

we speak of the Canon of Scriptures we mean the collection of the authentic books of the Bible. Christian Churches are generally agreed about the Canon of the New Testament, the difficulty is about that of the Old Testament. The Books of the Old Testament are divided into: Proto-Canonical and Deutero-Canonical Books, which my friend and the Reformers call "Apocryphals."—(1) The Proto-Canonical Books are those recognised by Jews and Christians as inspired, whose authenticity has never seriously been called into doubt. (2) The Deutero-Canonical Books are those which were not recognised by the Hebrews, but were admitted by the Hellenic Jews, and afterwards by the Catholic Church as really authentic and inspired, although before they were examined and recognised by the Church some Fathers whilst acknowledging their utility to promote piety and edify, hesitated to admit them as positively inspired. These are: Tobias, Judith, Baruch, some parts of the Book of Esther and of the Prophet Daniel, the history of Susannah, the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus and the two Books of the Macchabees, also the history of Belus and the dragon. Most of the Deutero-Canonical Books were probably written in Armenian, but we have only their translation. The Septuagint Version of the Bible includes them all. It is so called because it was commenced by seventy-two learned Jews, at the time of Ptolemy Philadelphos. It was highly esteemed in Egypt and Palestine. It was received by the Jews at the time of Our Blessed Lord, as is evident from the numerous quotations from it by the apostolical Fathers. "Many of the quotations ascribed in the New Testament to Our Blessed Saviour are taken from it, and not from the Old Hebrew text (Most Rev Dr. Carr, the Church and the Bible)" By thus quoting the Septuagint Our Blessed Lord implicitly, at least, acknowledged its veracity, for we cannot for a moment suppose that He would have quoted an inaccurate or false version; yet, my rev friend, because it contains the Books he rejects, says it contains dangerous errors and ridiculous stories. Is the history of Esther, of Tobias, or of the Macchabees ridiculous? Do not the Books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus contain most beautiful precepts of morality? For the Rev. J. Dickson "they are of no more value than the Iliad of Homer, the Milesian tales, or Gulliver's travels." How can a minister of God speak in such an impious manner? Contrary to the testimony of the greatest students of sacred hermeneutics, he falsely affirms that "they were never recognised as canonical by the Jews, nor by the primitive Christian Churches." They were not received by the Hebrews, but the Hellenic or Greek Jews admitted them and also many of the early Christian Fathers and Churches. As the Church had not pronounced on the matter, several Fathers, although they considered them as instructive, pious and edifying, hesitated to give them the same authority as to the Proto-Canonical Books, whose inspiration was never seriously contested. There is a great difference between this respectful reserve and the Rev. J. Dickson, who, in a former letter, said they were "as ostensibly full of folly as an egg is full of meat," and in his first lecture he wantonly declares that "they advocate suicide and lying and incantation and other errors." They indeed relate facts involving lying, incantation and other crimes, but they do not advocate them, no more than the other crimes related in the Proto-Canonical Books are advocated as an example for our imitation. Whatever is wrong and wicked or deceitful must be condemned and abhorred. Sometimes those who did such things may have acted with an erroneous conscience without adverting to the malice of what they were doing, thinking they were justified to think and speak as they did. In that case we must give them credit for their pure intention without justifying the deed itself. Evidently the object of my friend is to insinuate that the Church of Rome in acknowledging those Books as inspired and true is thereby an abettor of crime, and cannot, consequently, be the true Church of Christ. But is such line of argumentation "honest"? Is it calculated to promote truth, the love of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The Septuagint was received by St. Clement of Rome (i. Cor. 55); St. Polycarp (Phil. x.); Clement of Alexandria (Strom. i.); St. Ireneus (Haer. vi. 5); the Fathers of the second and third centuries, the Latin Version, called Vetus Itala, dating back to the first century, which formed the basis of the translation of St. Jerome, the Councils of Hippo, 393, and Carthage, 419, and sanctioned by Pope Damasus and Innocent I. Were not these holy, learned Doctors and Pontiffs in a better position to ascertain whether the controverted Books were authentic, veridical and inspired than the Reformers of the sixteenth century, who, as I have shown, and am in position to prove, rejected them simply because they were a condemnation of their errors opposed to the faith of all Christian antiquity. The hesitation of some Fathers to receive them as inspired before the final decision of the Church was an act of prudence; it did not show these Scriptures were not Divine, but simply that there was not an infallible decision telling us that they were so. From the decision of the VI. Council of Carthage 419, all the Fathers and doctors of Christendom quoted them and declared them to be the pure word of God. Authority for authority, even from a human point of view the authority of the Fathers and of the councils is a thou-

sand times greater than the unfounded opinion of the reformers. The Rev. J. Dickson does not blush to affirm that St Jerome was an imposter who translated the Bible "confessedly in the interests of a particular set of doctrines held by a particular Church." Let me completely refute this vile calumny. St Jerome has always been considered as the most learned of the Latin Fathers. He was born at Strigonium, near Aquileia. He had for his tutor the famous rhetor and literator Donatus and Victorinus, in whose honour a statue was raised by the Senate, and was considered the marvel of his time. He obtained the greatest honours as a Greek and Latin scholar. In order to improve himself and converse with the wisest and most learned in every place he resolved to travel. Knowing that the Romans had established in Gaul many celebrated schools, he repaired thither. St. Jerome purchased a great many rare books and copied others, and had others translated by his friends. He next travelled through eastern countries, Pontus, Bithinia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, visiting persons of eminent sanctity and learning. He carried nothing with him but his library. Evagrius, Bishop of Antioch, who was rich, gave him many rare and precious books and helped him with his purse. He spent some time at Antioch, and in the desert of Chalcis. He learned Hebrew the better to understand the Scriptures. He next travelled through Palestine, and visited all places sanctified by the presence of our Blessed Lord. He also went to Constantinople to consult St. Gregory Nazianzen about certain obscure and difficult passages of Holy Scriptures. Thence, he went to Rome where he astonished every one by his vast erudition, eloquence and piety. The greatest doctors went to listen to him; the clergy and the nobility were guided to a great extent by his advice. Roman ladies looked upon him as a saint and an oracle. Albina, Melania, Marcella, Asella, Fabiola, etc., took him for their spiritual guide, and he explained to them the Holy Scriptures with the explanations of the Fathers and traditions of the early Christians. He next went to Cyprus, where he was received with the greatest honours by St. Epiphanius. He went after that to Alexandria to consult about some biblical difficulties, Didymus, the famous director of that seat of learning. Didymus, besides the Holy Scriptures, was thoroughly acquainted with geometry, astronomy and music; he explained the works of Plato and Aristotle along with the Holy Scriptures. Could Pope Damasus have chosen a more fit man to revise and correct the Latin version of the Bible? He translated from the Hebrew the books of the Old Testament, the Gospels from the original Greek, and the rest from the old Latin Vulgate, or Vetus Itala. This great work occupied him for twenty years, that is, from 383 to 403. This alone shows how conscientious he was about his statements. The probity and honesty of St. Jerome has never been called into doubt by any great scholar in Holy Scriptures. To say, as the Rev. J. Dickson has the temerity to affirm, "that he confessedly translated it in the interests of a particular set of doctrines, held by a particular church," is to suppose that he was knowingly and purposely falsifying the word of God for the interests of the Holy Catholic Church he belonged to. Is not this a frightful accusation? It is the more so that no man ever less merited it than St. Jerome, as we shall show to evidence. From the VI century that is, from the days of Pope Gregory the Great 590-604 all the western churches recognised him as the most accurate version. The Fathers of the Council of Trent having compared it with the most ancient copies of the Hebrew and Greek, declared it to be the most faithful and correct. . . . Far from being written "confessedly in the interests of a particular sect," as my friend maliciously or erroneously asserts, what especially recommends the translation of St. Jerome is that it was written when both the Eastern and Western Churches were perfectly united in faith and government, before all the sects now subsisting, and therefore he could not have been biassed by party spirit. Hugo De Groot, generally known as Grotius, so celebrated for his vast erudition, in the preface of his commentaries on Holy Scriptures, declares "that the Vulgate of St. Jerome contains no unsound doctrine, but much erudition" (Grot. Praef. in Vet. Test. I. Amsterdam. 1679). This eminent Protestant did not think like the Rev. Dickson "it was as full of folly as an egg is full of meat." John Henri Michaelis, the learned Orientalist of Klettenberg, who had studied eastern languages and made a special study of Holy Scriptures, and ought to be at least as well informed as the Rev. J. Dickson, says "that the version of St. Jerome is the most perfect of all," (Bibliotheca Orientalis. xxi. n. 311). Dr Schaaf, of Switzerland, calls it "unrivalled and unique" (Relig. Encyclop. Art Bible version). Dr. Campbell, a Scotchman, declares "that the Vulgate of St. Jerome having been completed long before the rise of those controversies which are the foundation of most of the sects at present existing, it is, as we may rest assured exempt from all party influence" (Dr Campbell, Incunabula Biblica. ii. p. 239). For more proofs, see Australasian Catholic Record, Vol. ii. The Church and the Bible (Most Rev Dr Carr). Will my friend still uphold that the Vulgate of St. Jerome was translated "confessedly in the interests of a particular set of doctrines, held by a particular Church? This particular Church, I will soon show him was the universal Catholic Church established by Jesus Christ.