

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER I.-Of the Holy Scripture.

III. The Books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of Divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other humane Writings.¹

Question 1—*Which Books are commonly called Apocrypha?*

Answer—The Books commonly called Apocrypha do not include those Books of the Old and New Testament held by both Papist and Protestant to be canonical. The word “canon” refers to a rule or line used for measuring, *cf.* Gal. 6:16 (κανόνι—*kanonì*). Nor are we speaking of all Books which are apocryphal; for there are some rejected by the papists as well as by us [*i.e.*, 3rd and 4th Esdras, 3rd and 4th Maccabees, the Prayer of Solomon, *etc.*]. Rather this question concerns only the Books of Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, 1st and 2nd Maccabees, and the additions to Esther and Daniel, which the papists consider canonical and we exclude from the canon.

Question 2—*Why are these Books called Apocrypha?*

Answer—The Apocryphal Books are not so called because the Authors are unknown; for there are several canonical Books whose Authors are unknown. They are called Apocryphal because their source of authority was hidden or suspected, and consequently they were (and are) not resorted to for the confirmation of ecclesiastical doctrines.

Question 3—*Are the Books commonly called the Apocrypha of Divine Inspiration?*

Answer—No. Because: 1.) The Jewish church, to which the Oracles of God were committed, Rom. 3:2; never considered them as canonical. 2.) Having been written after the Book of Malachi and before the New Testament, they were composed, not in Hebrew, the language of Old Testament prophets, but in Greek. 3.) They were never quoted by Christ and the Apostles as canonical. And Christ, by dividing the Old Testament into three parts, Luke 24:27, 44, clearly approves the canon of the Jews and excludes those books not embraced in those classes. In fact, he alludes to the closing of the Hebrew canon in his remarks upon the impending destruction of Jerusalem for its complicity in shedding the blood of the martyrs, Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51. In the ordering of the Hebrew canon, the Scriptures begin with Genesis (*i.e.*, the martyrdom of Abel; Gen. 4:8-10) and end with 2 Chronicles (*i.e.*, the martyrdom of Zechariah; 2 Chron. 24:20-22). Thus, Jesus is saying that the blood of all the innocents shed from the beginning of the Scriptures unto the end of the Scriptures would be required of the generation that heard him preach. 4.) These Books contain many fantastical and impious Doctrines and Histories. First, in Tobit 5:12, the Angel says he was Azariah, the son of Ananias. This was a manifest lie, which cannot be attributed to a good Angel, *cf.* Tobit 12:15. Therefore, the Spirit of God has not dictated this history. Second, it is reported in Tobit 6:6, 7, 16, 17, that the heart and liver of a Fish was good to make a perfume to drive away the Devil, contrary to that of Christ, *cf.* Matt. 17:21. Again, in Tobit 12:12, 15, this “Angel of the Lord” arrogates to himself the oblation of prayers of the Saints. This work is proper only to Christ, *cf.* Heb. 7:25. Third,

¹ Luke 24:27, 44; Rom. 3:2; 2 Pet. 1:21.

The fact of Simeon and Levi, condemned by Jacob, acted by the Spirit of God, *cf.* Gen. 49:5-7, in killing the Shechemites, Gen. 34:25, is commended by Judith, 9:2, 3. Furthermore, this Book praises the deceits and lies of Judith, *cf.* chap. 11, a fact inconsistent with true piety, Rev. 22:15. Worse still, she seeks the blessing of God upon them, 9:13. Fourth, the Author of Wisdom falsely asserts that he was King in Israel, Wis. 9:7, 8; in order to be taken to be Solomon [Solomon reigned *ca.* 970-931 B.C.]. Yet, he alludes to the athletic contests [begun *ca.* 776 B.C.] which in the time of Solomon had not yet been established among the Greeks, *cf.* Wis. 4:2. Further, he introduces theories of Pythagoras [*ca.* 582-500 B.C.], respecting the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, *cf.* Wis. 8:19, 20; who was not yet born. And, he gives a false account of the origin of idolatry, 14:15, 16. Fifth, the Son of Sirach [*i.e.*, Ecclesiasticus], Sir. 46:20; attributes to Samuel what was done by the evil spirit raised by wicked devices, *cf.* 1 Sam. 28:11. He falsely speaks of Elijah's bodily return, Sir. 48:10, which argument was also made in a confused fashion by the scribes in Jesus' day, *cf.* Mal. 3:1, 2 w/ Matt. 17:10-13, Luke 1:17; and he excuses his oversights in his prologue. Sixth, there are so many contradictions and absurdities in the additions to Esther and Daniel that they refute themselves. Seventh, Baruch says he read his Book to Jeconiah and to all the people of Babylon; but Jeconiah was in prison and Baruch had been taken away to Egypt after the death of Gedaliah, *cf.* Jer. 43:6, 7. He mentions an altar of the Lord, Bar. 1:10; when there was none, the temple being destroyed. Eighth, the Books of the Maccabees often contradict each other, *cf.* 1 Mac. 6:8 w/ 2 Mac. 15:16 & 9:5. The suicide of Razis is praised, 2 Mac. 14:42. Will-worship—an offering for the dead, prayers, and reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin—is commended, *cf.* 2 Mac. 12:42-45. The Author apologizes for his youth and infirmity and complains of the painful labor of abridging the five Books of Jason, the Cyrenian, 2 Mac. 2:23, 24; 15:39.

Question 4—*What use then are these Apocryphal writings to the Church?*

Answer—We distinguish between the “canon of faith” and the “canon of ecclesiastical reading.” The former embraces all of the Divinely inspired Scriptures. From this “canon” alone all matters of doctrine and practice [*i.e.*, matters of faith] are to be established. The latter embraces those writings which, whilst they contain many things which prove they are not of divine origin (and, therefore, not to be trusted in matters of faith), have been recognized to be of a more general value in the reading of the Church. In this last sense alone, the early Church spoke of these books (as well as the sufferings of the martyrs) as being “canonical.” The “canon of ecclesiastical reading” is to be made use of as “other humane Writings” (which are not of the Infallible Spirit) and respects only matters of edification [*i.e.*, the edification of believers]. Therefore, we may seek within them examples which exemplify or illustrate those truths displayed in the “canon of faith.”