

RESTORING THE ORIGINAL BIBLE

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The world has never had a complete Bible of the Old and New Testaments in the original manuscript order of the biblical books. This is a fact! It is almost that such a non-manuscript arrangement of the books of the Bible could exist, but **all modern translations of the Holy Scriptures do not follow the early manuscripts**. Publishers in their quest to print numerous versions of the Bible have been led to avoid the manuscript positioning of the biblical books in favor of an ecclesiastical order which has no justification from the early Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible.

Let us look at the situation with the New Testament first. The last century saw the advent of what we call the modern scholarly criticism of the biblical texts and manuscripts. These pioneer scholars were very good at their task. Indeed, when they printed their final results of surveying the early New Testament manuscripts, they *all without exception* placed their arrangement of the books *in the same order*.

The order that they accepted was that of the manuscripts from which they had done their work. They felt compelled in their scholarly editions to arrange the books as they found them positioned in the manuscripts because the overwhelming evidence from those early documents demanded it. As an example, note Scrivener's words after surveying over 4000 New Testament manuscripts:

"Whether copies contain the whole or a part of the sacred volume, the general order of the books is the following: Gospels, Acts, Catholic Epistles, Pauline Epistles, Apocalypse [the Book of Revelation]."

- **Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, ¹**
—words in brackets are mine

Note that the seven Catholic ² Epistles (which are the epistles of James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John and Jude) were shown by Scrivener as being *before* the fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul in the manuscripts. This is a very significant feature of the manuscripts which has not been followed by modern translators.

"This is the position [the Catholic Epistles before those of Paul] assigned them in the critical editions of Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort."

- **Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, ³**
—words in brackets are mine

The reason for the placement of these seven epistles *before* the fourteen of Paul is because the early manuscripts which most textual critics uphold as the best in existence (notably the *Vaticanus*, the *Alexandrinus* and the *Ephraem*) position them in that order. There can be no doubt that this is where those seven epistles belong. But in our modern versions, the translators have abandoned this order of the manuscripts and adopted the arbitrary arrangement of Jerome who in the early 5th century (when he translated his Latin Vulgate) put the letters of the apostle Paul into a first position ahead of the seven "General Epistles" (James to Jude) which were considered to be "Jewish."

Jerome also placed the Book of Hebrews from its 10th place position in the manuscripts within the fourteen epistles of Paul and put it at the back (into the least position) because of its

"Jewish" characteristics and because some western theologians questioned whether it was written by Paul.

This new arrangement of Jerome had the advantage in Jerome's eyes and to some western theologians of exalting the position of Paul (the apostle to the Gentiles) to a primal authority of rank *above* the Jewish apostles who were commissioned to go to the Jews. Jerome's new and radical placement of Paul's epistles *before* the seven "Catholic Epistles" in his Latin Vulgate also placed the Book of Romans and the city of Rome (the city to whom the first epistle of Paul's collection of books was sent) into a first rank position ahead of the Jewish apostles who once had Jerusalem for their top rank position. This rearrangement by Jerome (to exalt the Gentile section of the Christian Church, and the city of Rome in particular) does not have the slightest justification when one consults the majority of the early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Indeed, notice what Dr. Bullinger had to say about this arrangement of Jerome.

"Our English Bibles follow the order as given in the Latin Vulgate. This order, therefore, depends on the arbitrary judgment of one man, Jerome (A.D. 382–429). All theories based on this order rest on human authority, and are thus without any true foundation."

- ***Companion Bible, Appendix 95, p.139***

The textual scholars of the last century knew that this arrangement by Jerome was simply the one preferred by him and it was willfully devised to exalt the so-called "Gentile" epistles of the New Testament into a primal position over those which had "Jewish" characteristics. Many of the early textual critics admitted that the arrangement of Jerome is provincial, sectarian and clearly adopted for political reasons. Jerome's order of the New Testament books cannot represent the original arrangement, and the evidence from the manuscripts demonstrates this abundantly. The truth is, Jerome (along with those who followed him) in adopting his novel arrangement wanted to exalt "Rome" and its theology over the site of "Jerusalem" and over the authority of the eastern churches who were not keen on Rome's leadership in Christendom. Note what M'Clintock and Strong had to say about this matter in their twelve volume *Cyclopedia*.

"The Western Church ... as represented by Jerome and Augustine, and their successors, gave priority of position to the Pauline epistles. The tendency of the Western Church to recognize Rome as the center of authority may perhaps, in part, account for this departure from the custom of the East. The order in the Alexandrian, Vatican and Ephraem manuscripts gives precedence to the Catholic Epistles, and as this is also recognized by the Council of Laodicea, Cyril of Jerusalem and Athanasius, it would appear to have been characteristic of the Eastern churches."

- ***CBTEL, vol. I, p. 800*** ⁴

This tendency of Jerome (and his followers) to downgrade the letters of the so-called "Jewish" apostles into a lesser position of authority in the New Testament canon and to advance Paul's epistles into a position of headship and prestige was done in order to exalt Rome and its western theology. This non-manuscript arrangement of the New Testament books, on the other hand, was not followed by most of the ancient Christian scholars and theologians who lived before and after the time of Jerome, and this was especially true with the theologians who flourished in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

Early Christian Beliefs

Almost all the Greek-speaking ecclesiastical authorities from the areas of Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece refer to the books of the New Testament and they do so in the proper

manuscript arrangement. Note in all cases that they position the seven “Catholic Epistles” (from James to Jude) *before* those of the apostle Paul.

- Athanasius said the order was **“the four Gospels; the Acts of the Apostles; the seven Catholic Epistles; the fourteen epistles of St. Paul; and the Revelation of John.”** [5](#)
- Leontius of Byzantium mentioned the order as **“Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; the Acts of the Apostles; the seven Catholic Epistles; the Epistles of Paul; and the Apocalypse.”** [6](#)
- Philastris was even bold in his statement that the seven Catholic Epistles must be positioned before Paul’s because in Galatians 1:17 Paul said that the Jewish apostles were **“before me.”** [7](#)
- The normal manuscript order was also advocated by the clerics at the eastern Church Synod of Laodicea in 365 C.E. [8](#) and it was further maintained by Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem. [9](#)
- John of Damascus (born 675 C.E.)—author of the standard textbook on Dogmatic Theology for the Greek Church—referred to the manuscript order of the books as the proper one. Without qualification he stated that the seven Catholic Epistles must be placed right after the Book of Acts. [10](#)

Further names could be cited in support of this prevalent view among eastern churchmen. These included Cassiodorus, Nicephorus and also the Syrian Peshitta Version of the New Testament. [11](#) These were followed by *Stoichiometry* from Cotelerius (806 C.E.) and Gecumenius (950 C.E.) the Bishop of Thessaly who wrote a short copy of verse on the New Testament in the proper manuscript order. [12](#)

This proper manuscript order (with the seven Catholic “Jewish” Epistles positioned before those of Paul) was even acknowledged by Jerome himself, yet in a personal letter to his friend Paulinus, Jerome followed an order peculiar to Epiphanius who even placed Paul’s letters right after the four Gospels. [13](#) This oddity of order is also found in the *Sinaiticus* manuscript and plainly is unlike the order of the original manuscripts as the textual scholars Westcott & Hort make clear. (See APPENDIX ONE to this chapter, below).

It is really easy to see that the final “western rearrangement” of Jerome which he displayed in his Latin Vulgate translation (and that which we find in our Bibles today) was an attempt to exalt the political position of the western church over the rest of Christendom. It was especially designed to put Rome ahead of all the churches in Christendom.

A reflection of this type of redesigning is found in the writings of the Latin theologian Rufinus, born about 330 C.E., a churchman of the “western school.” [14](#) The Third Council of Carthage also advocated the western arrangement. [15](#) Innocent of Rome did the same [16](#) and so did Gelasius, Bishop of Rome (492 C.E.). [17](#) These ecclesiastical leaders wanted Rome (not Jerusalem or any of the eastern cities) to be in top authority among the Christian churches.

There were even two easterners who followed the western order. One was Gregory of Nazianzus. This might be expected with Gregory because he championed a universal orthodoxy for both the eastern and western sections of the church against the doctrines of eastern Arianism. Associated with him was Amphilocheus, Bishop of Iconium. [18](#)

The main reason the westerners placed Paul’s epistles to a position *before* those of James, Peter, John, and Jude was to promote Paul (the Gentile apostle) as being preeminent over the Jewish apostles, which in turn helped to elevate the western ecclesiastical authorities of the fourth and fifth centuries into a supreme political position within Christendom.. There was, however, a major problem with this non-manuscript exaltation of Paul. It put Peter (whom most people felt was the first Bishop of Rome) into an inferior position. This may have been an embarrassment at first, but it was soon avoided by pointing out that the two epistles of Peter

were intended by Peter to go only to Jews, not to Gentiles as the Romans. So even the first "Pope" got put into a last position.

In spite of these sectarian reasons for placing Paul's letters *before* the seven Catholic ("Jewish") Epistles, the proper order of the New Testament books was well known and maintained by the majority of early Greek manuscripts. And this is exactly how the New Testament books should be positioned today. To promote this truth is one of the main reasons this book is being written. The world needs to return to the original Bible arrangement and abandon the sectarian one devised by Jerome and perpetuated by his western successors.

Indeed, I am not the only one stating this. The two great Cambridge professors of the last century Westcott & Hort, who were the principal actors in the production of the famous Revised Version of the Bible of 1881, maintained that the manuscript order should be retained by us moderns. Their appeal for the original order is recorded in their book *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* ¹⁹ and is given in APPENDIX ONE to this chapter. This version was the pioneer work for all of our modern versions today. What these two eminent professors had to say about the arrangement of the New Testament books ought to have a profound effect on how scholars arrange the books of their new translations today, but sadly, not the slightest attention has been given to their suggestions by modern translators of the New Testament (except one whom I will soon mention).

As a matter of fact, about twenty years later, Professor Thayer (who headed the American Standard Version committee in the United States) decided to retain the traditional order of the New Testament books that Jerome had devised in that 1901 version. He did this in spite of the fact that his own son-in-law (who was the eminent textual critic in Germany, Professor Caspar Rene Gregory) advised him to return to the original manuscript order of the New Testament books. Professor Gregory had long stated that the order of the main manuscripts should be maintained in all modern versions (see APPENDIX TWO of this chapter which has Professor Gregory's appeal).

But why, one might ask, were the appeals made by the various textual scholars in the past not heeded? The answer is simple and at the same time devastating to the cause of true scholarship. The plain truth is that the publishers at the various presses who were investing their money into gaining a profit on the new English Versions being produced thought that the general public would be averse to any different order of the biblical books. The marketers felt that the true and original manuscript order (which the scholars were well aware of) would probably appear "newfangled" and "way out" to the general public who were expected to buy the new Bibles.

The matter came down essentially to that of economics. The publishers not only wanted to get their money back from their publishing venture (which was reasonable enough), but they also wanted to make a profit (which is also reasonable). These matters were certainly important, but they should not be used at the expense of the truth. So what happened? The marketers prevailed and won the day hands down (and they continue to do the same thing today in the publishing world). As a result, the world is still saddled with the erroneous and sectarian order of the New Testament books that was devised by Jerome for his Latin Vulgate.

As far as I am aware, there has only been one modern version of the New Testament that has returned to the original manuscript order of the New Testament books. That is the translation of Ivan Panin (brought out first in 1914, revised in 1935 and reprinted several times by the Book Society of Canada). ²⁰ But there has not been a single other version in English (to my knowledge) that has returned to the original order of the manuscripts. This is a sad state of affairs. It appears to me that the least that the theologians and publishers could do today with their new translations is to tell the general public in their pro s or introductions what the manuscript order of the New Testament books actually is. But strange as it may seem, not a single version, even in its preliminary comments, has an explanation why they (the translators)

have abandoned the correct order of the manuscripts. As far as the scholarly world is concerned, their *dead silence* on this matter is universally consistent and outwardly conspicuous.

This state of affairs is really unconscionable. It is not proper for the actual manuscript order of the New Testament books to be jettisoned aside by the theologians and publishers of the modern versions being promoted today. The general public are not dunces. They ought to be told the truth.

The principal bugaboo among theologians and publishers (every time the original manuscript order is mentioned as the one to follow) is what they consider the problem of selling the new version to the general public. The difficulty in marketing such a "newfangled" order of the New Testament books among the people is the prime factor with publishers (who not only want to get their money back with any publishing venture, they want to *make a profit* to boot). The simple fact is, publishers feel the original order would appear too "strange" to the general public who buy their Bibles. Yes, this is true, such a Bible would appear "strange." But the reason for the "strangeness" is because of the apathy of scholars (both in past times and at the present) who have not insisted that publishers return to the original manuscript order in all modern versions of the Bible.

There is, however, another reason why theologians and publishers do not want to reveal to the general public the original manuscript order of the New Testament books. That is because the placement of the seven Catholic ("Jewish") Epistles *before* those of Paul (and to replace the Book of Hebrews into 10th position, rather than in its present 14th spot) would tend to advance the "Jewish" epistles *before* the "Gentile" ones of the apostle Paul. Some modern ecclesiastical leaders do not think this is desirable. If this were done, the general public would unmistakably observe that such an arrangement would make any common sense person focus his attention toward "Jerusalem" and not to "Rome." This literary detail found in the New Testament manuscripts would not be to the advantage of the present Catholic and Protestant hierarchical traditions (which dominated western theological opinions for the past sixteen centuries), because those traditions of western theologians tend to support Rome as the historic center of Christian authority.

It is often thought that since most readers of the New Testament are now Gentiles, many people believe today (and western theologians have thought this since the time of Jerome) that it is better to place books intended for the "Gentiles" *before* any books that seem to be "Jewish." Paul, however, as I will later show in this book, said that the Jews ought to come first on all occasions and that they had (and have) prime authority in teaching the Gospel of Christ (Romans 3:1-2).

At the present, publishers and scholars alike have been able to avoid discussing these important points by simply being apathetic to the original manuscript arrangement of the New Testament books. The time has come to abandon this indifference. There can be no doubt whatever that the actual manuscript order of the New Testament books should be restored *in all modern versions*. All the early textual critics in their Greek versions of the New Testament, along with Professors Westcott & Hort and Gregory, stated that the seven Catholic ("Jewish") Epistles should be placed in their original position *before* those of Paul and that the Book of Hebrews should be returned to its 10th position in Paul's collection, rather than being at the back of Paul's letters as it is now.

It is time that New Testament scholars and also the publishers of Bibles return to the proper order and inform the general public about the original arrangement of the New Testament books. The rewards for restoring the manuscript order can afford us of modern times a much better understanding of the messages of the New Testament. And when both the Old and New Testaments *are returned* to their original designs (and combined together) a new appreciation of the Bible will result.

The Old Testament

The books of the Old Testament also need to be repositioned to accord with the manuscripts maintained by Jewish authorities. Our Christian Old Testament follows an order of books which had its origin in Egypt in the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E. This order was devised when the codex form for producing books became popular (this is the type of book with which we are familiar today). Before the codex form of making a book was used, it was customary to use scrolls for the production of literary documents. But somewhere in the second or third centuries, the Greek translation of the Old Testament was put into a codex form called the Septuagint (abbreviated as LXX—a Greek version translated a few generations before the time of Christ).

The Jewish authorities at this time, however, would not place the Holy Scriptures in the codex form. The Jews demanded the scroll form well into the 5th century. But the Gentiles in Egypt put the LXX into the codex form. When they did, they abandoned the normal Jewish order (which had been maintained in the early Temple) and they rearranged the books into a subjectivized order. They put the historical books of the Old Testament together in one section, the poetic books in another, and the prophetic books in yet another. Josephus, the Jewish historian at the end of the 1st century, did the same thing (I will comment on his statements later). Josephus did this primarily because he had a Gentile audience that he was trying to inform and they did not appreciate or understand the order of the Old Testament books maintained by the Temple authorities in Jerusalem.

When the codex form of book came into general use among Christians, those in Egypt in the Greek-speaking world found the subjectivized arrangement of the LXX of the Old Testament to be academically desirable. The use of the codex form gave an appearance of standardization to the text of the Old Testament for Gentile Christian readers. It showed a permanent arrangement of books whereas separate scrolls cannot. This arrangement gave Jerome a reason for maintaining it when he devised his Latin Vulgate version. And we moderns have inherited (again from Jerome) the same Egyptian order which the codex form of the LXX presented to Christians in the second and third centuries after Christ.

Though Jerome adopted the Egyptian order of the Old Testament books as found in the LXX, this does not mean he was unaware of the Hebrew design of the books which even Christ referred to in Luke 24:44–45 as being “the Scriptures.” When questioned by some of his readers why he put among the prophets section of his Latin Vulgate, Jerome said:

“I give warning that Daniel in Hebrew is not found among the prophets, but among the writers of the Hagiographa [the third division of the Hebrew Bible]; for all Scripture is by them [the Jewish authorities] divided into three parts: the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa.”

- **Jerome, *Preface to Daniel*,
— words in brackets are mine ²¹**

The Hagiographa are “Holy Writings,” sometimes called the Psalms for the book that introduced this third division.

This shows that Jerome was well aware of what the Jewish order of the Old Testament was (and the one I am advocating in this book). It would seem to me that even we Christians ought to return to the Hebrew order of the books as maintained by the Temple authorities when the Holy Sanctuary existed in Jerusalem, since this is the order that Christ advocated as “the Scriptures” (Luke 24:44–45). The Hebrew manuscript order is as follows:

I. **THE LAW** (TORAH)

- 1) Genesis
- 2) Exodus
- 3) Leviticus
- 4) Numbers
- 5) Deuteronomy

II. **THE PROPHETS**

- 6) Joshua and Judges
[reckoned as two separate books by the Jews after the 2nd century]
- 7) The Book of Kingdoms (Samuel and Kings)
[reckoned as two separate books by the Jews after the 2nd century]
- 8) Isaiah
- 9) Jeremiah
- 10) Ezekiel
- 11) The Twelve (Hosea to Malachi)
[always reckoned as one book by the Jews]

III. **THE HOLY WRITINGS** (or THE PSALMS because it was the first book in the collection in this "Royal Division")

- 12) The Psalms
- 13) The Proverbs
- 14) Job
- 15) Song of Songs
- 16) Ruth
- 17) Lamentations
- 18) Ecclesiastes
- 19) Esther
- 20) Daniel
- 21) Ezra-Nehemiah [reckoned as one book by the Jews]
- 22) The Book of Chronicles [reckoned as one book by the Jews]

These 22 books of the Old Testament (and their arrangement as indicated above) should be the standard canon followed by every version of the Bible today. They represent the exact number presently in our King James Version but, as one can observe, they are arranged and enumerated differently. Again, it was Jerome who gave us our present enumeration of 39 books for the Old Testament rather than the original 22 enumeration (which agreed with the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet).

Note Jerome's own comment which shows he was well aware of the original 22 numbering (and he even approved of it in 391 C.E. by identifying himself with the Jews in this matter before he finished his Latin Vulgate). Though he finally abandoned the 22 enumeration in his Latin Vulgate which he prepared for his Gentile Christian readers, he formerly approved of it. Jerome in 391 C.E. said:

"As, then, there are twenty-two elementary characters by means of which WE write in Hebrew all WE say, and the compass of the human voice is contained within their limits, so WE reckon twenty-two books, by which, as by the alphabet of the doctrine of God, a righteous man is instructed in tender infancy, and, as it were, while still at the breast."

- **Jerome, *Preface to Samuel and Kings* ²²**

The world today needs to jettison Jerome's later opinions which were intended to exalt Rome as the center and head of Christendom. We should return to this original 22 numbering of the Old Testament books (which was the number of books mentioned by the priest/historian Josephus as the enumeration that existed in the time of Christ). This was the arrangement advocated by Christ himself as representing "the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44–45).

When these original manuscript features of the Old and New Testaments I have discussed are restored to our modern Bibles, an amazing relationship between all the books of the Holy Scriptures can be understood. Restoring the manuscript order to both testaments would make the messages of the Bible much easier to understand. Indeed, a great deal of important information about the Bible would come forth that people have not realized before.

Jerome with his Latin Vulgate did considerable damage to the early and pristine teachings of Christianity when he redesigned the books of both the Old and New Testaments in order to advance Gentile authority over any Jewish authority. His rearrangement also had the advantage (from Jerome's viewpoint) of exalting Rome and its ecclesiastical authorities over areas within the Christian community. But we need to restore the original Bible to the world—the Bible that left the hands of the prophets and apostles. The world needs, at this end of the 20th century, to finally abandon the political and sectarian arrangement of the biblical books devised and promoted in the early 5th century by Jerome and his successors. Restoring the original Bible to its proper divisions and arrangement of its books is my prime purpose for writing this present book.

A Numerical Summary

The original arrangement of the Old and New Testament books shows a marvelous design that enhances the basic teaching of Christ and the apostles. It reveals a symmetrical balance between the divisions and parts of the Bible that is truly inspiring and instructive. We will look at the significance of this matter later in this book, but as a preliminary synopsis, note that the original Scriptures had exactly 49 books: 22 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament.

This number 49 is, of course, 7 times 7, and seven represents the symbolic number of *completion or finalization*. One could spend many pages giving biblical references concerning the significance of the number seven. But as a simple illustration of its symbolic meaning, look at some basic features of the Hebrew calendar that Christ and the apostles observed. Note how the Hebrews recognized this.

- They noticed that the *seventh day of the week completed* the week.
- They also saw that the *seven weeks of grain harvest* (the 49 days from Passover to Pentecost) *completed* the firstfruits harvest. And there is more.
- The first *seven months of the Hebrew calendar* contained the times for the *seven annual festivals* commanded by Moses. In a sense it could be said that the *festival year of Moses was completed in seven months*, and those seven months contained and *completed* the holyday schedule for the Israelites.
- And let us not forget that every *seventh year* was reckoned a Sabbatical Year and it commemorated the *completion* of six years of agricultural activity for the Hebrews in Palestine.
- After *seven of those Sabbatical Years were completed* (a period of 49 years), the Year of Jubilee was reached which was supposed to be a time of a *thorough and finalized* agricultural and financial rejuvenation for all Israelites in Palestine. This period of 49 years (7 times 7) was the Jubilee period when a

religious and civil cycle was *completed*. This was when all social and economic activities were supposed to return to the same condition as they had been at the beginning of the previous 49 years.

Why are these *sevens* and multiples of *sevens* important? They show that it was no accident that the total number of Old and New Testament books came to 49 in number (7 times 7) in the enumeration maintained by the early Jewish and early Christian authorities. But there is more to it than that. There are also (as Christ taught) three divisions to the Old Testament:

- (1) The Law,
- (2) The Prophets, and
- (3) The Writings' (the Psalms) Division.

To these can be added the four divisions of the New Testament:

- (4) The Historical Books [Gospels and Acts],
- (5) The *seven* General [or Catholic] Epistles,
- (6) The *fourteen* [2 times 7] epistles of Paul, and then
- (7) the final Book of Revelation.

When one adds the three divisions of the Old Testament with the four of the New Testament, we arrive at *seven* divisions for the complete Bible. This *seven-fold* division was no accident.

Throughout the remainder of this book, I will show many more numerical relationships within and among the various books of the Bible involving the number *seven*. The Scripture is truly a marvelously arranged book and it reveals a symbolic message from those numerical patterns that will help enhance anyone's comprehension of the biblical revelation itself. But for the general public to appreciate this fact, the first thing to be done is for publishers of Bibles, for biblical scholars, and for modern preachers of the Gospel to abandon the sectarian arrangement of the biblical books which had its origin with Jerome in the early 5th century after Christ. The world needs to return to the manuscript order as maintained by the early Jews and early Christians. In other words, the modern world needs to *start over* with its biblical translations and versions, and *this time* scholars need to get the divisions and arrangement of the books straight. They need to be put back into their proper manuscript order.

True enough, this would be a major undertaking because every version combining the Old and New Testaments being published in the world today is in error and need adjustment. It would also be an enormous task to reeducate people to accept the original manuscript divisions and arrangement of the biblical books. The biggest problem of all is to change people's minds from the apathy that is presently expressed over the issue, and get them excited about a return to the original Bible. If such a Bible were produced, it would be the first time in history that a complete published Bible (in the original manuscript arrangements and order) would be given to the world.

It must be admitted that there could be resistance to any change from the erroneous arrangement saddled on the world by Jerome and his Latin Vulgate. It might rekindle the doctrinal arguments of the 4th and 5th centuries regarding the place where proper authority rests within Christendom. If one accepts the retention of our present catalog of the books of the New Testament, then some might imagine that the Roman church has some credentials for being in the top position. But if one returns to the original manuscript order and restores the seven Catholic Epistles to their rightful position in the New Testament canon (and placing the Book of Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians where the principal manuscripts have it), this would tend to exalt the "Jewish apostles" and the city of Jerusalem over the Gentile section of the Christian Church and the city of Rome. It is true that the original manuscript order downplays the historic role of headship that Rome has assumed in the world.

A return to the manuscript order of the Old and New Testament books is clearly the proper thing to do. Even the apostle Paul said that the message of Christian salvation should go to **"the Jew first"** (Romans 2:10; 3:1–2). And in Paul's personal evaluation of his rank as the apostle to the Gentiles, he admitted that the actual pillars in the Church were James, Peter, and John at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9); that they were apostles **"before me"** (Galatians 1:17). Indeed, Paul as the Gentile apostle considered himself the **"least of the apostles"** (1 Corinthians 15:9), and a person **"who am less than the least of all saints"** (Ephesians 3:8). There can be no question that if the apostle Paul himself would have a say in the positioning of his own fourteen epistles, he would not insist they be placed before the pillar apostles of the Christian Church.

The actual fact is, there is no need to lessen any church's jurisdiction when the world returns to the manuscript order of the Old and New Testament books. Such authority is based on a host of other considerations, not the positioning of the canonical books alone. Indeed, once the world returns to the original order, the apostle Peter (who is the first recorded Bishop of Rome in the historical annals) would then assume his rightful rank ahead of the apostle Paul (who considered himself as the **"least of the apostles"**). In reality, the New Testament itself is "a Jewish book" in every way and the Jews are given preeminence even by the apostle Paul throughout his epistles. Though it is true that much of the writings of the New Testament were intended to go to Gentile peoples, the authors still were Jewish Christians (and even Luke, though a Gentile, wrote under the auspices of the apostle Paul who was Jewish).

Our present arrangement exalts "Rome" and the Gentiles as being in authority over Christian affairs, rather than "Jerusalem" and the early Jewish apostles whom Christ Jesus selected to teach the basic doctrines of Christianity to the world. This is not right. The proper manuscript arrangement, however, tends to exalt the proper authority as being "Jerusalem" and the Jewish apostles of Christ, not Rome, Athens, London, Moscow, Berlin, New York, or any other city or any other person on earth.

As mentioned, the order of the biblical books is not the only reason for showing authority in Christian affairs, but it plays a part in directing people to the proper principles for solving the whole issue of Christian authority. Our modern world (on the verge of the 21st century) is entitled to have the versions of their Bibles (in their own languages) in the same manner in which the early Christians had theirs. The general public are not dunces. They are quite capable of understanding and evaluating the true manuscript arrangement of the biblical books. And with this restoration (which is long overdue), I think that a new appreciation for the Holy Bible will be the result.

APPENDIX ONE

Here are the comments of Professors Westcott & Hort in 1881 C.E.

"We have followed recent editors [in their official Greek text of the New Testament meant for scholars] **in abandoning the Hieronymic order [the arrangement of Jerome], familiar in modern Europe through the influence of the Latin Vulgate, in favour of the order most highly recommended by various Greek authority of the fourth century, the earliest time when we have distinct evidence of the completed Canon as it now stands. It differs from the Hieronymic [Jerome's] order in two respects. First, the Acts are immediately followed by the Catholic Epistles. The connexion between these two portions, commended by its intrinsic appropriateness, is preserved in a large proportion of Greek manuscripts of all ages, and corresponds to marked affinities of textual history. This connexion is not sacrificed in the arrangement found in the Sinai manuscript and elsewhere, by which the Pauline Epistles are placed next to the Gospels. The Sinaitic order has the undoubted advantage of keeping together those**

books of the New Testament which were most decisively invested with a scriptural character in the earlier ages. But there is a manifest incongruity in placing the Acts in the midst of the Epistles; and moreover, since the choice lies between what are after all only rival traditions, strong reasons would be needed to justify us in forsaking the highest ancient Greek authority, in accordance with which the Pauline Epistles stand after the Catholic Epistles. Secondly, the Epistle to the Hebrews stands before the Pastoral Epistles [of Paul]. It is certainly not satisfactory to ourselves personally to separate what we believe to be genuine writings of St Paul from the bulk of his works by an epistle in which we cannot recognize his authorship. But no violence has, we trust, been here done to truth in deferring throughout to the most eminent precedent, since the Epistle to the Hebrews is on all hands acknowledged as in some sense Pauline, and St Paul's epistles addressed to single persons [the four Pastoral Epistles: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon] may very well be placed by themselves. We have therefore been content to indicate the existence of three groups in the table prefixed to the whole Pauline collection [the nine epistles to the Seven Churches of Paul, the Book of Hebrews, and the Pastoral Epistles]."

- *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*,
— underlines and words in brackets are mine ²³

APPENDIX TWO

Here is the comment of Professor Caspar R. Gregory in 1907 C.E.

"The order in which we place the books of the New Testament is not a matter of indifference. Every Christian should be familiar with these books, and should know precisely where to find book. Every New Testament should have the books in precisely the same order, the order of the Greek Church, which in this case is of right the guardian of this ancient literature [see Romans 3:1-2]. The proper order is, I think: First, the Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Second, the Book of Acts. Third, the Catholic Epistles: James, First and Second Peter, First, Second, and Third John, and Jude. Fourth, the Epistles of Paul: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, Hebrews, First and Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon. And fifth, the Book of Revelation ... The Greek order is that which places the Epistle to the Hebrews between Thessalonians and Timothy, and that is the order to which we should hold. The Latin order [of Jerome] places Hebrews after Philemon. But we must keep to the old order or we shall have the New Testament turned upside down in connection with every fancied discovery as to authorship and date of books."

- *Canon and Text of the New Testament*, pp.467-469,
— underlines and words in brackets are mine ²⁴

¹ F.H.A. Scrivener, *Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 4th ed., vol. 1 (London, 1894), p. 72.

² It ought to be stated that the word "Catholic" in Scrivener's statement does not refer to any Christian denomination. It only signifies that the epistles in content are reckoned by scholars as being "Universal" or "General," which is what the word "Catholic" means.

- [3](#) James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible Dealing*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribener, 1911–12), p. 360.
- [4](#) John M'Clintock and James Strong, eds., *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, Arno Press, 1969 [original 1871–1881 ed.]).
- [5](#) Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, 8th ed., corr. and enl. Edition, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, [1807]), p. 253.
- [6](#) Horne, *Introduction*, vol. IV, p. 253.
- [7](#) James Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (T&T Clark Ltd, 1981), p. 13.
- [8](#) "Synod of Laodicea," Canon LX, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [hereafter NPNF], 2nd Series, vol. XIV, p. 159.
- [9](#) Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, *First Catechetical Lectures*, Lecture 4, §36, "Of the Divine Scriptures," in NPNF, 2nd Series, vol. VII.
- [10](#) Nathaniel Lardner, *Credibility of the Gospel History*, vol. V (London, 1788), p. 147.
- [11](#) Moffatt, *Introduction*, p. 14.
- [12](#) Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. V, pp. 89, 154–155.
- [13](#) Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. IV, pp. 437–438
- [14](#) Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. IV, pp. 483–484.
- [15](#) Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. IV, p. 487.
- [16](#) Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. IV, p.586)
- [17](#) Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. V, p. 76.
- [18](#) Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. IV, pp. 292–293.
- [19](#) New York: Harper, 1882.
- [20](#) Ivan Panin, ed., *The New Testament from the Greek Text as Established by Bible Numerics*, 2nd ed. (Niagra Falls, Ontario, Canada: Bible Numerics, 1935).
- [21](#) Jerome, "Preface to Daniel," in NPNF, 2nd Series, vol. VI, p. 493.
- [22](#) Jerome, "Preface to Samuel and Kings," in NPNF, 2nd Series, vol. VI, p. 489.
- [23](#) Westcott & Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*, pp. 320–321.
- [24](#) Caspar Renee Gregory, *Canon and Text of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1924), pp. 467–469.