

INSTITUTES
OF
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BOOK FOURTH.

OF THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

CHAPTER IX.

OF COUNCILS AND THEIR AUTHORITY.*

Since Papists regard their Councils as expressing the sentiment and consent of the Church, particularly as regards the authority of declaring dogmas and the exposition of them, it was necessary to treat of Councils before proceeding to consider that part of ecclesiastical power which relates to doctrine. I. First, the authority of Councils in delivering dogmas is discussed, and it is shown that the Spirit of God is not so bound to the Pastors of the Church as opponents suppose. Their objections refuted, sec. 1-7. II. The errors, contradictions, and weaknesses, of certain Councils exposed. A refutation of the subterfuge, that those set over us are to be obeyed without distinction, sec. 8-12. III. Of the authority of Councils as regards the interpretation of Scripture, sec. 13, 14.

Sections.

1. The true nature of Councils.
2. Whence the authority of Councils is derived. What meant by assembling in the name of Christ.
3. Objection, that no truth remains in the Church if it be not in Pastors and Councils. Answer, showing by passages from the Old Testament that Pastors were often devoid of the spirit of knowledge and truth.
4. Passages from the New Testament showing that our times were to be subject to the same evil. This confirmed by the example of almost all ages.
5. All not Pastors who pretend to be so.
6. Objection, that General Councils represent the Church. Answer, showing the absurdity of this objection from passages in the Old Testament.
7. Passages to the same effect from the New Testament.

* See Calvin's Antidote to the Articles of Sorbonne; Letter to Sadolet; Necessity of Reforming the Church; Antidote to the Council of Trent; Remarks on the Paternal Admonition of the Pope.

8. Councils have authority only in so far as accordant with Scripture. Testimony of Augustine. Councils of Nice, Constantinople, and Ephesus. Subsequent Councils more impure, and to be received with limitation.
9. Contradictory decisions of Councils. Those agreeing with divine truth to be received. Those at variance with it to be rejected. This confirmed by the example of the Council of Constantinople and the Council of Nice; also of the Council of Chalcedon, and second Council of Ephesus.
10. Errors of purer Councils. Four causes of these errors. An example from the Council of Nice.
11. Another example from the Council of Chalcedon. The same errors in Provincial Councils.
12. Evasion of the Papists. Three answers. Conclusion of the discussion as to the power of the Church in relation to doctrine.
13. Last part of the chapter. Power of the Church in interpreting Scripture. From what source interpretation is to be derived. Means of preserving unity in the Church.
14. Impudent attempt of the Papists to establish their tyranny refuted. Things at variance with Scripture sanctioned by their Councils. Instance in the prohibition of marriage and communion in both kinds.

1. Were I now to concede all that they ask concerning the Church, it would not greatly aid them in their object. For everything that is said of the Church they immediately transfer to councils, which, in their opinion, represent the Church. Nay, when they contend so doggedly for the power of the Church, their only object is to devolve the whole which they extort on the Roman Pontiff and his conclave. Before I begin to discuss this question, two points must be briefly premised. First, though I mean to be more rigid in discussing this subject, it is not because I set less value than I ought on ancient councils. I venerate them from my heart, and would have all to hold them in due honour.* But there must be some limitation, there must be nothing derogatory to Christ. Moreover, it is the right of Christ to preside over all councils, and not share the honour with any man. Now, I hold that he presides only when he governs the whole assembly by his word and Spirit. Secondly, in attributing less to councils than my opponents demand, it is not because I have any fear that councils are favourable to their cause and adverse to ours. For as we are amply provided by the word of the Lord with the means of proving our doctrine and overthrowing the whole Papacy, and thus have no great need of other aid, so, if the case required it, ancient councils furnish us in a great measure with what might be sufficient for both purposes.

* French, "Si je tien ici la bride roide pour ne lascher rien facilement à nos adversaires, ce n'est pas à dire pourtant que je prise les conciles anciens moins que je ne doy. Car je les honore de bonne affection, et desire que chacun les estime, et les ait en reverence."—If I here keep the reins tight, and do not easily yield anything to our opponents, it is not because I prize ancient councils less than I ought. For I honour them sincerely, and desire that every man esteem them, and hold them in reverence.

2. Let us now proceed to the subject itself. If we consult Scripture on the authority of councils, there is no promise more remarkable than that which is contained in these words of our Saviour, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But this is just as applicable to any particular meeting as to a universal council. And yet the important part of the question does not lie here, but in the condition which is added, viz., that Christ will be in the midst of a council, provided it be assembled in his name. Wherefore, though our opponents should name councils of thousands of bishops it will little avail them; nor will they induce us to believe that they are, as they maintain, guided by the Holy Spirit, until they make it credible that they assemble in the name of Christ: since it is as possible for wicked and dishonest to conspire against Christ, as for good and honest bishops to meet together in his name. Of this we have a clear proof in very many of the decrees which have proceeded from councils. But this will be afterwards seen. At present I only reply in one word, that our Saviour's promise is made to those only who assemble in his name. How, then, is such an assembly to be defined? I deny that those assemble in the name of Christ who, disregarding his command by which he forbids anything to be added to the word of God or taken from it, determine everything at their own pleasure, who, not contented with the oracles of Scripture, that is, with the only rule of perfect wisdom, devise some novelty out of their own head, (Deut. iv. 2; Rev. xxii. 18.) Certainly, since our Saviour has not promised to be present with all councils of whatever description, but has given a peculiar mark for distinguishing true and lawful councils from others, we ought not by any means to lose sight of the distinction. The covenant which God anciently made with the Levitical priests was to teach at his mouth, (Mal. ii. 7.) This he always required of the prophets, and we see also that it was the law given to the apostles. On those who violate this covenant God bestows neither the honour of the priesthood nor any authority. Let my opponents solve this difficulty if they would subject my faith to the decrees of man, without authority from the word of God.

3. Their idea that the truth cannot remain in the Church unless it exist among pastors, and that the Church herself cannot exist unless displayed in general councils, is very far from holding true if the prophets have left us a correct description of their own times. In the time of Isaiah there was a Church at Jerusalem which the Lord had not yet abandoned. But of pastors he thus speaks: "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way," (Isa. lvi. 10, 11.) In the same way Hosea says, "The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his

God,” (Hosea ix. 8.) Here, by ironically connecting them with God, he shows that the pretext of the priesthood was vain. There was also a Church in the time of Jeremiah. Let us hear what he says of pastors: “From the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.” Again, “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them,” (Jer. vi. 13; xiv. 14.) And not to be prolix with quotations, read the whole of his thirty-third and fortieth chapters. Then, on the other hand, Ezekiel inveighs against them in no milder terms. “There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls.” “Her priests have violated my law, and profaned mine holy things,” (Ezek. xxii. 25, 26.) There is more to the same purpose. Similar complaints abound throughout the prophets; nothing is of more frequent recurrence.

4. But perhaps, though this great evil prevailed among the Jews, our age is exempt from it. Would that it were so; but the Holy Spirit declared that it would be otherwise. For Peter’s words are clear, “But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily will bring in damnable heresies,” (2 Peter ii. 1.) See how he predicts impending danger, not from ordinary believers, but from those who should plume themselves on the name of pastors and teachers. Besides, how often did Christ and his apostles foretell that the greatest dangers with which the Church was threatened would come from pastors? (Matth. xxiv. 11, 24.) Nay, Paul openly declares, that Antichrist would have his seat in the temple of God, (2 Thess. ii. 4;) thereby intimating, that the fearful calamity of which he was speaking would come only from those who should have their seat in the Church as pastors. And in another passage he shows that the introduction of this great evil was almost at hand. For in addressing the elders of Ephesus, he says, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them,” (Acts xx. 29, 30.) How great corruption might a long series of years introduce among pastors, when they could degenerate so much within so short a time? And not to fill my pages with details, we are reminded by the examples of almost every age, that the truth is not always cherished in the bosoms of pastors, and that the safety of the Church depends not on their state. It was becoming that those appointed to preserve the peace and safety of the Church should be its presidents and guardians; but it is one thing to perform what you owe, and another to owe what you do not perform.

5. Let no man, however, understand me as if I were desirous in every thing rashly and unreservedly to overthrow the authority of pastors.* All I

* French, “Toutefois je ne veux point que ces propos soient entendus comme si je

advise is, to exercise discrimination, and not suppose, as a matter of course, that all who call themselves pastors are so in reality. But the Pope, with the whole crew of his bishops, for no other reason but because they are called pastors, shake off obedience to the word of God, invert all things, and turn them hither and thither at their pleasure; meanwhile, they insist that they cannot be destitute of the light of truth, that the Spirit of God perpetually resides in them, that the Church subsists in them, and dies with them, as if the Lord did not still inflict his judgments, and in the present day punish the world for its wickedness, in the same way in which he punished the ingratitude of the ancient people, namely, by smiting pastors with astonishment and blindness, (Zech. xii. 4.) These stupid men understand not that they are just chiming in with those of ancient times who warred with the word of God. For the enemies of Jeremiah thus set themselves against the truth, "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet," (Jer. xviii. 18.)

6. Hence it is easy to reply to their allegation concerning general councils. It cannot be denied, that the Jews had a true Church under the prophets. But had a general council then been composed of the priests, what kind of appearance would the Church have had? We hear the Lord denouncing not against one or two of them, but the whole order: "The priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder," (Jer. iv. 9.) Again, "The law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients," (Ezek. vii. 26.) Again, "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them," &c., (Micah iii. 6.) Now, had all men of this description been collected together, what spirit would have presided over their meeting? Of this we have a notable instance in the council which Ahab convened, (1 Kings xxii. 6, 22.) Four hundred prophets were present. But because they had met with no other intention than to flatter the impious king, Satan is sent by the Lord to be a lying spirit in all their mouths. The truth is there unanimously condemned. Micaiah is judged a heretic, is smitten, and cast into prison. So was it done to Jeremiah, and so to the other prophets.

7. But there is one memorable example which may suffice for all. In the council which the priests and Pharisees assembled at Jerusalem against Christ, (John xi. 47,) what is wanting, in so far as external appearance is concerned? Had there been no Church then at Jerusalem, Christ would never have joined in the sacrifices and other ceremonies. A solemn meeting is held;

vouloye amoindrir l'autorité des pasteurs, et induire le peuple à la mépriser légèrement."— However, I would not have these statements to be understood as if I wished to lessen the authority of pastors, and induce the people lightly to despise it.

the high priest presides; the whole sacerdotal order take their seats, and yet Christ is condemned, and his doctrine is put to flight. This atrocity proves that the Church was not at all included in that council. But there is no danger that any thing of the kind will happen with us. Who has told us so? Too much security in a matter of so great importance lies open to the charge of sluggishness. Nay, when the Spirit, by the mouth of Paul, foretells, in distinct terms, that a defection will take place, a defection which cannot come until pastors first forsake God, (2 Thess. ii. 3,) why do we spontaneously walk blindfold to our own destruction? Wherefore, we cannot on any account admit that the Church consists in a meeting of pastors, as to whom the Lord has nowhere promised that they would always be good, but has sometimes foretold that they would be wicked. When he warns us of danger, it is to make us use greater caution.

8. What, then, you will say, is there no authority in the definitions of councils? Yes, indeed; for I do not contend that all councils are to be condemned, and all their acts rescinded, or, as it is said, made one complete erasure. But you are bringing them all (it will be said) under subordination, and so leaving every one at liberty to receive or reject the decrees of councils as he pleases. By no means; but whenever the decree of a council is produced, the first thing I would wish to be done is, to examine at what time it was held, on what occasion, with what intention, and who were present at it; next I would bring the subject discussed to the standard of Scripture. And this I would do in such a way, that the decision of the council should have its weight, and be regarded in the light of a prior judgment, yet not so as to prevent the application of the test which I have mentioned. I wish all had observed the method which Augustine prescribes in his Third Book against Maximinus, when he wished to silence the cavils of this heretic against the decrees of councils, "I ought not to oppose the Council of Nice to you, nor ought you to oppose that of Ariminum to me, as prejudging the question. I am not bound by the authority of the latter, nor you by that of the former. Let thing contend with thing, cause with cause, reason with reason, on the authority of Scripture, an authority not peculiar to either, but common to all." In this way, councils would be duly respected, and yet the highest place would be given to Scripture, every thing being brought to it as a test. Thus those ancient Councils of Nice, Constantinople, the first of Ephesus, Chalcedon, and the like, which were held for refuting errors, we willingly embrace, and reverence as sacred, in so far as relates to doctrines of faith, for they contain nothing but the pure and genuine interpretation of Scripture, which the holy Fathers with spiritual prudence adopted to crush the enemies of religion who had then arisen. In some later councils, also, we see displayed a true zeal for religion, and moreover, unequivocal marks of genius, learning, and prudence. But as matters usually become worse and worse, it is easy to

see in more modern councils how much the Church gradually degenerated from the purity of that golden age. I doubt not, however, that even in those more corrupt ages, councils had their bishops of better character. But it happened with them as the Roman senators of old complained in regard to their decrees. Opinions being numbered, not weighed, the better were obliged to give way to the greater number. They certainly put forth many impious sentiments. There is no need here to collect instances, both because it would be tedious, and because it has been done by others so carefully, as not to leave much to be added.

9. Moreover, why should I review the contests of council with council? Nor is there any ground for whispering to me, that when councils are at variance, one or other of them is not a lawful council. For how shall we ascertain this? Just, if I mistake not, by judging from Scripture that the decrees are not orthodox. For this alone is the sure law of discrimination. It is now about nine hundred years since the Council of Constantinople, convened under the Emperor Leo, determined that the images set up in temples were to be thrown down and broken to pieces. Shortly after, the Council of Nice, which was assembled by Irene, through dislike of the former, decreed that images were to be restored. Which of the two councils shall we acknowledge to be lawful? The latter has usually prevailed, and secured a place for images in churches. But Augustine maintains that this could not be done without the greatest danger of idolatry. Epiphanius, at a later period, speaks much more harshly, (Epist. ad Joann. Hierosolym. et Lib. iii. contra Hæres.) For he says, it is an unspeakable abomination to see images in a Christian temple. Could those who speak thus approve of that council if they were alive in the present day? But if historians speak true, and we believe their acts, not only images themselves, but the worship of them, were there sanctioned. Now it is plain that this decree emanated from Satan. Do they not show, by corrupting and wresting Scripture, that they held it in derision? This I have made sufficiently clear in a former part of the work, (see Book I. chap. xi. sec. 14.) Be this as it may, we shall never be able to distinguish between contradictory and dissenting councils, which have been many, unless we weigh them all in that balance for men and angels, I mean, the word of God. Thus we embrace the Council of Chalcedon, and repudiate the second of Ephesus, because the latter sanctioned the impiety of Eutyches, and the former condemned it. The judgment of these holy men was founded on the Scriptures, and while we follow it, we desire that the word of God, which illuminated them, may now also illuminate us. Let the Romanists now go and boast after their manner, that the Holy Spirit is fixed and tied to their councils.

10. Even in their ancient and purer councils there is something to be considered, either because the otherwise learned and prudent men who attended, being distracted by the business in hand, did not attend to many

things beside; or because, occupied with grave and more serious measures, they winked at some of lesser moment; or simply because, as men, they were deceived through ignorance, or were sometimes carried headlong by some feeling in excess. Of this last case (which seems the most difficult of all to avoid) we have a striking example in the Council of Nice, which has been unanimously received, as it deserves, with the utmost veneration. For when the primary article of our faith was therein peril, and Arius, its enemy, was present, ready to engage any one in combat, and it was of the utmost moment that those who had come to attack Arius should be agreed, they nevertheless, feeling secure amid all these dangers, nay, as it were, forgetting their gravity, modesty, and politeness, laying aside the discussion which was before them, (as if they had met for the express purpose of gratifying Arius,) began to give way to intestine dissensions, and turn the pen, which should have been employed against Arius, against each other. Foul accusations were heard, libels flew up and down, and they never would have ceased from their contention until they had stabbed each other with mutual wounds, had not the Emperor Constantine interfered, and declaring that the investigation of their lives was a matter above his cognisance, repressed their intemperance by flattery rather than censure. In how many respects is it probable that councils, held subsequently to this, have erred? Nor does the fact stand in need of a long demonstration; any one who reads their acts will observe many infirmities, not to use a stronger term.

11. Even Leo, the Roman Pontiff, hesitates not to charge the Council of Chalcedon, which he admits to be orthodox in its doctrines, with ambition and inconsiderate rashness. He denies not that it was lawful, but openly maintains that it might have erred. Some may think me foolish in labouring to point out errors of this description, since my opponents admit that councils may err in things not necessary to salvation. My labour, however, is not superfluous. For although compelled, they admit this in word, yet by obtruding upon Us the determination of all councils, in all matters without distinction, as the oracles of the Holy Spirit, they exact more than they had at the outset assumed. By thus acting what do they maintain, but just that councils cannot err, or if they err, it is unlawful for us to perceive the truth, or refuse assent to their errors? At the same time, all I mean to infer from what I have said is, that though councils, otherwise pious and holy, were governed by the Holy Spirit, he yet allowed them to share the lot of humanity, lest we should confide too much in men. This is a much better view than that of Gregory Nazianzen, who says, (Ep. 55,) that he never saw any council end well. In asserting that all, without exception, ended ill, he leaves them little authority. There is no necessity for making separate mention of provincial councils, since it is easy to estimate, from the case of general councils, how much

authority they ought to have in framing articles of faith, and deciding what kind of doctrine is to be received.

12. But our Romanists, when, in defending their cause, they see all rational grounds slip from beneath them, betake themselves to a last miserable subterfuge. Although they should be dull in intellect and counsel, and most depraved in heart and will, still the word of the Lord remains, which commands us to obey those who have the rule over us, (Heb. xiii. 17.) Is it indeed so? What if I should deny that those who act thus have the rule over us? They ought not to claim for themselves more than Joshua had, who was both a prophet of the Lord and an excellent pastor. Let us then hear in what terms the Lord introduced him to his office. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success," (Josh. i. 7, 8.) Our spiritual rulers, therefore, will be those who turn not from the law of the Lord to the right hand or the left. But if the doctrine of all pastors is to be received without hesitation, why are we so often and so anxiously admonished by the Lord not to give heed to false prophets? "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord," (Jer. xxiii. 16.) Again, ^a Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," (Matth. vii. 15.) In vain also would John exhort us to try the spirits whether they be of God, (1 John iv. 1.) From this judgment not even angels are exempted, (Gal. i. 8;) far less Satan with his lies. And what is meant by the expression, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch?" (Matth. xv. 14.) Does it not sufficiently declare that there is a great difference among the pastors who are to be heard, that all are not to be heard indiscriminately? Wherefore they have no ground for deterring us by their name, in order to draw us into a participation of their blindness, since we see, on the contrary, that the Lord has used special care to guard us from allowing ourselves to be led away by the errors of others, whatever be the mask under which they may lurk. For if the answer of our Saviour is true, blind guides, whether high priests, prelates, or pontiffs, can do nothing more than hurry us over the same precipice with themselves. Wherefore, let no names of councils, pastors, and bishops, (which may be used on false pretences as well as truly,) hinder us from giving heed to the evidence both of words and facts, and bringing all spirits to the test of the divine word, that we may prove whether they are of God.

13. Having proved that no power was given to the Church to set up any new doctrine, let us now treat of the power attributed to them in the interpretation of Scripture. We readily admit, that when any doctrine is brought under

discussion, there is not a better or surer remedy than for a council of true bishops to meet and discuss the controverted point. There will be much more weight in a decision of this kind, to which the pastors of churches have agreed in common after invoking the Spirit of Christ, than if each, adopting it for himself, should deliver it to his people, or a few individuals should meet in private and decide. Secondly, When bishops have assembled in one place, they deliberate more conveniently in common, fixing both the doctrine and the form of teaching it, lest diversity give offence. Thirdly, Paul prescribes this method of determining doctrine. For when he gives the power of deciding to a single church, he shows what the course of procedure should be in more important cases, namely, that the churches together are to take common cognisance. And the very feeling of piety tells us, that if any one trouble the Church with some novelty in doctrine, and the matter be carried so far that there is danger of a greater dissension, the churches should first meet, examine the question, and at length, after due discussion, decide according to Scripture, which may both put an end to doubt in the people, and stop the mouths of wicked and restless men, so as to prevent the matter from proceeding farther. Thus when Arius arose, the Council of Nice was convened, and by its authority both crushed the wicked attempts of this impious man, and restored peace to the churches which he had vexed, and asserted the eternal divinity of Christ in opposition to his sacrilegious dogma. Thereafter, when Eunomius and Macedonius raised new disturbances, their madness was met with a similar remedy by the Council of Constantinople; the impiety of Nestorius was defeated by the Council of Ephesus. In short, this was from the first the usual method of preserving unity in the Church whenever Satan commenced his machinations. But let us remember, that all ages and places are not favoured with an Athanasius, a Basil, a Cyril, and like vindicators of sound doctrine, whom the Lord then raised up. Nay, let us consider what happened in the second Council of Ephesus when the Eutychian heresy prevailed. Flavianus, of holy memory, with some pious men, was driven into exile, and many similar crimes were committed, because, instead of the Spirit of the Lord, Dioscorus, a factious man, of a very bad disposition, presided. But the Church was not there. I admit it; for I always hold that the truth does not perish in the Church though it be oppressed by one council, but is wondrously preserved by the Lord to rise again, and prove victorious in his own time. I deny, however, that every interpretation of Scripture is true and certain which has received the votes of a council.

14. But the Romanists have another end in view when they say that the power of interpreting Scripture belongs to councils, and that without challenge. For they employ it as a pretext for giving the name of an interpretation of Scripture to everything which is determined in councils. Of purgatory, the intercession of saints, and auricular confession, and the like, not one syllable

can be found in Scripture. But as all these have been sanctioned by the authority of the Church, or, to speak more correctly, have been received by opinion and practice, every one of them is to be held as an interpretation of Scripture. And not only so, but whatever a council has determined against Scripture is to have the name of an interpretation. Christ bids all drink of the cup which he holds forth in the Supper. The Council of Constance prohibited the giving of it to the people, and determined that the priest alone should drink. Though this is diametrically opposed to the institution of Christ, (Matth. xxvi. 26,) they will have it to be regarded as his interpretation. Paul terms the prohibition of marriage a doctrine of devils, (1 Tim. iv. 1, 3;) and the Spirit elsewhere declares that "marriage is honourable in all," (Heb. xiii. 4.) Having afterwards interdicted their priests from marriage, they insist on this as a true and genuine interpretation of Scripture, though nothing can be imagined more alien to it. Should any one venture to open his lips in opposition, he will be judged a heretic, since the determination of the Church is without challenge, and it is unlawful to have any doubt as to the accuracy of her interpretation. Why should I assail such effrontery? to point to it is to condemn it. Their dogma with regard to the power of approving Scripture I intentionally omit. For to subject the oracles of God in this way to the censure of men, and hold that they are sanctioned because they please men, is a blasphemy which deserves not to be mentioned. Besides, I have already touched upon it, (Book I. chap. vii. viii., sec. 9.) I will ask them one question, however, If the authority of Scripture is founded on the approbation of the Church, will they quote the decree of a council to that effect? I believe they cannot. Why, then, did Arius allow himself to be vanquished at the Council of Nice by passages adduced from the Gospel of John? According to these, he was at liberty to repudiate them, as they had not previously been approved by any general council. They allege an old catalogue, which they call the Canon, and say that it originated in a decision of the Church. But I again ask, In what council was that Canon published? Here they must be dumb. Besides, I wish to know what they believe that Canon to be. For I see that the ancients are little agreed with regard to it. If effect is to be given to what Jerome says, (Præf. in Lib. Solom.) the Maccabees, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, and the like, must take their place in the Apocrypha: but this they will not tolerate on any account.