

has never attempted to do. She has not even sought to cut out those passages which militate against her dogmas.

But it may be asked further, notwithstanding all the watchfulness of the Jews and of the Roman Catholic church, is it not possible that at least one book of Scripture may have been lost in some of the world's dark ages, and that book perhaps the most important? It is possible that such a thing might have happened, but it is not true that it has happened. Melito, who flourished in the second century, gives the oldest list of the books of the Jewish canon, and it is identical with that which we now have, with the exception of Nehemiah and Esther, both of which are thought to have been included under the title of Ezra. A remarkable fact going to prove with what fidelity the Jews pre-served their Scriptures, came to light in the 17th century. A colony of Israelites settled near Pekin in China, which had been there from time immemorial, possessed the greater portion of the Old Testament, the rest having been destroyed by fire; the part that still remained corresponded exactly with our Hebrew Bible. And there have since been found amongst the Jews in Malabar, in antique form, entire manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures, corresponding to a letter with those which have come down to us. So much for the authenticity of the Old Testament.

With regard to the New Testament Scriptures, the inspiration of twenty of its books (the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the first thirteen Epistles of Paul, the first Epistle of Peter, and the first of John) was never controverted by the early church. The Epistle of James, the second of Peter, Jude, and the second and third of John were not received at first by some of the Christian churches as of Divine authority, but gradually came to

be recognised by all as such.* The Epistles to the Hebrews, the authority of which was disputed chiefly in the western churches; and the book of Revelation, which met with much opposition in the East, were longer than any others in being acknowledged as parts of the canon of Scripture. But although there was hesitancy in some cases concerning the authority of certain parts of Scripture, perfect harmony was what it all ended in. And even this early hesitancy shows that books were not blindly received into the sacred canon without their being thoroughly sifted. And, notwithstanding all the disputes of the first three centuries upon the point, as far back as the year 325 A.D., in which the famous council of Nice was held, we find all the churches agreeing that the only books of the New Testament Scripture are the *twenty-seven* which are now in our possession. And there are MSS. still existing nearly as old as this date. The Alexandrian MS. in the British Museum is about 1500 years old. And the Vatican MS. in the Pope's library at Rome is believed to have been written in the 5th century. And these documents, with very slight differences which are scarce worthy of notice, correspond with the New Testament as we now have it.*

Such statements are facts which cannot be gainsaid, and they prove beyond dispute that the Bible as it now exists is the inspired Word of God, which abideth for ever. History has been ransacked by the enemies of revelation, but instead of overthrowing it has only gone to substantiate the truth of the Bible. Criticism has also set its wits to work to prove it false, but like an old rock of the ocean against which the foaming billows have dashed for ages, the old Bible stands secure.

But methinks I hear some one asking, "Is it not true that criticism has discovered

* See Gausson on the Canon.