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THE CANON

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

FROM THE DOUBLE POINT OF VIEW

OF SCIENCE AND OF FAITH.

BY

L. GAUSSSEN, D.D.

GENEVA.

Third Edition.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET AND CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
M.DCCC.LXIII.
EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY,
PAUL'S WORK.
ADVERTISEMENT.

The following translation from the French has been carefully revised by the learned and venerable Author; and most of the quotations from the Fathers of the Church and ecclesiastical writers have again been verified by a comparison with the original works.
PREFACE.

In publishing this work, I am actuated by the threefold consideration,—of the real importance of the subject, of its being accessible to every class of readers, and of the very luminous aspect it presents when closely studied. It is only obscure at a distance; and if to some persons it seems beset with difficulty and uncertainty, it is only owing to their imperfect knowledge, or bad method of studying it. I was not aware that it was so intelligible till I had examined it with great attention.

For this reason I thought it my duty, in consequence of the very numerous and severe attacks made on the certainty of the canon, to treat it at large for the use of our theological students; and since that I have felt it desirable to introduce it to the knowledge of our churches.

With this view I have endeavoured to write a book that will be sufficiently intelligible to every serious reader; and it has been my desire, that all unlettered Christians who may have been disturbed by these attacks of modern infidelity, may feel themselves, on reading it, confirmed in their faith.

It is impossible to treat such a subject usefully,—at least from an historical point of view,—without adducing numerous testimonies from the fathers, with quotations from their writings, both Greek and Latin. But I have made it a rule always to translate those passages, and never to appeal to any of the ancient doctors,
either of the West or East, without giving some brief notice of
his character, his principal writings, and his place in history.

I publish these volumes as a complement of that which I
brought out, almost twenty years ago, on the inspiration of the
Scriptures. That work would have been incomplete unless ac-
 companied by a treatise on the canon; for its readers, even those
who were most thoroughly convinced, might always object, after
having heard me prove by all Scripture that all Scripture was
divinely inspired, that it still remained to be proved whether
Daniel, or Esther, or Canticles, or any other book of the Old
Testament, belonged to this inspired Scripture—whether the
Epistle of Jude, or that of James, or the Second Epistle of Peter,
or the Second and Third of John, or any other book commonly
included in the New Testament, legitimately formed a part of it—
or whether there was sufficient certainty that all the apocryphal
books ought to be absolutely excluded.

As long as these questions are not clearly solved, our privilege
of possessing an inspired Bible remains illusory, or is at least
compromised; we have a feeling of insecurity in its use; we
cannot clearly discern all its pages; a depressing cloud of un-
certainty floats over our heads between heaven and earth; and
though carrying in our hands a volume denominated the Scrip-
tures, we proceed with tottering steps.

But, blessed be God! my Christian brethren, this is not your
position; the God of the holy prophets has prepared better things
for His believing people.

Your proofs are abundant, and, as we are about to shew, you
have also divine guarantees. If your confidence in those Scrip-
tures, which constitute the rule and joy of your faith, rests, on
one side, on the most solid human reasons, on the other, it is
invited to support itself by the strongest divine reasons. On the
one hand, there are facts, documents, monuments, historical
testimonies—testimonies clear, numerous, certain, and sufficient—
such as no human composition under heaven ever possessed. On
the other hand, you have something still more simple and abso-
lute; your confidence has for its foundation the firmest principles of faith—an infallible guarantee,—the constant judgment of saints and prophets, the invariable procedure of God in all His revelations during fourteen centuries, and the example of Jesus Christ Himself—in a word, the wisdom of God—the harmony, the constancy, and the faithfulness of His ways.

I propose, then, to demonstrate, by arguments purely historical, in the First Part, to all unbelievers, the authenticity of all the scriptures of the New Testament, as might be done, if the question concerned only purely a human work.

Besides this, I propose, with the Lord’s assistance, to establish in the Second Part, and to believers only, the canonicity of all the scriptures of both Testaments, as may be done most satisfactorily for every man who is already convinced that inspired books exist, and that God, having revealed Himself from heaven by the prophets at sundry times, and in divers manners, for 1400 years, has in these last days spoken to us, in the person of His Son, by His apostles and evangelists.

These two classes of proof have each their distinct place and function; and while I think that we are under great obligations to all those defenders of the canon who have treated the subject with a view to unbelievers, for the historic proofs they have collected in such abundance, I am still deeply convinced that, in confining themselves to this office, they have ignored their privileges, and proceeded in part on a wrong track, losing sight of the example of the Redeemer, forgetting the lessons taught by past ages, and thus neglecting the most important and interesting part of their vocation.

To give a clearer idea of the character and design of this work, I would beg leave to state the reason that induced me to publish it.

I had first of all written, in 1851 and 1852, for the use of our evangelical School of Theology, the second part of this work, and it was not till a later period, in 1853 and 1854, that I conceived the design of adding what is now the first.
When we founded in Geneva, twenty-nine years ago, a School of Theology, for the purpose of elevating the long-depressed banner of the Saviour's divinity, and the great doctrines connected with it, in the Church of our fathers, I charged myself with the doctrinal instruction. But, in performing my task, I felt no need for many years of discussing to any extent either the canonicity or divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

We attended to what was most urgent, and those truths had not then been publicly called in question by any person in our immediate vicinity. As to myself, in my early years, and during my studies, though very anxious to settle my faith on a satisfactory basis, I never experienced any wavering on these two points. Since Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God, "created all things in heaven and earth, and by him all things subsist," (Col. i. 16,) I said to myself, how could I doubt that He has taken care of His own revelations, whether in giving them at first, or in their subsequent preservation and transmission? Our only business was to study them for the purpose of regulating each one's faith, and conscience, and life. Besides, we invited to our school none but young men who had already owned the authority of the Scriptures, and who were esteemed truly pious, as having experienced in their souls something of "the good word of God and the powers of the world to come."

We directed our attention in the first place, as I have said, to what was most urgent; we were eager to reach those vital truths, on the reception of which the stability of a church depends, and without which it falls.

Mere logical arrangement would have led us to give every question its exact place in a course of theology; but it was evident that the greatest attention should be given to those doctrines which had been long disregarded, and too often assailed, which convince men of sin, lead to the feet of Jesus, and keep them there,—I mean, the divinity of the Son of man and His everlasting priesthood, the fall of humanity and its entire ruin, the election of believers from all eternity, their redemption by
the expiation of the cross, their regeneration by the Spirit of God, their complete justification by faith alone, and, lastly, their resurrection from the dust to a life of glory and immortality.

But if these evangelical doctrines belong to all times alike, and their exposition is always in season, if the Church of God cannot dispense with them even for a day, the case is different with refutations and apologies.

These latter are not necessary, nor even beneficial, excepting at a time when the want of them is felt. Till that moment arrives, they may do our minds more harm than good, like remedies for bodily disorders administered before the malady exists. They suggest doubts that would never have been suspected; they raise unknown difficulties and objections of foreign origin, which, but for them, would never have entered our thoughts. For a hunting party to beat about a district for wild boars would be of no use unless it was ravaged by them; it would be injurious if there were none in the country; and it would be foolish and criminal if, for the sake of the sport, the animals were imported from a foreign land. Who can estimate, for example, all the mischief that has been often done in our churches by the young translators of those German works which have exhibited systems of scepticism, negation, and heresy, to which previously we had been total strangers, and which we have often seen propagated here long after they had ceased to be spoken of in the country of their birth.

It has been justly remarked of apologetics, that it must be remodelled every thirty years, because its wants change from one generation to another; the apologetics of to-day is no longer that which our fathers required, nor is it that which will meet the wants of our children.

In reference to the canonicity and divine inspiration of the Scriptures, I have arrived at the conclusion that it is highly important to discuss these subjects henceforward with greater fulness. The number of our opponents, the perfectly novel tactics of their infidelity, and the spirit of their attacks on the
written Word, make this a duty on our part, almost a necessity. In former times this need was not felt among us, as may be easily inferred from the very small space allotted to these questions by our best theological writers—Calvin, Francis Turretine, Pictet, and Stapfer, in their largest and most accredited treatises. But in the present day a great change has come over us, and we are condemned to see a totally novel warfare, no longer carried on from without against the Scriptures, but from within, and by men who profess to be, like ourselves, representatives of Christianity.

This kind of warfare is very pernicious; our fathers were not acquainted with it, or, at least, it never assailed them, excepting by short skirmishes, or by isolated attacks on one or other of our sacred books. In the present day the enemy is drawn up in battle-array against the whole of the Scriptures. Since the first third of the nineteenth century, we have seen almost all the opponents of the living truth vie with each other in efforts, not only, as heretofore, against this or the other vital doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, but against the depository of them all. For a time they leave undisturbed the distinctive teachings of the written Word as beneath their notice, in order to attack the volume in which God has given them to us. It is no longer the contents that are put upon their trial; of these our opponents think they can easily get rid, if they succeed in accomplishing the task of discrediting and demolishing the Scriptures. Their aim is directed against the depository, the entire volume, of revelation. Nothing is neglected which may render it suspected, uncertain, contradictory, mean, and tainted with error;—in a word, contemptible as a whole and in all its parts. They will deny its authority, its inspiration, its integrity; they will deny the canon- icity of each book;—in short, they will deny its authenticity, its veracity, its good sense, and even its morality!

But the most novel feature of this warfare, the most ill-omened, the most threatening in its immediate effect on our churches, and one which never appeared but in the second and third centuries,