



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 26
Issue 648

The Original Bible Restored

by — Ernest L. Martin (1984)

Book Review & Notes by – Bob Evelyn
(Including Some Additional Comments)

Part 1 of 3

ORDER AND NUMBER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

The current order of books found in our modern Old Testaments originated in Egypt in the second and third centuries A.D.⁽¹⁰⁾ The original Old Testament reckoned as official by the Jews for their synagogue services is as follows:

• I. The Law (Torah)

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

• II. The Prophets

6. Joshua/Judges
7. Book of Kingdoms (Samuel/Kings)
8. Isaiah
9. Jeremiah
10. Ezekiel
11. The Twelve (Hosea to Malachi)

• III. The Holy Writings (or The Psalms)

12. Psalms
13. Proverbs
14. Job

15. Song of Songs
16. Ruth
17. Lamentations
18. Ecclesiastes
19. Esther
20. Daniel
21. Ezra/Nehemiah
22. The Book of Chronicles

The original order observes the principle of eldership. The supreme position was given to the first five books called the Law (Torah). First rank after the Torah belonged to the Prophets. Among the prophets themselves there were degrees of rank ... the Former Prophets, then the Major Prophets, and finally the Minor Prophets.⁽⁶⁵⁻⁶⁶⁾ The 11 books of the third division were intended primarily for priests, kings and other rulers within a Temple (not synagogue) background.⁽⁷⁶⁾

The order shows a deliberate design put into play by the canonizers.⁽⁶⁵⁻⁶⁶⁾

THOSE WHO REFERRED TO THE 22 BOOKS

Josephus writes:

We have not a countless number of books, discordant and arranged against each other; but only two and twenty books, containing the history ▶

1. Superscripted numbers in parentheses denote page numbers from the Ernest Martin book.

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of every age, which are justly accredited as divine (Against Apion 1.8).

Sixtus Senensis, a medieval Jewish scholar, saw significance in there being 22 divine books, as there were 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

As with the Hebrew there are twenty-two letters, in which all that can be said and written is comprehended, so there are twenty-two books in which are contained all that can be known and uttered of divine things (William H. Green, *A General Introduction to the Old Testament*, Vol. I, pg. 87).

Others who also made reference to the 22 books in their writings:⁽³⁷⁻³⁹⁾

- The Book of Jubilees (theological opinions of Jewish sectarians of the Dead Sea community)
- Melito (170 A.D.)
- Origen (210 A.D.)
- Hilary of Poitiers (360 A.D.)
- Athanasius (365 A.D.)
- The Council of Laodicea (343-391 A.D.)
- Cyril of Jerusalem (386 A.D.)
- Gregory of Nazianzus (390 A.D.)
- Epiphanius (400 A.D.)

- Rufinus (410 A.D.)
- Jerome (410 A.D.)
- Synopsis of Sacred Scriptures (500 A.D.)
- Isidore of Seville (600 A.D.)
- Leontius (610 A.D.)
- John of Damascus (730 A.D.)
- Nicephorus (9th century A.D.)
- Jesudad, Bishop of Hadad, Syria (852 A.D.)
- Hrabanus (9th century A.D.)
- Moses of Chorene, Armenian historian (1000 A.D. or early 6th century)
- Peter of Cluny (1150 A.D.)
- John of Salisbury (1180 A.D. A.D.)
- Hugh of St. Victor (12th century)
- Richard of St. Victor (13th century)

Whereas the 12 Minor Prophets (Hosea to Malachi) were formerly written on one scroll and counted as one book (as Luke does in Acts 7:42 and 13:40), each of the 12 is today counted separately.⁽⁵⁶⁾

WHY 22 BOOKS MAKES SENSE, THE "ACROSTIC"

A literary device used in the Old Testament was the "acrostic" ... where the first letter of a sentence begins with the first letter of the alphabet, the second sentence begins with the second letter of the alpha-



Making the Most of the Bible *Lessons on Understanding God's Word*

by – Stephen Hill

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for every serious Bible student who is eager to do just what the title says – "make the most of the Bible."

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bet, and so on.⁽⁴⁰⁾

In complete Hebrew acrostics there are always 22 sentences, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

When one realizes the significance of the acrostic style for emphasizing a completeness and perfection, it is an easy step to acknowledge that the 22 books of the Old Testament canon represent (in a symbolic sense) a complete and perfect canonical acrostic.⁽⁴²⁾

A CHANGE TO 24 BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Sometime in the late first century or early second century the Jewish authorities re-divided the Old Testament into 24 books. It appears that the Jews in Babylon were the first to devise this new number. They simply divided two of the original books to arrive at the new number. There may have been political and religious reasons to make this change.

When the New Testament books were being accepted as divine, all could see that the 27 New Testament books added to the 22 Old Testament books would result in the significant total of 49 books ... a powerful indication that God's complete revelation was found with the addition of the New Testament books.² It could have been that the Old Testament re-numbering was done so as to bring the total to 51 ... an insignificant number.⁽⁴⁴⁾

2. [Editor:] *i.e.*, 7x7, 7 being the number of "spiritual perfection." For more information see,
– Appendix 10 in the *Appendixes to the Companion Bible*, E.W. Bullinger, see order form;
– *Number in Scripture*, E.W. Bullinger, see order form.

E.W. Bullinger presents the 24 book arrangement in the *Companion Bible* ... with Joshua-Judges split into two books, and the Book of Kingdoms split into two ... Samuel and Kings. Despite this re-division, Bullinger does maintain the original ordering of the Old Testament, unlike our modern Bibles.

The Tripartite Division

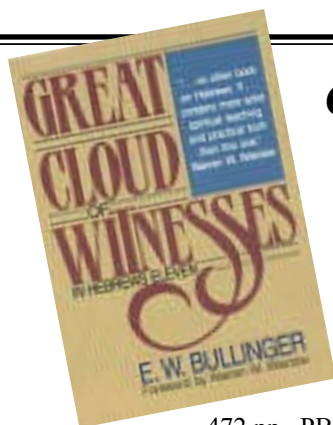
The three divisions (referred to as "The Tripartite Divisions") were referred to by Christ, and He designated them as "*the Scriptures*." We see in this passage the only place in the New Testament where the Old Testament Scriptures are defined.⁽¹²⁾

Now He said to them, "These are My words, which I speak to you, still being with you, for all must be fulfilled that is written in the LAW of Moses and the PROPHETS and PSALMS concerning Me." Then He opens up their mind to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:44-46).³

The Talmud supports the Tripartite Divisions as representing the official "canon." Since the fifth century, the Jews have had a special name for the Old Testament ... the "Tanak." This name comes from the Tripartite Divisions of the Old Testament Scriptures:⁽⁵⁵⁾

- T (Torah, or The Law)
- N (Nebi'um – the Prophets)
- K (Ketuvim – the Psalms, or Writings, Division)

3. Scriptural references displayed in the *Concordant Version*.



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WE CAN RELY UPON THE ORIGINAL JEWISH ORDERING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Mosaic laws represented the civil, governmental, societal and strict religious regulators which thoroughly dominated the lives of all Jews everywhere. We can be certain that all copies of the “constitution” were the same throughout the Jewish world. No priest or king could (or would) have revised the basic words of the Temple scrolls. There was, then, a good system of checks and balances to preserve the purity of the Temple and synagogue scrolls.⁽³³⁾

There may have been differing interpretations of the words contained within the scrolls, but the words themselves could not have been tampered with.⁽³⁴⁾

This same level of purity did not extend to the texts of sectarians who wished to live outside mainline Judaism, or if they lived under the jurisdiction of Gentile governments in Egypt, Rome, etc. The Dead Sea scrolls would be an example. Those Jews who joined private communal societies outside normative Judaism were prone to adopt their own rules and regulations. The same could be said of the manuscripts of the Law maintained by the Samaritan communities.⁽³⁴⁾

But the only texts that those in Judaea would naturally accept were the original Hebrew ones deposited in the courts (synagogues) and the Temple.⁽³⁵⁾

ORIGINAL ORDER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

The overwhelming evidence from the New Testament manuscripts places the books in the following order:⁽⁵⁻⁶⁾

- Gospels
- Acts
- General Epistles
- Pauline Epistles
- Apocalypse

This includes the early manuscripts which most textual critics believe to be the best (*Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, Ephraem*).

The following from the early Greek church also adhere to this ordering:⁽⁶⁾

- Athanasius
- Leontius of Byzantium
- Philastria
- The clerics at the eastern Church Council of Laodicea
- Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem
- John of Damascus

E.W. Bullinger reports the same general ordering of the New Testament in the *Companion Bible*:

- The Four Gospels,
- The Acts of the Apostles,
- The General Epistles,
- The Pauline Epistles,
- The Apocalypse.



80 pp, PB

See order form.

The Outcome of Infinite Grace

by — Loyal F. Hurley

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death!” It was this verse which caused the author, a pastor, to study afresh the subject of the fate of the wicked. The three choices apparent from a surface reading of various biblical texts were eternal torment, extermination or ultimate reconciliation. The author studied to find which one was true.

“A helpful introduction to the great truth that God is the Savior of all mankind.” — A.E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches Magazine*

Bullinger adds:

Even the order of these five groups varies in very few cases. But these are so exceptional as not to affect the general order as given above; indeed, they help to confirm it (*Appendix 95*, pg. 139).⁴

CHANGES MADE TO THE ORIGINAL ORDER

The prime difference in the arrangement of the biblical books (which has dominated all modern versions of the Bible) is that which Jerome established in the fifth century when he produced the *Latin Vulgate* version.⁽²⁴⁴⁾

E.W. Bullinger reports in the *Companion Bible*:

Our English Bibles follow the order as given in the *Latin Vulgate*. This order, therefore, depends on the arbitrary judgment of one man, Jerome (382-405 A.D.).

All theories based on this order rest on human authority, and are thus without any true foundation (*Appendix 95*, pg. 139).

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Modern editions have placed the Book of Hebrews at the very end of the Pauline collection of books. This is what some church officials of the Western Church (Carthage and Rome) did in the late fourth century

4. [Editor:] *Appendixes to the Companion Bible*, E.W. Bullinger, see order form.

contrary to the best manuscripts and the opinions of most officials in the Eastern Church. The proper position of Hebrews is right after II Thessalonians.

In the Pauline epistles, that to the Hebrews immediately follows the second to the Thessalonians in the four great codices *Vaticanus*, *Sinaiticus*, *Alexandrinus* and *Ephraemi* ... (Scrivener, *Introduction*, Vol. I, pg. 74).⁽²²⁸⁾

The Latin section of the church found it difficult to believe Hebrews was written by Paul, and many refused to accept it as belonging in the New Testament.

To our own people [Christians], we must say that this Epistle, which is inscribed "To the Hebrews," is received as the Apostle Paul's, not only in the churches of the East, but by all the ecclesiastical writers of former times. But the Latins do not receive it among the canonical Scriptures (Whytehead, *A Handbook to the Canon and Inspiration to the Scriptures*, pg. 131).⁽²²⁹⁾

The current order originated in Rome and Carthage, thru the Latin speaking church authorities. This re-adjustment by the western church places the epistles of Paul, and especially the Book of Romans, in first rank among the epistles ... advancing the jurisdiction of the Roman church into a position of first rank over all other church areas.⁽⁷⁾

The original "Greek Church" order for the New Testament also placed the Epistle to the Hebrews among Paul's letters ... between Thessalonians and Timothy.⁽⁹⁾

Daily Quick Quotes

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Peter may have referred to Paul's epistle to the Hebrews in II Peter 3:15-16.

... as our beloved brother Paul also writes to you, according to the wisdom given to him, as also in all the epistles.

This implies that Paul had written to the same group that Peter addressed concerning the Day of the Lord. We remember that Paul was commissioned to preach not only to the Gentiles, but also to the Israelites (Acts 9:15). And this reference to Paul's letter that preceded 2 Peter, directed to the Israelites, could have been the epistle to the Hebrews.⁽²⁴²⁾

SEVEN CHURCHES (“ECCLESIAS”)

Paul wrote nine epistles to seven different churches (ecclesias⁵) ... Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians. It is interesting to note that just as John wrote to seven ecclesias in the first few chapters of Revelation, Paul also wrote to seven ecclesias.

The apostle Paul himself, following the example of John, wrote by name to Seven Churches. True, he wrote twice to the Corinthians and Thessalonians for their correction, but he shows thereby the unity of the Church; for John also in Revelation, though he writes to seven churches only, yet speaks to all

5. [Editor:] The Greek word often translated as “church” in most English versions is εκκλησια (ekklesia, or ecclesia). The word is a compound word meaning “called-out” (ek = “out”; kaleō = “called”). The ecclesia is God's “called-out” ones. The ecclesia is not a building or denomination; not a meeting, or doctrinal creed; it is not somewhere we go, or something we do, it is who we as believers are. For more information see:

- *The Outsiders*, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. (see order form);
- *The “Ecclesias” (Churches) of the Scriptures*, Adlai Loudy (see order form).

(*Muratorian Canon*, written about 180 A.D.).⁽²³¹⁾

Victorinus, who wrote about 290 A.D. also observed the fact that Paul wrote specifically to seven churches, and thereby to the “one general church.”⁽²³¹⁾

Cyprian of Carthage (roughly 250 A.D.) also recognized the symbolism in Paul's writing only to Seven Churches ... as did Jerome (roughly 400 A.D.) and Isidore of Seville (roughly 600 A.D.).⁽²³¹⁾

REASONS WHY THE ORIGINAL ORDER MAKES SENSE

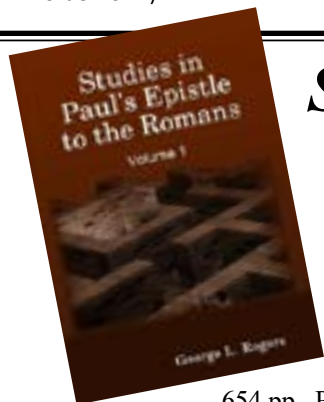
Are we to imagine that the canonizers of the Bible would disallow the principle of “elder supremacy” when positioning the books of the Bible? Even Paul recognized that “they” were ministers before him (Galatians 1:17) and that the gospel went first to the Jews and only thereafter to the Gentiles.⁽²⁰⁾

Keeping in mind the principle of superior rank, first place in order went to James ... the leader of the Jerusalem church ... followed by Peter, and then John. This is the order Paul observed:

James and Cephas and John, who are supposed to be pillars (Galatians 2:9).

We also note that Peter's name always preceded John's in passages involving both.⁽²⁰⁾

It also makes sense for the order to move from general to specific. The seven “General Epistles” dealt with large groups of people (mostly Jewish) who were still adhering, in many cases, to the national concept of Judaism. This is why these epistles were



Studies in Paul's Epistle to the Romans

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by — George L. Rogers (1869-1947)

“This book is an exhaustive study of the first eight chapters of Romans, including pertinent questions at the end of each chapter, which serve to help the student evaluate his reading.” – Ernest Knoch

654 pp., PB

See order form.

placed before those of Paul. They present teachings for an “infant” stage to the understanding of Christian doctrines and church discipline.⁽²¹⁹⁾

“CANONIZATION”

“Canonization” is the determination as to which writings were inspired by God and intended to be set apart as divine Scripture. Many believe these decisions were made by a church council several centuries after the apostles had died. But the Bible as well as early church history recognize that “canonization” was actually completed by certain prophets and apostles, especially Ezra (Old Testament) and John (New Testament).

KING HEZEKIAH’S “CANONIZATION”

When Hezekiah ruled, Judah was in danger of being destroyed. The emergency prompted Hezekiah and Isaiah to place their seal of authority upon certain sacred books found in Israel. They sought to preserve all Temple books because it appeared that the Temple services and all physical components of Judah’s religion might soon be extinguished.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Proverbs 25:1 reveals some of the canonization activities of Hezekiah and his helpers. Here a new section of the Book of Proverbs begins with these words: “These are also the proverbs of Solomon, which the

men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.” So Proverbs 25 to 29 were added to the Temple collection which had already been set in order by Solomon.⁽⁸⁷⁾

Hezekiah brought up-to-date the canonical literature for use in the restored Temple services. One of the most striking evidences of Hezekiah’s canonization is his “sign-manual” ... a series of three Hebrew letters (HZK) that occur at the end of every Old Testament book with the exception of the five books of the “Megilloth” (Festival Scrolls) ... Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. These five books were positioned in a special section in the Temple liturgy by Ezra.⁽⁸⁸⁾

The “sign-manual” has not been translated in any of the English versions, but was Hezekiah’s means of “confirming” or “binding” the various Old Testament books.⁽⁸⁸⁾

When later writers (such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel) had their prophecies placed among the sacred writings of the Old Testament, the same sign-manual was affixed to the end of these books. And Ezra, at the final canonization, carefully placed the sign-manual on all books which he and the Great Assembly recognized, omitting it only from the five Festival Scrolls which were being regularly read by the priests in the Temple.⁽⁹⁰⁾

(to be continued)



72 pp, BK.
See order form.

The Myth of Easter

“The Christian Mythology” Series

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

There are many myths in Christendom. They have managed to master their own form of mythology. Easter is an example of such a religious fable.

If Easter is the celebration of the historical fact of our Lord Jesus Christ’s resurrection, then why does its date change every year? Historical dates do not fluctuate; but Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25. Have you ever wondered why?

It is one of the glaring clues that something is seriously wrong with Christendom. The Western Christian religion can’t seem to get anything right when it comes to even the simplest of Scriptural truths.

Have you ever really considered if there is any scriptural basis of Good Friday or Easter Sunrise Services that are so commonly observed by the religious community? Additionally, have you ever considered what Easter Rabbits and Easter Eggs have to do with the resurrection of Christ or teachings of God’s Word?

Although millions of people are of the opinion that Easter and all of its customs are Christian and originated as a result of Christ’s resurrection, it is a historical fact that the observance of Easter long antedates Christianity by centuries.



Editor's Desk

Finances

Seldom, if ever, have we mentioned our finances in the *Bible Student's Notebook*. Recently while reading a 1921 *Unsearchable Riches* magazine I personally appreciated A.E. Knoch's willingness to express the way in which he conducted his ministry financially. It was a refreshing encouragement, reflecting the same manner that we carry out our work and ministry here:

Our custom is to use all available funds in the work, so that the treasury is practically empty at all times. In fact, if all obligations were met, it would be a minus quantity. Like the widow's barrel of meal and the cruise of oil, we depend on the Lord to provide our every need. There is always more to be done than the funds allow. ...

In order to carry on this work we refuse steady work at good wages for lack of strength to do both. We work for wages at intervals to keep from using funds

due us, but which are needed to keep the work under way. ... It is the privilege of the man of God to provide for his needs with his own hands.

How touched I was to read these words, as they encapsulate our own approach. I want to give thanks to our readers who stand with us in their financial support. God is our supply; you are His channel. The fruit that is being reaped from this work "*abounds to your¹ account*" (Philippians 4:17).

An ever grateful servant,

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
The Pilkington Abbey
Windber, PA

TOPICS:

Major: Editor's Desk; Giving

1. [Editor:] For more information about financial fellowship, see:

- *Fellowship in the Gospel*, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., [Bible Student's Notebook #240](#);
- *Depositing Wealth in the Divine Treasury*, A.E. Knoch, [Bible Student's Notebook #240](#).

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- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "*preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past*" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:

- total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

Local: (814) 701-0063

bsn@studyshef.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor
André Sneidar – Managing Editor

Managers and Assistants

Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Keith Martin, Nathan H. Pilkington, Janet L. Maher, Stephen Hill, Aaron Locker, Mark Peters, Cindy Pilkington, Nadine Sneidar

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