophetas autem a mundi fabricatoribus angelis inspiratos dixisse prophetias; quapropter nec ulterius curarent eos hi, qui in eum et in Selenea ejus spem habeant. P. 116. B. ed. Fevard. Paris. 1685.]

[⁴ Judæorum Deum unum ex angelis esse dixit, et . . . advenisse Christum ad destructionem Judæorum Dei Prophetias autem quasdam quidem

solve the law and the prophets, and the works of that God who made the world. This Irenæus tells us⁵, Lib. i. c. 29. Such frantic men Christ himself expressly refutes by his own words, when he says, that he did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil. Matt. v. 17. This heresy Augustine also imputes to the Cerdonians, whom he affirms to hold the old Testament in contempt⁶, (*Ad Quod vult Deum*, c. 21), and to the Severians, of whom he writes, "They condemn the resurrection of the flesh and the old Testament⁷," (ibid. c. 24.) Guido Cameracensis reckons this also amongst the heresies of the Albigenses. This heresy is refuted by Epiphanius, in the place which I have already cited, and most copiously by Augustine against Faustus the Manichee, and against the adversary of the law and the prophets.

The Ptolemæans condemned the books of Moses⁸, as Epiphanius relates, Hæres. xxxiii. The Nicolaitans and Gnostics ejected the book of Psalms from the sacred canon, as Philaster informs us, (in Lib. de Hær. c. 127); which heresy the Anabaptists have renewed in our times. But all these heretics are refuted by the clearest evidence of the new Testament.

Many formerly, as Philaster relates (in Cat. c. 132, 133), rejected the books of Solomon, and especially Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs; because in the former Solomon seems to invite men to a life of pleasure, and in the latter, to relate certain amatory discourses between himself and Pharaoh's daughter. But it is plain that these men fell into a manifest and impious error. For in Ecclesiastes Solomon does not allure men to enjoy the pleasures and blandishments of the world, but rather deters them from such pleasures, and exhorts them, with a divine eloquence, to

ab iis angelis qui mundum fabricaverunt dictas; quasdam autem a Satana, quem et ipsum angelum adversarium mundi fabricatoribus ostendit; maxime autem Judæorum Deo. Ibid. p. 118, c.]

[⁵ Marcion . . . impudorate blasphemans eum qui a lege et prophetis annunciatus est Deus . . . Jesum autem [dicens] . . . venientem in Judæam . . . dissolventem prophetas et legem, et omnia opera ejus Dei qui mundum fecit. Ibid. p. 129, A.]

[⁶ Resurrectionem mortuorum negat, spernens etiam Testamentum Vetus. Augustini Opp. T. VIII. col. 43, A. Paris. 1837.]

[⁷ Carnis resurrectionem cum Vetere Testamento respuentes. Ibid. c.]

[⁸ Παρὰ γὰρ τοῖς εἰρημένοις καὶ τὸν νόμον τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν διὰ Μωυσέως βλασφημῶν οὐκ αἰσχύνεται. Ed. Petav. Colon. 1682. T. I. p. 216. See the curious epistle of Ptolemæus to Flora, which he there subjoins, given also by Grabe, Spicil. 11. 69.]

despise and contemn the present world. Thus at the very commencement he exclaims, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity:" in which words he declares that all those things which are sought after in this world, are uncertain, transitory, and fallacious. Whence it necessarily follows that those are mad who acquiesce in the enjoyment of such objects. And so (after having disputed through the whole book against those who pursue these pleasures so greedily, and desire to satisfy themselves with such goods, whatever they are) he at the close teaches that happiness consists not, as many suppose, in things of this kind, but in true piety, and thus concludes: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man." This is not the judgment of an Epicurus, but of a holy prophet, withdrawing foolish men from the pursuit of worthless objects, and recalling them into the true path of a pious and a happy life.

In the Song, if Solomon had wished to praise his wife, he would not have used such prodigious and absurd comparisons. For he compares her to the cavalry of Pharaoh, her head to Carmel, her eyes to fish-ponds, her nose to a tower, her teeth to a flock of sheep; and finally pronounces her whole person terrible as an army. Such things do not suit the daughter of Pharaoh and the bride of Solomon. They must, therefore, be referred to the mystic bride of another Solomon,—that is, to the Church of Christ, whose consummate union of faith and love with her spouse this whole book sets forth; as, indeed, all men of sound judgment have always determined. Nor is the fact, that none of the customary names of God occur in this book, any proof that it is not canonical. For, although such names are omitted, yet others are used of the same kind and importance, as shepherd, brother, friend, beloved, spouse, which were much more suitable to the style of such a piece: since he, whom the bride so often addresses under these names, is no other than Christ, at once the true Son of God, and the true God himself.

We care little for the impious Anabaptists, who reject this book with contempt; nor can we at all excuse Castalio¹, if he really wrote

[¹ I write the name thus in conformity with Whitaker's usage; but the correct form is *Castellio*. See the curious history of the origin of the other form in Bayle, *CASTALIO*, Rem. M. With respect to the imputation mentioned in the text, Varillas charges it upon *Castellio* more definitely, stating this injurious opinion of the Canticles to be avowed by him in his argument to that book. Bayle observes, that in five editions of *Castellio's* bible which he

what some object to him;—that this book is nothing but a conversation which Solomon held with his Sulamith.

The Anabaptists are said, at the present day, to reject and ridicule the book of Job, and some have written that it is called by those heretics a *Hebrew Tragi-Comedy*. This they would seem to have learned from the wicked Jews: for certain rabbins, authors of the Talmudic fables, affirm² that it is a fictitious story, and no such man ever existed. The impudence of these persons is refuted by other testimonies of scripture. For, in Ezekiel xiv. 14, the Lord says: "If these three men were in the midst thereof, Noah, Daniel, and Job, &c." Whence we perceive that Job must have really existed, as no one doubts that Noah and Daniel did. Paul too cites a clear testimony from this book (1 Cor. iii. 19): "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" which words we find, in Job v. 13, to have been pronounced by Eliphaz. The apostle James, also, hath mentioned this man, James v. 11. Hence it is manifest that this was a true history, and that the book itself is canonical, and that they who determine otherwise are to be esteemed as heretics.

Jerome, in the Proëm of his Commentaries on Daniel³, relates that Porphyry the philosopher wrote a volume against the book of our prophet Daniel, and affirmed that what is now extant under the name of Daniel, was not published by the ancient prophet, but by some later Daniel, who lived in the times of Antiochus Epiphanes. But we need not regard what the impious Porphyry may have written, who mocked at all the scriptures and religion itself,

examined, he could find no argument to that book whatever. However, in the London edition of the Latin bible (in 4 vols. 12mo. 1726), there is the following: "*Colloquium Servatoris et Ecclesiæ. Domestici in Ecclesiæ (Ecclesia) hostes. Servator, lilium Columba. Solomo Christi Imago. Ad puellas vir, et ad virum puellæ. Ecclesiæ pulchritudo. Servatoris in Ecclesiam Studium. Ecclesia vinea copiosa.*"

[² Nosti quosdam esse, qui dicunt Jobum nunquam fuisse, neque creatum esse; sed historiam ejus nihil aliud esse quam parabolam. Maimonides, Moreh Nevoch. par. iii. c. 22. Compare Manasseh Ben Israel, de Resurr. Mort. p. 123.]

[³ Contra prophetam Danielem duodecimum librum scripsit Porphyrius, nolens eum ab ipso, cujus inscriptus est nomine, esse compositum, sed a quodam qui temporibus Antiochi Epiphaniis fuerit in Judæa; et non tam Danielem ventura dixisse, quam illum narrasse præterita. T. iii. p. 1071, &c. ed. Bened.]

and whose calumnies were refuted by Eusebius, Apollinarius and Methodius¹, as Jerome testifies in the above-cited place. So far concerning the old Testament.

The new Testament, also, was formerly assaulted in various ways by heretics and others. The Manichees shewed themselves no less impious and sacrilegious towards the books of the new Testament than they were towards those of the old. They were not afraid to say that the books of the apostles and evangelists were stuffed full of lies: which madness and frenzy of theirs Augustine hath most learnedly confuted in his thirty-second book against Faustus the Manichee.

Others received no gospel but that of Luke, and hardly any other part of the new Testament; as Cerdon and his disciple Marcion. Tertullian speaks of these towards the end of his Prescriptions²: "Cerdon receives only the gospel of Luke, nor even that entire. He takes the epistles of Paul, but neither all of them, nor in their integrity. He rejects the Acts of the Apostles and the Apocalypse as false. After him appeared his disciple, Marcion by name, who endeavoured to support the heresy of Cerdon." These men took away almost the whole contents of the new Testament.

The Valentinians admitted no gospel but that of John, as Ire-næus tells us³; (Lib. III. c. 11.) which error the papists charge on Luther also, but most falsely, as they themselves well know. The Alogians⁴, on the contrary, rejected all John's writings, and were so called because they would not acknowledge as God the Logos,

[¹ Cui solertissime responderunt Cæsariensis Episcopus. . . . Apollinarius quoque et ante hos, ex parte, Methodius. Ibid.]

[² Solum Evangelium Lucæ, nec totum recipit, Apostoli Pauli neque omnes neque totas epistolas sumit; Acta Apostolorum et Apocalypsin quasi falsa rejicit. Post hunc discipulus ipsius emersit, Marcion quidam nomine . . . hæresin Cerdonis approbare conatus est. c. 51. This piece, which forms the concluding part of the Prescriptions (from c. 45), seems the work of some later hand.]

[³ Hi autem qui a Valentino sunt, eo quod est secundum Joannem plenissime utentes ad ostensionem conjugationum suarum, ex ipso deteguntur nihil recte dicentes. p. 258, D.]

[⁴ Lardner, History of Heretics, chap. 23 (Works, 4to ed., Vol. IV. p. 690), considers the existence of such a heresy very doubtful; but I cannot see sufficient ground for all his suspicions. However, it is hard to believe that any men in their senses ever ascribed *all* John's writings to Cerinthus, as Epiphanius seems to say, p. 424.]

whom John declares to be God in the beginning of his gospel. This is related by Epiphanius (Hær. Lib. i.), who gave them this appellation upon that account.

Irenæus relates⁵ (Lib. i. c. 26.), that the Ebionites received only the gospel according to Matthew, and rejected the apostle Paul as an apostate from the law.

The Severians made no account of the Acts of the Apostles, as Eusebius informs us, Lib. iv. c. 27⁶.

The Marcionites rejected both epistles to Timothy, the epistle to Titus, and the epistle to the Hebrews, as Epiphanius records, Hær. XLII.⁷

Chrysostom and Jerome⁸, in the Preface to the epistle of Paul to Philemon, testify that it was by some not received as canonical; which conclusion they were led into by considering that human frailty could not bear the continual uninterrupted action of the Holy Ghost, and that the apostles must have spoken some things by a mere human spirit. Amongst these they classed this epistle, as containing in it nothing worthy of an apostolic and divine authority, or useful to us. Chrysostom⁹ refutes this opinion, with much truth and beauty, in the Argument of this epistle, and teaches us that many noble and necessary lessons may be learned from it: first, that we should extend our solicitude to the meanest persons: secondly, that we should not despair of slaves, (and therefore, still less of freemen,) however wicked and abandoned: thirdly, that it is not lawful for any one to withdraw a slave from his master under pretence of religion: fourthly, that it is our duty not to be ashamed of slaves, if they be honest men. Who now will say that this epistle is useless to us, from which we may learn so many and

[⁵ Solo autem eo quod est secundum Matthæum Evangelio utuntur, et Apostolum Paulum recusant, apostatam esse eum Legis dicentes. p. 127, c.]

[⁶ Βλασφημοῦντες δὲ Παῦλον τὸν ἀπόστολον, ἀθετοῦσιν αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐπιστολάς, μηδὲ τὰς πράξεις τῶν ἀποστόλων καταδεχόμενοι. T. I. p. 409.]

[⁷ Ἐπιστολάς παρ' αὐτῷ τοῦ ἁγίου ἀποστόλου δέκα, αἷς μόνοις κέχρηται. §. 9. T. I. p. 309. D.]

[⁸ Volunt aut epistolam non esse Pauli, quæ ad Philemonem scribitur; aut etiam si Pauli sit, nihil habere quod edificare nos possit.—Hieron. præf. in Ep. ad Philem. T. iv. p. 442.]

[⁹ The best edition of Chrysostom's admirable Commentary on the epistle to Philemon is that by Raphelius, subjoined to Vol. II. of his Annotationes Philologicæ. Lugd. Bat. 1747. The reader will find the passage here referred to at pp. 28, 30, 32.]

such distinguished lessons? Forasmuch, therefore, as this epistle was both written by Paul, and contains in it such excellent instruction, it ought not by any means to be rejected.

Such, then, was the opinion, or rather the mad raving of the heretics concerning the sacred books. There were others also, who either rejected altogether certain books and parts of books of the new Testament, or else allowed them no great authority, whom it is not necessary to enumerate: for we must not spend too much time in recording or refuting such persons. But the Schwenkfeldtians¹ and Libertines, proceeding to a still greater length in their wickedness, despise the whole scripture, and insult it with many reproaches, holding that we should attend not to what the scriptures speak, but to what the Spirit utters and teaches us internally. Of these, Hosius Polonus writes thus, in his book concerning the express word of God: "We will dismiss the scriptures, and rather listen to God speaking to us, than return to those beggarly elements. One is not required to be learned in the law and scriptures, but to be taught of God. Vain is the labour which is expended upon scripture: for the scripture is a creature and a beggarly sort of element²." Many passages of scripture condemn this monstrous heresy. Christ says: "Search the scriptures." Paul says: "Whatsoever things were written of old time were written for our learning." Rom. xv. 4. And elsewhere: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness." 2 Tim. iii. 16. There are innumerable such testimonies, by which the authority of the scriptures is fully proved, and the blasphemy of these men refuted; against which our divines have also written many excellent discourses.

At the same time that we justly condemn the heresies which I have mentioned, we cannot but wholly disapprove the opinion of those, who think that the sacred writers have, in some places, fallen

[¹ So called from Gaspar Schwenckfeldt, a Silesian knight, and counsellor to the Duke of Lignitz, who died in 1561. See an account of him in Mosheim, Cent. xvi. Sect. III. part II. c. 1, §§ 23, 24.]

[² Nos . . . ipsas scripturas . . . facessere jubebimus, et Deum loquentem potius audiemus, . . . quam ad egena ista elementa nos convertamus. . . Non oportet legis et scripturæ peritum esse, sed a Deo doctum. Vanus est labor qui scripturæ impenditur: scriptura enim creatura est, et egenum quoddam elementum.—Hos. Op. Col. 1584. De express. Dei Verbo. Tom. I. p. 624.]

into mistakes. That some of the ancients were of this opinion appears from the testimony of Augustine, who maintains, in opposition to them³, "that the evangelists are free from all falsehood, both from that which proceeds from deliberate deceit, and that which is the result of forgetfulness." (De Cons. Ev. Lib. II. c. 12.) Consequently, Jerome judged wrong, if he really judged, as Erasmus supposes⁴, "that the evangelists might have fallen into an error of memory." Erasmus himself, indeed, determines that it is neither impious nor absurd to think so; and allows it possible that Matthew, for instance, in that place of his 27th chapter, may have put the name of Jeremiah instead of Zechariah. Upon which place Erasmus writes thus: "But although this were a slip of memory merely in the name, I do not suppose that one ought to be so over-scrupulous as that the authority of the whole scripture should seem invalidated on that account⁵." But it does not become us to be so easy and indulgent as to concede that such a lapse could be incident to the sacred writers. They wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as Peter tells us, 2 Pet. i. 21. And all scripture is inspired of God, as Paul expressly writes, 2 Tim. iii. 16. Whereas, therefore, no one may say that any infirmity could befall the Holy Spirit, it follows that the sacred writers could not be deceived, or err, in any respect. Here, then, it becomes us to be so scrupulous as not to allow that any such slip can be found in scripture. For, whatever Erasmus may think, it is a solid answer which Augustine gives to Jerome: "If any, even the smallest, lie be admitted in the scriptures, the whole authority of scripture is presently invalidated and destroyed⁶." That form which the prophets use so

[³ Omnem autem falsitatem abesse ab Evangelistis decet, non solum eam quæ mentiendo promitur, sed etiam eam quæ obliviscendo.—Aug. Opp. T. III. P. II. 1310. B.]

[⁴ Erasmus (loc. infra citat.) gives Jerome's own words from his epistle *de optimo genere interpretandi*: Accusent Apostolum falsitatis, quod nec cum Hebraico nec cum Septuaginta congruat translatoribus, et, quod his majus est, *erret* in nomine: pro Zacharia quippe Hieremiam posuit. Sed absit hoc de pedissequo Christi dicere, cui curæ fuit non verba et syllabas aucupari, sed sententias dogmatum ponere.—Epist. ci. T. II. p. 334. Antv. 1579.]

[⁵ Ceterum etiamsi fuisset in nomine duntaxat memoriæ lapsus, non opinor quemquam adeo morosum esse oporteret, ut ob eam causam totius scripturæ sacræ labasceret auctoritas.—Erasm. Annot. p. 107. Froben. Basil. 1535.]

[⁶ Si mendacium aliquod in scripturis vel levissimum admittatur, scripturæ auctoritatem omnem mox labefactari ac convelli.—This is the quotation as given by Whitaker in his text. The following is probably the passage

often, "Thus saith the Lord," is to be attributed also to the apostles and evangelists. For the Holy Spirit dictated to them whatever things they wrote; whose grace (as Ambrose writes, Lib. II. in Luc.) "knows nothing of slow struggles¹." Hence neither can that be tolerated which Melchior Canus has alleged, (Lib. II. c. 18. ad 6) in explanation of a certain difficulty in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. vii. 16; where Stephen says, that Abraham bought a sepulchre from the sons of Emmor, whereas Moses relates that the sepulchre was purchased by Jacob, not by Abraham. Canus thinks that Stephen might have made a mistake in relating so long a history, but that Luke committed no error, since he faithfully recorded what Stephen said². But that answer draws the knot tighter, instead of loosing it: for Stephen was not only full of the Holy Ghost, but is even said to have spoken by the Holy Ghost. Acts vi. 10. Stephen, therefore, could no more have mistaken than Luke; because the Holy Ghost was the same in Luke and in Stephen, and had no less force in the one than in the other. Besides, if we concede that Stephen mistook or was deceived, I do not see how he can excuse Luke for not rectifying the error. Therefore we must maintain intact the authority of scripture in such a sense as not to allow that anything is therein delivered otherwise than the most perfect truth required. Wherefore I cannot understand with what degree of prudence and consideration Jerome can have written that, which he says is to be noted, in his Questions upon Genesis: "Wherever the apostles or apostolical men speak to the people, they generally use those testimonies which had gotten into common use amongst the nations³."

intended: Admisso enim semel in tantum auctoritatis fastigium officioso aliquo mendacio, nulla illorum librorum particula remanebit, &c. Epist. xix. Tom. II. p. 14.]

[¹ Nescit tarda molimina Sancti Spiritus gratia. c. XIX. Ambros. Opp. T. v. p. 46. Paris. 1838.]

[² Stephano id quod vulgo solet accidisse, ut in longa videlicet narratione, eademque præsertim subita, confuderit nonnulla et miscuerit, in quibusdam etiam memoria lapsus fuerit; . . . Lucas vero, historiæ veritatem retinere volens, ne iota quidem immutavit, sed rem ut a Stephano narrata erat exposuit.—Melch. Cani Loc. Theolog. fol. 89. 2. Colon. Agripp. 1585.]

[³ Ubicunque Sancti Apostoli aut Apostolici viri loquuntur ad populos, iis plerumque testimoniis abutuntur, quæ jam fuerant in gentibus divulgata.—Hieron. Quæst. Hebr. in Genes. T. III. p. 468.]