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THE DECRETAL OF DAMASUS.¹

I HAVE recently had occasion to examine with closer attention the evidence for the genuineness of some documents the value of which as authorities I had hitherto been constrained to accept with more confidence than I can now. This has led me to modify some previously expressed views. Inasmuch as more learned men than myself have been my guides in this matter and it is one of considerable importance and interest, I may be allowed to begin this paper with a discussion of it.

In the first volume of the *Journal of Theological Studies* Mr C. H. Turner published the well-known text of the Decretal attributed to Damasus, who was Pope from 366 to 384, which, if a genuine document, is of prime value in the history of the Latin Canon of the Bible, since it contains a list of the books of the Bible professedly issued by that pope and consequently of very early date.

In support of the genuineness and authority of the document he quotes the excellent recent names of A. Thiel, F. Maassen, and T. Zahn. Notwithstanding the gravity of the names I venture to ask for a reconsideration of this judgement.

¹ The following pages were in type and corrected for press in October 1911, as the first part of Sir Henry Howorth's third article on 'The influence of St Jerome on the Canon of the Western Church' published in this JOURNAL in that month. The discussion of the genuineness of the Decree of Damasus appeared to be easily separable from the rest of the article without loss to the main argument and, partly owing to pressure on our space, it was omitted from the article as published. The question has since been dealt with by Dr E. von Dobschütz in the book which is reviewed in this no. of the JOURNAL (*infra* p. 469): Sir Henry Howorth's article, which is now published without alteration, as it was passed by him for press in October 1911, has the value of an entirely independent treatment of the question by an English scholar. Dr von Dobschütz has carried the argument further, but his chief conclusions were anticipated by Sir Henry Howorth.—J. F. B-B.

The question is not a simple one. The decree attributed to Pope Damasus occurs in several MSS in which that pope is named as its promulgator. In other and more numerous MSS it occurs in an enlarged form with certain notable additions. This enlarged form is assigned in the document itself in some cases to Pope Gelasius and in others to Pope Hormisdas. Those who sustain the genuineness of the document have argued that in the latter cases we have later editions of a primitive Damasine text issued at a later period by Popes Gelasius and Hormisdas respectively, who are supposed to have added fresh material to the original decree. Mr Turner argues that the suspicious character of the matter is confined to the later editions and that the Damasine part of the decree can be completely separated from the latter. His words are, 'It remains inexplicable that the Damasine matter, which is easily separable, and which is separated not only in the Vatican and Vallicellian MS (my *l* and *vall*), but by Arevalo (A.D. 1794) and by Thiel (A.D. 1866) in their editions, should have been passed over by so many writers without even a mention of its possible authenticity'. He does not examine the very strong case against the Damasine portion of the matter at all. He says, in fact, that 'he does not propose to waste time in arguing the genuineness of the Council (? the decree of the Council) of Damasus which is printed here for the first time', but takes it for granted that because the matter in question occurs separately in certain MSS therefore it is genuine, which is not a very conclusive argument; but he adds some supplementary facts which, he urges, support the claim to authenticity.

Inter alia he says:—

'If any fresh arguments are needed, a comparison of the *Decretum* with the preface to the "Isidorian" translation of the Nicene Canons, the date of which must be some years earlier than A.D. 451, may supply what is wanted. The third part of the Damasine decree, that on the Roman primacy, is borrowed by the "Isidorian" translator, and forms the groundwork of the first portion of his preface', &c., &c. (*op. cit.* p. 555).

On this paragraph I should like to say a few words. In the first place the use of the name of Isidore by such an authority even in inverted commas in connexion with the Preface to the Nicene Canons seems to me misleading. It misled me. The

name of Isidore of Seville was no doubt once associated with the early collection of conciliar documents apparently compiled in Spain; but this is no longer the case, and they are not found, therefore, in the critical editions of his works.

Maassen says:—

‘Den Namen der isidorischen hat man derjenigen Version der Nicäischen und der uebrigen griechischen Canonen gegeben, in der die spanische Sammlung diese Canonen bringt. Diese Benennung ist aus einem doppelten Grunde verkehrt. Es ist nämlich weder Isidor von Sevilla der Verfasser der spanischen Sammlung, noch sind die griechischen Canonen von dem Verfasser dieser Sammlung selbst uebersetzt’ (Maassen *Geschichte der Quellen* &c. 12).

The collection of Canons above named I will refer to, as others have done, by the more neutral name of *Hispana*. The compiler of it used an old Latin translation of the Greek Canons. This translation, with the Preface to the Nicene Canons above referred to, occurs in two editions, the earliest copies of which are contained, according to Maassen, in the so-called Quesnel and Freisingen MSS respectively, both probably of the beginning of the ninth century (the former may be a little older).

The fact of there being two editions led Maassen to suggest that it could not have been the writer of the Quesnel MS who composed the Preface to the Nicene Canons, as had been suggested. He goes on to say that, since it was compiled from the Damatine decretal and the Church history of Rufinus, it could not have been written before the fifth century.

To this last statement of Maassen I must take exception. I cannot understand how it could have been made by any one who had compared the documents. The copy of the Preface in the early collection of Canons (it is given in Mansi III) cannot have been taken from the Damatine decretal, for it is much longer and in addition to the mutilation of several clauses in the so-called decretal it entirely leaves out the two last paragraphs which are essential to the understanding of the text. On the other hand the so-called Damatine decretal contains a phrase which is omitted in the Preface and would hardly have been so if the latter had been its source, namely, ‘Est ergo prima Petri apostoli sedes Romanae ecclesiae non habens maculam nec rugam nec aliquid eiusmodi’.

It seems as plain as anything can be that the reverse of Maassen's theory was really true and that the last clause of the so-called Damasine decretal was a mere epitome of the Preface with the clause just quoted inserted, and that the latter was also the source of the common matter given by Rufinus.

That the Preface was an early document is proved by a striking fact. In it Ephesus, and not Constantinople, is made one of the great metropolitan sees and is given a special paragraph, while Constantinople is not named at all. As Maassen himself pointed out, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 by its twenty-eighth Canon gives the see of Constantinople the supremacy over the dioceses of Pontus, Asia, and Thrace, and makes that see rank next to Rome (*op. cit.* 41). This shews that the Preface dates from before the year 451; but, as it seems to me, if Maassen is right in this contention we must go further. The Council of Chalcedon in the Canon just named only professed to confirm what had been done already at the Council of Constantinople in 381, the well-known third Canon of which puts the Bishop of Constantinople immediately after the Bishop of Rome. As Dr. Percival says, in 394, only thirteen years after the Council of Constantinople, we find the Bishop of Constantinople presiding over a synod where the Bishops of Alexandria and Antioch were both present and thus given a remarkable precedence.

On the other hand, the Council of 431, which was held at Ephesus, was held there, and not at Constantinople, because it was the heresy of the Archbishop of Constantinople which was to be specially tried, and, be it noted, no mention is made in its acts of the three Ephesian bishops or of the status of the see.

For these various reasons it seems almost incredible that, in the Preface to the Nicene Canons, Ephesus, and not Constantinople, should be mentioned as the metropolitan see, unless the document was written before the Council of Constantinople in 381 and therefore before the alleged Roman Synod of 382, whence the alleged decree of Damasus issued. On *prima facie* grounds it would seem probable, in fact, that the Preface in question, which does not occur in the Greek copies, was the work of the original translator of the Greek Canons into Latin.

For every reason, therefore, it seems impossible to treat 'the

Preface' as Mr Turner does as in any way supporting the genuineness of the Damasine decree since it was an older document.

Let us now turn to another support of the genuineness of the Damasine decretal quoted by Mr Turner. This is based on the similarity in the description in it of the book of 'Lamentations', which is given its Hebrew name as it is in Jerome's *Prologus Galeatus*. This Mr Turner explains by the fact of Jerome having been present at the synod and being supposed to have advised the Fathers there. It is quite true that Jerome in the *Prologus Galeatus* uses the Hebrew name for the book; but that preface was written a good many years later than the reign of Damasus when Jerome had entirely adopted his later theory about the Hebrew verity. At the time of the Roman Council of 382 he still held by the Greek Old Testament and had a very slight, if any, knowledge of Hebrew, and it would not have occurred to him to use a Hebrew name for a Bible book. Much less would it have occurred to the Fathers at the Roman Council to do so. If, therefore, the decretal was influenced by Jerome in this matter, it shews that it was not composed till long after the death of Damasus. The same argument applies to the argument of Mr Turner from the use of the name John the Presbyter in the second and third Epistles of John. It merely proves that the author of the decree, whoever he was, had St Jerome's edition of the Epistle before him, but Jerome's translation of the Epistle was not made till long after the death of Damasus.

Having thus analysed Mr Turner's 'additional arguments' let us now turn to the decree itself and see what its main contents have to tell us.

The copies in which it is attributed to Damasus are contained in four MSS, two attributed by Mr Turner to the eighth and two to the ninth century (*Journal of Theological Studies* i 555). Each is headed 'Incipit concilium urbis Romae sub Damaso Papa de explanatione Fidei', and consists of three different paragraphs or short chapters, the first treating 'de spiritu septiformi qui in Christo requiescit', the second 'de scripturis divinis agendis est quid universalis catholica recipiat ecclesia et quid vitare debeat', while the third deals with the supremacy of the Holy See. Mr Turner, as I have said, follows Maassen, Thiel, and Zahn in

accepting this document as perfectly genuine, and I have followed in their wake in a previous memoir.

The first notable and, in fact, unprecedented thing to remember about this edition of the document is that it is not dated. It does not give us the year of the Council when the decretal was issued, nor yet the particular number of the Council held at Rome in the time of Damasus, as is the case with the other editions. And it has been a mere conjecture that the document was issued at a Roman Council of 382.

It is most unfortunate that we know so very little that is authoritative of this synod and its doings. Jerome, who was a contemporary and was at Rome at the time, and in all probability present at it, does not seem to have been sufficiently interested in it to enter into details about it in his voluminous correspondence, nor does he say a word anywhere about its having discussed the Canon. I can only find two references to it in his letters. In his letter to Eustachius (number 108 in Vallarsi) he says, 'cumque Orientis et Occidentis episcopos ob quasdam Ecclesiarum dissensiones Romam imperiales literae contraxissent', and he mentions that Paulinus of Antioch and Epiphanius of Salamis were present. In his letter to Ageruchia (Vallarsi, 72) he says, 'ante annos plurimos cum in chartis Ecclesiasticis iuvarem Damasum Romanae urbis Episcopum, et Orientis atque Occidentis Synodicis consultationibus responderem'.

These two references have been generally, and probably, supposed to refer to the Council of 382, but the fact is not certain. Otherwise the synod, so far as I know, is only noticed in a reference of Theodoret V, where he tells us that a synodal letter was sent from the Council to Constantinople, which was replied to by the Fathers who met at the latter place in the following year.

Besides these three more or less contemporary notices we have absolutely nothing recorded about the Council which a historian dare accept. We have no record of what was discussed there. None of its official acts has been preserved and none is contained in the great collection of conciliar pronouncements. The only one professing to have issued from it is the Decretal we are discussing, which does not occur in any document, nor is there a known reference to it until the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century—that famous age of sophistications and forgeries.

And what are the contents of the document? Can they be matched anywhere? First, a kind of prologue neither laying down a new definition nor prescribing a new dogma, but consisting of a rhetorical outburst about the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit in Christ. Then follows the list of canonical books, which is again followed by an epilogue consisting of a mutilated fragment of the Preface to the Nicene Canons *à propos* of nothing and having no definite or logical tie or connexion with what goes before, but having a very definite meaning if the whole document was a concoction meant to enhance and magnify the primacy and dominance of the See of Rome.

As little can we understand why a council summoned at Rome in 382 should have gone out of its way to formulate a list of canonical books, and, if it had done so, that such a fact should not have been mentioned by Jerome or the Church historians and writers who wrote between the fourth and the ninth century.

In other cases where such a formulation certainly took place there were special reasons why a decision fixing the legitimate books should have been made. The same argument is used by Thiel in regard to the later Gelasian edition of the decree, where he says:—

‘Nulla enim ex huius pontificatu causa nota est, cur de spiritu Sancto, nulla cur de Canone scripturae sacrae synodaliter tractandum esset.’

It is also very strange and almost incredible that if Jerome, who was very probably present at the Council and was certainly at Rome, had ever heard of such a pronouncement he should nowhere have mentioned it, or that it should not have greatly qualified his own statements on the Bible Canon, for he posed as a most orthodox person and was especially devoted to the papal chair, but, on the other hand, should have so pertinaciously pressed the claims of another Canon altogether. Again, it is almost incredible that Nicholas the First, when writing of the Bible Canon to the archbishops and bishops of Gaul, should say:—

‘Sed responsuri sunt isti qui non ad obediendum potius quam ad resistendum sunt parati aientes, Quod inter Canones inveniatur Capitulum S. Papae Innocentii; cuius autoritate doceatur a nobis utrumque Testamentum esse recipiendum, quanquam in ipsis paternis Canonibus nullum eorum ex toto contineatur insertum.’

Why should Pope Nicholas on this occasion have thus quoted the decree of Innocent the First issued in A.D. 405, to which I shall presently refer, and completely ignore the earlier and more important pronouncement of Damasus if it had then existed ?

It is equally remarkable that the writers of the ninth century who refer to the decree under the name of Gelasius should have entirely omitted any reference to the Damatine one which was professedly so much older, and therefore more important. On the other hand a sophisticator would not unnaturally use the name of Damasus, who was otherwise a well-known, if not notorious, personage, and would do it with more safety since the earliest collection of Latin conciliar canons and decretals, namely that of Dionysius Exiguus, begins with those of Siricius, the successor of Damasus. Why Dionysius should have begun at that particular date with the decretals of an obscure pope seems, in fact, best explained by the fact that he was probably the first pope who issued decretals. If Damasus had issued anything so important as the document we are discussing we can hardly doubt that Dionysius would have commenced his work at an earlier date and not left it to some later writer, probably some predecessor of the pseudo-Isidore, to fill up the earlier period with concoctions of his own.

I have devoted considerable space to the Edict of Damasus not only because of the weight of the authorities who have recently supported it, but because, if genuine, it furnishes the earliest official list of canonical books known to the Western Church. It will be remembered, however, by those who have discussed this question of the Canon, that it is only comparatively recently that a pronouncement on the subject has been attributed to Damasus. The list of canonical books for which his name has been recently cited was until lately assigned by virtually every writer to Popes Gelasius or Hormisdas, and the only reason for the change has been that in four out of many MSS, two only of which are early, which contain the list and which have the alleged decretal in a truncated form, his name, which was earlier than theirs, appears. We have seen how natural it was for the forger, if the document was forged, to use that pope's name for the purpose, since there was no means of verifying it or the reverse by an appeal to any early genuine work on decretals and canons. While the form of the decretal assigned

to Damasus occurs in two early MSS only, the enlarged form in which the name of either Gelasius or Hormisdas occurs is found in several MSS, some of them also early. It is again in this latter form that it was usually known and quoted in later times. Let us now turn to this later edition. In the first place it is a longer document than the one just described, which it in fact incorporates as it stands. All the arguments which can be urged in regard to the contents of the so-called Damasine part of the text when occurring by itself, apply to the same text when in its enlarged form, with this additional difficulty, that it is almost incredible that Pope Gelasius should have issued a solemn decretal 100 years after Pope Damasus, in the most important part of which he servilely follows the text of his predecessor without naming the earlier document, if it then existed. A large part of this later document is merely rhetorical and it does not in any way deal with the practical issues which were in dispute in the days of Gelasius.

It was after I had written this sentence that I found Thiel had used the same argument in the passage quoted *supra* with regard to Gelasius: 'Nulla enim ex huius pontificatu causa nota est, cur de spiritu Sancto, nulla cur de Canone scripturæ sacrae synodaliter tractandum esset.'

Let us proceed, however. In the papacy of Hormisdas Dionysius Exiguus was commissioned to prepare a translation of conciliar canons from the Greek and to collect the series of the decretals of the Roman popes. The latter part of his work began in the time of Pope Siricius and extended to that of Anastasius the Second, the successor of Gelasius the First and the precursor of Hormisdas. This work of Dionysius is an authority of the very first rank and the only contemporary authority, in fact, which we possess on the subject. He was a very learned and capable person. He lived in the reigns of Justinian and Justin *and was therefore a contemporary of Gelasius, of whom he gives us several decretals, but he nowhere mentions any such document as the one we are discussing.* This is almost, if not quite, conclusive. Again, the document in its enlarged form, as attributed to Gelasius, is not mentioned in any independent document before the year 840, nor is it named by any of the professed ecclesiastical historians such as Gennadius, Ildefonsus, Isidore

Hispalensis, nor even by Sigebert of Gemblours, or Honorius of Autun, nor by authors dealing with the many and fierce controversies of those times, when it would have been most useful to be able to quote it.

The additional matter which is contained both in the Gelasian and in the Hormisdan editions consists of a long list of forbidden books, or books decreed to have no valid authority, and would, if genuine, constitute the first *index expurgatorius*.

Let us now turn to the contents of this so-called Gelasian decree. In the first place the decree in this form is attributed both to Pope Gelasius and also to Pope Hormisdas. But such documents are not repeated intact by different popes in their own names, and the attribution of this to two popes shews there was no real certainty as to its author.

Secondly, even in the case of those MSS which attribute the decree to Gelasius the heading is not the same in all, but varies.

The next thing to be remembered is that the question of the genuineness of the document we are discussing was raised as long ago as the seventeenth century in a very able and complete manner by an English scholar of high repute in a work not too familiar to modern English scholars, namely, by Bishop John Pearson, in his *Vindiciae Epistolarum S. Ignatii*; and it seems to me that his arguments and conclusions, in so far as they relate to the Gelasian document and its special feature, are conclusive.

Thus he shews that in a MS in Trinity College, Cambridge, once belonging to Lanfranc, in which we are told that he had had it brought from the monastery of Bec, 'de Beccensi Coenobio in Anglicam terram deferri fecit', 'the heading is 'Decreta Gelasii Papae de recipiendis et non recipiendis Libris, quae scripta sunt ab eo cum lxx eruditissimis Episcopis'. This same heading was in the MS referred to by Lupus Ferrariensis, 828-857, in the very first independent notice we have of the document, namely one of his epistles numbered 128, where he says:—

'Quoniam docet Gelasius cum lxx Episcopis viris eruditissimis qui scriptores essent vel non essent recipiendi' (J. Pearson *op. cit.* 45).

Other MSS of the decree add that the synod in question was held *Asterio et Praesidio Coss.* Thence Baronius in his annals derives the date which he assigns to a really supposititious synod,

i. e. A. D. 494. From Baronius it was taken over by Labbe in his great *corpus* on the Councils, and thence it has passed into many works in many tongues.

Pearson has shewn whence this last addition to the heading was derived and how it was transferred from a perfectly reputable source by a fraud.

Dionysius Exiguus mentions decrees of Gelasius and notably decrees issued in 494, at the end of which are the words 'Datum v. Idus Martiarum, Asterio et Praesidio VV. CC. Coss.', *but the particular decree we are discussing does not occur among them.* Well may Pearson say:—

'Quisquamne autem credet Dionysium, nominis Gelasiani adeo studiosum, inter decreta iis Consulibus edita, hoc tam celebre omittere voluisse, quo Gelasius depingitur, "distinguens separansque, quasi os Domini, mundum ab immundo, et secernens pretiosum a vili," ut loquitur Baronius? Praeterea res ipsa clamitat eum titulum ex collectione Dionysii fuisse huic Decreto falso praefixum.'

It is plain, therefore, that there is no evidence of any kind save the statement of the decree itself that Gelasius ever held a synod at Rome in the year 494; while the fact that the heading to the alleged decree of this Council has been deliberately falsified makes it plain that the document itself is an untrustworthy one.

This conclusion has been ingeniously proved in another way by Pearson. Among the statements in the decree is the following: 'Item venerabilis viri Sedulii Paschale opus, quod heroicis descripsit versibus, insigni laude praeferimus.' This statement could not have been written in 494 when Asterius was consul, for we have copious evidence that the work in question was not published until after he had ceased to be consul, as appears from a note in Gennadius, which reads, 'Hoc opusculum non a Sedulio autore editum est, sed a Turcio Rufo Asterio V. C. exconsule ordinario atque patricio, qui id inter scripta Sedulii invenit'. This is confirmed by an epigram written by Asterius and quoted by Pearson (*op. cit.* 46).

It is plain, therefore, that the decree in question could not have been issued at any synod in 494 for the existence of which this sophisticated document is the only witness, and that the Roman synod of 494 ought clearly to be struck out of all conciliar lists.

Long ago Ussher and 'Binius' had noticed the impossibility of

dating the decree we are discussing in 494, and they therefore transferred its issue to the following year, the consulship of Victor, when a genuine synod was held at Rome, attended not by 70 but by 75 bishops; but here again, as Pearson says, the position is untenable, since the Acts of that synod are extant and no such decree exists among them.

Gelasius died on the 8th of September 496, and, as Pearson says, 'Postremo Gelasii anno Synodus nulla, quantum novimus, coacta est'; and he adds what seems unanswerable, 'ut a Synodo aliqua Gelasiana editum fuisse hoc Decretum plane incredibile sit'. This is not all: the contents of the decree are quite inconsistent with its having been issued under Gelasius. Thus, as Cave says:—

'Quis credat Gelasium, virum inter primos eruditum, lxx Episcoporum Concilio stipatum, Clementis Alex. quem totus venerabatur Orbis, Opera in Apocryphorum censum relegasse, et Africani, Arnobii, Lactantii, Commodiani scripta in eandem Classem retulisse? Quis credat, cui sanum sinciput, Papam, Patresque Synodales, in eodem decreto Eusebii Historiam Ecclesiasticam inter probatos autores recipere, et cum damnatis reicere? Mitto Gelasium verum de Eusebio in Opere suo de duabus Naturis praeclare loqui' (Cave *Hist. Lit.*, sub voce Gelasius; vide also Pearson *op. cit.* 48).

Again, in the decree we read 'Liber qui appellatur Canones Apostolorum, Apocryphus', a statement most inconsistent with its Gelasian origin. If the statement had been his, how comes it that Dionysius Exiguus, who so greatly admired Gelasius, should shortly after this have translated three Apostolical Canons from Greek into Latin and in the preface to them have said:—

'Quibus quia plurimi consensum non praebuere facilem, hoc ipsum vestram nolimus ignorare sanctitatem: quamvis postea quaedam Constituta Pontificum ex ipsis Canonibus adsumpta esse videantur'?

How could he have spoken thus if only a few years before the Roman Pontiff in Council had numbered these Canons among the writings which 'Catholicis vitanda sunt et quae nullatenus recipit Catholica et Apostolica Romana Ecclesia...?' 'Certe,' continues Pearson, 'Dionysius Translatione sua efficere nunquam potuisset ut hi Canones ab Ecclesia Romana reciperentur, si ab ipso Gelasio fuissent nuperrime reiecti'.

Cassiodorus *Divin. lec.* cap. 23 is a witness to the high esti-

mation in which the Apostolical Canons were then held in the Church. He says of them, 'quos hodie usu celeberrimo Ecclesia Romana complectitur'. This is again shewn, as Pearson says, by the letter written to Caesarius of Arles by Pope John the Second, in which he quotes the 25th chapter of the Apostolical Canons as authoritative. He further adds, 'Fuerunt igitur tempore Ioannis 2. Pontificis et Cassiodori, Canones Apostolici in Romana Ecclesia receptissimi; quod fieri potuisse nemo concedet, si vel a Gelasio, vel Hormisda fuissent tam publice reiecti'. He further quotes several passages from these Canons used by Gelasius as authorities in his epistolary decretals (vide 50 and 51).¹

Again, we read in the decree, 'Scriptura de inventione Dominicae crucis, et alia Scriptura de inventione capitis B. Ioannis Baptistae novellae quidem relationes sunt, et nonnulli eas Catholici legunt'; but, as Pearson says, this document did not exist in the time of Gelasius. There is a small work falsely attributed to St Cyprian, entitled *De revelatione capitis Ioannis Baptistae*, which Baronius identified with the document referred to in the decree. This tract, however, was certainly written after the time of Count Marcellinus, who is mentioned in it, and the Chronicle of Marcellinus was written in 534, where it ends, which was long after the death of Gelasius. Dionysius also translated a memoir on the same subject by Marcellus the Archimandrite, but this he wrote after the death of Gelasius (Pearson *op. cit.* 54).

That the decree, as we have it, cannot have been written till long after the time of Gelasius appears from another factor in it. Thus, after mentioning four great general councils, the author of the decree goes on to refer to subsequent councils in the words:—

'Sed et si qua sunt Concilia a SS. Patribus hactenus instituta, post illorum quatuor autoritatem et custodienda et recipienda decrevimus.'

Pearson adds:—

'Aetate Gelasii nullum post Chalcedonense concilium celebratum est quod in numero Generalium poni potuit. Autor igitur huius Decreti

¹ It would seem that the so-called Gelasian decree which Hincmar had before him did not contain the above passage about the Apostolical Canons, for we read in his *Opusc.* ch. 24: 'Sed et Beatus Gelasius in Catalogo qui libri ab Ecclesia recipiantur, de his apostolorum canonibus penitus tacuit sed nec inter apocrypha eos misit.' Nor does Gratian, when reporting the names of those who rejected the Apostolical Canons as apocryphal, mention Gelasius.

omnino post Concilium quintum, sive Constantinopolitarum secundum scripsit. De illo diu dubitanter locuti sunt Latini, nec parvis cum quatuor auctoritatis esse voluerunt. Gregorius I: "De illa tamen Synodo, quae Constantinopoli postmodum facta est, quae a multis Quinta nominatur, scire vos volo." A multis aeo Gregorii, non ab omnibus Quinta dicebatur, et cum idem Gregorius de Synodi Chalcedonensis auctoritate dixisset, de quinta haec statim addidit. Nam Synodus quae post eam generaliter facta est, idcirco a nobis recipitur quia eiusdem Synodi in omnibus sequens tenorem illius auctoritatem custodit. Isidorus l. 6 Etymol. c. 16: "Hae sunt quatuor Synodi Principales, fidei doctrinam plenissime praedicantes. Sed et si qua sunt Concilia quae SS. Patres Spiritu Dei pleni sanxerunt post illorum quatuor auctoritatem omni manent stabilita vigore." Quis non videt haec eadem quasi mente scribi, qua illa in Decreto Gelasiano scribebantur? Nec haec igitur nec illa ante Quintam Synodum scriptum fuisse putandum est. Cassiodorus qui post Gelasium, ante vel circa Synodum Quintam scripsit, Quatuor tantum nominavit, de posterioribus nihil omnino addidit' (*op. cit.* 53 and 54).

Of these several passages Pearson says:—

'Quae verba nec Concilio, nec Pontifici Romano satis conveniunt; et res aliter omnino se habet. A nemine enim magis dissentit quam ab Hieronymo. Libros omnes Veteris Testamenti, qui non in Hebraeorum Canonem habebantur, ad Apocrypha rotunde relegavit Hieronymus; eosdem in Decreto pariter cum Canonicis Sancta et Catholica suscipit et honorat Ecclesia. . . . In Decreto omnia quae apocrypha appellantur, tanquam a Catholicis vitanda, et ab Ecclesia eliminanda damnantur. Hoc sensu inter apocrypha numerantur Opuscula Tertulliani, Novati, Arnobii, Apollinarii. Aliter plane Hieronymus Epist. 76. "Ego Originem propter eruditionem sic interdum legendum, quomodo Tertullianum, Novatum, Arnobium, Apollinarium, et nonnullos Ecclesiasticos scriptores Graecos pariter et Latinos, ut bona eorum colligamus vitemusque contraria, iuxta Apostolum dicentem . . ." . . . Pessimo sensu in Decreto legimus: "Liber qui appellatus Pastoris, apocryphus"; quem apud quasdam Graeciae Ecclesias etiam publice legi testatus est, et "revera utilem librum" pronuntiavit Hieronymus', etc. (*op. cit.* 54 f).

The decree again speaks of the Evangelist Mark, saying that he 'gloriosum consummasse Martyrium', but this is not mentioned by Eusebius or Jerome, nor yet by Isidore Hispalensis, and was doubtless taken from a *Vita S. Marci* written between the time of Isidore and that of Bede, and therefore after the time of Gelasius.

Lastly, the incongruity between the decree and the opinions

and writings of the popes at this time is shewn perhaps most of all in the passages in which Jerome is so much exalted and Rufinus correspondingly depreciated. They run as follows:—

‘Rufinus vir religiosissimus plurimos ecclesiastici operis edidit libros : nonnullas etiam Scripturas interpretatus est. Sed quoniam venerabilis Hieronymus cum in aliquibus de arbitrii libertate notavit ; illa sentimus, quae praedictum beatum Hieronymum sentire cognoscimus ; et non solum de Rufino, sed etiam de universis quos sis saepius memoratus zelo Dei, et fidei religione reprehendit. Item Originis nonnulla opuscula, quae vir beatissimus Hieronymus non repudiat, legenda suscipimus : reliqua autem omnia cum auctore suo dicimus renuenda.’

It is perfectly plain, therefore, from its contents that the decree we are discussing was written after the time of Gelasius. It was probably because some scribe who wrote it out could not find such a document among those cited by Dionysius that he altered the name of Gelasius to Hormisdas, the documents of whose papacy were not recorded by Dionysius. The reign of Hormisdas would be, however, equally inconsistent with the consulship of Asterius, nor are the contents of the document consistent with his papacy any more than they are with that of Gelasius.

The case made out against the genuineness of the decree in all its forms by Pearson and Cave seems to me to be unanswerable. Thiel, who knew of Pearson’s work, nowhere attempts to answer his arguments and merely questions its having been concocted by the pseudo-Isidore, considering that it was composed earlier than the middle of the ninth century, which may well be, since we have ample evidence that such forgeries were issued as far back at least as the time of Charles the Great. Until some one has resuscitated the credit of this document, therefore, which seems virtually impossible, we must treat the lists of canonical books passing under the names of Damasus, Gelasius, and Hormisdas, as late sophistications made four centuries after their professed date, and therefore of no service in tracing the history of the Western Canon.

Let us now revert to our story.

The conclusion that the so-called Decretal of Damasus is not genuine affects materially the earlier position of St Jerome in regard to the Bible Canon as it has generally been stated. If no such pronouncement was made on the subject by his patron,

Pope Damasus, at the time when he was living in Rome and acting as his secretary and engaged in translating the Psalms and Gospels, it is plain that he had nothing to do with any Bible Canon issued in 382, and, so far as the evidence is available, had no part at any time in supporting a Bible Canon other than that which he supported in later times.

That he did so change his view, as the facts as previously interpreted seemed to shew conclusively and as, with others, I supposed, was a fact otherwise very hard to understand, since it implied that one of the most orthodox of men adopted heretical views in regard to the most important of all dogmatic matters, namely, the legitimate contents of the Bible, and did so immediately after a solemn pronouncement had been made in a synod at which he was probably present and one presided over by a pope whom he greatly regarded, by whom he was especially patronized, and who adopted two of his new translations, those of the Psalms and Gospels, as the official texts patronized by the Roman See.

It is still more wonderful that Jerome should have done this so soon after the alleged synod, since it would seem now (*supra* vol. xi p. 332) that both in regard to his translation of the Old Testament from the Greek and Hebrew he adopted the shorter Canon, and not that of the Damasine list,¹ just as his early friend and companion Rufinus had always done up to that time, and as we know he did in a work dated before 382. It would seem, therefore, that both Jerome and Rufinus in their earlier days when they were both devoted followers of Origen, like Hilary of Poitiers, followed the footsteps of Origen in a large measure about the Canon, as they did on other matters.

With the cancelling of the claims of the so-called Damasine decretal to be a genuine document we revert again to the view, not long ago everywhere prevalent, that the first official pronouncement of the Latin Church on the question of the Canon was not made at Rome, but in Africa, in the Synods of Hippo and Carthage held in 393 and 397. It is not improbable that this pronouncement was induced by the widespread views promulgated

¹ In addition to the arguments used in the previous paper I would add the fact that if Jerome ever adopted this longer Canon in his translation from the Greek he would not have gone to the Old Latin for the fragments of that Canon which he inserted in his Hebrew translation of Daniel and Esther, but to his own translation.

north of the Mediterranean by Hilary, Jerome, and Rufinus, in favour of Origen's ambiguous teaching on the subject, and that these views led to the iteration of the pronouncement at two successive synods a very short time apart on what must have been deemed a burning question.

The first distinctly Roman pronouncement on the subject was contained in the letter of Pope Innocent to Bishop Exuperius of Toulouse. Exuperius was a friend of Jerome who dedicated his commentary on Zechariah to him. He was apparently troubled in regard to Jerome's views and theories about the Canon and wrote for instruction to the Pope. The Pope's letter in reply was dated February 405, and is very important as formulating the Canon recognized by the Metropolitan Church.

It reads as follows:—

'Qui libri recipiantur in Can. S. Scrip. brevis annexus ostendit.

Moyses libri 5, Ies. N., Iud., Regu. 4, simul et Ruth, Proph. libri 16, Salomonis libri 5, Psalt. Item historiarum Job, Tob., Esther, Iudith, Maccab. 2, Esdrae 2, Paral. 2.

N. T. Evang. iv, Ep. Pauli 14, Ioan. 3, Petri 2, Iudae 1, Iac. 1, Actus Ap., Apoc. Ioannis.

Cetera autem quae vel sub nomine Matthiae, sive Iacobi Minoris, vel sub nomine Petri et Ioannis, quae a quodam Leucio scripta sunt, vel sub nomine Andreae quae a Xenocharide et Leonida Philosophis; vel sub nomine Thomae, et si qua sunt alia, non solum repudianda, verum etiam noveris esse damnanda.'

It will be noted that a phrase in the life of Exuperius in Smith's *Dictionary of Biography* in reference to this list is misleading. It says that the list in question gives the scriptural books as they are now received, *excluding the Apocrypha*, which to most people would mean the Apocrypha in our Bibles, whereas they are duly contained in it without any sign of inferiority.

H. H. HOWORTH.