

**THE CANONS OF THE CHURCH
CONCERNING THE
CANON OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE**

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PROLOGUE

One of the most basic and vital issues of the Christian Church is the question of the Canon of Holy Scripture, and this because it is a matter concerning knowledge of the truth, unto which the Church is committed to minister. We need not exhaust the issue of the importance of the truth for the Christian and for every human being in general. It is enough for us to say epigrammatically that it is related to the correct course that man ought to follow; to his true progress; to his freedom, peace and salvation. Otherwise, all these things are placed in jeopardy and seriously threatened, and man is delivered over to error and destruction. Our Lord Himself, when on earth, said to the Jews (Sadducees) when asked: "You are in error, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matth.22,29).

It is obvious that, here, the Lord does not mean every scripture, every book, but Holy Scripture, divinely-inspired Scripture. This is why St. Paul says: Every scripture is divinely inspired and useful for teaching, for censure, for correction, for education in righteousness, so that the man of God may be perfect" (II Tim.3, 16-17).

* Engl. trans. Fr. Stephanos Avramides

For these same reasons the Church of the Ecumenical Councils based herself upon Holy Scripture, in order to theologize and dogmatize, as can be seen from her texts and as she herself proclaims and confesses: “These things, then, having been confessed, which we have received from divine Scripture...”¹.

Such use of Holy Scripture is necessary also for the reason that Divine Scripture is the best and most authentic witness to the saving truth that has been handed down. It is even more convincing than the witness provided by someone who might miraculously be brought back from the dead. This is the meaning of what Abraham said to the rich man in the Gospel parable: “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, then they shall not be convinced, even should someone rise from the dead” (Luke 16, 31)².

We need not emphasize that Holy Scripture is especially significant and important for Canon Law, since it constitutes its first and basic source³ and serves, so to speak, as its constitution, as concerns the canons of the Church, which constitute its “laws”. For this reason Canon V of the Council of Carthage states: “Concerning those things which Holy Scripture has explicitly established, one should not vote but rather follow”⁴.

1. Cf. Definition of Faith (after the 14th anathema) of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, in Ioannis Karmiris, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ συμβολικά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* (*The Dogmatic and Symbolic Texts of the Orthodox Catholic Church*), Vol I, Athens, 1960, p. 178 [179].

2. *St. John Chrysostom* says in this regard: “That which the Scriptures state, these things were stated by the Master; hence should one rise from the dead or an angel come down from heaven, Holy Scriptures are more trustworthy...” *Εἰς τὸν πλούσιον καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον* (*On the Rich Man and Lazarus*), Homily IV, in PG 48,1010). Cf. also Archimandrite Sp. Bilalis, *Ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν βιβλίων (ἢ Βίβλος)* (*The King of Books (the Bible)*), Athens, 1960, p.129.

3. Cf. N. Milasch – M. Apostolopoulos, *Τὸ Ἐκκλησιαστικὸν Δίκαιον τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* (*The Ecclesiastical Law of the Eastern Orthodox Church*) (henceforth: Milasch – Apostolopoulos, *The Ecclesiastical Law*), Athens 1906 (Photo-offset edition 1970), p. 101ff., Constantine Mouratides, *Μαθήματα Κανονικοῦ Δικαίου* (*Lessons in Canon Law*), Athens 1964, p. 55 and An. Christophilopoulos, *Ἑλληνικὸν Ἐκκλησιαστικὸν Δίκαιον* (*Greek Ecclesiastical Law*), Athens, 1965 (second edition) p.28.

4. G. Rallis – M. Potlis, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν Κανόνων* (*Constitution of the divine and sacred Canons*) (henceforth: Rallis – Potlis), Vol. III, p. 306.

For all these reasons then, the Church's chief concern was to provide an answer to the question: Which are the divine books that constitute Holy or Divine Scripture⁵. This question continues to occupy her even today. Proof of this is the fact that the question has been included in the matters that are to be taken up by the future Pan-Orthodox Council⁵. Hence, the present study has as its purpose to contribute to this task of the Church, so that a satisfactory answer may be given to this question, even more so because this vital question constitutes the "core problem" of inter-Christian theological discussions and research⁶.

INTRODUCTION

1. Historical Review — The Problem

The question of the divine or divinely inspired books of Holy Scripture or the problem of the Canon of Holy Scripture has concerned the Church from the very beginning of her earthly existence and activity.

With the passing of time Christians did not display the same holiness and purity of life so that the grace of the Holy Spirit might take up abode in their souls and God's laws be inscribed and preserved without guile and unadulterated in their minds and hearts. Thus, "the Church sensed the need to compile her Holy Scripture", her Canon, "which would serve as the canon, i.e. the measure and criterion of what ought to be believed and done"⁷.

5. Cf. Secretariat for the Preparation of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, *Πρὸς τὴν Μεγάλην Σύνοδον, 1, Εἰσηγήσεις τῆς Διορθοδόξου Προπαρασκευαστικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς ἐπὶ τῶν ἕξ θεμάτων τοῦ πρώτου σταδίου (Towards the Great Council, 1, Proposals of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission on the six themes of the first stage)*, Chambesy, Geneva 1971, p. 13ffl.

6. Cf. Al. Sand, "Der Schriftkanon der Kirche und die kirchliche Autoritat", in *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, Vol 24, (1973) p.363.

7. Cf. John Chrysostom, *Ἐπίτομη εἰς τὸν Ἅγιον Ματθαῖον τὸν Εὐαγγελιστὴν (Commentary on St. Matthew the Evangelist)*, Homily I, PG 57, 13-14, and Bas. Ioannides, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν Καινὴν Διαθήκην (Introduction to the New Testament)*, Athens 1960, p.479. "Without Holy Scripture...Christian teaching could not have been

Further, the Church found herself in need of concerning herself more specifically with the compiling of such a catalogue-Canon of the books of Holy Scripture because of the activities of the various heretical offshoots that began to appear, especially because of the activities of the Gnostics. The Gnostics put into circulation many apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphal books (usually bearing the name of one of the Apostles), which they put forth as sources of Christian teaching and belief.

Towards this end, then, various Churchmen, Fathers of the Church, and even local Councils, began very early to concern themselves with the distinction and the specification of the divine Books, with an aim to creating a catalogue of them.

Bearing this in mind, we can add, by way of completion, that even if the beginning of the formation of the Canon of Holy Scripture was the Church's defense against the heretics (Gnostics) and the protection of the faithful from every type of deviation, as time passed, and especially during the Fourth Century and after, the Canon became associated with "the instruction, the development of dogma and the expressive lessons of faith read in divine worship"⁸. *It became a canon of truth and life for her and her members.*

Hence, when we speak of the Canon of Holy Scripture we mean the sum of the books of Holy Scripture that show us the correct path leading to the knowledge of truth and to the living of the true life and to the experience of freedom in Christ. It follows, then, that these books are infallible. Infallible and unerring, we can say with all certainty, is that which comes from omniscient God, or at least that which has been authored under His supervision, He being the only infallible Being. Hence, infallible books are those that have been written by Divine revelation or by God's inspiration, i.e. they are Divinely inspired, or at least written under His guidance, with divine supervision and bearing God's seal.

preserved in all its purity and simplicity" (Pan. Trembelas, *Δογματική της Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας (Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church)* (henceforth: Trembelas, *Dogmatics*) Vol I, Athens 1959, p. 125.

8. Savvas Agourides, «Κανόνας τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης» ("The Canon of the New Testament"), in *Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια Ὑδρία (Encyclopaedia Hydria)*, Vol. 30 (1983), p.391.

In this sense of the Canon of Holy Scripture, we are obliged to add the following clarification or presupposition: “When we speak of the Canon of the (Old or) New Testament, we always mean a closed number of sacred and authentic texts. An open Canon is a contradiction of the very term ‘canon’ itself”⁹.

The question that immediately arises is the following: Are we certain and sure that the Canon of Holy Scripture compiled by different individuals or by local church councils is authentic? Does it transmit to us and show us infallibly the truly divinely inspired or divine Books? To put it another way: Which of these Canons represents the Church, or in which of these is the special, above-mentioned mission of the Church accomplished?

2. The (ecclesiastical) basis of the solution to the Problem

We stated above that the question of the Canon of Holy Scripture will occupy theology and the Church, until such time as an authentic answer is found, for it is necessary that authenticity be a prerequisite or presupposition for the solving of the problem. The Canon desires to speak about the authentic books of Holy Scripture. But first of all, the Canon itself has to be authentic and infallible, i.e. it has to have been drawn up, accepted and transmitted by an authentic organ.

No human can claim to possess such an ability. Even the decisions of the Local Councils, our Church teaches, are not necessarily infallible. In this regard, Professor Panagiotis Trembelas writes: “The centuries-old history of the Church indisputably testifies to the fact that not all Coun-

9. Savvas Agourides, *Εισαγωγή εις την Καινήν Διαθήκην (Introduction to the New Testament)*, (henceforth: Agourides, *Introduction*), ed. Gregoris, Athens 1971, p. 60. The great Russian Theologian, Fr. Georges Florovsky accepts the closed canon by stating: “Die Bibel ist vollendet...Der abgeschlossene Kanon der Heiligen Schriften selbst ist Symbol einer Vollendung. Die Bibel ist abgeschlossen, weil eben das Wort Gottes Fleisch geworden ist” (G. Florovsky, “Offenbarung und Deutung” in *Die Autorität der Bibel heute* (herausg. Von Al. Richardson – W. Schweitzer), Zurich – Frankfurt a. M. 1951, pp.204-205).

cils of bishops are guarantors of the truth or devoid of all error...”¹⁰ Professor Ioannis Karmiris also observes: “The Church is infallible... as a whole, as a body, as *pleroma*, but not the members of the body, however... or the local Churches”¹¹.

For this reason both the opinions of the Fathers as well as the decisions of the local councils cannot possibly, by themselves, guarantee the authenticity of a Canon of Holy Scripture that they may offer us. We cannot, therefore, base ourselves upon the authenticity of a Canon compiled or issued by a single Father of the Church, or by one local council, and be at ease or accept it as sufficient.

It thus becomes necessary for us to seek another authority, one that transcends this world, that will guarantee and confirm for us the Canon of Holy Scripture, i.e. the list of the authentic and divine Books. And such an authority, besides of course omniscient God, is the Church “which is the pillar and foundation of Truth” (I Timothy 3,15), as St. Paul teaches us. The Church again is expressed by the Ecumenical Council through its decisions (definitions-canons). The Ecumenical Council is the voice of the Church. Thus in the matter of the Canon of Holy Scripture also, a decision of an Ecumenical Council is necessary, a decision that will represent the entire Church and voice Church authority¹².

For these reasons then, we, too, in order to find an answer to the question of the Canon of Holy Scripture and a solution to the problem, shall recourse to those canons promulgated by Ecumenical Councils, or, that have been confirmed by an Ecumenical Council. For these same rea-

10. Trembelas, *Dogmatics*, Vol. II, pp. 403-404.

11. Ioannis Karmiris, *Ἐκκλησιολογία, Δογματικῆς τμήμα Ε'* (*Orthodox Ecclesiology, Dogmatics Part V*), Athens 1973, p.333.

12. Cf. H. Haag, “Die Buchwertung des Wortes Gottes in der Heiligen Schrift”, in *Mysterium Salutis*, ed. by J. Feiner – M. Lohrer, Vol. I, Einsiedeln – Zurich – Köln 1965, p. 384 and Chrysostomos Constantinides, Metropolitan of Myra, «Ἡ ἀθθεντία εἰς τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν» (“Authority in the Orthodox Church”) in *Μνήμη Μητροπολίτου Ἰκονίου (Memory of Metropolitan Iakovos of Iconium)*, Athens 1984, p. 381. Of course ecclesiastical authority is necessary to provide us with and confirm the Canon of the books of Holy Scripture so that we can be certain about its divinely-inspired books, without this, of course, meaning that the Church creates and grants authenticity to these books, which, of themselves, they possess, because they are divinely-inspired.

sons, we employ as the title of this present study “The Canons of the Church concerning the Canon of Holy Scripture”, because those canons confirmed by Ecumenical Councils we consider to be canons of the Church, the entire Church. Only these can be truly characterized as canons of the Church, and not those which have not been so confirmed¹³.

In accordance with this principle then, we are obliged to recourse to those canons that have been confirmed by an Ecumenical Council, and specifically by the Quinisext Council (691 AD) for a solution to our problem. We recourse to this Ecumenical Council because this Council confirmed by name Canons of Fathers who lived before, or of Local Councils. Among these canons are those that deal with the Canon of Holy Scripture.

Moreover, the fact that the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which in time follows the Quinisext, states (in its Canon I) that it accepts the divine canons “of the preceding Six Ecumenical Councils”, despite the fact that the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils did not issue canons, signifies that it not only adopted the canons of the Quinisext Council, which “continued” and “supplemented” the work of these two Councils (the Fifth and the Sixth), but also that it considers these canons as belonging to the Fifth and Six Ecumenical Councils. Hence, we conclude that the Seventh Ecumenical Council received the canons of the Quinisext Council as the work of an Ecumenical Council and thus recognizes it as being Ecumenical.

Thus, this act of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, in the final analysis, constitutes one more reason why we are obliged to insist upon and to base ourselves upon the canons confirmed by the Quinisext Ecumenical Council. Such canons referring to the Canon of Holy Scripture are: a) Canon 85 of the Apostolic canons, b) Canons 59 and 60 of the Council

13. Not every tradition that circulates within the Church should be characterised as Church Tradition, but only that tradition that bears the seal of the entire Church. Cf. Photius the Great, *Ἡ ἀπολογητικὴ ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν Πάπαν Νικόλαον* (*The Apologetic Epistle addressed to Pope Nicholas*), PG 102,604D-605AD, John Meyendorff, «Παράδοσις τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ παραδόσεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων» (“The Tradition of the Church and the traditions of men”), in *Θεολογία-Ἀλήθεια καὶ ζωή. Πνευματικὸν συμπόσιον* (*Theology – Truth and Life. A Spiritual Symposium*). Athens 1962, p. 131 fl.

of Laodicea, c) the canon of St. Athanasius the Great, d) the canon of St. Gregory the Theologian, e) the canon of St. Amphilochius of Iconium and f) the 24th (32nd) canon of the Council of Carthage (419 AD).

Furthermore, the great Byzantine canonologists (Zonaras and Balsamon) also point to these canons as being guides for him who seeks to learn which books are to be read “in Church”, i.e. which books belong to the Canon of Holy Scripture¹⁴.

3. Principles of Research

At this point it is almost certain that the following query will be, justifiably to some extent, put forth: How is it possible for these canons in question to possess divine supervision, be authoritative, to define what is correct, and in this case, to provide us with the correct Canon of Holy Scripture, given that there are differences between them, precisely on the very question of the Scriptural Canon¹⁵, or so it appears at first sight? Professor Vasileios Vellas, influenced by the first impression or prevailing opinion, says, obviously in his attempt to justify the situation, that the canons dealing with the Canon of Holy Scripture were ratified by the Quinisext Ecumenical Council *en masse*¹⁶, without dealing specifically with them.

If we submit to this argument and accept that these canons differ between themselves because they were ratified as a unit, we cannot base ourselves upon them with surety and certainty for the solution to the problem in question as well as for solving other controversial problems of Church life.

14. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. III, p. 369. Cf. Also the note by Aristinus (*ibid.*).

15. Indeed, Th. Zahn censures the Byzantine Church for codifying “such contradicting traditions” (*Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (henceforth: Zahn, *Geschichte*) Vol. 2, 1, Erlangen und Leipzig 1890 – 1892 p.187), as well as the Byzantine Canonists of the XIIth century, for the apathy with which they deal with “the differences between these *extremely contradicting decrees*” (*ibid.*, p.200)

16. Vasileios Vellas, *Ἡ ἅγια Γραφή ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ* (*Holy Scripture in the Orthodox Church*), Athens 1958, p.5: “This Council did not deal specifically with the Canon of Holy Scripture but approved the above-mentioned canons *en masse*”.

This being the situation, we believe that those who say that they cannot accept the testimony of these canons concerning the Canon of Holy Scripture, if their concurrence and unity are not previously or at least simultaneously proven, are correct.

We thus give ourselves over to the task of finding, with God's help, such a concurrence. We begin with the following simple thought: For the Quinisext Ecumenical Council to endorse all the above related canons, this must indicate that the Council wants to take "something" from them, or rather it indicates that one is obliged to take all of them into consideration, in order to come to a complete and perfected conclusion. If the Council wished us to take our information only from one canon, then it was not necessary for it to ratify all (six) of them, especially when it saw that they were –if they were– contradictory to one another.

In our present study then, we begin with the principal and conviction that these sacred and divine canons are necessary for the solution of our problem, for obviously they supplement each other and they provide us with a constructive whole, a (revealing) sum. Hence, they should not be seen as contradicting one another but rather as being in harmony.

Continuing, we should note that in order to achieve the harmonization and concurrence of the canons, a successful, correct and exact interpretation of the canons in question must be previously achieved. This we shall attempt to do in this present study. In order to achieve this, we must employ, as a methodology, the *literal* interpretation of these sacred canons. This interpretation is generally accepted as being the most positive. The purpose of this study is to ascertain that which is sure and certain in the Canon and in regard to the number of the books of Holy Scripture. And this certainty can be found and can easily be examined –only in the literal interpretation, rather than in the typological or allegorical or any other type of interpretation. St. Nicodemus the Hagioreite states in his "Rudder": "It is from the literal sense that theology derives its conclusions with certainty and out of necessity, but not necessarily from the spiritual sense on the one hand, but it (the spiritual sense) trustworthily convinces on the other hand and always benefits the interpreter"¹⁷.

17. Agapius the Hieromonk - Nicodemus the Monk, *Πηδάλιον, ἤτοι ἅπαντες οἱ ἱεροὶ καὶ θεῖοι κανόνες* (*The Rudder: All the sacred and divine Canons*) (henceforth: *The Rudder*), ed. "Astir", Athens 1957, p.113, n.

We proceed to this method of work and interpretation—being obliged to do so, given what we have stated above—with every possible exactness of expression, in obedience to the command found in the sacred canons themselves, especially in Canon XVI of St. Basil that especially urges us: “Pay careful attention to Scripture and there you will find the solution to the problem”¹⁸.

Elsewhere, St. Basil indeed observes that: “To listen to the voices of the theologians without curiosity, but rather to attempt to discover the hidden meaning in each word and each syllable is not the characteristic of those who are slothful in piety, but of those who are aware of the purpose of their calling...Hence the examination of the syllables is not without purpose”¹⁹.

4. Clarifications, Conclusions and Findings

We thus have the urgent duty to attempt the distinction in question between the divine and human voices, between divine and human books, between canonical and non-canonical scriptures. And we are obliged to proceed to the distinction in question for yet another reason: By maintaining and numbering among the canonical books other books of human provenance, we run the danger of rending their teachings absolute. And when these teachings are not really divine and absolute, but human and relative, we are in danger of falling into idolatry, for rendering absolute that which is relative, idolatry and foolish servitude²⁰.

But beyond these aforementioned arguments we also have the injunction of Canon 24/32 of the Council of Carthage that was ratified by the Quinisext Ecumenical Council and which states: “Similarly, it pleased (the Fathers of the Council) that besides the Canonical Scriptures nothing be read in church under the name of divine Scripture”. Since, then, this canon specifically specifies that no book that is not divine, ought to be read as divine in church, we are obliged to follow this

18. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. IV, p.136.

19. Basil the Great, *Περὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος* (*On the Holy Spirit*), I,2, PG 32, 69B.

20. Cf. Gal. 4, 8-9.

principle. Since this canon exhorts us to avoid such confusion, derived from superficial piety, we are obligated to follow it and to apply it.

This being the case, one cannot maintain that the Quinisext Ecumenical Council confirmed *en masse* all those sacred canons issued before its convocation (including those canons referring to the Canon of Holy Scripture) without previously testing and examining them. On the contrary, all indications lead to the conclusion that it previously examined them. Except for the above-mentioned reasons we can also maintain this premise by basing ourselves upon the following observation: Even though there already existed a list of the books of Holy Scripture compiled by Cyril of Jerusalem, a great Father of the Church, the Quinisext Ecumenical Council did not ratify this catalogue-canon, while, on the contrary, it ratified the Canon of Amphilochius of Iconium, a man enjoying lesser honour within the Church.

Of course the view that this careful examination and testing did not only take place during the sessions of an Ecumenical Council, but had already preceded within the Church and theology, and that the Council (simply) ratified and crystallized the view of the Church's *pleroma* concerning the sacred canons and their content, i.e. the already formed tradition of the Catholic Church, is also a valid one. It is apparent that one can say that the Quinisext Ecumenical Council, through its Canon II, crystallized, sealed and adopted the existing prevalent idea in the Church concerning the canons which it mentions in general, and more specifically those canons referring to the Canon of Holy Scripture, giving itself over and entrusting itself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, and in any case, whether or not the Quinisext Ecumenical Council proceeded to all the detailed scholastic actions entailed, the truth is that the action of the Holy Spirit, which guides the Church, is of indisputable and decisive importance. And we state this unreservedly, for as anyone can perceive, it was more or less humanly impossible for the Holy Fathers to "sit down" and to complete all the detailed presuppositions and preparations necessary for determining or achieving the coordination and harmonisation of all the sacred canons, in all their propositions and all their details. Such a task would demand indefinite time and incalculable labour. It is a task almost unachievable and beyond human capabilities: it is a divine opus.

For this reason, it is of little significance for example whether or not the Fathers ratified all the canons "*en masse*" or whether they did so af-

ter close scrutiny and research. What is important is that which was really accomplished and achieved through such a ratification and what finally the sacred canons, transmitted to us by divine supervision²¹, reveal to us concerning the matter of the Canon of Holy Scripture. At any rate, even today it is generally accepted by theological research that “the Church could not have acquired and achieved the knowledge of the canonicity (and the divine inspiration) of the Scriptures, other than solely by revelation”²².

Justifiably, then, does Professor Savvas Agourides point out: “The history of the Canon of the New Testament during the century of its creation constitutes a true saga, during which it is clear that the interventions and decisions of the Church were motivated and inspired by the Holy Spirit, Who leads her unto all the truth”²³.

Subsequent to all this and to what has so far been said, are the words of Professor M. Schmaus, who states: “The Canon, i.e. the catalogue of the Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit, has need of a testimony other than those existing within itself. One cannot maintain to a careful reader who opens himself freely to God, that the character of the Holy Scriptures as the word of God, of itself imposes itself, and hence has no need of an external authority (guarantee)”²⁴.

21. Cf. Also what is stated concerning this at the end of the note on p. 76 of *The Rudder*.

22. Cf. Pet. Lengsfelf, “Katholische Sicht von Schrift, Kanon und Tradition”, in Er. Käsemann (herausg.), *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, Göttingen 1970, p. 215: “Die Kirche konnte zur Erkenntnis der Kanonizität (und Inspiriertheit) dieser Schriften nur durch Offenbarung elangen. Eine explizite, satzhäfte Mitteilung ist uns nicht bekannt, bleibt also nur eine implizite Offenbarung”.

23. Agourides, *Introduction*, p.69.

24. M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, Vol.III,1, Munchen 1958 (fifth ed.) p.754. The following are certain basic points of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the matter of the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture: “The unique criterion of the divine inspiration of the biblical texts can be a special revelation of God to the Church. How and when such a revelation occurred we cannot today know with certainty. Doubts about the canonicity of certain books of the New Testament that occurred during the first centuries, were abrogated by the infallible decision of the Church. It is evident that faith in the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture is inseparably connected with the infallibility of the Church” (Pan. Andriopoulos, *Τὸ πρόβλημα τοῦ «ἱστορικοῦ Ἰησοῦ»*

It is therefore necessary for us to have an external authority that will inform us as to the canonicity or not (the divine inspiration or not) of the books of Holy Scripture. And for us, this authority belongs to the Ecumenical Councils and is expressed by them²⁵.

It may be superfluous for us to say that of course we shall attempt to examine the Canon of Holy Scripture on the basis of the canons of the Church relating to it, as a single composite whole.

Finally, we must state that we shall not examine equally all the points and elements that these canons offer us, but rather that we shall focus our attention first on those that need greater analysis on the one hand, and that help us decisively in harmonizing and synthesizing the canons, and in determining and systematizing the Canon of Holy Scripture, on those points that are pertinent to our theme, on the other.

5. A Few Words about our Outline

Before we undertake to report on the conclusions and findings of this present study, we must, we feel, say a few words about the outline we plan to follow.

In accordance with what we have said so far, Church canons that refer directly and *ad hoc* to the Canon of Holy Scripture are, in chronological order, the following:

1. Canon 85 of the Apostolic Canons (chronology unknown),
2. Canon 60 of the Council of Laodicea (c.360 AD),
3. Canon of Athanasius the Great (367 AD),
4. Canon of Gregory the Theologian (+ 390 AD),
5. Canon of Amphilochius of Iconium (+ c. 395 AD),
6. Canon 24/32 of the Council of Carthage (419).

ἐν τῇ συγχρόνῳ ἐρμηνευτικῇ τῆς Κ.Δ. ὑπὸ τὸ φῶς τῆς Θεολογίας Κυρίλλου τοῦ Ἀλεξανδρείας (*The Problem of the "Historical Jesus" in contemporary hermeneutics of the New Testament in the light of the Theology of Cyril of Alexandria*), Athens 1975, pp.192-193). Cf. Also A.Bea, "Inspiration" in *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche*, Vol. 5, p.707.

25. Cf. Elias Economou, «Προλεγόμενα εἰς τὴν ἐρμηνείαν τῆς Π. Διαθήκης» ("Prolegomena to the Interpretation of the Old Testament"), in *Δελτίον Βιβλικῶν Μελετῶν* (*Bulletin of Biblical Studies*), Vol. III (1975), issue no.9, p. 21.

We shall not, however, study these canons strictly according to their chronological order, but rather we shall follow a mixed system of systematic and historical exposition. That is to say, we shall in the beginning examine the canons of the Local Councils according to the chronology accepted by most scholars and then the canons of the Fathers of the Church, again in accordance with the chronology most widely accepted.

Furthermore, we must observe that in this way, by this method, it is possible for us to examine more easily the harmony or disharmony of the canons.

CHAPTER I

APOSTOLIC CANON 85

1. Introductory Remarks

1. First of all we should like briefly to give the reasons why we here give and examine first the 85th Apostolic Canon and indeed from among the synodical canons. Of course, it is known that there is a certain uncertainty among scholars in regard to the time when the Apostolic Canons were written. We cannot, however, completely rule out the view that these canons represent indeed the oral teaching and commands of the Apostles²⁶, that were set down, at least in the first instance or in a limited scale, by Clement, the disciple of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and later Bishop of Rome, as the present 85th Apostolic Canon testifies, saying: "...and the Constitutions of me, Clement, to you Bishops...and the Acts of us Apostles"²⁷.
2. Things being so, we can accept (we can imagine) Clement as secretary of one or more apostolic councils or meetings and decisions of the

26. St. Nicodemus the Hagioreite in *the Rudder* (pp.xxii-xxiv) puts forward sufficient arguments and indications concerning the Apostolic provenance of these canons, many of which, we believe, are convincing. Cf. Also Milasch – Apostolopoulos, *Ecclesiastical Law*, pp. 111-112.

27. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. II, pp. 109-110.

Apostles. And since in these councils not all the Apostles participated but most probably only two or three of them, we can liken these small meetings to the particular or local councils, such as the councils of Laodicea and Carthage that followed. For this reason we place the Apostolic Canons, and specifically the 85th, among the Counciliar canons and, indeed, first of all.

3. Furthermore we may add that these canons cannot be grouped with those of the Church Fathers, since they are not ascribed to a single or specific Apostle, but to the Apostles collectively. We need not mention the fact that the authority of a single Apostle is much greater than a simple Church Father and teacher, and comparable to at least a local, if not an Ecumenical, Council.

2. The Text of the Canon²⁸

Let the following books be counted venerable and sacred by all of you²⁹, both clergy and laity. Of the Old Testament five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; of Joshua³⁰ of Nun, one; of the Judges, one; of Ruth, one; of the Kings, four; of the Chronicles of the book of the days³¹, two; of Ezra, two; of Esther, one; [some texts read “of Judith, one”]; of the Maccabees, three; of Job, one; of the Psalter, one; of Solomon, three, viz: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs; of the Prophets, twelve; of Isaiah, one; of Jeremiah, one’ of Ezekiel, one, of Daniel, one. But besides these, you are recommended to teach your young persons the Wisdom of the very learned Sirach. Our own books, that

28. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. II, pp.109-110. The variant readings given in the footnotes are taken from the edition by P.-P. Joannou, *Discipline générale antique*, Vol. 2, Grottoferrata (Roma) 1962-63.

29. Ἐκκλησιαστικοῖς, Ecclesiastics.

30. Υἱοῦ, the Son

31. The two books of “Chronicles”, are described by the present Canon as “the book of the days”, because the Hebrews considered it as a single book. From the LXX and after it was divided into two books. Cf. Athanasios Hastoupis, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν Παλαιὰν Διαθήκην (Introduction to the Old Testament)*, (hereafter: Hastoupis, Introduction), Athens 1981, p. 426.

is, of the New Testament, are: the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; fourteen Epistles of Paul; two Epistles of Peter; three of John; one of James, and one of Jude. The Epistles of Clemens, and the Constitutions of me Clemens, addressed to you Bishops, in eight books, which are not to be published to all on account of the mystical things³² in them. And the Acts of us Apostles.

3. Hermeneutic Comments

1. First we must underline and take seriously into account, for the further course and success of this present research, the fact that the canon simply and reticently suggests that the books mentioned are to be considered venerable and holy, and does not characterize, or dictate that they are to be considered as divine, divinely inspired, as able to be included in the Canon or as canonical.
2. This fact also indicates that the characterization of the Books of Holy Scripture as being divinely inspired or divine, had not as yet been introduced, or at least had not yet become prevalent at the time during which the present Apostolic Canon was written.
3. This view is strengthened by the fact that the 60th Apostolic Canon, analogous to the 85th Apostolic Canon, dictates: “Whosoever reads publicly in the church the falsely inscribed (ψευδεπίγραφα) books of impious men as if they were holy Scripture, to the destruction of the people and clergy, let him be deposed”³³. In this canon as well, the term “holy”³⁴ is also employed.
4. Despite the fact, then, that the 85th Apostolic Canon does not characterize the books of the Old and Testament that it lists as being divinely inspired, etc, but only as being venerable and holy (or even as readable), it does not list among them the Wisdom of Sirach, even though it proposes it as a useful and profitable book, especially for young people.

32. Ἡ μυστήρια, or mysteries

33. Rallis and Potlis, Vol.II, p. 77.

34. From the insistence on using only this characterisation, we can be assured of the antiquity of the present canon, as well as of the other Apostolic canons.

5. We can conclude that the canon takes this position vis-à-vis the Wisdom of Sirach and tends towards excluding it from the books of Holy Scripture from the passage: “But besides these [=outside of these], (Ἐξωθεν δὲ ὑμῖν προῖστορεῖσθω) you are recommended to teach your young persons the Wisdom of the very learned Sirach”. It is if it states that this book is useful for the education of young people, but is not considered so venerable and holy, as to be included in the Holy Scriptures and to be recommended as readable in church, since, according to the 60th Apostolic Canon, only “the holy Books are read publicly in church”.
6. Also we are obliged to note that the manner in which the Canon is worded, does not exclude the possibility of there being other venerable and holy books of the Old and New Testament besides those listed. It does not state: “Let there be for all...books venerable and holy... only the following:”, but stops at the word “holy” and then lists the books. It thus provides room and gives the opportunity and freedom for adding similar books, if necessary.
7. Let our final observation be, then, that the 85th Apostolic Canon does not declare anything specific about the divinely inspired Canon of Holy Scripture. Hence, it follows that it does not limit us in this regard. We can thus say that one is free not to base himself upon it when forming and drawing up the Canon of the divinely inspired or divine books of Holy Scripture.
8. Further, for the reasons stated above, we see that no problem is created by the fact that from this catalogue of books, other books at sundry times given as divinely inspired or divine, are absent, as for example, the Book of Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon or the Apocalypse of John. (Especially the Book of Nehemiah, while not specifically mentioned, may not be absent from this catalogue, but understood as being included in the Books of Esdras)³⁵.

35. This possibility is related to the known problem of the books that bear the name “Ezdras”. As is known, more than one book bear this name. At the same time, at one point, one of the books of Ezdras was divided under two names (Ezdras and Neemiah). Cf. Panagiotis Bratsiotis, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Athens 1937, p. 210f, p. 218f and p. 631f. Also Hastoupis, *Introduction*, p. 420f, 435f and p. 500.

9. For these same reasons, neither did the Quinisext Ecumenical Council “feel uneasy”, as Th. Zahn, apparently ironically observes, when it ratified the present 85th Apostolic Canon, even though the Apocalypse of John was missing from it. The simple fact is that the Canon of the divinely inspired or divine Books of Holy Scripture had not as yet been drawn up, let alone completed or closed. Why then should the Quinisext Ecumenical Council “feel ill at ease”?

CHAPTER II

CANON 60 OF THE COUNCIL OF LAODICEA

1. Introductory remarks

1. Certain scholars maintain that the canon in question, the 60th Canon of the Council of Laodicea is not genuine. This canon, they argue, was not originally included in the canons of the Council of Laodicea, but was added later, originally as a supplement to the Council’s Canon 59.
2. Concerning this theory, we observe that it is quite possible that those who followed or follow this view are either unhappy with the content and composition of the canon, or because they think that the present canon does not agree with the other canons related to the books of Holy Scripture. This impression, however, we believe to be incorrect; neither is their case put forth in a strong and sound manner, as we shall see further on.

2. The Text of the canon³⁶

These are all the books of the Old Testament appointed to be read³⁷: 1, Genesis of the world; 2, The Exodus from Egypt; 3, Leveticus; 4, Numbers; 5, Deuteronomy; 6, Joshua, the son of Nun; 7, Judges, Ruth; 8, Esther; 9, Of the Kings, First and Second; 10, Of the Kings,

36. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. III, pp. 225-226.

37. *Καὶ ἀὐθεντεῖν* – and to have authority.

Third and Fourth; 11, Chronicles, First and Second; 12, Esdras, First and Second; 13, the Book of Psalms; 14, the Proverbs of Solomon; 15, Ecclesiastes; 16, the Song of Songs; 17, Job; 18, The Twelve Prophets; 19, Isaiah; 20, Jeremiah, and Baruch, the Lamentations, and Epistles³⁸; 21, Ezekiel; 22, Daniel.

And these are the books of the New Testament: Four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; The Acts of the Apostles; Seven Catholic Epistles, to wit, one of James, two of Peter, three of John, one of Jude; Fourteen Epistles of Paul, one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Philippians, one to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, one to the Hebrews, two to Timothy, one to Titus and one to Philemon.

3. Hermeneutical Comments

1. Contrary to the 85th Apostolic Canon, the present canon, decrees that the books of the Old and Testament that it mentions ought to be read (δεῖ ἀναγιγνώσκεισθαι) in Church. That is to say, it considers that they should be read, because it apparently considers them to be included in the Canon of Holy Scripture and that they are canonical.
2. This becomes especially clear when we combine it with Canon 59, which precedes it and which states: “No psalms composed by private individuals nor any non-canonical books may be read in the church, but only the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments”³⁹.
3. Continuing, we should point out the following: Despite the fact that Canon 60 immediately follows Canon 59 and one would naturally expect Canon 60 to begin in the following manner: “The Canonical Books of the Old Testament then are the following...”, the canon avoids this precise and specific way of listing the books, and states in a rather general and indeterminate way: “Those books of the Old Testament that should be read and considered authoritative (αὐθεντεῖν)”⁴⁰. In this manner does it indicate which books should be read

38. Ἡ, Ἐπιστολή – or, the Epistle.

39. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. III, p. 225.

40. Cf. P.- P. Joannou, *Discipline*, Vol. 1,2 p. 154. It is uncertain whether or not the

and be considered authentic, i.e. it states which books are canonical (at least up until that moment), but at the same time does not exclude –it does not “close” the Canon– other books from the Canon. On the contrary, it provides the possibility of including other canonical books within the Canon.

4. The same holds true concerning the phrase introducing the books of the New Testament: “And those of the New Testament these”. In this statement, it is apparent that the phrase “ought to be read” (ἀναγνωστέα ἐστί) which is identical with the expression “should be read” (δεῖ ἀναγινώσκεσθαι). The canon could have listed the books of Holy Scripture with the following common introductory phrase: “Those books of the Old and New Testament that should be read”.
5. Hence, through the 60th Canon of Laodicea we do not have the final composition or “closing” of the Canon of Holy Scripture. The commentary of Zonaras concerning this canon tends towards this view, especially in his opening comment: “The present canon, is an uncommitted expression”, without excluding the fact that “it is possible for another canon to list” other books.
6. At any rate, however, through the indirect use (with Canon 59) and introduction of the terms “canonical” (κανονικά) and “uncanonical” (ακανόνιστα) [lit. not having been regularized] books, we conclude that a *Canon of authoritative*, i.e. infallible divine books had already slowly begun to be formed and adapted: books that could be used as a rule and canon for the life of Christians and as a path leading “to the straight way of life”⁴¹.
7. At this point we should possibly mention the testimony of the other commentator, viz. Matthew Blastaris, who supports the view that the 60th Canon of Laodicea is genuine, since under a special heading (“the 60th (Canon) of Laodicea”) in his “Constitution according to alphabetical order” he states the following: “In exactly the same way (as the 85th Apostolic Canon), without any deviation, does the 60th Ca-

word “ἀὐθεντεῖν» was originally in the text of the canon. Even if this word is omitted from the text of the canon, we can consider these books to be authentic or authoritative because they are considered to be, as we have seen *canonical*.

41. Cf. Canon 12 of the Council of Laodicea in Rallis and Potlis, Vol. III, p. 182.

non of the Council of Laodicea also enumerate the books, without including the Epistles of Clement and the Apostolic Regulations (Διατάξεις)⁴².

8. Of course here we ought to examine the possibility that such a view concerning the authenticity of the 60th Canon of Laodicea might not be accepted, and that, contrariwise, that it might be proven that this canon-catalogue of books is not genuine. What should happen then? What would be the consequences? Would a problem then arise—something that for us canonologists would be of special concern—in regard to the genuineness of the canon and its testimony?
9. Certainly, this would create a problem as to the genuineness of the canon, but fortunately, no problem concerning the creation of the Canon of Holy Scripture is created. Even if the genuineness of the present 60th Canon of Laodicea were to be called into question or rendered unattainable, and its testimony as to the Canon of Holy Scripture overlooked or ignored as not being authentic or authoritative, a «serious loss» does not occur concerning the final composition of the Canon of Holy Scripture. This canon does not present something essentially different from that which the other canons that were ratified offer.

CHAPTER III

CANON 24/32 OF THE COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE

1. Introductory Remarks

Instead of any other introductory observations here, we think it sufficient to remind the reader that this canon of the Council of Carthage (of 419AD) or of the Biblical Canons of the Church in Africa (*Codex canonum ecclesiae Africanae*) is for the most part a repetition or ratification of the canon of the Council of Hippo (of 393AD) and that of Carthage (of

42. Matthaios Blastares, *Σύνταγμα κατὰ στοιχείων* (*Constitution according to alphabetical Order*) (κατὰ στοιχείων) II, chapter XI, in Rallis and Potlis, Vol. VI, p. 145.

the year 397AD), without, however, our being able to speak with certainty about their being identical.

2. Text⁴³

Similarly it was decided that besides the Canonical Scriptures nothing be read in Church under the name of divine Scripture.

But the Canonical Scriptures are as follows⁴⁴:

Genesis.

Exodus.

Leveticus.

Numbers.

Deuteronomy.

Joshua, the Son of Nun.

The Judges.

Ruth.

The Kings, four books.

The Chronicles, two books.

Job.

The Psalter.

The five books of Solomon.

The Twelve Books of the Prophets.

Isaiah.

Jeremiah.

Ezekiel.

Daniel.

Tobit.

Judith.

Esther.

Ezra, two books.

Macabees, two books.

43. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. III, pp. 368-369.

44. "Ἡ, τουτέστι: - or, that is to say:

THE NEW TESTAMENT

- The Gospels, four books.
- The Acts of the Apostles, one book.
- The Epistles of Paul, fourteen.
- The Epistles of Peter, the Apostle, two.
- The Epistles of John the Apostle, three.
- The Epistle of James the Apostle, one.
- The Epistle of Jude the Apostle, one.
- The Revelation of John, one book.

Let this be sent to our brother and fellow bishop, Boniface, and to the other bishops of those parts, that they may confirm this canon, for these are the things which we have received from our fathers to be read in church.

2. Hermeneutical Observations.

1. In the canon at hand we observe that the close connection of the two characterizations “canonical” and “divine” for the Scriptures is synodically ratified and becomes official. “Except for the canonical Scriptures, nothing else can be read with the name of, or as being characterized as being, divine Scripture”. So states the present canon. Only the canonical books, the books belonging to the Canon of Holy Scripture can claim to be “divine”. Conversely also, only the divine books can be canonical and authoritative. Only they can claim a place in the Canon of Holy Scripture.
2. We must of course, however, add that for a book to belong to the Canon of Holy Scripture with certainty and incontestably, it has to have been included in the Canon officially and synodically-canonically. That is to say, books belonging to the Canon of Holy Scripture (or Canonical Scriptures) are those that were included in the Canon by canons of the Church: and we repeat, remind and emphasize by the Church catholic, i.e. those books that have been ratified by an Ecumenical Council.
3. After all that we have noted, we must here pay special attention to the following: the present canon uses the definitive (ὀριστική) phrase

“and these are the canonical Scriptures” and thus defines and at the same time limits the canonical books of Holy Scripture to those that it mentions. *Hence, it closes the Canon of Holy Scripture.* Only if it used an indefinite expression, as for example, “And Canonical Scriptures are Genesis, etc”, (i.e. without the definite article “the” and the pronoun “these”) could we then be able to say that this canon does not close the Canon of Holy Scripture, but allows room for other books to be added to it.

4. Someone might ask: why does this canon say that these books have been received as books that *must be read* (ἀναγνωστέα) while other canons, and specifically Canon 60 of Laodicea, which lists what books must be read (δεῖ ἀναγιγνώσκεισθαι), does not specify the same books as our present canon but lists fewer⁴⁵? Doesn't this constitute a contradiction between the canons? The answer to this question is negative. If we examine the matter historically and pay careful attention to the way in which the canons are worded, we will be convinced as to the soundness of our answer. The present Canon 24/32 of Carthage lists those books which the Fathers of the Council received in the year 419AD. It is not at all strange that Canon 60 of Laodicea, which was written earlier (360AD) lists fewer books.
5. The manner in which Canon 60 of Laodicea is worded, as we have already pointed out, in no way excludes this possibility. Moreover, we must not forget that Canon 60 of Laodicea speaks rather modestly and indefinitely, and hence reservedly, in stating: “Those books of the Old Testament that should be read and considered authentic”. Thus, in reference to the moment of the canon's composition, and because the canon does not close the Canon of Scripture, the possibility of later adding other books is not precluded. It thus follows that Canon 24/32 of Carthage in no way contradicts Canon 60 of Laodicea.
6. Also we should note that our present Canon 24/32 of Carthage closely connects the adjectives “divine” and “canonical” books with the characterization “must be read” (ἀναγνωστέα) in Church. At the same time, only the books that it lists, and no other, does it impose to be read in church. And the way in which the wording of the canon

45. For example, the Book of Revelation is not included.

ends, as well as the wording at the beginning of the canon, about which we have already spoken, defines and limits, i.e., “closes” the Canon of Holy Scripture.

7. Finally, following the exhortation of the canonologist Balsamon, Patriarch of Antioch, let us “seek”⁴⁶, let us examine, and let us study the remaining canons of the Holy Fathers, despite the fact that with this present canon the Canon of Holy Scripture closes. We are obliged to do so also for the following reason: in order to clarify certain phrases of the canons that we have examined, and in order to elucidate further, certain points on the question of the Canon of Holy Scripture, so that certain reservations that remain may be removed and that we can ascertain, as much as we possibly can, and demonstrate the harmony of the sacred canons.

CHAPTER IV

CANON OF ATHANASIUS THE GREAT

1. Introductory Observations.

1. The present canon is part of the 39th Festal Epistle of Athanasius the Great. Festal Epistles or as they are sometimes called Paschal homilies, is the name given to those epistles that the Patriarchs of Alexandria would send to their bishops shortly following the Feast of Theophany, announcing to them the date of Easter for the current year⁴⁷. This custom had already begun from the third century.
2. After the First Ecumenical Council (325AD) and by its authorization⁴⁸, the Patriarch of Alexandria was obliged to communicate the

46. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. III, p. 369.

47. They were called “festal” because during the early Christian period, the feast *par excellence*, or rather the only feast, the feast of Christianity, was that of Pascha or Easter. Cf. St. Sakkos, *Ἡ λθ' ἑορταστικὴ ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ Μ. Ἀθανασίου (The 39th Festal Epistle of Athanasius the Great)*, Thessaloniki, 1973-74, p.9.

48. Because there was disagreement amongst the Local Churches as to the day upon

date of Easter to the Church at large, through the Archbishops and Patriarchs of the large territories. The Patriarchs of Alexandria did this because the Church of Alexandria and its clergy were entrusted with the calculation and determination of the date of Easter in view of the fact that Alexandria was the most important center of astronomical science at the time. Seizing the opportunity, the Patriarchs of Alexandria, in these Epistles, spoke of other matters as well (dogmatic, canonical, pastoral, liturgical etc.,) that concerned the Church.

3. The present is such an Epistle; Athanasius the Great, while Patriarch of Alexandria sent it in the year 367. In it, besides the date for the celebration of Easter, he also speaks about the Canon of the books of Holy Scripture. This Epistle-Canon is part of Athanasius' struggle in behalf of the orthodox faith and against the heretics.

2. The Text⁴⁹

Since we have spoken about the heretics as being (spiritually) dead, and about us as having the divine Scriptures for our salvation, and because I fear that, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, some⁵⁰ believers with integrity, because of their simplicity and purity, might be led astray by the craftiness of men, and begin henceforth to study other books, the so-called apocrypha, being deceived by books bearing the same name as the genuine books, I ask that you bear with me, if I speak of things that you know well, and refer to them in writing for the benefit of the Church. As I attempt to mention these, I shall, in order to render my own presentation, follow that of St. Luke and say: Because some have attempted to put in a new order the so-called apocrypha and to mix them with divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have received information, as they have been handed

which Pascha was to be celebrated, the matter was taken up by the First Ecumenical Council, which established the common celebration of the Feast by all Christians on the same Sunday and indeed, after the Jewish Pascha. Cf. the 7th Apostolic Canon and Canon I of the Council of Antioch.

49. Rallis and Potlis, Vol. IV, pp. 78-80.

50. ὅλιγοι – or, a few.

down to the Fathers by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed good to me, also, being encouraged by true brethren and having been taught by the aforesaid, to list below the books belonging to the canon that have been handed down and believed to be divine, so that everyone, if led astray, may well recognise those by whom he was deceived, while those who have remained undefiled may rejoice in our reminding them of them. There are, then, in all twenty-two books of the Old Testament. First Genesis, then Exodus, Leviticus follows, and after that Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. After comes Joshua, and Judges; and after it, Ruth; then immediately follow the four books of the Kings, counted as two. Then Chronicles, the two counted as one. Then First and Second Esdras, [i.e. Ezra and Nehemiah], again counted as one book. After these Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. To these follow Job, and the Twelve Prophets, counted as one book. Then Isaiah, Jeramiah, together with the Epistle of Baruch; after come the Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These then are the divinely inspired books of the Old Testament.

Now I must not overlook naming the books of the New Testament. These are the following: the Four Gospels: according to St. Matthew, according to St. Mark, according to St. Luke, according to St. John; After these come the Acts of the Apostles, and the seven Catholic Epistles of the Apostles, as they are called: one belonging to James, two to Peter and three to John, after which the one belonging to Jude. Besides these, there are the fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul, which are listed in the following order: first the Epistle to the Roman, then two epistles to the Corinthians, after these comes the Epistle to the Galatians, then the Epistle to the Ephesians, followed by the Epistle to the Philippians and the Epistle to the Colossians, and⁵¹ the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, followed by the Epistle to the Hebrews⁵². After this follow the two Epistles to Timothy, then comes the Epistle to Titus and finally the Epistle to Philemon; after these follows the Apocalypse (Revelation) of John.

51. Μετὰ ταῦτα = after come

52. ἢ, εὐθὺς = or, then immediately follow

These are the fountains of salvation, that whoso thirsteth, may be satisfied by the eloquence which is in them. In them alone (ἐν τούτοις μόνοις) is set forth the doctrine of piety. Let no one add to them, nor take aught therefrom. Concerning them the Lord deplored the Sadducees saying, “You do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor their powers⁵³, while exhorting the Jews, saying, “Search the Scriptures for they are they that which testify of me”.

I also add for further accuracy that⁵⁴ there are certain other books, not edited in the Canon, but established by the Fathers, to be read to those newly come and desiring to be instructed in the doctrine of piety: The Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, the Doctrine (Διδασχία) of the Apostles and the Pastor (Shepherd of Hermas). And yet, beloved, though the former being considered as belonging to the Canon and the latter as (beneficial) to be read, the apocrypha are nowhere mentioned. They are the invention of the heretics who author them at will and add to them antiquity so that they may appear to be ancient and authentic so as to deceive the upright.

3. Hermeneutic Remarks

1. First of all let us pay attention to the following: “as they were *handed down* (to us) from the beginning” and not “as they *were written* from the beginning”. This is stated because others than the twelve Apostles wrote Holy Scripture; but it was the Apostles who transmitted or certified what others wrote in these books. It was the Apostles that set the foundations of the Canon of Holy Scripture.
2. It was to the Apostles that Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would teach them *all things* and recall to them all that He had said to them (Jn. 14,26). First of all, He had promised them that the Holy Spirit would lead them unto all the truth”, and moreover, that He “would announce to them the future things” (Jn.16, 13). Thus the Apostles

53. Ἡ, τὴν δύναμιν = or the power [of God]

54. Ἡ, ὡς ὅτι = a variant of ὡς

would become “the foundation stones of the Church” (Rev. 21,14), since “their preaching is the foundation and support of the Church”⁵⁵.

3. Thus it is that in the Church in general, we correctly speak about “Apostolic Tradition”, and this is why their successors, the Holy Fathers, correctly took (and take) special care to transmit *precisely whatever* they received from the Apostles. Only in this way was it possible for the Church to preserve its identity as “*Catholic and Apostolic*”.
4. The Fathers of the Church entrusted this aim and this concern not only to the clergy but also to “each one”, to every Christian faithful of the Church (“so that each one”, it states).
5. Further, we feel especially obliged to pay attention to and to underline that in the present canon, Athanasius the Great speaks first of all specifically about the “*divinely-inspired Scripture*” and not about the “divine books” in general. This special direction is made apparent by the phrase: “Precisely, because certain individuals have attempted to rearrange for themselves the so-called apocrypha and to include them in the divinely-inspired Scripture, about which we have received exactly as they were transmitted to the Fathers (of the Church) those, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and servants of the word, it seemed good to me...”. This does not mean that Athanasius the Great could not characterise these divinely inspired books also as being “divine”, as he does in any case by saying, “and were also believed to be *divine* books”. This is easy for him since, when a book is divinely-inspired it is also divine. The opposite does not always hold true.
6. Before continuing, and so that we may more readily adopt what we have said above, we may have to say certain things about whether or not there is indeed a difference between the term “divinely-inspired” and “divine”, and if so, what is the difference. We note that there is

55. Euthymios Zigabenos, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὰς ΙΔ΄ Ἐπιστολάς τοῦ Ἀπ. Παύλου καὶ εἰς τὰς Ζ΄ Καθολικάς* (*Exegesis of the XIV Letters of the Apostle Paul and of the VII Catholic Epistles*), edited by Archbishop Nicephoros Kalogeras, Vol. II, Athens 1887, p.22 (Ephes. 2,20).

a difference, and the difference is this: Divine are those books in general that are infallible because they were authored under divine supervision. It is possible that they were written solely on the basis of logical thought, on the basis of our innate moral law, or on the basis of existing information; however, the Holy Spirit (God-Divinity) supervised and assisted their authors so as not to fall into error. Thus the content of these books neither contradict the other books of Holy Scripture, nor clash with objective, real science and truth.

7. *Divinely-inspired* are those books that contain words of God that contain the truth that He has revealed to His chosen ones, or to put it another way, that they received through inspiration, being moved by the Holy Spirit. Cf. II Peter 1,21: “Being moved by the Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke”. Of course it was the Holy Spirit that supervised during the recording of these truths, so that no mistakes be made. Moreover, these truths (these Scriptures) are able to inspire the reader with further knowledge and experience of the truth⁵⁶. Cf. II Tim. 3,16 “All Scripture is divinely inspired and beneficial for instruction, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”.
8. The fact that such a distinction that we have just described exists in theology between the terms “divine” and “divinely-inspired” can be clearly discerned in the following remarks by St. Nicodemus the Hagioireite (1716—1806)⁵⁷. Clearly making a distinction between Holy Scripture and the sacred canons, he says that the latter have been written “under God’s supervision and not by inspiration and thus

56. Cf. also Chrysostomos Konstantinides – Emmanuel Photiades, *Ἐκθεσις περὶ τῶν πηγῶν τῆς θείας Ἀποκαλύψεως κατὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Ἀνατολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν* (Report concerning the Sources of Divine Revelation according to the Eastern Orthodox Church), Thessaloniki 1971, pp. 48-49 and 53.

57. Cf. Eugenios Boulgaris, *Θεολογικόν* (*Theologikon*) (by Archimandrite Angelos Lontopoulos), Venice 1872, pp. 23fl. Cf. also Eu. Antoniadis, «Ἐπὶ τοῦ προβλήματος τῆς θεοπνευστίας τῆς Ἁγ. Γραφῆς» (“Concerning the Problem of the Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture”) in *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν* (*Scientific Review of the Theological School of the University of Athens*), Vol. IV, 1937-1938 pp. 134-135.

they are not called divinely inspired Scripture”⁵⁸. They are however called “divine”. St. Nicodemus adds that certain of the more ancient ecclesiastical authors “say that the mystical and more prominent (books) of the Scriptures were characterized as being inspired by the (Holy) Spirit, while the historical books as *only have been written under its supervision*”⁵⁹.

9. This view has been adopted by many of the more recent Orthodox theologians, as for example Constantinos Oikonomou of the House of Oikonomou, Constantinos Kontogonis, Alexandros Lycourgos, Zekos Rosis, Christos Androutsos, Demetrios Balanos and Panagiotis Trembelas⁶⁰.
10. In the Canon of Athanasius the Great then, it appears that we also have such a delicate differentiation. Moreover, Athanasius the Great speaks very carefully and with very great discernment. He speaks with the precision characteristic of an Orthodox theologian and true scholar. This can be seen also in the following two related and very discerning expressions: “It seem good also to me...to present below those books believed to be under canonization (κανονιζόμενα) and divine».
11. First of all, he says that it seem good to him to present «the books *under canonization*». He does not say the «canonical» books. He knows well and he carefully informs us that (during his time or in his area) the books of Holy Scripture have not yet irrevocably been determined as canonical. They are in the process of being canonized, and of being accepted as canonical. Therefore he wishes to present us with these books «in the process of being canonized». He also informs us with the same careful wording that *it has been believed* that they are divine books. He does not speak in dogmatic terms saying that they are divine books, or even more that these are the divine books and no others.

58. *The Rudder*, p. 112, footnote.

59. *Ibid.* p. 113, footnote.

60. Cf. Panagiotes Boumis, *Οἱ Κανόνες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας περὶ τοῦ Κανόνος τῆς Ἁγ. Γραφῆς* (*The Canons of the Church concerning the Canon of the Holy Scripture*), Athens 1986, pp. 134-135.

12. Hence, Athanasius the Great speaking with great care and discernment introduces –possibly without realizing all its ramifications– officially a new concept concerning the books that he mentions. Through this Canon the special characterization of divinely inspired books and divinely inspired Scripture is given. Further along, we will be given the opportunity to conclude that he speaks about divinely inspired Scripture or in other words, about Scripture’s divinely inspired books.
13. After enumerating the books of the Old Testament, St. Athanasius says: “Up to these are the (books) of the Old Testament”. By this and his preceding phrase, “The books of the Old Testament then are all in all twenty two in number”, Athanasius the Great appears to be closing the Canon of the Books of the Old Testament and limiting their number to those that he has mentioned. The same impression is conveyed concerning the Canon, the number and the books of the New Testament when he explicitly and in a determinative manner states: “*Now I must not overlook naming the books of the New Testament. These are the following:*” and then goes on to list them.
14. After enumerating the books of the New Testament, he states with the same exclusivity concerning their value: “*These are the fountains of salvation...In them alone (ἐν τούτοις μόνοις) is set forth the doctrine of piety.*” And he adds: “*Let no one add to them, nor take aught therefrom.*” These expressions and especially the phrase “*in them alone*” (ἐν τούτοις μόνοις) give the impression that indeed he closes the list, the Canon of the Books of Holy Scripture.
15. Having these absolute and exclusive phrases in mind and the number of books of Holy Scripture that Athanasius the Great gives, which does not agree with the previous Canons and especially that of Canon 24/32 of the Council of Catharge, which likewise closes the Canon of the Books of Holy Scripture, one could submit with some self-complacency the following observation-question: «Do we not have here a disagreement between Canons?» To this we would succinctly reply: «Fortunately, no we do not».
16. It necessary to put things in order. First, it is possible that some may put forth disagreement of the two Canons (that of Catharge and that of St. Athanasius) because of the different number of books to be contained in the Canon (κανονιζόμενα) or Canonical books

(κανονικά) of the Holy Scripture that are mentioned in each of these two Canons. It is however in the distinction between «those contained in the Canon» (κανονιζόμενα) and «Canonical» (κανονικά) that the solution to the problem is to be found, viz., the false impression that the Canons disagree.

17. Thus, we are obliged to observe that Athanasius the Great states in his Canon that he thought it beneficial to list the “books of Holy Scripture to be contained in the Canon” (κανονιζόμενα), while that Canon of Carthage speaks of “canonical” (κανονικά) books. Athanasius the Great uses the term (κανονιζόμενα) for the books he mentions, the term implying, as we have already stated, those books that are in the process of becoming canonical and to be accepted as such, i.e. in the stage in which their canonicity is being discussed. On the contrary, Canon 24/32 of the Council of Carthage employs the term “canonical” (κανονικά), which designates the end result, and finality of this process and discussion.
18. It is thus possible that a book today (or in a certain area) to be in the process of being accepted as canonical or its canonicity being under discussion, tomorrow (in another area) to become canonical (to have its canonicity determined) or to be rejected. Or contrariwise: it is possible for a book that today (or in a certain geographical area) is not included in the number of books undergoing the process of canonization, i.e. books whose canonicity is under discussion, tomorrow (or in a different area) to be included as such, or even to be declared canonical. Hence, the term κανονιζόμενα (in the present tense) because of its nature and action, does not close the number of canonical books.
19. Secondly, it is possible for one to insist that the canons disagree by putting forth the supposed different number of «divine» books of Holy Scripture that are enumerated as such by the present Canon of St. Athanasius, as compared with those listed in Canon 24/32 of the Council of Carthage, which states: «Similarly it was decided that besides the Canonical Scriptures nothing be read in Church under the name of divine Scripture”. If, however, we pay attention to the manner in which Athanasius the Great’s Canon is worded, we observe that he does not say that he will list the “divine” books of Holy Scripture, but those books *that were believed also to be divine*. Specifi-

cally, he states, “*it seemed good to me, also... to list below the books belonging to the canon that have been handed down and believed to be divine*”. Hence, he does not specify the number of divine books, nor does he determine the number of the canonical books.

20. Hence, the Canon of Athanasius the Great does not even close the number of divine books of Holy Scripture. Thus, it is not possible to support the view that there is disagreement between the present Canon and another that may by chance contain a different number of books characterized as “divine”⁶¹. To be more specific, the fact that the Canon of the Council of Carthage includes other books not included in the Canon of St. Athanasius, in no way creates a problem.
21. In previous observations we have stated that Athanasius the Great closes the Canon of the books of Holy Scripture. We must however, state here, in light of what we have observed above, that he closes the number of divinely inspired books and not the number of divine or canonical books. On the contrary, it is possible, as we have stated, to include other books among the canonical or divine books. The purpose of St. Athanasius’ Canon is not, as we have seen, to list all the canonical books and all the divine ones.
22. Moreover, besides all that we have stated so far, the following phrases indicate that St. Athanasius’ Canon speaks about the divinely inspired books of Holy Scripture and it is their number that he desires to close: “*These are the fountains of salvation, that whoso thirsteth, may be satisfied by the eloquence which is in them. In them alone (ἐν τούτοις μόνοις) is set forth (εὐαγγελίζεται) the doctrine (διδασκαλεῖον) of piety*”, especially the last phrase. In order, however, to use this expression as an argument, we have to clarify its meaning.
23. First of all we must distinguish between the terms “διδασκαλία” and “διδασκαλεῖον”. Διδασκαλία is one thing while διδασκαλεῖον is another. Ordinarily, διδασκαλεῖον is the place or space where the διδασκαλία takes place, and in the present passage we believe that

61. Indeed, we are at a loss as what to marvel first of all: the wondrous insight of the Fathers of the Church, or the manifest supervision of the Holy Spirit over the manner in which the sacred canons were formulated or adopted so as not to contradict one another in any way.

St. Athanasios speaks about the διδασκαλεῖον (this interpretation is also supported grammatically) in and through which piety is taught (διδάσκειται). Such a place apparently is understood to be the Church. The Church is the διδασκαλεῖον or school of piety, of correct reverence, correct worship, correct belief and correct practice. It is the Church that teaches the truth and true life.

24. The meaning of this passage from the Canon of Athanasius the Great then is that through the divinely inspired books (that he has enumerated) the Church, this school (διδασκαλεῖον) of piety evangelizes, proclaims the good news, the gospel of salvation. She evangelizes both those near and afar, both those within and outside the Church.
25. Here we must point out that the breadth of the term “εὐσέβεια” (piety) is different than that of the term “εὐαγγελισμός” (evangelism), the former having a broader range than the latter. The term “εὐαγγελισμός” (evangelism) is more specialized. Thus it is that a book may be suitable for piety but not for evangelism. Hence, it is possible that books suitable for the advancement of piety may be more numerous than those suitable for evangelization. In this way, the Church, being the school of piety can employ other books as well, that are appropriate for cultivating piety, beyond those that are specifically for evangelization, and enumerated as such by Athanasius the Great.
26. That the term *εὐαγγελισμός-εὐαγγελίζεσθαι* possesses a certain particularity can be more clearly seen in the following observation: These books contain and transmit in an original manner evangelism, they contain the heavenly good news concerning the salvation of the human race. Cf. the glad tidings of the angel to the shepherds: “Behold, unto you I bring good tidings of great joy...unto you is born this day a Saviour” (Lk 2, 8-11). Our canon then speaks of an order or group of books that possess a special place among all the books, even those appropriate for the propagation of piety. He speaks of the sum total of the divinely inspired books⁶².

62. Perhaps, by what we have so far noted about the divinely-inspired Books of Holy Scripture, an answer, to some extent, is given to the question: what is the meaning of the

27. As a general deduction from all that we have observed above, we believe that matters are well clarified and harmonized when we bear in mind that Athanasius the Great specifically speaks of the *divinely inspired* books and not the *divine* books of Holy Scripture. Furthermore, by his phrase: “in these alone” (τούτοις μόνοις), and other related expressions, St. Athanasius finalises the number of *divinely-inspired* and not *divine* books of Holy Scripture.
28. Besides these books the Canon does not exclude the possibility of the existence of other divine or holy books. This is why it does not employ the phrase “the following” before going on to enumerate them, but ends rather abruptly, so that we may say the term “for example” is to be understood here: (For example, the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach etc.) In this passage, that is, Athanasius the Great does not limit things by saying that only these, only the following books are suitable for one to be instructed in piety. Thus, in regard to the books not divinely inspired the Canon appears to have great elasticity and hence does not contradict other Canons that state otherwise.
29. After what we have observed above and clarified, we believe that the present Canon is in complete harmony with the previous Synodal canons that we have examined (the 85th Apostolic Canon, Canon 60 of the Council of Laodicea, Canon 24/32 of the Council of Carthage). Also, it agrees with the Canons of the Holy Fathers that we are now about to examine. Lastly, we may add that the present Canon is the product of a life in God lived by one of the Great Fathers of the Church, “actuated by the divinely inspired words of Scripture” and has provided us with an opportunity to clarify many issues contained therein as well as issues concerning the Church and Theology.

term “divine inspiration”, a question that concerns both the Orthodox Church and Orthodox Theology. Cf.: Ecumenical Patriarchate: *Ἡ πρώτη Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις* (*The First Panorthodox Consultation*), Rhodes, 24 September – 1 October 1961, *Texts – Minutes*, Phanar 1967, pp. 13, 25-26 and 128.

CHAPTER V**CANON OF GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN****1. Introductory Observations**

First of all, we should point out that the present Canon is not included in all the codices-manuscripts and collections of the sacred canons. Does this, then, mean that it was not received by the Church? In all likelihood, no; because Canon 2 of the Quinisext Ecumenical Council also ratified the canons of Gregory (Nazianzen) the Theologian, and these are, all-in-all, only one: the present Canon. Consequently, the Canon has been received. Perhaps the omission of this Canon from certain manuscripts or collections is due to a misunderstanding: the false –as we shall see– impression that the Canon does not agree with the related Canons.

2. The Text

So that you may not be led astray by strange books, for many malignant writings have been disseminated, receive, o friend, my reputable number (of the books) of Holy Scripture. The historical books are twelve in number by the Hebrew count, all belonging to the ancient Hebrew wisdom (of the Old Testament). First comes Genesis; then Exodus and Leviticus; then Numbers; after this Deuteronomy. Then follows Joshua and the Judges; the eighth (book) is Ruth; the ninth and tenth are the Acts of the Kings and the Chronicles; finally there is Esdras. The poetic books are five, the first of which of course is Job, then come the (Psalms) of David; these are followed by the three books of Solomon: Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs and the Proverbs. There follow five (more) books as also being (books) of the Prophetic Spirit. In one book, there are the twelve (minor prophets): Hosea and Amos; the third is Micah; then come Joel, Jonas, Obadiah and Nahum, Habbakkuk and Zephaniah, Haggai, followed by Zechariah and Malachi. After this one book⁶³ comes

63. Ἡ, ἦδε, instead of οἶδε

the second: that of Isaiah. Then follows Jeremiah, who as a babe was called (to the prophetic dignity); after comes Iezekiel and then Daniel⁶⁴ (a work written) by grace. Thus there are twenty-two ancient books of the Old Testament which correspond to the Hebrew letters. The number of the books of the New Mystery are Matthew, who wrote the Miracles of Christ for the Hebrews; Mark for Italy; Luke, for Greece; John, the enterer of heaven, was a preacher to all, then the Acts, the xiv Epistles of Paul, the vii Catholic Epistles, and so you have all. If there is any besides these, do not repute it to belong to the genuine⁶⁵.

3. Hermeneutical Observations.

1. At the beginning of the Canon Gregory the Theologian states the purpose (“ὄφρα” a Homeric word = ἵνα [so that]) for which he drafted the present Canon of Holy Scripture. Its purpose was to protect the faithful, the “friends”⁶⁶, from the temptations and deception of the “foreign”, the false and non-“reputable” books of Holy Scripture, that contain much “malevolence”. That is to say, he does this, we may suppose, for the same pastoral purpose for which the Canon of Athanasius the Great was created.
2. Continuing, St. Gregory mentions twelve historical books “from the more ancient”, as he describes it, “Hebrew wisdom”, i.e., the Old Testament. The use of the phrase “Hebrew wisdom” obliges us to ask the following questions: Why does he consider these books as being books of Hebrew wisdom? Are they not of God? Are they not divinely inspired? Or does Gregory the Theologian consider them as not being divinely inspired? And why doesn’t he use this term, or at least the term “divine” or the term “canonical”? The answer to these questions is that maybe these terms had not as yet become fixed and formal, as can also be seen in the previous Canon, that of Athanasius

64. Ἡ, Δανιήλ, ὄς = or Daniel, who

65. For a paraphrase of the present Canon see that given by Balsamon (*Rallis and Potles*, Vol.IV, p. 364), as well as another similar to this by an anonymous author (*PG*. 38, 841- 844), and yet another, also by an anonymous author (*PG*. 38, 844 fl.).

66. Cf. also Jn 15, 13-15.

the Great, who speaks of books “κανονιζόμενα” (on the way towards canonization) and not of “canonical” books. Cf. also the terms employed by 85th Apostolic Canon: “venerable and holy” instead of “divinely inspired”, “divine” etc.

3. This view is also strengthened by the fact that Gregory the Theologian (also), instead of using one of the above-mentioned terms (divine, canonical, etc) employs a term similar to that of “κανονιζόμενα”, viz., the word “ἔγκριτος” (reputable). He gives and urges his «friend» the reader to accept this «reputable number of mine (ἐμεῖο)» of the books of Holy Scripture. But the word «reputable» accompanied, indeed, by the personal pronoun «ἐμεῖο» (mine) cannot confirm and convince us that it implies something synodal, official and universally accepted and confirmed by the Church as something final and definitive.
4. This being the case, the canon appears to be flexible as to the number of books contained in Holy Scripture (divine, or divinely inspired), indeed, much more so, in that it contains a personal element. (Cf. the use of the word «mine»). In other words, even in the extreme instance where one would accept the passive past perfect participle «ἐγκριμένος» (=approved) as being the meaning of the word «ἔγκριτος», he still could not arrive at a meaning signifying something objectively accomplished because of the personal element contained in the word «ἐμοῦ». Therefore, in this case also, what we have stated elsewhere concerning the term “κανονιζόμενα” or the phrase “πιστευθέντα εἶναι θεῖα” (=believed to be divine), holds true. Hence, this canon does not provide us with a closed Canon of Holy Scripture and is not in contradiction with other Canons containing a different number of books.
5. But let us return to the expression “Hebrew wisdom”, which we have mentioned above. We observed that it is possible to reflect a period during which there was no definite and final characterization of things. The fact that this canon considers these books as belonging to the more ancient Hebrew wisdom or rather literature, does not mean that they were not divinely inspired or lacked divine supervision, i.e., that they were not divine. One cannot argue this, even more so, since the canon contains the description “καί πένθ’ ὁμοίως Πνεύματος προφητικῶν” (= and, *similarly* five [books] of the

prophetical Spirit). That is, he appears to accept the previous books also as having relationship (source or connection) with the Holy Spirit. (We underline the word ὁμοίως = *similarly*).

6. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that the word «μυστήριον» (mystery) used by Gregory the Theologian in regard to the New Testament, is ascribed also to the «two and twenty books of the ancient Hebrew wisdom». That is to say, Gregory, beginning the enumeration of the books of the New Testament, says: “The number of the books of the *New Mystery* are...” Hence, it is safe to say that he considers “the two and twenty books of the ancient Hebrew wisdom” as belonging to the “*Old Mystery*”. In other words, that he considers the latter as also belonging the mysteries of God, as deriving from divine revelation.
7. At the end of the Canon Gregory the Theologian, having mentioned the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul and enumerating the Catholic Epistles, without mentioning the Revelation of John, states: “πάσας ἔχει” (*and so you have all*). The question therefore arises: Does the πάσας (all) refer to the epistles, since immediately before he was speaking about the epistles, or does it refer to all the books (βίβλους) “of the Old and New Mysteries”, i.e., of the Old and New Testaments? The ancient is a bit difficult. Possibly, the former is meant; it equally possible, however, that the latter meaning is intended.
8. Should, however, this have been the case, then another problem arises: «Certain books of the Old Testament are not mentioned, e.g. The Wisdom of Solomon, Esther, et.al, while the Revelation of John is absent from the New Testament. What is the status of these books? Does he exclude them from Holy Scripture?
9. The key to understanding things and the solution to the problem, we believe is, (excluding of course the possibility that «all» refers to the Epistles) to be found at the end of the Canon, and specifically in Gregory’s phrase: «If there is any besides these, do not repute it to belong to the genuine”. It should be underlined and seriously taken into account that the Canon does not say “it is not genuine” but rather that it “does not belong, is not numbered among the genuine”. That is to say, we can assume that at the time when, and in the area in which, Gregory was writing the present Canon, The Wisdom of Solomon, Esther, et. al., as well as the Revelation of John simply

were not included among the genuine books of the Old and New Testament, and not that they were not genuine.

10. That the above is the meaning of the phrase in question, becomes apparent if we keep the following event in mind: Gregory the Theologian himself, “in his assembly speech before the 150 bishops, obviously refers to it (the Apocalypse or Revelation)⁶⁷ saying: ‘for I am convinced that other (Angels) are leaders of other Churches, as John teaches me through the Apocalypse’⁶⁸. For Gregory the Theologian to say that John “teaches” him, and for him to confess that he is “convinced” means that while he does not proclaim the genuineness of the Book of Revelation, he does not reject it, but rather accepts it. He was, however, obliged to reflect in his Canon the views that prevailed during his time and in his region.
11. Of course, in order to better understand what we have stated above, we must add here that what is stated, is stated in regard to the books of the Old and New Testament. It does not apply to books of another religion, of another literature or of another spiritual creation. How, then, can we, for instance, say that Plato’s *Politeia* is not numbered amongst his genuine works? On the contrary, however, we can say that this book is not included among the genuine books of Holy Scripture (Old and New Testament). Hence, what is said, is said in regard to their place within or outside of the Canon of Scripture.
12. And not only this. It appears that what is stated concerning genuineness is so stated in regard to their being characterized as divinely inspired as well. This view-point is strengthened, first of all, by the title of the epic poem in question: “Concerning the Genuine Books of Divinely inspired Scripture”⁶⁹. Thus one could say that “not among the genuine” = “not among the divinely inspired”.

67. Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος (Homily) XLII*, 9 PG. 36, 469A (*BEPES* 60, 126). Cf also his *Λόγος (Homily) XXIX*, 17, PG. 36,96D (*BEPES* 59,247) where he uses the Apocalypse to establish the divinity of the Son and Logos of God.

68. The author of the *Rudder* (Πηδάλιον) (p. 663 note 3) also says in his interpretation of the present canon: “Note that in other of his works Gregory the Theologian accepts as genuine and divinely inspired the Apocalypse of John.”

69. *BEPES* 61,38, vs. 28-29.

13. After accepting this premise, we must also make the following significant observation: In this way, we can explain, on the one hand, the divergence of this Canon from those of the Councils, which also included the divine (and not only the divinely inspired) books, while on the other, its similarity to Athanasius the Great's Canon of divinely-inspired books, i.e. those books that St. Athanasius characterizes and numbers among the divinely inspired. At the same time we point out, in order to explain away any perchance existing differences, that we have always to keep in mind that the Canon states that "not among the genuine" = "not among the divinely inspired"; in other words, it informs us that certain other books are simply not numbered (by Gregory the Theologian or by some other "at that time") among the divinely inspired books and that he does not make a definite pronouncement as to their not being divinely inspired.
14. Finally, after all that we have expounded above, we are able to reiterate that the Canon of St. Gregory does not close (with finality) the Canon of divinely inspired Scripture. It does of course mention a certain tested number of them that the faithful Christian is obliged to know, and it is for this reason that St. Gregory the Theologian sets them before "his friend" the reader. (Cf. also that which is stated at the beginning of the Canon: "receive, o friend, my reputable number of the books of Holy Scripture").

CHAPTER VI

THE CANON OF AMPHILOCHIOS OF ICONIUM

1. Introductory Remarks

The present canon was at times ascribed to Gregory the Theologian. The fact, however, that the Second Canon of the Quinisext Ecumenical Council also ratifies the Canon of Amphilochios of Iconium, obliges us to accept the present Canon as belonging to Amphilochius, given that no other canon among the collection of Canons is ascribed to him⁷⁰. It is the

⁷⁰. Milasch – Apostolopoulos, *Ecclesiastical Law*, p. 146 and Hamilca Alivizatos, *Oi*

only one. It is obvious, therefore that because of this the Quinisext Ecumenical Council included Amphilochios among those Fathers who “set up Scriptural Canons”.

2. The Text⁷¹

Above all, you should know that not every book which is call Scripture is to be received as a safe guide. For indeed, some, though pseudepigrapha, appear to be most similar and close to those books that contain the word of truth; in the end, however they are spurious and uncertain, just as are those medals and counterfeit coins, which though they bear the inscription of the King are forgeries, deceitfully adulterated as concerns its metallic contents. Therefore the books which the inspiration of God hath given I will enumerate. So that you may to learn them precisely, I shall enumerate first those of the Old Testament. The Pentateuch (contains) the Creation (Genesis), then Exodus, Leveticus, which is in the centre; then follow Numbers and Deuteronomy. To these add Joshua, Son of Nun and the Judges. After comes Ruth and the Four Books of Kings; then without fail Two Books of Chronicles; immediately after these, I Esdras and then II Esdras. Continuing I shall now mention five poetic books: Job, who was crowned⁷² with the great achievements of enduring various trials and tribulations, and the Book of Psalms, that metric work that grants relief to (grieved) souls. Likewise, the Three Books of wise Solomon: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and immediately thereafter, the Song of Songs. To these add the twelve (minor) Prophets: first, Hosea, then Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah and Jonah, who prefigured the Lord’s three-day sojourn in the Tomb. After these comes Nahum, and ninth, Habbakkuk. Then Zepheniah and Haggai and Zechariah; and the renowned angel, Malachi. After these, be informed of the four (major) Prophets: the courageous Isaiah, the likable Jeremiah and the

ἱεροὶ κανόνες καὶ οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ νόμοι (The Sacred Canons and Ecclesiastical Laws), Athens 1949, p. 408.

71. *Rallis and Potles*, Vol. IV, pp. 265-367.

72. Or στεφθέντας instead of στεφθέντα

mystical Iezekiel, and lastly Daniel, wise in both word and deed. To these (Old Testament Books) some add Esther.

It is now time for me to mention which are the books of the New Testament. Accept only Four Evangelists: Matthew, then Mark, to whom⁷³ add Luke and then John as the fourth chronologically, but who is really first as regards the loftiness of his teachings, for I, too, call him the Son of Thunder, for he did loudly proclaim the Word of God⁷⁴. Also accept the second Book by Luke: the Universal Acts of the Apostles. Then add the chosen vessel, the Herald of the Nations, the Apostle Paul, who with wisdom wrote fourteen epistles to the Churches: one to the Romans, to which we must add two to the Corinthians, the epistle to the Galatians and that to the Ephesians. After this, the Epistle to the Philippians, after which comes that written to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, one each⁷⁵ to Titus and Philemon, and one to the Hebrews. Some, however, say that the Epistle to the Hebrews is spurious, though they are wrong, for the grace contained within it is genuine. Be that as it may. What remains? (Let us go on to mention first) the Catholic Epistles⁷⁶. Some say that there are seven, others only three. They say that we must accept the Epistle of James, one by Peter and one by John, while others accept three (by John) as well as two by Peter and add that of Jude as the seventh. Again some add to these the Revelation of John, but by far the majority say that it is spurious. This, then, would be the most true canon of the Divinely given Scriptures.

3. Hermeneutical Observations

1. At the beginning of this Canon, Amphilochios, the bishop of Iconium, as well as the Quinisext Ecumenical Council, mention a basic obligation of every *faithful Christian*: that he must realize very well that not every book that bears (either by acquisition or by ascription)

73. Or ᾧ, instead of οἷς.

74. Or Θεῶ, instead of Θεοῦ

75. Or ἑκατέρω instead of ἑκάστω.

76. Or καθολικῶν ἐπιστολῶν instead of καθολικὰς ἐπιστολάς.

- the modest characterization of Scripture, can safely be said to be so.
2. Since not every book described as Scriptural is safe and beneficial, it follows then that not only is it not authentic and infallible, but indeed and more importantly, it is not divinely inspired. Therefore the following important question arises: Why does St. Paul state in II Timothy 3,16: “all Scripture is divinely inspired and beneficial for teaching”? Do we not have here a contradiction between the present Canon and Holy Scripture?
 3. This obligates us, in compliance with Canon 16 of St. Basil the Great, to once again recourse to II Timothy 3,16 in order to clarify the matter. It is our opinion that St. Paul purposely placed the adjective “divinely inspired” next to the noun “Scripture”, as a modifier, in order to make the noun “Scripture” dependent upon the adjective “divinely inspired”, and to define it, i.e., in order to indicate that he is speaking about divinely inspired Scripture. He therefore is saying that “every divinely inspired Scripture is beneficial for teaching etc. Hence, the first and basic proposition, we also believe, is that “Every divinely inspired (book is) Scripture and beneficial...”⁷⁷. In other words, in this instance “divinely inspired” is not an appositive, but an adjectival modifier of “Scripture”⁷⁸.
 4. By what we have stated above, it is not our intention to rule out the possibility that “divinely inspired” in the scriptural passage under examination is also an appositive. On the contrary, the use of the connective conjunction “and” leads us to this possibility. Since the passage states “and beneficial”, it indicates that it wants to connect the adjective “beneficial” with something that has been previously stated. And that obviously is the adjective “divinely inspired”. Hence, whatever is beneficial, becomes divinely inspired, since the conjunc-

77. This identification of ἐστὶ with εἶναι, is adopted by the Syriac Pesitta, the Latin translation of Jerome and Luther’s translation of 1522. Cf. Trembelas, *Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 108. John of Damascus also, in his work, *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου πίστεως* (*The Precise Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*), appears to follow this punctuation, when he says: “Πᾶσα τοίνυν Γραφή θεόπνευστος, πάντως καὶ ὠφέλιμος” (PG. 94,1176B).

78. Cf. Panagiotes Trembelas, *Ἡ θεοπνευστία τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς* (*The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture*), Athens 1938, p.11.

tion “and” joins similar things. That is to say, “divinely inspired” also serves as an appositive.

5. The dual function and use of “divinely inspired” has of course its own significance and mission, its own reason and purpose. Indeed, the term “divinely inspired”, besides possessing a passive significance, also has an active one. Here, then, in order to supplement and to verify things, we can say that every Scripture that is divinely inspired in a passive sense, is equally divinely inspired in an active sense as well. In other words, “divinely inspired”, on the one hand, as an adjectival modifier of the word “Scripture” lends itself to a passive sense that Scripture possesses as being “inspired by God”⁷⁹, while as an appositive it renders an active sense that Scripture possesses “as radiating the divine Spirit” and as “inspiring its readers with this Spirit”⁸⁰.
6. And this phenomenon can be justified in this manner: The word “divinely inspired” as an adjectival modifier, i.e., in its passive sense, is a permanent characteristic of these Scriptures and can never be taken away. Once they have been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they permanently possess this characteristic which will always accompany them and for which reason they were written. On the other hand, “divinely inspired” as an appositive, i.e., in its active sense, may not always be manifest. And this, because this characteristic becomes evident only when he who reads the divinely inspired Scripture, is called by divine Grace, and submits his will to it and is inspired by the Holy Spirit. That is to say, it is possible that divine inspiration is in an indiscernible state and thus not specifically declared.
7. Hence, Amphilochios’ “premise” that not every book described as being Scripture is safe, continues to be valid and does not contradict what St. Paul says, since he, too, considers only divinely inspired

79. Trembelas, *Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 108. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Κατὰ Εὐνομίου (Rebuttal ad Eunomium Book) VII*, or *Πρὸς Εὐνόμιον ἀντιρρητικός λόγος (Contra Eunomium), Homily VII*, PG. 45,744C-D.

80. Trembelas, p.109.

Scripture to be safe and beneficial, and not “every Scripture” in general.

8. After the above observations, we must underline that whatever books have not formally and canonically been declared to be Scripture, are not safe nor infallible, and of course neither divine nor divinely inspired. First, they must be characterized and ratified, and included within the Canon by the Churches for them to be safe and to be worthy of being characterized as Scripture (divine or divinely inspired, accordingly). Otherwise they have no right to be called divine or divinely inspired Scripture, if they have not received such a characterization formally from the competent ecclesial organ. This is even more so the case, if such a characterization has been ascribed them in order to deceive and lead away simple Christians.
9. Further, we must emphasize that the present Canon is an attempt to enumerate specifically the divinely inspired books of Holy Scripture, and it is concerning these that the canon speaks and not about the divine books of Holy Scripture in general. This can be seen in the phrase of the Canon “For this reason I speak of each divinely inspired book”, as well as at the end of the Canon where it repeats: “Thus should be the infallible Canon of divinely inspired Scripture”.
10. Also we must justify why the present Canon is an attempt, an endeavor to enumerate the divinely inspired Scriptures. Indeed, if we study carefully the sentence: “For this reason I speak to you about each of the divinely inspired books”, we deduce that it speaks by paraphrasing, with some reservation, rather than directly. Thus it does not say “For this reason, I mention the divinely inspired books” but indirectly: “I mention each of (from, among) the divinely inspired books”. Nor must we overlook the fact that he uses the verb “ἔρω” (to speak) and not “εἰσὶ” (are). That is, he says, ...I shall mention to you (ero) about each one of the divinely inspired books, and does not say categorically that these are the divinely inspired books. Thus he appears to present a personally-subjective view, or at least that he is presenting the views prevalent at the time.
11. That Amphilochius’ position vis-à-vis the number of the Books of Holy Scripture was elastic and that we have hence correctly characterized his effort to count the divinely-inspired Scriptures as an “attempt” can be seen from the case of the Catholic Epistles. That is to

- say, he says concerning these: “What then? Concerning the Catholic Epistles, some say that there are seven; others that there are only three”. Through these phrases as well as what he says further on: “It is necessary to accept one belonging to James, one belonging to Peter, and one belonging to John. Yet, others accept three, and in addition to these, two belonging to Peter and that of Jude as the seventh”, it becomes sufficiently clear that he does not take a clear position on these books.
12. It is also with great care that Amphilochius refers to the dissention within the Church concerning the book of Revelation or the Apocalypse. He says that “on the one hand certain individuals approve of it, but the majority say that it is spurious”. And while he appears to be informing us objectively (and more or less negatively) with the phrase: “but the majority say that it is spurious”, in reality he appears to favor the view that it was authored by John, when he says, “and again John’s Apocalypse”. By saying “again”, he leads us to imagine that he means St. John the Evangelist and author of the Catholic Epistles, whom he previously mentioned. At any rate, even if this is not the case as concerns Amphilochius’ preferences, we still cannot argue that he excludes the Apocalypse from the Canon of Holy Scripture, and indeed from its divinely inspired books, in accord with what we have already said about the Canon’s elasticity.
 13. We arrive at this conclusion not only on the basis of what we have analyzed and developed so far, but also on the basis of what he says by way of ending his Canon. Once more we repeat that he says in conclusion: “This would be [not is] the truest Canon of divinely inspired Scripture”. Through this potential or hypothetical statement he does not close the Canon of the divinely-inspired Books of Holy Scripture, but rather leaves it open. Hence it is possible to include the Apocalypse among them, since it is included as such in another Canon of the Church.
 14. Because of this statement, it is quite possible not to exclude other books besides the Apocalypse from the Canon but rather to add them to it. Moreover, and contrariwise, because of the way this statement is worded, it is possible for us to remove a book from the list given by Amphilochius, if it were to contradict one of the Canons that we have already examined. Such a wording “would be” [but is

not] gives us freedom of movement and a margin of maneuvering in order to harmonize things. By using this type of wording he declares that he does not deliver to us something complete and definite, but rather something for discussion and formation.

15. This being the case, and since St. Amphilochius of Iconium's Canon concerning the number of divinely inspired books does not deliver something completed and definitely structured, we remain with the Catalogue-Canon of Holy Scripture compiled up to now. We recall that we owe its formation to the previously examined Canon of the Council of Carthage and that of St. Athanasius the Great; the first of these speaking in general about divine books, the second referring specifically to divinely inspired books.
16. Also another positive element provided by Amphilochius' Canonical Epistle is that we have correctly insisted in distinguishing between divinely-inspired and divine Scripture while examining the Canon of Athanasius the Great. Because Amphilochius of Iconium speaks only of divinely inspired Scripture and not of divine Scripture in general, he does not mention certain other books characterized as divine Books of Holy Scripture by other known sources.

CONCLUSION - EPILOGUE

In the present study we have seen that the Christian Church through the Quinisext (and VIIth) Ecumenical Council ratified canons 85 of the Apostles, 60 of Laodicea, 24/32 of Carthage, those of Athanasius the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Amphilochius of Iconium, all of which refer to the Canon of Holy Scripture, despite the fact that "at first sight" they are presented by many researchers as differing amongst themselves. Despite this supposed "disagreement", we have attempted to find a solution and answer to the burning, diachronic and inter-Christian problem of the Canon of Holy Scripture, precisely on the basis of these canons of the Church.

We were led to this research, as we have already stated in our Introduction, by the simple thought that for the Church to ratify all these canons referring to the Canon of Holy Scripture, we must take them into account in order to arrive at a complete and definite conclusion. And

we had already stated –and placed as a presupposition— that it is possible to find a solution and to provide an answer to the problem of the Canon of Holy Scripture, if we can achieve a harmonization of these sacred canons that express the Church’s opinion.

Now then, finding ourselves at the end of the present study and on the basis of what we have so far analytically expounded, we can, we believe, by way of a conclusion, arrive at the following finding: That there exists between the Church canons referring to the Scriptural Canon and ratified by the Quinisext Ecumenical Council a wondrous agreement and a real harmony. Hence, we can say that an answer is given to the long-standing problem of the Canon of Holy Scripture.

For this reason, and before proceeding further, we believe that it would be useful here to provide a brief recapitulation of the central points of these canons, which “at first sight” appear to present problems and to show the canons as disagreeing amongst themselves concerning the compilation of the Canon of Holy Scripture. Thus, we recapitulate here, briefly, the facts ascertained and simultaneously and epigrammatically remind our readers of the manner in which we solve the supposed problem of their disagreement.

1. First we must observe that the 85th Apostolic Canon does not create a problem for the compilation and closing of the books of the Scriptural Canon because it does not refer to the divinely inspired or even the divine books of Holy Scripture (Old and New Testament). It refers in general to “holy” and “venerable” books of the Christians, without, indeed, limiting their number. Hence among the number given, it is possible that books neither divinely inspired or divine could be included, while at the same time, it provides the possibility of adding still other books not mentioned.
2. Continuing, we observe that Canon 60 of Laodicea speaks of books of the Old and New Testament that should be read (“δεῖ ἀναγινώσκεισθαι”). The books that it mentions we can also describe as being canonical (as divinely-inspired or divine), if we take into account Canon 59 of the same Council. What is worthy of note, however, is that the present canon, as it is worded, does not close the number of the books of Holy Scripture. This can be seen when it states: “Those books of the Old Testament that should be read” and “those of the New Testament (that should be read)” and does not state:

- “These are the books of the Old Testament” or “and those of the New Testament are...”. In this way it provides us with the witness of its times, without determining with finality the books and those contradicting another canon that might perchance provide a different number of canonical (divinely-inspired or divine) books of Holy Scripture.
3. We now come to Canon 24/32 of the Council of Carthage which provides us with a compiled (closed) Scriptural Canon of the canonical or divine books, or books that should be read. We support the view that the Scriptural Canon it provides is closed because it states: “These are the canonical (divine) Scriptures”. Hence every other canon giving a different closed number of books, necessarily is in contradiction with the present one.
 4. Fortunately, the canon of Athanasius the Great, which also presents a closed Canon of the Books of Holy Scripture does not contradict Canon 24/32 of the Council of Carthage, despite the fact that it includes a different (lesser) number of books. This contradiction is avoided because Athanasius the Great’s canon speaks chiefly and especially about the divinely inspired books of Holy Scripture, while that of Carthage speaks more generally of the divine books of Holy Scripture. That is to say, the Carthagensian canon refers to those books that are simply divine, unerring, divinely overseen, but are not divinely inspired, i.e., they do not contain “divine revelation”, they are not “sources of salvation”.
 5. Continuing, we now come to the canon of Gregory the Theologian who informs us of divinely inspired or genuine Scriptures, as accepted during his time. Because he does not include the same number of books as the canons mentioned above (and at the same time by saying that “you have them [the books] all; if any be excluded, it is not among the genuine” he gives the impression that he is closing the Canon of Holy Scripture), he appears to be contradicting the above-mentioned canons. This apparent contradiction disappears, however, because Gregory does not, in reality, close the Canon of Holy Scripture. If we pay careful attention, we will ascertain that he is careful to avoid saying that “if any be excluded, it is not genuine, but spurious” but rather he says, “it is not among the genuine”. In other words, he says that it is not (now) among the genuine-divinely inspired books, but this does not mean that it is not genuine and that it cannot be include by others, or elsewhere, or in the future.

6. Finally, Amphilochius of Iconium's canon, which also speaks about divinely inspired Scriptures, does not contradict the former canons, even though it does not contain the same number of books. This is so because this canon also does not finalize the Canon of Holy Scripture, despite the first impression given by the manner in which it ends. Indeed, only if Amphilochius' canon ended by stating that "this is the unerring Canon of the divinely inspired Scriptures" would there be a problem, since it would have finalized the Scriptural Canon. Since, however, he states: "This ought to be (ὅν εἶη) the unerring Canon of the divinely inspired Scriptures", i.e., it ought to be but isn't, this means that it does not specify and does not finalize the Scriptural Canon.

After this, allow us to add the following: If Th. Zahn had in mind the above mentioned observations, we believe that he would have understood that the Quinisext Ecumenical Council would not have been "concerned"⁸¹ when it ratified canons of the Fathers from which e.g. the Apocalypse of John or when it ratified in general canons of Holy Scripture "with such a diversified content"⁸². Also, if Th. Zahn (and all who are of a similar opinion) were aware of the above, they would not have argued that "the simultaneous canonization of these extremely contradictory regulations of the Biblical Canon by the Council of Trullo in 692 and the extremely indifferent way in which the Greek Canonists of the twelfth century present these differences, indicates the complete indifference for a precise definition of (which books) constitute the Bible"⁸³. And for these very same reasons he would have realised that he was wrong when he said that "the canonization of such contradictory traditions is characteristic of the petrification into which the Byzantine Church had fallen"⁸⁴.

81. Cf. Zahn's opinion in *Geschichte*, Vol. 2, 1, p. 186

82. Zahn, *Ibid.*, p. 187. Cf p. 212, as well.

83. *Ibid.*, p.200. Cf. Joh. Leiboldt, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, Teil 1, Leipzig 1907 p.99.

84. Zahn, *Geschichte*, Vol. 2, 1, p. 187: "Die Kanonisierung so widersprechender Traditionen kennzeichnet die Versteinerung, welcher die Byzantinische Kirche anheim fiel".

Possibly, he might have been more objective and fair if he were more restrained and more careful, if, for example, he had said that the Quinisext Ecumenical Council only indirectly regularized the existing problem concerning the Scriptural Canon⁸⁵, while it should have been regularized directly and definitively. In any case, the fact remains that this supposed “petrified” Church of the Byzantine times, gave its witness to the question of the Canon of Holy Scripture, even if indirectly and indefinitely.

And yet, even this indefiniteness has its reasons. Professor Savvas Agourides proceeds with great care to make the following observations that provide a satisfactory answer to this phenomenon. He says: “the Church during the second century established the bases and principle of her Canon. Because, however, of the ecumenical character of Christianity and because in certain ancient Churches there were certain long-established traditions that differed among themselves as far as certain books were concerned, the Church did not impose, by authoritative decision, a strict and definite Canon. Internally, she guided all her children throughout the world in such a way as to converge, in time, upon the same limits”⁸⁶.

Such being the case, and after what we have ascertained, we feel that we can propose the following: From now and henceforth, the canonicity of a book of Holy Scripture should depend upon to what extent it is so characterized (as canonical, or divinely inspired or divine) by the canons of the Church, by her official decisions. This should be considered as being real canonicity.

Also, we should like to observe that rightly and correctly we characterize today as Holy Scripture the sum total of books that compose it,

85. Cf. Hastoupis, *Introduction*, p.560: “This uncertainty (concerning the canonical and readable books of the Old Testament) has not disappeared even up to the present, though it was contained to a certain extent by the Council of Trullo (692), which **indirectly** decided in favour of the Canon of the Third Council of Carthage”. Cf. also Nicholas Papadopoulos, *Τὰ δευτεροκανονικά τεμάχια τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Δανιήλ (The Deuterocanonical Portions of the Book of Daniel)*, Athens 1970, pp. 55-56: “The Quinisext Council of Trullo (691)... **indirectly** institutes the broader Canon, as that prevailing at the time” and “the question of the Canon has not been solved with finality in the Church through a clear Synodal decision of universal authority” (*Ibid.*, p. 56).

86. Agourides, *Introduction*, p. 70.

and not as divine Scripture. We say that we are correct in doing so, because among the books that make up Holy Scripture are included books not divinely inspired or divine –which in ignorance we have received– so that we would not be absolutely precise if we were to speak of divine or divinely-inspired Scripture. Contrariwise, we are not wrong in describing them as Holy Scripture, because these books that are not divine nor divinely inspired, can be called “holy”, as we see in the case of the 85th Apostolic Canon. This Canon, as we know, describes as “holy” books the three books of the Macabees and even the epistles of Clement. Thus, we are justified in asking: Is not this an amazing and note-worthy fact? Is it merely accidental, or is this also an act of Divine Providence that guides the Church, so that in the end within Her one always finds that which is correct?

Hence, with the aid of what we have stated thus far, we believe that an answer is given to the greatest problem of Canon Law, i.e., its authentic sources, and those of the Church in general, for we acquire knowledge of those books that constitute the unerring sources of truth and salvation. Those books not ratified as divine or divinely inspired or as canonical books can be used as helps, but we cannot base upon them alone, the dogmatic and canonical truths that are not also ratified and confirmed by the canonical (divinely inspired or divine) books.

Of course, it is our hope that through this study we have managed to show forth the value of the canonical tradition of the canons of the Church. Thus, their great value for the solution of the great problems of Christianity and society in general is underlined. We can have recourse to them in order to be guided to the correct answer and solution of these problems. And we can achieve this because these canons of the Church are authentic and divine, for they have been adopted with the collaboration and supervision of Divine Grace.

Further, we can, or rather we are obliged, to underline once more, the following from an Orthodox view-point: It is said, and we have mentioned in our Prologue, that Holy Scripture is the touchstone of oral Apostolic Tradition in the Church. Official ecclesiastic Tradition however, has also played and more or less plays the same role in setting apart the genuine books of Holy Scripture and in the formation of the Scriptural Canon. Justifiably, then, St. Nicodemus the Hagioreite says: “Ecclesiastical Tradition is the touchstone and criterion that sets apart the

genuine and canonized books of both the Old and New Testament that contain the faith from those that are spurious and not canonized". Concluding, he says, "Hence, just as ecclesiastical Traditions have need of the faith, similarly, the faith has need of the ecclesiastical Traditions; they cannot be separated from each other"⁸⁷. That is to say the one constitutes the touchstone of the other.

Of course this is achieved always within the Church. It is for this reason that Professor Panagiotis Bratsiotis very discerningly observes: "The Church, the Bible and Tradition are and remain within the Orthodox Church a single indivisible unity"⁸⁸. And Constantine Papapetrou, basing himself upon Cyril of Alexandria, writes in this regard: "From the hermeneutic view-point, the Church (and Tradition) on the one hand, and Scripture on the other, constitute a circle. The one cannot exist without the other. For this reason, the question which constitutes the criterion for the other, anagogically brings us to the circle that they both constitute. Holy Scripture is of course the criterion of the Church; equally, however, the Church is the criterion for understanding Scripture..."⁸⁹.

Finding ourselves at the end of our study and its Epilogue, the following basic question presents itself: And now what do we do? Are we,

87. The *Rudder*, (Πηδάλιον), p. 645. Note 1. We once again underline of course "the official and authentic Church tradition".

88. Pan. Bratsiotis, "Ein orthodoxer Beitrag", in Oikumene, *Die Autorität der Bibel heute* (herausg. Von Al. Richardson- W. Schweitzer), Zürich – Frankfurt a. M. 1951, p. 22. Cf. also Nik. Nissiotis, "Die Einheit von Schrift und Tradition", in *Oekumenische Rundschau*, Vol. 14 (1965) p. 271ff. And also G. Galitis, "Die historisch – kritische Bibelwissenschaft und die Orthodoxe Theologie" offprint from *La théologie dans l'Église et dans le monde* [Études Théologiques, 4], Chambésy – Genève 1984, pp. 4-5.

89. Constantine Papapetrou, *Ἡ οὐσία τῆς Θεολογίας (The Essence of Theology)*, Athens 1970, p. 74. Cf. Bas. Vellas, *Ἡ ἅγια Γραφή ἐν τῇ ὀρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ (Holy Scripture in the Orthodox Church)*, Athens 1958, pp. 17-18. M. Siotis, "Die Ekklesiologie als Grundlage der neutestamentlichen Auslegung in der Griechisch – Orthodoxen Kirche" in *Θεολογία (Theologia)*, Vol 31 (1960) p. 513ff. And indeed p. 519ff. Cf. also Per. Lengsfeld, "Katholische Sicht von Schrift, Kanon und Tradition" in Er Käsemen (herausg.) *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, Göttingen 1970, pp. 216-217: "Gott ist es, der Kirche gesetzt, und durch die Kirche setzt er ausserlich den Kanon, und in dem Kanon ist wieder das Zeugnis der Urkirche über die Kirche enthalten, im Kanon setzt Gott die Kirche".

as the Orthodox Church, as well as the other “Churches” or Confessions, to adopt this Canon of Holy Scripture. By way of answering this question, we quote here the words of a distinguished Protestant Theologian who says: “This road will be long, laborious and painful. Yet it must be traversed, if we are to overcome the present situation. The goal justifies every effort, every pain and labor. For if we succeed in achieving a common and real Canon, this will mean that we have arrived at the unity of the faith, at the unity of the Church”⁹⁰.

It is our belief that this present study⁹¹ contributes towards this common search, i.e. to the laborious attempt to point out and to put forth a Canon of universal ecclesiastical authority, one of common acceptance on the part of Christians. “Before the size and significance, as well as the harm caused by the confusion (over the Canon)”, however, “...the intensity of the efforts of all must be accompanied by trust in God’s Providence and hope in its assistance. At the same time, our efforts must be accompanied by the prayer: *Veni Creator Spiritus*. For only the Holy Spirit can help us to achieve the successful accomplishment of this duty of ours”⁹². We can already say that God’s Providence operated through the Quinisext Ecumenical Council in creating a common, acceptable Scriptural Canon. Where we go from here, is up to us.

90. K. Aland, “Das Problem des neutestamentlichen Kanons” in Er. Käsemann (herausg.) *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, Göttingen 1970, pp. 157-178.

91. The present study is an abridged form of a more extensive work of research entitled, *Οί Κανόνες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας περὶ τοῦ Κανόνος τῆς Ἁγ. Γραφῆς* (*The Canons of the Church concerning the Canon of the Holy Scripture*), Vol. A (Direct written evidence) Athens 1986, p. 240, Vol B (Indirect evidence) Athens 1991, p. 117.

92. K. Aland, *Das Problem*, p. 158.