

# Can You Trust the New Testament Scriptures as YHVH's Divine Word?

*Ya'acov Natan Lawrence*

*Hoshana Rabbah Messianic Discipleship Resources*

## **The Uniqueness of the Bible**

**T**HE BIBLE. There has never been any book like it. Its authors included kings and peasants and it was written over a span of 1500 years and 40 generations by 40 authors writing from palaces to jail cells. It was first translated into a foreign language circa 250 B.C. and has since, in whole or in part, been translated into several thousand languages or dialects. It has survived time. Though printed on perishable materials and recopied countless times over the past 2000 years by hand and by press, the main style and message of this book has never changed. The Bible has withstood vicious attacks by its enemies as no other book. Since Roman times, governmental and religious authorities have tried to ban it, burn it and outlaw it, but to no avail. It is still the most widely published and read book of all time (McDowell, pp. 13-24). Why?

Many have willingly given their lives to translate it, smuggle it, distribute it, preach its message or even simply possess a copy of it. Why? More than two billion people on earth today, about one-third of earth's population claim to be followers of the Bible. Why? Nearly 50,000 people are currently martyred each year for refusing to budge from their faith in the Bible's message. Why?

The answer is simple. Regardless of the language into which the Bible has been translated, regardless of the liberal or conservative biases of the translators, one thing is certain: The redemptive and salvation message of the Bible always comes through. It is a life-changing message of hope. Why? Because its pages contain words that have the power to change lives dramatically for good, for eternity. Why? Because these words are not the words of men, but of the Creator of men—of YHVH Elohim, the God of the Bible. As such, they carry the full force, power and anointing of divine origination. If not, how else can one explain the biblical phenomena? There is no human explanation for it other than the divine hand of YHVH Elohim has been on the Bible from its beginning until this very moment!

## **Can We Trust the Bible?**

In spite of the impact the Bible has had on the lives of billions of souls over the past 2000 years, a question remains: Can *you* put your trust in every word contained therein? This is an important question, for if the Bible is correct, then whether you live again or not after your physical death will depend on how you orient your life with respect to the biblical message. So can we trust our lives with the words of Scripture—specifically, the message of Yeshua the Messiah as recorded in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament)? Are the 27 books which comprise the Apostolic Scriptures in our Bible the true and accurate accounts of the words of Yeshua and his directly commissioned apostles?

In this work we shall see that the 27 books of the Apostolic Scriptures would not have been acknowledged as being "Canon" if they had not first been recognized by the apostles of Yeshua and the Body of Believers in the first and second centuries A.D. as having the same authority as the earlier Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). And the latter Christian church would not have accepted these books as canon, and subsequently affirmed their canonicity if they had not felt that these books carried the weight of apostolic authority. Period! Yet despite this profound and simple truth, many are beginning to question the authority of the New Testament Canon of Scripture.

## **A Problem: Some Are Questioning the Bible**

The Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) are under fire. Some Messianic/Hebrew roots teachers are currently questioning if the 27 books of the New Testament are all divinely inspired or not. Some are even taking it upon

themselves to begin tossing out certain books, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews, from the New Testament canon claiming that it was not divinely inspired and was added later to the canon of Scripture by the proto-Catholic Church. Others claim that the early church fathers “messed” with the original writings of the apostles leaving us to doubt whether we can trust the Apostolic Scriptures or not. What is the truth of the matter?

When was the New Testament canonized and by whom? Did YHVH Elohim leave his priceless Word hanging in the lurch for hundreds of years only to have the Christian church choose what would be Scripture or not?

We will produce substantial scholarly evidence from the Scriptures themselves and from first and second century historical documents that Yeshua commissioned certain apostles to canonize what would later become known as the “New Testament” Scriptures.

The work that follows will strengthen your faith in the inspired Word of Elohim as preserved in the 27 books of the Apostolic Scriptures, in the Gospel message, and in the person, redemptive work and deity of Yeshua. You will also have the tools to defend your faith and to help those who have fallen under the sway of false teachings questioning the divine inspiration of all of the Messianic Scriptures from Matthew to Revelation.

## What Some Messianic Teachers Are Now Saying About the Apostolic Scriptures

One Hebrew roots teacher has posted on his web site the following:

The Brit HaChadashah (the “New Testament”) is not “Scripture,” at least in the form that we have today, because there is no “Old Testament” or “New Testament” evidence for such a concept. Rather, the “New Testament” speaks of or alludes to the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings as Scripture in many places (Luke 4:21, John 10:35, Acts 1:16, Acts 8:35, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 2:8, 2 Peter 1:20). Thus, all “New Testament” doctrines must line up with the written evidence that is found in the Law, the Prophets, or the Writings. If we accept anything else as Scripture, when there is no written evidence to call it Scripture, then we are guilty of violating Scripture according to Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 (13:1 in Hebrew), thus making us liars (Proverbs 30:6). This does not, however, mean that we cannot glean important insights and knowledge from reading it.

Another Messianic teacher has recently written the following in his widely circulated magazine concerning the Apostolic or Messianic Scriptures/Renewed Covenant or New Testament (all names for the same thing) and the Epistle to the Hebrews in particular:

The Bible is organized and printed by the church fathers to support their theology about the Old Testament (everything lumped together as the Old Covenant), and then starting with the Gospels, headed by a page never written by any Apostle, there is a page called ‘The New Testament.’ This definition for our present Bible did not actually happen until the fourth century when Jerome (the Bishop of Rome) [sic] put the Book of Hebrews into his compilation of the New Testament. Prior to that, the Book of Hebrews was disputed as appropriate for the Bible.

So, how did the early Gentile believers get so befuddled and confused about God’s covenants? There are probably a number of reasons relating to past mistakes already mentioned, but I personally believe that the greater number of Churchmen have been misled by something put into the New Testament—the Book of Hebrews.

There are contradictions and mistakes in the Book of Hebrews that have Bible scholars scratching their heads to this day.

Is the Book of Hebrews an example of Scripture written by Holy Men moved by the Holy Spirit, or is it a better example of second or third century Churchmen trying to sound like a first century Apostle with an agenda to get rid of the Jewish writings (the Old Testament). [Note: The author asks a question at the beginning of his sentence, but does not end with the proper punctuation of a question mark. So is he asking a question, or making a statement consistent with his own personal belief? In light of the author’s negativity toward Hebrew’s inclusion in the canon of Scriptures, it would seem that the latter (a statement) would be the likely answer.] By the way, the Book of Hebrews is one of the last books put in the New Testament. It was included in the New Testament by Jerome, the Bishop of Rome, (the Pope) [sic] in the fourth century.

These two writers make some serious allegations, yet they fail to give us one scintilla of documentation for their assertions. Are we to accept what they say just because they have said it? Who are they, or who is anyone, for that matter, that one should accept what another says on the merits of what is said alone? Yet, this is what these authors seem to be expecting of their readers. Are their accusations against YHVH's Word, as preserved in the canon of Scripture, correct, or have they fallen to a spirit of confusion or delusion?

It seems to the reasonable mind that any valid study of the canonization of Scripture should be grounded in historical facts, not in the unsubstantiated opinions of men. Any author who bases his arguments on his own unverified opinion has failed to do his proverbial homework!

In this work, we will attempt to provide you with scholarly proof, historical evidence and biblical references for everything we say. Scripture commands us to prove all things and to hold fast to that which is good (1 Thes. 5:23), to study to show yourself approved unto Elohim by rightly dividing the YHVH's Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), and to be noble as the Bereans by searching the Scriptures daily to determine the truth of what a biblical teacher says (Acts 17:11).

### Certain Key Issues That Must Be Considered Before Commencing This Study

- ☞ There must be bedrock aspects of our faith that remain non-negotiable otherwise one will be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14) and ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). Period! To open the door of doubt in the areas of the deity, incarnation and virgin birth of Yeshua, the basic message of the cross, the means of salvation (by grace through faith in the atoning blood of Yeshua), as well as the divine inspiration and infallibility of YHVH's written Word from Genesis to Revelation, is to begin falling down a slippery slope that can lead nowhere good. If we hit a snag in our understanding in any of these areas, the problem does not lie with the Word of Elohim, but with our understanding.
- ☞ No one can prove definitively how the New Testament canon came to be or when this occurred. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the deaths of the last apostolic writers. Though written historical records exist from that time period, the histories are often vague and sketchy and can easily be interpreted in a variety of ways, even by competent scholars. Although on the surface there seems to be general consensus among Christian scholars as to how the New Testament canon came to be, upon a more careful analysis of the leading Christian scholars on this subject, it becomes evident that there are many, often opposing and varying, opinions and streams of thought on this subject. This all goes to prove that no one can definitively state how the New Testament canon came to be. What we will present here is credible evidence to support the idea that the apostles themselves canonized the New Testament, and that by the time the last apostle was dead (the Apostle John at the end of the first century) and by the beginning of the second century A.D. the 27 books of the New Testament were fixed in place and recognized by many early church fathers as authoritative and inspired. The later church councils simply confirmed what the majority of Christian churches prior to that date had already accepted. We cannot prove our point definitively, for two thousand years of since passed and we have no living eyewitnesses to events occurring then, nor do we have the original (handwritten) documents of the apostles. But neither can it be proven definitively that the proto-Catholic Church was the sole determiner of what would become the New Testament canon. It is our goal to study historical documents from that period, as well as the Scriptural record, and let them speak for themselves.
- ☞ Authority and canon(icity) are not synonymous terms, although some try to make them to be so. In confusing these terms they attempt to make official recognition of the New Testament books by the church also the act of deciding their authoritativeness. The historical record shows that their authoritativeness had already been long determined and recognized by the early second century. In other words, recognized authority proceeds canonization.
- ☞ One thing becomes apparent when studying the writings of the early church fathers (A.D. 70–120). None questioned apostolic authority. They held the writings of the apostles to be on a plane above their own writings, and no other contemporary writings, no matter the author, was on the same par. The Person, work and message of Yeshua had touched, transformed and anointed the apostles in such a fundamentally profound way that it was impossible for others to deny this fact, as was the case with the Jewish rulers of the Temple (Acts 4:13). They marveled at the wisdom, demeanor, anointing and authority of the apostles, for they recognized that they had been with Yeshua. The same was the case with the early church fathers. Therefore, their

writings were revered and venerated from the very beginning. An analysis of the writings of the early church fathers reveals this.

### Derivation of the Word *Canon*

The term *canon* relates to the list of books in the Bible that are considered inspired and of divine origination. There is the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures or Tanakh (Old Testament) and that of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament).

Canon derives from the Latin, which comes from the Greek *kanon*, which in turn was borrowed from the Hebrew *qaneh* meaning *reed* or *cane*. “The word was used of an instrument made of reed or other material, and denoted especially such an instrument used as a rod or ruler, as an aid in making straight lines or accurate measurements. Thus it came to mean a standard of straightness or accuracy” (Filson, p. 15–16). Since a reed was used as a measuring rod, one of the word’s derivative meanings came to be a rule or standard in a metaphorical sense. “It is in this last sense that a Greek Father like Origen used the word *kanon* to denote what we called the rule of faith, the standards by which we are to measure and evaluate everything that may be offered to us as an article of belief” (Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 95). Filson further notes that *canon* “in a figurative sense, [refers] to rules or standards for conduct or for workmanship. Paul, the only New Testament writer to use the word, used it in Gal. 6:16 of the rule or standard of Christian living, and in 2 Cor. 10:13–16 of the ‘limit’ or prescribed ‘field’ of the Christian leader’s work” (Filson, *ibid.*).

“One use of the word *canon* was to describe documents which provided a standard or norm. In this connection we should note the word’s use with the special meaning of a list of items or writings. It is not entirely clear whether the first use of the word *canon* to designate the books of the Bible referred primarily to the list of them or to the rule or standard of faith and life which they contained. It seems that neither idea could ever have been completely lacking—each was at least implied from the first—but conviction that these books were basic and authoritative appears primary” (Ibid.).

### Distinction Between Authority and Canonicity

There is much confusion in terms when it comes to discussing the idea of the canon of Scripture. As we shall see below, some view *canon* and *authority* as synonymous and codependent terms. Is it correct to assume this? It is probably safe to say that most Believers think that until the Christian church placed its official stamp of approval upon the writings of the apostles no one could be certain whether they were authoritative or not. Is it possible that the Apostolic Scriptures were viewed as authoritative by the majority of Believers, and that there was an unofficial, yet generally accepted list of apostolically-authored books long before there was an official Christian “Sanhedrin” to place its stamp of approval on that list? We will discuss these issues below.

Modern Christian apologist, Josh McDowell in his classic book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, addresses the issue of apostolic authority this way: Quoting Stonehouse, he says,

“N. B. Stonehouse writes that the apostolic authority ‘which speaks forth in the New Testament is never detached from the authority of the Lord. In the Epistles, there is consistent recognition that in the church there is only one absolute authority, the authority of the Lord himself. Wherever the apostles speak with authority, they do so as exercising the Lord’s authority. Thus, for example, where Paul defends his authority as an apostle, he bases his claim solely and directly upon his commission by the Lord (Gal. 1 and 2); where he assumes the right to regulate the life of the church, he claims for his word the Lord’s authority, even when no direct word of the Lord has been handed down’ (1 Cor. 14:37; cf. 1 Cor. 7:10). (McDowell, p. 36).

“The only one who speaks in the New Testament with an authority that is underived and self-authenticating is the Lord” (Ibid.).

Next Prof. F. F. Bruce relates for us the concept of “authority” with that of “canonicity”:

“There is a distinction between the canonicity of a book of the Bible and its authority. Its canonicity is dependent upon its authority. For when we ascribe canonicity to a book we simply mean that it belongs to the canon or list. But why does it belong? Because it was recognized as possessing special authority. People frequently speak and write as if the authority with which the books



of the Bible are invested in the minds of Christians is the result of their having been included in the sacred list. But the historical fact is the other way about; they were and are included in the list because they were acknowledged as authoritative” (Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 95–96).

## First Century Cultural and Religious Context

In discussing the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) few Christian scholars take into consideration the cultural and religious context of the first century Jewish Believers. What was their view of “Holy Writ” and canonization? Too often the discussion of this subject focuses solely on the writings of the Gentile church fathers and ignores the antecedents: those who wrote the Scripture; what did they say, and what did they think about canonization?

Nineteenth century theologian and professor Louis Gaussen describes the cultural context of the Messianic Jews of the early first century. Understanding this is essential if one is to comprehend the spiritual ground out of which the Apostolic Writings emerged. He states:

“Before even consulting the ecclesiastical historians on this subject, we may already comprehend from the nature of things, that the idea of a divine collection of the writings of the New Testament, must have early sprung up in all the communities of those who believed in [the Messiah]. Is it not evident that it must have originated as soon as these churches saw the men, ‘apostles and prophets,’ who announced to them the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, beginning to write to them apostolical letters, or transmit to them the history of the Saviour’s life and teachings?

“In fact, they were entirely prepared for it by having in their hands the Old Testament. This collection, already formed for so many ages, and of the divinity of which there was never but one opinion among the Jews ... this collection, venerated by the people of God in every age, venerated by the Apostles, who called it the oracles of God; venerated by the Son of God himself, who called it the Law, your Law, the Scripture, the Scriptures; venerated by the Christian churches, who read it in all their assemblies; this collection, we say, must necessarily have led all their company to the notion of an analogous collection of sacred books of the New Testament.

“Was not the idea of a canon of the Scriptures the characteristic trait of the people of God for fifteen hundred years? Had it not always appeared to them from the beginning of their national existence, the very reason of their existence and the indispensable means of its continuance? Yet, at the same time, this notion born in the desert with the Israelitish church, and always maintained by that church, had never been that of a code completed by one hand, or in one generation, or received in its fullness once for all. On the contrary, it was that of a collection commencing with the five books of Moses, and destined to grow from age to age; continued by the addition of new books, during eleven centuries, as God raised up new prophets, and not ceasing to accumulate its treasures to the days of Malachi, when the spirit of prophecy became silent for four centuries. It was then very natural that the church, at the coming of the Messiah, should look for new additions, since the ancient spirit of prophecy had just been restored to her, and since new men of God, ‘apostles and prophets,’ more miraculously endowed than the ancients, had just been raised up.

“So then if, on the one hand, the notion of a canon of the scriptures was, as it were, incarnated in the people of God,—if it was with them inseparable from the notion of the church; on the other hand, the thought of incorporating the not less sacred books of the New Testament with those of the Old, as they were written successively, was with them equally inseparable from their notion of the scriptures.

“The history of primitive Christianity strongly confirms this view of the notion of the sacred canon then prevalent in the church. So far from being introduced at a later period, as has been asserted by some, we find it constantly, from the beginning, both in the church and in its enemies” (Gaussen, pp. 18–21).

To prove this point, Gaussen draws our attention to the apostle Peter's remark in 2 Peter 3:16 where he refers to all the "epistles" of Paul as on a par with the "other Scripture"—a reference either to the Hebrew Scriptures, or to the Scriptures of the other apostolic writers.

According to Gaussen, from the beginning, the writings of the apostles were successively gathered into one collection, which was respected by the primitive Christians equally with the Old Testament, which they read in their religious meetings. The first written record of this that this author could find is in the writings of Polycarp, the disciple of John the Apostle. In his *Epistle of Polycarp*, chapter 12 we read,

For I trust that ye are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures, and that nothing is hid from you; but to me this privilege is not yet granted. It is declared then in these Scriptures, "Be ye angry, and sin not," [a quote from Ps. 4:5] and "Let not the sun go down upon our wrath" [quoted from Eph. 4:26] (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol 1, p. 35).

In this epistle, written about 50 years after the death of John, we see Polycarp juxtaposing one of Paul's epistles with a book from the Hebrew Scriptures and referring to both as the "Sacred Scriptures." In Polycarp's short epistle, he also quotes from Philippians, Acts, 1 Peter, Matthew, Luke, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, and 1 John.

In the second century following Peter's example, the early church fathers referred to the Apostolic Writings using the following terms:

- *The Scriptures*; or after the example Fathers, *the Book* (Papias, chap. 1)
- *The New Testament* (Origen [185-254 A.D.], as quoted by Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.* 6.25)
- *The Divine Instrument* (Tertullian [150-220 A.D.] *adv. Marcion*, 5.13)
- *The Sacred Digest* (Ibid., 4:13)
- *The Divine Oracles*; or again, *the Evangelist and the Apostles* (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7 pp. 706, 757; Ignatius, *Epis. to the Philad.* chap. 5; *Epis. to Dignet.* chap. 11; Justin Martyr, *Great Apol.* chap. 67; Tertullian, *de Graec. Script.* chap. 36; *Apol.* chap. 39; Hippolytus the Martyr, *on Antichrist*, chap. 58); after the example of [Messiah], who called the Old Testament '*the Law and the Prophets*'
- They then early adopted the custom of calling it *the Canon*, or *the Rule*, and whatever constituted a portion of this infallible code, *Canonical Books*" (all quotes above are from Gaussen, p. 21).

Gaussen then lists later church fathers and the terms they used in referring to the Apostolic Scriptures.

- Irenaeus (b. A.D. 120-140, d. A.D. 202) speaking of the Scriptures as divine calls them *the Gospels of the Apostles, the Scriptures, or the Gospel of truth* (*Against Heresies*, 3.11; 4.35).
- Tertullian (same century) refers to the Apostolic Scriptures as the *Complete Instrument* (*De Praescript. Haeretic*, chaps. 35-38).
- Clement of Alexandria (in the same century) refers to the Apostolic Scriptures as the *true evangelical canon* (Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 6:25).
- Athanasius in his Festal Epistle (A.D. 367) speaks of three kinds of books: canonical (which are those of our current Bibles); the ecclesiastical, which were non-canonical, but were permitted to be read in Christian meetings; and the apocryphal.
- In the Council of Laodicea in A.D. 364 it was decreed that no other book than canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments should be read in the churches, far from originating the distinction between canonical and uncanonical books, this decree was but a sanctioning of the distinction long before adopted by the universal church (all quotes above are from Gaussen, p. 22).

## The Framing of the Argument:

### Various Viewpoints on the Canonization of the New Testament and Its Timing

We present the testimonies of the following "expert witnesses" to show the reader that there is not a unanimous consensus among modern leading scholars on the issue of the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures. Ostensibly, they all have access to the same historical data, yet there exist differentials among them as to how to interpret

that data. This, hence, gives rise to various speculation, opinion and theories regarding the canonization. Again, there is not one viewpoint on this subject, but credible data to support several viewpoints—even opposing ones. Where does this leave the reader? It is the belief, and therefore the bias, of this author that the apostolic writers themselves, under divine mandate, canonized their own writings. We provide evidence for this view later. But, even if the reader does not end up accepting our position on this matter, we hope to provide enough evidence, at least, to show that the Apostolic Scriptures were accepted as authoritative by the beginning of the second century and were de facto canonized by the accepted practices and mutual consent of early church leaders. When we say “early” we are speaking of the late first century to the mid-second century A.D. This modified view of the canonization counterbalances the accepted and prevalent notion that there existed no generally accepted canon until the early Catholic Church declared so in the middle-to-end of the fourth century—nearly three hundred years after the death of the last apostle.

## **First Viewpoint: The Canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures: The Traditional (Party Line) View Versus ... (?)**

If one were to look in most Bible dictionaries under the heading “Canonization of the Bible,” or something similar, one would be led to believe that it is the general consensus among *all* Christian scholars that the New Testament was not canonized until the fourth century by, in effect, the Catholic Church, and that until this late date—A.D. 367 or 397 (depending on which scholar you believe)—the New Testament canon was in a great state of flux until then due to the debate over which books should be included in the canon and which should not. Is this what you have been led to believe? This majority viewpoint can be summarized as follows:

Traditional studies on the history of the canon concentrated on indirect evidence. The authoritative collections and interpretations of these sources go back to the nineteenth century. They were closely associated with the work of four scholars in particular: B. F. Westcott for English-speaking readers, A. Loisy for the French and Theodor Zahn and Adolf von Harnack for Germans. Despite considerable differences as far as details are concerned, these scholars agreed on a general outline of historical events and strongly influenced the twentieth-century consensus regarding the provenance of the [New Testament canon].

The shared assumption was that the New Testament’s writings had been circulating separately for a considerable period before a lengthy and complicated collection process began. The process produced differing results in the various geographical regions. This eventually forced the emerging Catholic Church to issue authoritative lists of those writings that should be part of the Christian Bible and those that must be excluded. (Trobisch, p. 4)

Think of this: If Professor Trobisch’s analysis is correct, then four men have shaped the opinion of most Christians and scholars in regard to the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures. And if one believes that theirs is the only viewpoint extant, and is therefore the undisputed truth, then, frankly, one has been sold and has bought a bill of goods!

Upon careful analysis of the world’s leading New Testament scholars over the past 140 years we find that a very different picture emerges. There is not the unanimous opinion among all of them pertaining to the emergence of a late canon, as many have been led to believe. Many see that the New Testament canon was, to one degree or another, in place by the end of or the beginning of the second century—within 20 to 30 short years after the death of the last apostle. Some see it as having even been fixed by the death of John at the end of the first century. We will explore these issues below.

At stake is the faith of many who are beginning to accept the notion that some if not much of the New Testament is of Christian (or Catholic) invention, or at the very least, whatever may have been original to the apostolic writers has been so redacted or amended by later church leaders that the New Testament is unreliable as a faith-based document. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If one of the books of the New Testament can be proven to be unreliable, then which ones are next? Eventually this can lead to one’s questioning the deity of Yeshua, the message of redemption and so on. These are serious issues not to be taken lightly. One’s spiritual destiny

could literally depend on what side of the argument one comes down on with regard to these issues.

## Second Viewpoint

### Second Century Canonization?

#### Yes, But Not Really ... The Church Did It in the Fourth Century

There are Christian scholars while holding to the “party line” viewpoint regarding the canonization of the New Testament, give a quick nod to the idea that the canon was in place by the second century. Prof. Trobisch gives us an example of this very thing: “According to Zahn, an anonymous anti-Montanist writer at the end of the second century asserted that any additions or deletions to the Holy Scripture were intolerable. Zahn turns to Tertullian, a Montanist, who only a few years later repeated exactly the same sentence about such additions and deletions during a discussion with a theological opponent. For Zahn there is little doubt that both authors refer to the final verses of Revelation. Zahn then ironically remarks that one could conclude that these men had perused an exemplar [an original copy], that is, that looked very much like modern printed editions. As far as Zahn is concerned, such a conclusion would be a foolish error. His verdict strongly influenced most twentieth-century studies on the New Testament canon” (Trobisch, p. 35).

## Third Viewpoint:

### By the Early Second Century a Corpus of Authoritative Apostolic Scriptures Existed, But It Was Not Really an Official Canon

Conservative Christian scholars admit that there was a body of Apostolic Scriptures extant by the end of the first century that was being used and regarded as authoritative by the earliest church fathers.

In the period of A.D. 100–170 “[W]e ... find in the writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers (Clement of Rome, the Epistle of Barnabas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Hermas, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) ... first, a witness to the fact that the books destined to become the New Testament canon are there, at work in the church from the first. The books are quoted and alluded to, more often without mention of author or title than by way of formal quotation. Secondly, we find a witness to the fact that the thought and life of the church were being shaped by the content of the New Testament writings from the first, and moreover by the contents of all types of New Testament writings” (Franzmann, p. 287–288).

Some of the same historical evidence Gaussen provides above in attempts to prove a first century canonization, Ferguson also quotes, but is reluctant to admit that a canon was in place by then. “The first Christian writers to comment on which books were regarded as authoritative described them as having been ‘handed down’ or ‘received.’ This standard language for tradition was used about the canonical books. Irenaeus spoke of ‘The gospels handed down to us from the apostles’ (*Haer.* 3.11.9), and, ‘The gospel handed down to us by the will of God in scriptures’ (*Ibid.*, 3.1.1). Clement of Alexandria specified ‘The four gospels that have been handed down to us’ (*Strom.* 3.13.93) ... The early ecclesiastical writers did not regard themselves as deciding which books to accept or reject. Rather, they saw themselves as acknowledging which books had been handed down.” (A footnote states, “This was still the usage of Athanasius [*Ep. fest.* 39], ‘handed down to our ancestors.’”) (*The Canon Debate*, “Factors Leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon,” by Everett Ferguson, p. 295)

## Fourth Viewpoint:

### Acceptance of the Quasi-Canonization of the New Testament

#### By the End of the 1st Century

Some conservative New Testament scholars feel that there is undeniable historical evidence to support the idea that there was at least a corpus of Apostolic Scriptures which were not only considered authoritative, but had achieved quasi-canonical status in the eyes of early Believers. Representing this viewpoint Prof. Barton states,

“The classic statement of this position is Theodor Zahn’s massive *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* [2 vols, Leipzig 1888–1892]. Zahn made an exhaustive examination of the New Testament citations in the Fathers, and concluded that there was already a Christian canon by the end of



the first century. This does not mean that the Church entered the second century with every one of the present twenty-seven books already canonized; citations of the Pastorals, for example, or of the minor catholic epistles, do not become plentiful until somewhat later. But there as already, according to Zahn, a collection that we may without anachronism call the 'New Testament,' even though he knew that this term did not itself become current until later. The essential point in Zahn's reconstruction is that the New Testament was a spontaneous creation of the first generations of Christians, not something forced upon the Church by internal or external pressures. As such, it belongs to the earliest period of the Church, as citations and allusions from the Apostolic Fathers onward made evident. This has already been argued in an earlier British contribution to the history of the canon, Westcott's *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament* [London, 1885]. 'According to Westcott,' as Metzger [*The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, Oxford 1987] observes, 'the formation of the canon was among the first instinctive acts of the Christian society, resting upon the general confession the churches and not upon independent opinions of its members. The canon was not the result of a series of contests; rather, canonical books were separated from others by the intuitive insight of the church'" (Barton, pp. 2-3).

## **Fifth Viewpoint: The New Testament Was Canonized In the First Century by the Apostles or Others Helping Them**

### **First Century Canonization Affirmed by the Aramaic *Peshitta*— The Scriptures of the Church of the East, Which It Claims Date from the First Century**

Prof. Louis Gausson identifies the Syriac New Testament, called the *Peshito* (or *Peshitta*). According to Gausson, the *Peshitta* version of the New Testament is the most ancient, the most celebrated, and the most respected of all. Interestingly, we can find little if any mention of the *Peshitta* in any of our research we have done on the canonization of the New Testament based on the works of modern Christian theologians. Gausson says that the *Peshitta* "was not known in Europe until the mission of Moses Mardin, deputed in 1552 by the patriarch of the Maronites to Pope Julius 3. Michaelis, who, in accordance with many of the most eminent philologists, attributes it to the first or second century, declares it to be the best version known to him, whether in regard to its freedom, elegance, or fidelity as a translation" (Gausson, pp. 31-32).

"... [W]e find toward the first half of the second century, in the history of Eusebius, an interesting trace of the usage already established in those countries of reading and quoting the Syriac Scriptures of the New Testament. In speaking of the celebrated Hegeppus, who was the earliest ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, to show that his author was unquestionably a Jewish Christian, remarks that he takes his quotations either from the Hebrew or the Syriac version ... These facts then give us the evidence of the high antiquity of the *Peshito* version" (Ibid., p. 33).

"But more than this, we have additional testimony to its remote origin. Universal opinion has always assigned it that; and even to our day the Syrian Christians regard the *Peshito* as the original of the New Testament. They believe this, because their language was that of the apostles and primitive Christians of Jerusalem, whose churches, as soon as they were formed, divided themselves into Hellenists and Hebrews, or Aramaeans (Acts 6:1); that, also, of the greater part of the churches founded among the Oriental Jews, especially in Babylon and Orsoene, where the Syriac Old Testament had existed for ages. We know that, according to the testimony of all the Fathers, it was in Aramean that Matthew first wrote his Gospel; but it is more probable that he issued an edition of his book in Greek, and another in Aramaen at the same time" (Ibid., p. 33).

"Now this ancient version already contained our canon complete, with the single exception of Revelation and the four shorter and later Epistles of Jude, Peter, and John. Such then, at the beginning of the second century, or rather at the end of the first, was the canon of the Syriac churches" (Ibid., p. 34).

Concerning the Aramaic *Peshitta*, Gausson states, "The Scriptures of the New Testament must, therefore, have been translated very early in the midst of them in the very language spoken by the primitive churches and by [Yeshua the Messiah] (*Hist. Eccl.* book 4, chap. 22). Thus we find toward the first half of the second century, in the

history of Eusebius, an interesting trace of the usage already established in those countries, of reading and quoting the Syriac Scriptures of the New Testament” (Ibid., p. 33).

George Lamsa, the translator of the Aramaic Bible into English from Aramaic and Church of the East scholar, states that the Christian Church of the East still uses the Aramaic Bible and attests to the originality of the *Peshitta* when one of its notable leaders stated in 1957 in the preface to George Lamsa’s Aramaic Bible, “... [T]he Church of the East received the scriptures from the hands of the blessed Apostles themselves in the Aramaic original, the language spoken by our Lord [Yeshua] himself, and that the *Peshitta* is the text of the Church of the East which has come down from the Biblical times without any change or revision.”

“The Scriptures in the Church of the East, from the inception of Christianity to the present day, are in Aramaic and have never been tampered with or revised, as attested by the present Patriarch of the Church of the East” (Introduction to Lamsa’s Bible, p. v).

Lamsa states that the original *Peshitta* New Testament—which those of the Church of the East maintain is from the first century—contains all the books of the Greek New Testament canon except 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. Lamsa adds, “[T]hese books are included in later Aramaic texts. The *Peshitta* canon was set before the discovery of these books” (Introduction to Lamsa’s Bible, p. viii).

## Evidence Within the Apostolic Writings Themselves About the Canonization of the New Testament

Dr. Henry Halley, author of the ever popular *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, states in his book, “There are hints in the New Testament itself that, while the Apostles were yet living, and under their own supervision, collections of their Writings began to be made for the churches, and placed with the Old Testament as the Word of God.” He then notes that Paul claimed for his teachings the inspiration of Elohim (1 Cor. 2:7–13; 14:37; 1 Thes. 2:13). So did John for the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:2). Paul intended that his Epistles should be read in the churches (Col. 4:16; 1 Thes. 5:27; 2 Thes. 2:15). Peter wrote that “These Things” might remain in the churches “after his departure” (2 Pet. 1:15; 3:1–2). Paul quoted as “Scripture” (1 Tim. 5:18), “The laborer is worthy of his hire.” This sentence is found nowhere in the Bible except Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7, which is evidence that Matthew or Luke was then in existence, and regarded as “Scripture.” Finally, Peter classes Paul’s epistles with the “Other Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15–16) (Halley, pp. 741–742).

But is there more conclusive evidence suggesting that the apostles themselves canonized once and for all for posterity the entire New Testament? Let us now explore this possibility by examining the *internal evidence* found within the New Testament itself that would suggest this.

According to Dr. Ernest Martin, the occurrence of apostasy in the first century as recorded in the Apostolic Scriptures gave rise in the minds of the Apostles for a need to preserve the canon of truth to stem the tide of heretical teaching (1 Tim. 4:1–2; 2 Tim. 4:3–4) (Martin, p. 282ff). Professor Trobisch, on the other hand, sees the motivation for the apostles’ publication of what he calls “The Canonical Edition of the New Testament” was to minimize the conflict between Peter along with the Jerusalem authorities and Paul so vividly described in the Letter to the Galatians (Trobisch, p. 80). Perhaps both are correct.

Both Martin and Trobisch provide ample scriptural evidence to support each one’s view, as we shall see. No doubt, if these scholars’ theses are correct, there was impetus from several directions that converged to necessitate the apostles’ canonizing their writings. YHVH often works that way in the lives of his servants to accomplish his sovereign will.

“When the first century Christians finally came to the realization that [Messiah] was not returning to earth in their generation, they began to write accounts of [Messiah’s] life and documents about his teachings for posterity, and they were doing it in the manner they thought best. Luke referred to this and said that ‘many’ were composing such Gospels (Luke 1:1). While this might appear a good thing at first, it must be remembered that these written Gospels were being produced within an environment of religious and political insurrection. How could one be certain the various accounts were presenting an accurate narration?” (Martin, pp. 284–285).

## Peter Takes Charge in Initiating the Work of Preserving the Canon

The apostles rose to the challenge. After his resurrection, Yeshua had instructed Peter to feed his sheep. He spent his life fulfilling his Master’s command. Near the end of Peter’s life (in the mid sixties of the first century) Peter

was concerned with preserving the true and precious Gospel message for posterity. The principal subject of Peter's Second Epistle was "the precious and exceeding great promises" of Messiah (2 Pet. 1:12) (Martin, p. 285). Second Peter 1:12-21 records Peter's thoughts on this subject. In this passage, Martin calls our attention to several key phrases that express Peter's intentions in this regard. Please note them.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent **to remind you of these things** [the Gospel message], though ye know them, and be firmly fixed in the present truth. 13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by **putting you in remembrance**; 14 knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Master Yeshua Messiah hath showed me. 15 Moreover I will endeavor **that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance**. [or, But I will give diligence that at each time you may be able after my death to recall these things to remembrance.] 16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Master Yeshua Messiah, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from Elohim the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount [the Mount of Transfiguration]. 19 **We have also a more sure word of prophecy** [as opposed to those who propagate fables]; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed [to what we are saying, as opposed to those who propagate heretical fables] as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but set-apart men of Elohim spoke as they were moved by the Set-apart Spirit. (emphasis added)

What Peter is saying here is that Believers would always have the truth with them. According to Martin, the only way this could rationally be accomplished is for Peter to leave some authorized written record. He alludes to this when he says, "But I will give diligence that at each time you may be able after my death to recall these things to remembrance ... The phrase "at each time" means that the reader could return again and again to consult the document he was leaving them, even after his death, in order to be assured of what those great and precious promises of [Messiah] really were. Clearly, he is speaking of a written document." Martin then quotes the *Expositors Greek Testament* that says that Peter is about to leave "some systematic body of instruction" (vol. 5, p. 129) (Martin, p. 286).

Trobisch confirms Martin's assertion about Peter leaving a literary legacy after his death. In 2 Peter 1:15, Peter states that "he wants to pass his message along to future generations. Aware of his impending death, he writes, 'And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time recall these things'" (2 Pet. 1:15) (Trobisch, p. 87). Both Martin (above) and Trobisch agree that this statement is a reference to the formation of the New Testament in Peter's day. Trobisch continues, "The reader may safely assume that Peter is talking about a literary legacy, since the expression 'that you should remember' is repeated later as an explicit reference to Peter's writings: 'In both letters ... I am reminding you, that you should remember' (2 Pet. 3:1b-2a). Since the Canonical Edition [i.e., the first century New Testament canon compiled and published by the Apostles and their helpers] displays a special interest in the writings of the apostle Peter, readers may further assume that the writing referred to is part of the Canonical Edition, though obviously not published under Peter's name. Once these conclusions are reached, it is not difficult to identify the literary legacy of Peter as the Gospel according to Mark. Among the New Testament authors, Mark is the only disciple of an apostle linked to Peter in the text (Acts 12:12 and 1 Pet. 5:13). Readers may feel that these conclusions are confirmed by two corroborating observations. The expression 'I will make every effort' (2 Pet. 1:15) supports the notion that Peter did not write down his recollections himself but commissioned this work to someone else" (Ibid.). As Trobisch then notes, the historical record indeed states that Mark, who was Peter's amanuensis (scribal secretary), indeed authored the Gospel of Mark at Peter's behest (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3.39.14-15). "Concerning the contents of this legacy, in the following sentence Peter insists that he and others 'did not follow cleverly devised myths ... but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty' (2 Pet. 1:16). This describes the claim of the canonical Gospel collection very precisely: it intends to narrate the ministry of [Yeshua] based on the reliable testimony of eyewitnesses" (Ibid., pp. 87-88). In 2 Peter 1:17-18, Peter recounts the event at the Mount of the Transfiguration. Trobisch says, "This reference to the account of the Transfiguration prepares the readers for another, very remarkable cross-reference to the first part of the Canonical Edition, the Old Testament" (Ibid., p. 88).

## Yeshua Commissions Peter, James and John to Canonize the Apostolic Scriptures

Martin goes beyond Trobisch to point out that Peter was not the only one involved in establishing a permanent written record of the Gospel message (Martin, p. 287). Note the references to “we” in this passage of Second Peter (see verses 16 and 18). Especially note the “we” references in verse 18:

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount [i.e., the Mount of Transfiguration]. (emphasis added)

Who was with Peter on that mount? The brothers, James and John. By the time Peter wrote his second epistle James was dead. That left John as the only apostle beside Peter who had been there to hear the voice of Elohim himself. Martin maintains that on the mount, the apostles Peter and John (along with James) had been given the word of prophecy in a “more confirmed” way. “While many persons might have taken it in hand to write several accounts of [Messiah’s] life and teachings, Peter was making it clear to his readers that only he and John had the proper authority to do so in an inspired way. This is why he reminded his readers that ‘we [Peter and John] have the prophetic word more confirmed’—more than any others who might write Gospels in the future or who had written them in the past. Indeed, Peter said that they were the ones who had been graced with the power of the Holy Spirit to do such things: ‘no prophecy was ever borne by man’s will, but men spoke from God, being borne on the Holy Spirit.’ Peter did not believe that this kind of prophetic responsibility originated within the mind of man, not even within Peter himself. ‘Knowing this first that no prophecy of Scripture is of its own evolvment [or, the Greek word actually means, *private origination*]’ (Martin, p. 288).

But there is more to draw out of this key passage in Second Peter. Martin next calls our attention to the phrase, “prophecy of Scripture.” He points out, “Peter had just said that both John and he were commissioned with a more confirmed ‘word of prophecy.’ He then interpreted what this signifies by equating it with the ‘prophecy of Scripture’ which was not of man’s origination. In a word, Peter is saying that the documents that he and John were leaving to the Christian community were to be considered like any ‘prophecy of Scripture.’ The use of the word *Scripture* brings the matter of inspired writings into the picture. In simple language, Peter was saying that the two remaining apostles to the Transfiguration were collecting a set of official works which would have their apostolic approbation and that these documents were to be considered by Christians as ‘more confirmed’ than any others in circulation. And besides that, these documents were to remain in the presence of Christians to be consulted ‘at each time’ the Christian community needed the occasion in order to learn the truth of ‘the great and precious promises’ of [Messiah]. These official writings (document) were to last until the second advent of [Messiah] and to be esteemed as being on an equal basis with the Old Testament Scriptures” (Martin, pp. 288–289).

Martin then calls our attention to a passage in 2 Peter 3:1–2,

1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.

Martin maintains that for the Believers to be reminded of all the teachings of the apostles Yeshua would require them to have some kind of written documents of an official nature which could be consulted whenever one needed to study the essential truths of Messiah. Furthermore, these records—“the commandments of the apostles”—would be on a par with the prophetic writings of the Hebrew Scriptures (ibid.).

Trobisch comments on Peter’s statements in First Peter, as well, but interprets it differently than Martin. Trobisch calls our attention to Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 1:19–21,

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy [or, prophecy of Scripture]; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of Elohim spoke as they were moved by the Set-apart Spirit.

According to Trobisch, the meaning of the expression, ‘prophecy of Scripture’ is defined by the immediate context. “The following verse uses the term *prophecy* as a phenomenon of the past (2 Pet. 1:21). It refers to the people and false prophets of that time (2 Pet. 2:1), thus clearly marking the statement as a literary reference to the Old



Testament prophecy” (Trobisch, pp. 88–89). These statements form the transition to the warnings against false teachers, which is the subject of the second chapter of Peter’s epistle. The false teachers of the future are paralleled with those of the past mentioned in the Scriptures: ‘But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you’ (2 Pet. 2:1). “This implies a correspondence between the true prophets of the Old Testament and the true teachers of the present days. The connection between prophets and apostles is made more explicitly later in the letter: “You should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through the apostles (2 Pet. 3:2). Seen from this perspective, the inspired prophets are paralleled to the apostles who become inspired advocates of the tradition of [Yeshua]” (Trobisch, p. 89).

### **Peter’s Reference to Paul in His Second Epistle— Paul As Part of the Canonization Process**

Next we find Peter making a reference to “all of his [Paul’s] letters” and comparing them to “the other scriptures,” which places Paul’s letters on the level of “Holy Writ” or the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (2 Pet. 3:16)

Obviously, Peter views Paul’s letters as a collection of which Peter’s readers would be well aware. In this context we call to your remembrance what New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce stated above. In the early years of the Church Paul’s letters circulated as a collection, and that this collection was the precursor to the New Testament canon. So, if Yeshua commissioned Peter to canonize the Apostolic Scriptures, and Paul was an apostle whose letters were already well-known as a unified collection, and were recognized by the one commissioned to canonize the New Testament as being on a par with the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) what can we deduce from this? Peter was to have a hand in incorporating Paul’s writings into canon. How did this happen?

Paul died in Rome around A.D. 65 to 68, the same time Peter died. According to the witnesses of several early church fathers (*Recognitions of Clement*, 3.63; Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 2.17; Schaff, vol. 1, p. 251 where he lists no less than a dozen church fathers who attest to Peter preaching the Gospel in Rome when Paul was there, and where both subsequently were martyred.)

What would have been Peter’s motivations for going to Rome? According to Martin, “Peter went to Rome specifically to meet with the apostle Paul to decide what letters of Paul would find an inclusion in this initial canonization. And now, Second Peter gives an authorized statement to show how Peter and John (not long before Peter’s death) took a collection of Paul’s letters and then gathered together other written records which the apostles themselves either wrote, had authorized to be written, or they were sanctioning already existing works, and the two apostles placed them into a position of canonicity. If one would simply believe what Peter said about this matter, it would have to be reckoned that Peter’s Second Epistle was written, among other things, for the express purpose of showing that the apostle John and himself were the ones ordained of God to leave Christians with the canon of the New Testament (and that a collection of Paul’s letters were to be a part of it)” (Martin, pp. 292–293).

In light of this biblical evidence supported by historical records we have to recognize the fact, as Martin states, that the apostles themselves canonized the New Testament and “that it is not some later church leaders who, in some unknown and haphazard way, collected the 27 books of the New Testament to be attached to the 22 books of the Old Testament to form what we call the Holy Bible” (Ibid., p. 293). He goes on to say, “It was they [the apostles] who saw in their own generation the urgency, just before their deaths, of securing such a canon. With false doctrines and rebellion (even to apostolic authority) on all sides, and with future prospect looking even worse, they completed their task of preaching the Gospel to the world by starting and finishing the canonization of the New Testament” (Ibid.).

The canonization of the New Testament was left up to both John and Peter. Peter died not having completed the task, for as we know, several books of the Apostolic Scriptures were written after the death of Peter, namely, John’s books and possibly Jude. Therefore, as Martin notes, it was left up to John to complete this most vital commission given to them by Elohim at the Transfiguration.

## Did the Conflict Between Peter and Paul Threaten to Undermine the Canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures?

Martin is certain that Yeshua commissioned Peter and John to canonize the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament). Because of Paul's prominent role in the spreading the Gospel and his divine commissioning, it was indispensable for him to be brought in on this project, as well. Yet the schism between Peter and Paul threatened to undermine, if not undo, this project. As already noted, Trobisch believes that the healing of this rift and the presentation of the Gospel worker's messages as a unified whole was a prime factor behind the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures (which Trobisch refers to as the "Canonical Edition"). Trobisch believes that the tendency to minimize the conflict between Peter and Paul is detectable in the apparent parallels between the account of the two apostles and their companions (Trobisch, p. 80). He then notes parallel accounts of the activities of each apostle in the book of Acts to present them on equal terms and par (Ibid., pp. 81–82). For example:

- Peter heals a lame man (Acts 3:1–10); so does Paul (Acts 14:8–10).
- The sick are healed by Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15); the sick are healed by means of an anointed cloth, which Paul touches (Acts 19:12).
- Peter casts out unclean spirits (Acts 5:16); Paul casts out a spirit of divination from the slave girl (Acts 16:18).
- Peter cured the sick brought to him from all around Jerusalem (Acts 5:16); On Malta, Paul healed all the sick brought to him (Acts 28:9).
- Both are capable of bringing dead people back to life (Acts 9:36–41; 20:9–12).
- Peter heals a man paralyzed and bedridden for eight years (Acts 9:33–34); Paul heals a man suffering from fever and dysentery (Acts 28:8).
- Peter's power is greater than that of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:18–25); Paul overcomes the power of Elymas who is struck with blindness (Acts 13:6–12), and in Ephesus Paul prompts a public burning of magic books (Acts 19:17–20).
- Cornelius falls at Peter's feet (Acts 10:25); Paul and Barnabas are worshiped as gods in Lystra (Acts 14:11–18, cf. 28:6). After each instance, Peter and Paul both reply that they are mortal.
- Both lay hands on people to receive the Spirit of Elohim (Acts 8:14–17, cf. 10:44; 19:1–7).
- Both receive dramatic visions from YHVH commissioning them in their spiritual work (Acts 10, cf. 11:5–10; 9:1–22; 22:6–11; 26:12–18).
- They both experience sufferings and persecutions, are hauled before magistrates, and are imprisoned.

Trobisch notes that the selection of the eight apostolic authors of the New Testament points toward the conflict between Paul and Peter described in Galatians. He conjectures that if minimizing this conflict was one of the major objectives of Acts, the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–19) forms the heart of this book. "From the perspective of the final redaction of the New Testament, the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem might even form the heart of the New Testament. No other passage documents the absolute accord between the circle around Paul and the circle around Peter so effectively as this report of a common meeting and resolution" (Trobisch, p. 82).

As we will examine in more detail later, much of the New Testament canon, when analyzed from a literary perspective, links and cross references back and forth between the various books as if someone, by intentional design, was attempting to sew these 27 books together into a cohesive literary unit. In so doing, the unity of the authors themselves to fulfill the mission of Yeshua, their commissioning officer, is abundantly demonstrated, as well. We will discuss this subject in more detail below.

## The Hebrew Scriptures Prophecy the Canonization of the New Testament

As Martin notes, not only did Peter and John possess the authority and a mandate from YHVH-Yeshua himself for their work, but Martin believes that there was a prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures, of which the apostles were doubtless aware, that further authorized them to accomplish this important work. In Matthew 5:17, Yeshua says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Torah or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." The word *fulfill* means *to fill up that which is not yet full*.

Martin then references a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 8:13–17,

13 Sanctify YHVH of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. 16 **Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.** 17 And I will wait upon YHVH, that hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. (emphasis added)

Martin maintains that the apostles would have recognized this passage in Isaiah as referring to Yeshua, and when it speaks of “my disciples” as being a reference to them. After all, both Peter and Paul saw the relevance of verse 14 to their times (1 Pet. 2:6–8 and Rom. 9:33). Hence, understanding that the apostles thought that Messiah fulfilled Isaiah 8:13–17 in their time, they were able to learn a great deal about their own responsibilities since verse 16 specifically references Messiah’s disciples (Martin, p. 298).

“What do the words *bind* and *seal* signify? The Hebrew for the word *bind* means *to close*. The word *seal* means practically the same—to *cap off*, *to enclose*. This is exactly what the apostles did with the message which [Yeshua] the Stone and Rock [Isa. 8:14] gave them. They were to complete it. Bind it up. Close it shut. The authority to perform such an important job may have been reflected in [Messiah’s] teaching that the apostles had power to ‘bind on earth’ (Matthew 16:19). The word *to bind* has the significance of *authorization* or *giving judgment*, just as the word *unbind* means *not to receive* or *not accept*. . . . In a word, the apostles felt that they had authority, even from the Old Testament, to bind, seal, authorize and canonize the Law and Testimony of [Messiah]. This meant to put the teachings of [Messiah] in a book, just like the Old Testament was given to the early Jews” (Ibid., pp. 298–299).

### Yeshua Implies the Canonization of the New Testament

In John 16:12–15 we find recorded some of Yeshua’s last instructions to the disciples before his death:

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he will guide you into all truth:** for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and **he will show you things to come.** 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. 15 All things that the Father has are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and **shall show it unto you.** (emphasis added)

Please note the emphasized phrases. To what was Yeshua referring when he used the phrase, “show you things to come”? It certainly could refer to the Book of Revelation—a book that is wholly devoted to prophecy pertaining to “things to come” (Rev. 1:1) (Martin, p. 299). Yeshua in this John passage prophesies that all truth was going to be given to the apostles back in the first century (verse 13). This is important to understand that the first century Believers would not have to wait until the fourth century for a paganized Roman church to finally determine what the truth would be, for they could know it in the first century by the hands of the apostles themselves (Ibid., pp. 299–300). Martin then quotes Jerome, the eminent fourth century Catholic theologian, who attests to the fact that the New Testament was canonized in the time of the apostles (Ibid., p. 300):

Distinguished from the books of later authors is the excellence of the canonical authority of the Old and New Testaments; which, **having been established in the time of the apostles**, hath through the succession of overseers and propagators of churches been set as it were in a lofty tribunal, demanding the obedience of every faithful and pious understanding. (*Contra Faustum Man.* 11.5) (emphasis added)

### Paul Claims That His Writings Would Be Canonized

At the end of the Book of Romans (16:25–26), Paul makes a statement that suggests that he believed that his writings concerning the Gospel of the Messiah would be acknowledged as prophetic Scripture (Martin, p. 305).

25 Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Yeshua the Messiah, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets [or, prophetic

writings (see the NIV and *The Interlinear Bible* by Jay P. Green)], according to the commandment of the everlasting Elohim, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

Now the King James Version states “scriptures of the prophets” even though the literal Greek says “prophetic writings.” The NIV and Jay P. Green in his interlinear Bible not only note this more correct translation, but Bullinger does, as well, in his *Companion Bible*. The KJV rendering would seem to lead the reader to view this phrase in terms of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, yet the actual Greek leads us to believe that Paul is referring to his own writings and those of the other apostolic writers who are bringing forth the inspired prophetic utterances pertaining to the mysteries of Yeshua the Messiah.

Elsewhere Paul talks about the revelation of the mystery of the Gospel being “now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3,5) of whom Paul was one. Then in Colossians Paul talks about his mission to help fulfill (as Yeshua predicted using the same word in Matt. 5:17) or fill to the top “the Word of Elohim. Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now [in the middle of the sixties A.D.] is made manifest to his saints” (Col. 1:25–26). As Martin notes, these are important statements relative to the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures. It tells us under no uncertain terms that Paul knew he had been given a special commission to help fulfill (that is, to fill to the top) the Word of Elohim. This is why Paul had little reluctance in telling people about the high calling that he had. Paul considered that the teachings he recorded represented the very commandments of Elohim. “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of Elohim” (1 Corinthians 14:37). “These are strong and authoritative words. No man could make such assertions unless he was convinced in his own mind that he had the prophetic office to write inspired Scripture” (Martin, pp. 306–307). We see this commission alluded to in several other passages of Paul’s writings, as well:

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of Elohim; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of Elohim. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but **which the Set-apart Spirit teaches**; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Cor. 1:12–13, emphasis added)

For this cause also thank we Elohim without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of Elohim which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, **the word of Elohim**, which effectually works also in you that believe. (1 Thes. 2:13, emphasis added)

“When one comprehends that Paul himself was aware of his role in completing the full message of God to this world, then the statement of Peter in his Second Epistle can begin to make sense. Peter readily acknowledged that the Apostle Paul was given an equal commission along with himself and John, to write ‘prophetic scriptures.’ This is exactly what Paul called his own writings in Romans 16:25,26 and the apostle Peter boldly ranked those writings of the apostle Paul alongside the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:15,16)” (Martin, p. 307).

### The Cloak (?), The Scrolls and The Parchment

Dr. Martin in his book discusses another discovery he has made that many scholars have heretofore overlooked. If his assertions are correct, Martin’s discoveries may shed some more light on Paul’s involvement in the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures.

Paul asked Timothy and John Mark to bring to him three important items of his with them to Rome. “When you come, bring the cloak [Greek: *phelonen*] I left with Carpus, and the scrolls, especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13) (Martin, p. 385). Martin questions why a heavy coat would be mentioned along side books or paper scrolls (Greek: *biblion*) and parchments (Greek: *membrana* meaning *animal skins, vellum*), yet this is how most scholars have interpreted this verse. On closer analysis, we see that the Greek word *phelonen* has another meaning, as well. Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament*, says the word *phelonen* originally meant *a case for keeping the mouth-pieces for wind instruments; a box, a treasury chest; also a box for transporting or preserving parchments; the parchment for covering papyrus rolls*. “Accordingly it is claimed here that Timothy is here bidden to bring, not a cloak, but a roll-case” (vol. 3, p. 326). Indeed, the Syriac (Aramaic) version of the New Testament, which some claim to have derived from the first century, indeed uses the words *book carrier* or *book container* instead of *cloak* (see *The Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text* trans. by George Lamsa; *The Hebrew Roots Version Scriptures*, trans. by James Trimm). It is interesting to note that Chrysostom, in the fourth century, commented on this very refer-



ence of Paul's and stated that some thought Paul meant a "book case"—a receptacle for books (*Hom. in loc.*, vol. II, p. 780, ed. Gaume). Even Jerome mentioned this point (*Epist. 36, ad Damasum*) (Martin, p. 386). Though the word *phelonen* could mean *a heavy coat*, it is more likely, in the context of the verse itself, that it means *a book carrier* or *container*. If this is the case, Martin muses, it is unlikely that this case would contain scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), since these would have been readily available to Paul in any city, such as Rome, where there was any sizable Jewish population at all. Whatever these books were they were of the utmost importance to Paul, for he specifies *the* books (papyrus scrolls) and *the* parchments (animal skins or vellum volumes). "Note the definite articles in front of each of the three items. Since Paul gave no further description about them, it appears that Timothy and John Mark knew exactly the specific things Paul meant, and they realized it was important that they be brought immediately to Rome. There is no doubt in my mind that some particular scrolls and parchment documents were being kept safely by Paul in a specially constructed carrying case or book cover. It also makes sense that they were his own writings which he had brought together and left in Asia Minor with Carpus. Paul now needed them dispatched to Rome immediately. This must be the reason why Paul requested John Mark to accompany Timothy" (Ibid., p. 388). Mark was indispensable to the work of Paul, for we read in 2 Timothy 4:11, "Take Mark, and bring him with you, because he is a very useful helper in my work" (CJB).

"John Mark was Peter's assistant or right hand man. He was also his secretary — the one who wrote literary documents for Peter. This historical fact is attested to in the writings of Eusebius, the early church historian (Eusebius' *Eccl. Hist.* 2:15; 1 Pet. 5:13 where "Babylon" is a code name for "Rome"). The service that Paul wanted John Mark to perform may have concerned the retention (or a collection) of some of Paul's writings. This is as good a reason as any why Paul wanted John Mark in Rome. If it was not to take Paul's letters to Peter, then it was to talk over the matter of the letters and have Peter come to Paul in Rome.

"Since it seems that Paul wrote Second Timothy in the late summer or autumn of A.D. 65, then John Mark's journey to Rome, and back to Jerusalem where Peter probably was, could have been accomplished by late spring of A.D. 66. And with the miraculous events concerning the Temple starting to happen just before Passover A.D. 66 and continuing until Pentecost A.D. 66 (when God abandoned the Temple at Jerusalem), it would have been possible for Peter to reach Rome by the late summer of A.D. 66.

"If this is the case, Peter's only reason for going to Rome was to see the Apostle Paul relative to the matter of the New Testament canonization. This could have been the main reason that John Mark was involved in the issue since he was the literary assistant to Peter. And recall, Paul urgently admonished Timothy to bring the written documents with John Mark. The historical scenario provided by Paul's last chapter of Second Timothy demands that a highly important literary activity was under way.

"With both Peter and Paul in Rome in the final weeks of A.D. 66 or in early A.D. 67 they could have selected and canonized the New Testament scriptures in their possession and then sent them to the apostle John. Peter was aware that even he would meet his death very soon, just as [Yeshua] prophesied.

"Since this appears quite possible, it seems that Paul was given the opportunity to edit his own letters for inclusion into the sacred canon of the New Testament. An example of this [would be] the last three verses of Romans in our present versions. These verses are very close to the writing style of Ephesians and Colossians, and they contain a reference that Paul's teachings were then being called "the prophetic scriptures" (verse 26, Greek). Such use of the phrase 'prophetic scriptures' is a sure sign that Paul's letters were then being considered as sacred and as inspired as were the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

"Recall that Peter and John considered themselves as having 'the prophetic word more confirmed' (2 Peter 1:18) and this was a reference to their written works as being inspired of God (2 Pet. 1:20). And now we have Paul saying the same thing about his own writings, that they were 'the prophetic scriptures' (Rom. 16:26). Paul wrote this editorial remark at the end of Romans long after he had composed the actual letter back in A.D. 56. This is because he made it clear in the editorial footnote that 'all the nations' had now received the teaching of his Gospel (verse 26). This could only have been stated after he had returned from Spain in about A.D. 62. This reference dovetails precisely with that which Paul stated in the Book of Colossians (written about A.D. 64.) that the Gospel had now been 'preached in all creation that is under heaven'" (Col. 1:23) (Martin, pp. 388–390).

## Peter, James and John: Prophetically Called for a Unique Mission

Yeshua chose twelve apostles, but the first three of the twelve that he chose were unique. This trio—Peter, James

and John—formed the innermost circle of Yeshua’s associates, and ten times the Scriptures record their names together, as a group. Beyond that, Yeshua spoke prophetically over each one which, we can now see in retrospect, pertained to the calling he was giving them to canonize what would later become known as the New Testament. Let’s now examine the scriptural evidence for this assertion.

To Simon, Yeshua gave the nickname Peter, which means *a stone*. To James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, he gave the nickname *Sons of Thunder* (Greek: *Boanerges*, Mark 3:17). Did you ever wonder why he dubbed only these three disciples with sobriquets and not the others? Was Yeshua involved in fun and games, or was he declaring over them, in these nicknames, what their prophetic mission was to be years later? “These are the original apostles who were given distinctive titles by [the Messiah] in order to convey some special assignments that they were expected to complete. Peter was to be associated with [Messiah] (the Rock himself) in the creation of the Christian *ekklesia*. This was accomplished in its initiation phases with Peter on the Day of Pentecost some 50 days after the resurrection of [Messiah] (Acts 2). Peter was also given the ‘keys’ of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19). These ‘keys’ were to allow him the power to open ‘the doors of the kingdom’ to those who would hear the Gospel. It even entailed an authority to bind or to loose people regarding their entrance into that kingdom. (This power was later extended to all the apostles, John 20:23). And it appears certain that one of the main methods by which Peter would be able to exercise the power of the ‘keys’ was to be in charge of the canonization of the New Testament. The information in the canon would ‘open the doors’ to all people who would read and heed the written messages therein” (Martin, p. 311).

The other two apostles who received special titles were James and John, who Yeshua called the Sons of Thunder. Martin points out that the meaning of this title has been a mystery to most scholars, and the common understanding of it is that these two brothers were headstrong, impetuous, intolerant and authoritarian. And this may be true, but by the time the aged John writes his letters his demeanor had changed to one of love and conciliation among the brethren. But in their youth they appear to be stern and uncompromising toward evil (Luke 9:54), and they were ambitious for position (Matt. 20:20–24). “They were not mild tempered. They were to be men of ‘Thunder.’ In Hebrew, *thunder* (*kol*) meant *the Voice of God* (Exod. 9:23; Ps. 29:3; Jer. 10:13; etc.). The title could signify that they were to speak like God himself—as personal spokesmen for God” (Martin, pp. 311–312).

“This title gave them special rank of authority and, along with Peter, they were the only apostles to witness the Transfiguration and to hear the voice of God the Father himself (and in vision to see Moses and Elijah) (Matt. 17:1–9). This experience rendered the jurisdiction of those three men as superior to the other apostles and it singled them out for a special purpose. Peter was to be in charge of congregational affairs (Matt. 16:17–19), but James and John were to have the distinction of being ‘Sons of Thunder’—to *thunder* forth his words to the people as did Moses” (Ibid., p. 312).

### **The Apostolic Scriptures Are Linked to Each Other In a Literary Manner As If By Design on the Part of a Publisher**

We will now list examples that Trobisch believes confirm his thesis that the publisher of the first century canon of the Apostolic Scriptures deliberately attempted to show that the Apostles were united theologically in their efforts to spread the Gospel, and that Paul and the Apostles of Jerusalem were in one accord theologically, and that the rift between them, as recorded in the Epistle to the Galatians, was healed (Trobisch, pp. 83–96).

Any rift between Paul and James, the leader of the mother assembly of Believers in Jerusalem, was healed in light of the plan that the two conceived in attempts to convince those who believed Paul was teaching against the Torah and who, therefore, wanted to take his life, that he was not anti-Torah (Acts 21:18–21).

In Galatians Paul rebukes Peter, thus casting Peter in a negative light. As if to balance the poor impression readers might have of Peter in Galatians, two episodes immediately following the Apostolic Council cast a negative light on Paul: namely, the dispute with Barnabas and the issues surrounding the circumcision of Timothy (Gal. 2:13; Acts 15:38–39; 16:13).

Now let’s examine writings of the apostles in search of evidence to support Trobisch’s thesis.

### **The Book of Acts**

“No other writing connects the collection units of the New Testament as well as Acts. It continues the narrative of Luke, which is part of the Four-Gospel Book. It also serves as an introduction to the General Letters,

introducing in its first part the authors of these writings—James, Peter, and John. In its second part, Acts provides biographical information concerning Paul that helps readers better understand the background of the individual letters” (Trobisch, p. 84). Acts provides specific background information that directly relates to various other books in the Canonical Edition of the New Testament. Through cross-referencing, we see that 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians; Philippians, Galatians and Ephesians are linked to the Book of Acts (Ibid.).

Second Timothy is linked to Acts in that Acts gives much background information about Timothy himself. Furthermore, Paul’s situation at the end of Acts as he awaits trial is described in very much the same way as in 2 Timothy. Trobisch also finds Paul validating other New Testament writers (2 Tim. 4:11), and putting his stamp of approval on the other New Testament writings, as well, and linking and placing them on a par with those of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) (2 Tim. 3:15–17) (Trobisch, p. 86).

Trobisch notes that a key interest of what he calls the final redaction of the Apostolic Scriptures (or Canonical Edition) by those who would later publish it was “to bridge the gap between Peter and Paul. The later authorship of the Gospels bearing the names of Mark and Luke serves this interest as well, with vital reinforcement from 2 Timothy[,...] also supplies the decisive piece of indirect evidence for the date of Acts. Dating the Book of Acts finally permits the placement of the four Gospels in a relative chronological order....” (Ibid.). Again we see demonstrated, according to Trobisch’s thesis, the dovetailing of the various books of the Apostolic Scriptures to validate and reinforce each other. Obviously this cohesiveness occurred through the guiding hand of Providence as it moved on each author inspiring them to write, but, as we shall see later, on the redaction and editing, as well. It is the latter that Trobisch is emphasizing here. We will present more evidence to support this idea later. All this adds credence to the idea of the first century canonization of the New Testament, which is the overall idea we are attempting to prove here.

### **The Second Epistle of Peter**

Within the General Letters, 2 Peter functions very much the way 2 Timothy does for the readers of the Letters of Paul. In this letter, Peter addresses “those who have received a faith very much like ours” (2 Pet. 1:1). No geographical or biographical information is given. It is assumed that readers of the Canonical Edition will already have known who Peter is from having already read the Gospels and Acts. These stories provide the framework in which the brief references to Peter in 1 Corinthians and Galatians may be understood” (Trobisch, pp. 86–87).

### **The Second Epistle of Peter and The Gospel According to John**

Second Peter cross-references and validates John’s Gospel. “Following the opening paragraphs, where ‘precious and very great promises’ (2 Pet. 1:4) are mentioned—a reference to the Jewish Scriptures—Peter reflects upon his personal situation: ‘I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord [Yeshua Messiah] has made clear to me’ (2 Pet. 1:14).” This is a reference to John 21:18–19 (Trobisch, p. 87).

### **The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude.**

“Second Peter shares a parallel structure, content, and vocabulary with the Letter of Jude. ... The numerous literary parallel ... seem significant in the context of the Canonical Edition” (Trobisch, pp. 89–90). Trobisch then shows line-by-line the parallels between the two epistles pertaining to the description of false teachers, Elohim’s judgment, more accusations against false teachers’ rejection of authority, how false teachers behave like irrational animals, how they are compared to Balaam, their carousing is criticized, that for them gloom and darkness has been reserved, and that they entice with licentious passions of the flesh. Trobisch then remarks that the readers of the Canonical Edition are accustomed to parallels. While they do not use exactly the same words, the traditions shared by the four Gospels are understood as agreeing on the essential matters. In this way, they confirm the reliability of these writings. The same applies to the parallel accounts in the Letters of Paul and Acts, or to the Transfiguration on the mountain, which 2 Peter (1:17–18) describes differently from any of the Gospels. The cross-references of the titles link Jude and his brother James to the circle of the Jerusalem apostles around Peter. Paul, who, in 1 Corinthians 9:5, mentions Peter together with the brothers of [Yeshua], endorses the connection explicitly. The close parallels between Jude and 2 Peter may simply provide another confirmation of what readers of the Canonical Edition already know: the Apostles Peter and Jude, the brother of [Yeshua] knew each other very well” (Ibid., pp. 93–94).

## First and Second Epistles of Peter

In his second epistle, Peter references his first epistle when he says of the second, “This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you” (2 Pet. 3:1). Peter here is giving credence to the accurate title in the Canonical Edition: Second Letter of Peter. At the same time, he implies the title of 1 Peter, and he assumes that it is familiar to the readers. As far as the content is concerned, the two letters are treated as a unit: “In them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you ...” (2 Pet. 3:1) (Trobisch, p. 94).

## Letters of Paul and 2 Peter

Next we see how the editors of the Canonical Edition seek to harmonize Peter and Paul. We find this in 2 Peter 3:15b–16,

... even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Trobisch notes that, “Peter refers to Paul with a positive connotation; he calls him their ‘beloved brother’ and states that Paul is in complete agreement with him. Any difficulties are discarded as misrepresentations of ‘things hard to understand,’ promoted by people who are ‘unstable’ and who twist ‘the other scriptures’ as well. By using the term ‘other scriptures,’ the author presupposes a limited number of writings. The collection the author has in mind evidently contained the Letters of Paul together with other books. Readers of the Canonical Edition will immediately think of the writings of the Old and New Testament. Peter takes it for granted that the people he is writing to [would be] the same people Paul wrote his letters for. Moreover, his reference to ‘all his letters,’ taken literally, implies a comprehensive edition of Paul’s letters. To the readers of the Canonical Edition this reference should not cause a problem. They may safely assume that the New Testament collection entitled ‘Letters to Paul’ represents just that comprehensive edition. And they would learn that 2 Peter had been written after the Book of Acts and 2 Timothy, at a time when the Pauline letter collection was complete and already published” (Trobisch, pp. 94–95).

In the preceding passages, we have seen how 2 Peter plays an integral role in the Canonical Edition of the New Testament. Trobisch notes that the apparent cross-references to the collection units (i.e., the Gospels, Paul’s Letters, the Praxapostolic Writings [Acts and the General Epistles] and Revelation) are quite astonishing. “The Old Testament is quoted abundantly. Biblical prophecy is explicitly addressed, its relevance for the present time of the reader is demonstrated, and it is related to theology of divine inspiration formulated in a manner easily applied to the other New Testament writings as well. The letter clearly refers to the canonical Gospel collection by pointing to John (John 21), Mark, and the synoptic accounts of the Transfiguration. The references to 1 Peter and Jude serve as links to Praxapostolos. It presupposes that the readers have access to a comprehensive collection of Paul’s letters. In addition to these literary links, the treatment of Peter and Paul as equals is another trait 2 Peter shares with the editorial interests of the Canonical Edition” (Ibid., p. 95).

## Summary and Conclusion

From the analysis of the above Scriptures, Trobisch believes that he has demonstrated that The Canonical Edition [the version of the Apostolic Scriptures canonized in the first century] represents a careful selection of writings. Passages that in some way harmonize the conflict between Paul and the Jerusalem authorities were included in the collection. In this context, it may be significant that the New ‘Testament’ contains a literary ‘testament’ of Paul and a literary ‘testament’ of Peter” (Ibid., p. 96).

## John and the Canonization of the New Testament

James, the brother of John had been martyred in Jerusalem in the early sixties A.D., Peter in Rome in the mid to late sixties, and now it was left up to John, the remaining apostle, to finalize the New Testament canon. What is the proof of his hand in this task, and did he do it alone or did he have helpers—an editorial staff, if you will?

“John did not create the New Testament on his own. He had helpers. If one will read the writings of John carefully, these assistants can be recognized, and they played a very important part in the overall canonization. References to them are found from time to time cropping up within the contexts of John’s compositions. The elders who helped John were very important. ... [M]any of them were eyewitnesses to the teachings of [Yeshua]



in Judaea and they also saw him alive after his resurrection from the dead. They were a part of those 500 people still alive in A.D. 55 who Paul said were witnesses to [Messiah's] resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:6). This means that they were certainly Jewish Christians" (Martin, p. 398). At this point, Martin directs our attention to the "we" passages in John's Gospel and epistles.

The first instance of a "we" passage is at the beginning and at the end of John's Gospel. Chapter one starts with a "we" passage, and then throughout the 21 chapters of this Gospel John has recorded what Yeshua taught him, but then in John 21:24 there is a remark in the text that interjects what others besides John had to say about the Gospel of John. (Ibid.)

John 1:14, And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (emphasis added)

John 21:24, This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

"Notice the abrupt change from the third person singular to the plural. The last part of this verse is introducing further witnesses, other than John (who are identified only by the pronoun "we"). Who were these men? In the Gospel they are not identified, but it can reasonably be assumed that the first readers of John's Gospel must have been aware of their identities. They must have represented an officially recognized body of men since they boldly gave their witness to John's written word, "And *we* know that the witness he [John] gives is true" (Ibid., pp. 398–399).

This is just the beginning of the "we" passages. They occur numerous times in John's short epistle to testify to the veracity of what John is saying pertaining to his recording of the Gospel account. In these writings, we see that in the middle of John's narrative there will suddenly be an inclusion of a "we" passage as if to lend credibility to what he is saying. Examples of this are:

1 John 1:1–4, 1 That which was from the beginning, which **we** have heard, which **we** have seen with **our** eyes, which **we** have looked upon, and **our** hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and **we** have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto **us**;) that which **we** have seen and heard declare **we** unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with **us**: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Yeshua Messiah. And these things write **we** unto you, that your joy may be full. (emphasis added)

1 John 4:11, And **we** have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. (emphasis added)

3 John 12, ... and **we** also bear record; and ye know that **our** record is true. (emphasis added)

"It is clear that a body of men, other than John himself, was telling the readers of his [First and] Third Epistle[s] that they too were witnesses to the truth that John was stating. These assistants (or editors) of John must have been well known to John's readers. All they say is "you know that the witness **we** give is true." Certainly, these men could reasonably be considered a group of John's right-hand men and known by all" (Ibid., p. 399).

"Whoever these men were, they figured very prominently in the writing of John's three epistles. But more than that, they were men from Palestine who had been personal acquaintances of [the Messiah] and they were witnesses of his resurrection from the dead. This put them into a relatively high position of authority. After all, how many people in the first century could claim such distinction? Even the apostle Paul knew in A.D. 55 of only about 500 who were so honored (1 Corinthians 15:6). These men were certainly a part of that group. They may even have been of more esteem in the eyes of Christians at the time" (Ibid., p. 401)

"Scholars are aware that this interjection is the separate witness by John's assistants or editors (Hastings, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. 1, pp. 880, 881), but the vast majority of readers of the New Testament simply pass over [these references] so quickly that they do not notice the relevance of [them]. It is time to restore the testimony of these men to its proper place.

"Who were these men who interposed their own testimonies at crucial points in the texts of John? One thing is assured. They were almost certainly Jewish because they were witnesses of [the Messiah] in the flesh before his crucifixion and after his resurrection. Both the references in John 1:14 and 1 John 1:1–4 show this" (Ibid., p. 402).

Is there historical record of these “elders” outside of Scripture? Indeed there is. Early church father, Papias, who lived from about A.D. 70 to A.D. 155 mentions “the elders” several times in the short fragment of his work that remains (written about A.D. 110). Papias differentiates the elders from the apostles and confesses to inquiring of them pertaining to what the apostles had said. In his second reference to the elders he mentions the elders as having seen John and had been taught of him (see Papias, chapters 1 and 4). In fact, Papias states that he would prefer to speak with these first-hand witnesses of events of the first century happenings than to resort to books that were “not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice.” So not only does Papias speak of elders, but of books. So history does indeed record a body of men who even after the death of John, the last apostle, were still testifying to the veracity of what the apostles had said and taught, as well as books that recorded the same things about which the eyewitnesses themselves testified. This could very well be a reference to the New Testament canon that would have been of less importance to Papias while the first-hand witnesses were still alive than later after they were dead.

Clement of Alexandria also mentions these “elders” of John (early third century A.D.) when he discussed the method that John used in writing his Gospel. He said:

But last of all, John, perceiving that the observable facts had been made plain in the Gospel [those formerly written], being urged on by friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel. (As quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* VI.14.7) (Martin, p. 407).

Martin speculates that these elders may very well have formed part of John’s editorial staff and helped him in his final editing of the New Testament canon while he was very elderly (in his nineties). Martin writes, “They may well have been remaining with John and helping him in the writing of his Gospel and his three epistles. They may even have added a few remarks to John’s works after John’s death (if they thought it was necessary to do so). After all, the official scribes of the Jews added genealogical matters to the Temple scrolls down to the time of Alexander the Great (some 100 years after the close of the Old Testament canon). There would be nothing wrong in adding a few editorial remarks to the divine library of New Testament books if the ‘elders’ who supported the apostle John were still alive after John’s death.

“These suggestions can make sense. The fact is, there appear to be a number of such editorial remarks in John’s Gospel, either in relation to the ‘*we* sections’ or distinct from them. The King James Version shows some of them by placing their occurrences within parentheses” (Ibid., pp. 402–403).

As an example Martin notes John 3:13 states: “And no man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven (*even the Son of man which is in heaven*).” Obviously, the italicized words represent a later editorial remark because [the Messiah] was certainly on earth when he uttered the first part of the verse, but only after his resurrection was he actually in heaven.

Next we look at John 4:23 where Yeshua said to the Samaritan woman: “But the hour comes, *and now is*, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” Here Yeshua was telling her that the Temple at Jerusalem was no longer to be important, but when Yeshua said this the Temple was still the proper site for assembly. But the editors (at the time the Gospel was canonized) put in the reference “and now is” to show that what Yeshua had predicted had now come true.

Another such passage is John 5:25. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming (*and now is*) when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Elohim: and they that hear shall live.” According to Martin, the italicized words are a later insertion that could only have been stating the truth after the resurrection of Lazarus and those who were made alive after Yeshua’s resurrection (John 11:1–46; Matt. 27:52–53).

Next there is John 13:3: “Yeshua knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from Elohim (*and went to Elohim*).” The italicized words, again, are a later editorial remark.

“There is also John 17:3. Yeshua said: “And this is life eternal, that they may know you the only true Elohim (*and Yeshua the Messiah whom you have sent*).”

And finally, let us note John 19:35: “And he that saw it bore record (*and his record is true and he knows that he says true, that you might believe*)” (Martin, pp. 402–403).

If Prof. Trobisch sees John and those around him as the final editors and publishers of the final edition of the Apostolic Scriptures toward the end of the first century when John was in his nineties, he does not say so. But Dr. Trobisch, like Dr. Martin, cannot help but notice the “we” passages in John’s writings as well as portions that appear to have been redacted by the earliest first century publishers of the Apostolic Scriptures.

The first passage Trobisch calls our attention to is John 20:30–31,

And many other signs truly did Yeshua in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of Elohim; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

In addition, Trobisch notes, at the end of chapter 21 we hear a voice different from the author of the Fourth Gospel, who is referred to as “this ... disciple.”

This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. (John 21:24)

In Trobisch’s mind there is little room for doubt that this final portion of John’s epistle is an appendix to John’s Gospel, which in reality ended in John 20:31 judging from the final tone of that passage (compare this ending with that found at the end of John’s Book of Revelation in Rev. 22:18). Whoever the author of the appendix may be, Trobisch points out that he “is not only an eyewitness, whose oral report has been used, but also the person who actually wrote this Gospel down” (Trobisch, p. 96). Trobisch maintains that the publisher of John’s Gospel is the one speaking here.

Trobisch admits that there has been a lively debate among scholars about this appendix to the Gospel of John. Is it simply an appendix to a finished Gospel, or does this passage show later text alteration? Trobisch does not believe the latter to be the case for the following reasons. “The links between this chapter and the preceding text seem too elaborate to [prove the idea of later text alteration]. John 21 may be better understood as the product of the final editors of this Gospel, who not only added a chapter but also revised the manuscript produced by the ‘beloved disciple.’” (Trobisch, p. 150, footnote 32). He maintains that the fact that the uniform manuscript tradition of the Canonical Edition does not contain passages without John 21 indicates that this chapter was part of the archetype of this edition. “From the very beginning readers encountered this chapter as an integral part of the Gospel. And it was just as clear that readers were informed that these passages of the Gospel were written by someone other than the beloved disciple. The publisher does not disguise himself as the author—a literary device that was quite common in pseudepigraphic literature. Rather, he introduces himself or herself to the readers. The last sentence of the canonical Gospel collection presents itself as an editorial note to the reader” (Ibid., p. 97).

Next Trobisch looks at the final verse of the Gospel of John and the Gospel portion of the Apostolic Scriptures for some clues as to the first Canonical Edition of the New Testament, published in the first century.

And there are also many other things which Yeshua did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

Here is Trobisch’s analysis of this verse:

First, Trobisch notes the change from the pronouns “we” to “I” between verses 24 and 25: “we know that his testimony is true” (in verse 24) compared to “I suppose” (in verse 25). He does not see these verses as being read in one breath, but, in reality, pointing to different subjects.

The mention of multiple “books” as opposed to one book in John 20:30 signifies that this sentence does not talk about John’s Gospel alone but refers to several books.

The contents of what could be “written down” is referred to as “things that Yeshua did.” In all modern editions of the New Testament, the Book of Acts follows John 21. The implied author, Luke, repeats this literary definition to point back to his own Gospel: “I wrote about all that Yeshua did” (Acts 1:1). From a reader’s perspective this may create an important cross-reference between John 21:25 and Acts 1:1. Both texts seem to refer to canonical Gospels, according to Trobisch (Ibid. pp. 97–98).

Trobisch concludes that the “close connection to the preceding sentence plus the strong resemblance in wording to John 20:30 suggests that the publishers of the Gospels are identical with the publishers of the Gospels According to John. The first person singular (‘I suppose’) indicates that the publishers of the canonical Gospel collection assumed that they were well known to their readership” (Ibid., p. 98).

At first glance, notes Trobisch, it is not obvious why Luke’s Gospel and Luke’s Acts should be separated by the Gospel of John. However, he notes, the placement of John seems intentional if the editors of the four Gospels wanted to arrange them chronologically. By adding their editorial note to the Gospel According to John, they are presenting this Gospel as the most recent of the collection. The placement would also make sense if they wanted

to connect Acts with the General Letters (Ibid., pp. 99–100).

John most likely wrote his Gospel after the deaths of Peter (which John refers to in the past tense), and Paul's martyrdom, as well as after that of Jude, Yeshua's brother, therefore, Trobisch speculates, editorial remarks at the conclusion of John's Gospel are logical. "The most important formal feature of an editorial is that it presents itself as the last passage added to an edition. From the reader's perspective that is exactly what John 21 looks like. Moreover, if John 21:25 is understood as referring to the Four-Gospel Book, it may be linked to the Canonical Edition as such, thus serving as an editorial note to the readers of what is called the Christian Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments. By choosing the words *books* and *the world* and first person singular, the unnamed publisher alludes to his or her act of publication. And therefore the last sentence [of John 21:25] could very well be translated as,

But there are also many other things that [Yeshua] did; if every one of them were published, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be published. (Trobisch, pp. 100–101)

### **The Uniqueness of John's Gospel Compared to the Other Three Gospels**

Martin speculates that since John was a very old man (in his nineties) when his Gospel was written, there were people accusing him of not being able to remember the real teachings of Yeshua. This is why, Martin conjectures, John invoked the witness of the Spirit of Elohim to counter this. But John was also, in his Gospel and epistles, constantly appealing to the truth provided by competent witnesses from Judea. Martin observes that in his Gospel alone, John stressed the word 'witness' (or its cognates) 47 times. This was a most unusual emphasis. Why did John resort to such an appeal? No other apostolic writer had to constantly remind his readers that he had many kinds of "witnesses" to the truth of what he was writing. Martin concludes this to be the case because no other writer was being accused of being too old to remember the truths of earlier times (Martin, p. 408).

"The fact is, when John wrote his Gospel, there were many people in the world who began to question the accuracy of it, and of the competence of John himself. This is one of the main reasons that John emphasized that the Holy Spirit was promised by [Messiah] to bring back a remembrance of 'all the truth' to his apostles (John 16:13), and if that were not enough, John also called on a group of his select friends (the elders of the 'we' passages) who were also eyewitnesses to all that he was saying, and they also vouched for the truth of his statements.

"It should be recalled that there were many 'gospels' of [Messiah] already circulating by the time John wrote his works (Luke 1:1), and that both Peter and Paul warned of the fables that were destined to be put forth as the truth (2 Pet. 1:16; 2 Tim. 4:4). John (even in his old age) felt that it was incumbent upon him to clear the air with the truth. He thus asked the witnesses of [Messiah's] earthly life who were still living (the elders) to cooperate with him in the production of the final Gospel. This was done just before John's death (about the time he canonized the Book of Revelation)."

Martin continues, It is for this reason that many features of John's Gospel can be satisfactorily explained. This is why, Martin conjectures, he could record the incident of Lazarus being resurrected from the dead while the other three Gospel accounts did not wish to do so. Since Lazarus was now dead, and this would prevent any harassment from his admirers or his foes, John could tell the story in detail.

"But John left out things too. There is no mention of [the Messiah's] prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem, to which the other three Gospels paid considerable attention. It would have been unwise to mention matters that many had considered as already taken place (and record them as 'future' prophecies). And, after all, the Olivet Prophecies had been adequately covered by the other three Gospels written before the destruction of Jerusalem. John's task was different and for other reasons. He was simply giving a summary of doctrinal and spiritual matters taught by [Messiah] that the other apostles had left out or did not feel necessary to record. His Gospel was a spiritual one" (Martin, pp. 408–409).

### **The Symmetry of the Scriptures:**

#### **Do All the Books Belong in the Old and New Testament Canon?**

The symmetry of the Scriptures, biblical numerics, hidden codes and various types and patterns throughout the Scriptures is a subject about which volumes could no doubt be written. What we present here is but a smattering of what there is to learn and teach about this subject. The deeper one studies the Word of Elohim at all levels, the



more one sees the indelible mark of YHVH's fingerprint throughout. It does not take long before one realizes that this Book could never have been conceived by the mind of man, and is so other-worldly that it forcefully and undeniably points to a Higher Power for inspiration. This and this alone is ample reason to believe the Bible in its full and unabridged form.

### The Number of the Books of the Bible

The first point in determining the symmetry of the Scriptures is to realize that originally the Tanakh (Old Testament) was subdivided into 22 books, not the 39 in our present Bible. There was no difference in the content between then and now but only in how the books were categorized. The Book of Jubilees, a Jewish pseudepigraphic work dating to the second century B.C., attests to the fact (Jubilees 2:23)\* of there originally being 22 books in the Tanakh, as does Josephus in his *Contra Apion* (Book 1.8), and as do many early Church fathers and other early Christian scholars (Martin references 22 such early Christian writers, including Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.26.14, Martin, pp. 58–60). It is believed that Ezra the scribe originally arranged the books of the Hebrew Bible in this manner. Thus, books such as Samuel, Kings and Chronicles were combined into one book each and the 12 Minor Prophets were combined into one book, as well. We will discuss the significance of the number 22 in Scripture momentarily, but for now, how did the Tanakh get expanded from 22 to 39 books? According to Martin, the Jewish translators of the Greek version of the Tanakh (the Septuagint) in the second and third century B.C. subdivided the books of the Hebrew Scriptures into the pattern we have today. There were, however, no Hebrew manuscripts that followed the Greek version (Martin, p. 65). Sometime in the last part of the first century or beginning of the second century A.D. Jewish authorities decided to re-divide the Tanakh into 24 books rather than to maintain the 22 (Martin, pp. 67–68). Eventually the Jews adopted the Christian numbering system of the books of the Tanakh found in the modern Protestant Christian Bible.

“There may well have been political and religious reasons why the Jewish authorities made the change when they did. When the New Testament books were being accepted as divine literature by great numbers of people within the Roman world, all could see that the 27 New Testament books added to the original 22 of the Old Testament reached the significant number 49 [7 x 7]. This was a powerful indication that the world now had the complete revelation from God with the inclusion of those New Testament books. Since Jewish officials were powerless to do anything with the New Testament, the only recourse they saw possible was to alter the traditional numbering” (Martin, p. 68).

### The Significance of the Number 22 in Hebrew Thought

Martin now draws our attention to the ancient Jewish Book of Jubilees which mentions the significance of the number 22 in Hebraic biblical thought. Annotated to the restored text of Jubilees 2:23 is the remark that Elohim made 22 things on the six days of creation with man being the twenty-second created thing—the crowning achievement of YHVH's creative activities. These 22 events paralleled the 22 generations from Adam to Jacob (i.e., the Israelite nation being the crowning achievement of YHVH's work among the nations of the world with Israel being the vehicle through which redemption would occur), the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the 22 books of the Holy Scripture (Martin, p. 57)†.

The 22 numbering is most interesting and fits in well with the literary and symbolic meaning of “completion” as understood by early Jews. The Book of Jubilees put forth that the number represented the “final” and “complete” creations of Elohim. Adam was the last creation of Elohim (being the 22nd). Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, was the 22nd generation from Adam; and Jacob was acknowledged as the father of the spiritual nation of Elohim. Also the Hebrew language became the means by which Elohim communicated his divine will to mankind. It had an alphabet of 22 letters. And, finally, when Elohim wished to give his complete Old Testament revelation to humanity, that divine canon was presented in 22 authorized books. The medieval Jewish scholar Sixtus Senensis explained the significance of this matter (Martin, pp. 57–58).

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.‡

\**The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James Charlesworth, ed., vol. 2, p. 57, see footnote “y.”

†*Ibid.*

‡ William H. Green, *General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon*, vol. 1, London: Murray, 1898, p. 87, as quoted by Martin, p. 58.

## The Use of Acrostic in the Bible

The significance of the number twenty-two is revealed in the biblical use of a literary device known as *acrostic*. An acrostic is a composition usually in verse form in which sets of letters are arranged in order to form a word or phrase of a regular sequence of letters of the alphabet. As used in the Bible, acrostic “is both a poetic method for expressing a unified design in biblical composition as well as a technique of arrangement which emphasizes completion and perfection” (Martin, p. 61).

We find an example of this in Psalm 119 where the first letter of each word of the first sentence in the stanza begins with the next letter of the alphabet. So the first word in the first stanza of the Psalm begins with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, the first word of the second stanza begins with second letter, and so on all the way to the end of the twenty-two letter Hebrew alphabet. In Psalm 119, David discusses various aspects of YHVH’s Torah or law using acrostic to express the idea of perfection and completeness. In each stanza there are eight sentences in Hebrew. The number eight in biblical numerology denotes resurrection, regeneration, or a new beginning or commencement, a new first; hence, we find the octave in music, color, and Sunday, the first day of the week sometimes being expressed in ancient literature as the “eighth day”<sup>s</sup>. Indeed, YHVH’s Torah (his instructions, teachings, or precepts in righteousness) or his Word not only is the expression of complete perfection and flawlessness, but beyond that within the human life it produces spiritual regeneration, newness and resurrection. With regard to the use of acrostic, Martin adds, “If all the letters are utilized in a proper and consecutive fashion, then the psychological feeling that this literary device provides is one of accomplishment and fulfillment — a feeling of wholeness, flawlessness, and perfect symmetry” (Martin, p. 61). “This is one of the reasons the early Hebrews saw that Adam, being the 22nd creation of God, represented God’s prime and perfect physical creation, and that Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) was the 22nd spiritual creation of God. The symbolic significance of the number 22, as found in the Old Testament acrostics, was recognized as emblematic of a perfect state of affairs” Martin, p. 62).

Other examples of acrostic may be found in Psalms 111 and 112 as well as in Proverbs 31 where it is used to emphasize the completeness of the virtuous woman (Ibid).

Likewise, Scripture employs the incomplete acrostic to give “the feeling of frustration, letdown, or incompleteness. When such incomplete acrostics are used, a feeling of discomfiture is intended to be conveyed to the reader.” (Ibid., p. 63). Examples of this, according to Martin, can be found in Psalms 9 and 10 where we find a description of great tribulation on Israel (Ibid.). The Hebrew poetic concept of *incomplete acrostic* may be difficult for the Western mind to comprehend, but several examples from our culture to which many can relate may help. Most are familiar with the poem:

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
Sugar is sweet  
And so are you.

No suppose we change the last line to read,

Peanut butter is sticky.

Does this grate against your sensitivities of what is correct and incorrect? Or how about a beautiful piece of music written in a major cord that ends abruptly in a minor dissonant musical phrase? To those who appreciate well-written music this can be like listening to fingernails scratching on a chalkboard. Perhaps you now have a better idea of *incomplete acrostic*.

In view of the significance of the biblical number twenty-two in light of the acrostic Martin concludes:

In regard to the Old Testament canon, which was originally written in Hebrew characters, it can be seen why the ancients looked on the 22 books of the Hebrew Bible as corresponding to the 22 alphabetic Hebrew letters. 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. Once the 22 books of the Hebrew canon were authorized and placed by Ezra the priest within the archives of the Temple as the ordained Scriptures for Israel, no other books could be canonized in the Hebrew language. Figuratively, all the Hebrew letters have been used up. If any further revelation

§ E. W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 10, “The Spiritual Significance of Numbers.”

were to be forthcoming, it would have to be in another language. The next addition to the divine canon was of course the New Testament which was written in the Greek language. (Martin, p. 64)

In light of these facts, of the completeness of the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures or Tanakh (Old Testament), one might conclude that there was no need, nor could there be any place for any addition to the Tanakh. Yet with the twenty-two books of the “Former Testament” combined with the twenty-seven of the “Latter Testament” for a combined total of 49 books in all Martin points out that we have arrived at something that is very special, indeed: seven times seven, which expresses “double or emphasized completion” (Martin, p. 65).

The number 49 is a far cry from the 66 books as they are currently divided in our modern Bibles. Six is the biblical number of man, while seven is that of YHVH. Men, down through the centuries, for one reason and another, have tampered with the divisions of the books of the Bible and now we have 66 instead of 49.

What is the point of our whole discussion here? It is simply this: if one book is removed from the present canon of Scripture, as some Bible teachers are suggesting that we do, the whole order and symmetry of Scripture is destroyed. But there is more.

Martin has discovered that there is even a greater symmetry to the canon of Scripture than we have thus far seen. He notes that the Word of Elohim is subdivided into seven divisions: The Torah (the Law of Moses), The Prophets, the Writings, The Gospels and Acts, The General Epistles, The Epistles of Paul and The Book of Revelation<sup>¶</sup>. At the center of the 49 total books in the original Bible is what Martin calls the “New Testament Pentateuch” comprising of the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts” three of which were written by the chief apostles (or their amanuensis [scribal secretaries]) of the New Testament who, as we have already seen, were used of YHVH to canonize the New Testament: Peter, Paul and John. Preceding these five books (the Torah of the Apostolic Scriptures) are the 22 books of the Tanakh, and proceeding are the remaining 22 books of the New Testament. These five Gospels (including Acts) form the very center of the entire biblical record\*\*.

So while the five books of the Tanakh’s Torah are foundational in understanding the Written Word of YHVH, so the five books of the New Testament Torah are foundational in understanding the Word of Elohim made flesh: Yeshua the Living Torah-Word of Elohim. As there are 22 books that precede the Apostolic Scriptures with a primary focus on the Written Word of YHVH, so there are 22 books which proceed the Pentateuch (Torah) of the New Testament, which primarily discuss Yeshua, the Living Word of Elohim. In the center of it all, perfectly balanced as if on a set of scales, is the Written and Living Word of Elohim come together in the Person and word of YHVH-Yeshua, the Redeemer, Savior and Master of mankind. It is here that the Good News of salvation through repentance from sin, and acceptance of Yeshua’s atoning sacrifice on the cross leading to entrance into the kingdom of Elohim is presented. If we lose even one book from either the Tanakh or the Apostolic Scriptures the perfect balance and symmetry of the YHVH’s Scriptures are thrown out of balance. The scales would then either tilt toward the letter (the Tanakh) or toward the spirit (the Apostolic Scriptures) of YHVH’s Word, or otherwise stated, toward legalism or toward licence. The perfect balance is in the middle in the identity, mission, work and Personage of Yeshua the Messiah.

## **A Divergence of Opinion, Same Conclusion: Hebrews Is In the Canon**

A discussion of the subject of the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures would not be complete without addressing the issue of the so-called “disputed books.” Why? Because there are Bible teachers who wave the red flag of the “disputed books,” it seems, in an effort to cast a shadow of doubt on either certain books contained in the accepted New Testament canon, or to call into question the entire corpus of Apostolic Scriptures. Only Elohim knows their true motives for doing this. Some may do so in search of “truth.” Others, do it as a way to undermine the veracity of the Apostolic Scriptures, and to eventually question the Gospel message itself—especially the deity, incarnation and salvific work of Messiah Yeshua. How sad and tragic that, ostensibly, in search of the truth, the very truth they seek alludes them and they often end up believing the bigger and more damning lie that certain (or all) of the New Testament books do not belong in the canon of Scripture!

Unlike those Messianic authors we have quoted at the beginning of this work who give no shred of supporting documentation for their stand against the canon of Scripture, we will not ask you to believe what we say *just*

¶ Ibid., “Geographical Design of the Holy Scriptures,” <http://www.askelm.com/restoring/res999.htm>.

\*\* This information is available on Martin’s web site in diagram form: <http://www.askelm.com/restoring/res000a.pdf>.

because *we said it*. Again, any valid study of the canon of Scripture *must* be grounded in the facts, otherwise we are simply presenting hearsay evidence and the unfounded opinions of men, and we have failed to “do our homework.” On this basis, let us proceed with this study.

This author could find no evidence to support the notion presented by some Bible teachers as “indisputable fact” that, according to them, “the Book of Hebrews is one of the last books put in the New Testament. It was included in the New Testament by Jerome, the Bishop of Rome (the pope) [sic] in the fourth century.” First, Jerome was neither a bishop of Rome, nor a pope, and second, if such evidence exists that he alone was responsible for the inclusion of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament canon, then scholarly and historical sources need to be referenced. For Bible teachers to put out as fact information that is not fact, and then to expect their constituents to believe it as fact “just because they said so” is reckless, irresponsible and is poor leadership. To eviscerate the canon of Scripture and then to expect others to believe them just because they said it is unacceptable! Such an approach does not serve to advance the cause of truth, nor does it improve the credibility of the Messianic Movement in the least.

Below, we provide the reader with many quotes from scholarly sources based on their studies of history regarding the Book of Hebrews and other disputed books, which are part of the Apostolic Scriptures. There is a divergence of opinions presented here, but none of them question the Books of Hebrews’ placement in the canon or its early authorship. In fact, there are many scholars who believe it to be a product of the first century and that it was accepted as authoritative in the beginning of the second century.

Among those who hold to the view of the later rather than earlier acceptance of Hebrew is Prof. C. F. D. Moule. “There was at first doubters in the East and many in the West. But it was indispensable; it was compatible with Pauline doctrine; and the prevailing opinion of the eastern Churches was eventually accepted—that it was Pauline (Moffatt, *I.L.N.T.*, p. 431)” (Moule, pp. 190–191). Prof. Abraham accepts this same view: “Two decades before the end of the second century the special status of the four gospels was secure. In the same time frame, the Pauline corpus was treated as worthy of a distinct place in the life of the Church. Thereafter the story of the acceptance of the other books into this privileged circle is a murky one. From Eusebius we know that around A.D. 330 the books finding the greatest difficulty were the Gospel according to the Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. The Gospel according to the Hebrews was rejected in the West, as was Revelation at first in the East. The fate of the smaller Catholic Epistles is even more difficult to unravel. By the time of Athanasius’ Easter Letter, however, the list that was eventually accepted by the Church was complete. It was left for various synods and councils to make the final demarcation” (Abraham, pp. 32–34).

British theologian, Dr. E. F. Scott, believes that, though Hebrews and Revelation were disputed books, and were eventually accepted, other New Testament books were disputed after Hebrews. “Hebrews and Revelation eventually won their place, in spite of their failure to meet the required tests; but there were five writings which were long kept outside the New Testament, or remained only on the outer fringe of it—Second Peter, Jude, James, Second and Third John. The Epistle of James was highly esteemed, but its authorship by a great Apostle was acknowledged to be uncertain. Still more dubious was the origin of Jude and Second Peter. Against the two Epistles of John, there seems to have been no objection except that they were so short and theologically so unimportant. If books that taught unsound doctrine were to be excluded, must the rule be also enforced against writings which taught no doctrine at all?” (Scott, pp. 290–291).

Both Moffatt and Zahn discuss the canonicity issues relating to the Epistle to the Hebrews and show how its slow acceptance in Western churches was due to its uncertain authorship. It seems that if Hebrews could have definitively been proven to be of Pauline authorship it would have readily been accepted as canonical, since the early church showed favoritism to the writings of the “Apostle to the Gentiles” (Moffatt, p. 430ff; Zahn, vol. 2. p. 301). “The scholars of the Alexandrian church, where it first gained canonical position, felt obvious difficulties in the Pauline authorship which was bound up with its claim to canonicity” (Moffatt, p. 432).

The first instance where Hebrews is quoted by early church fathers is in Clement of Rome’s epistle “who quotes [Hebrews] tacitly and with his usual freedom” (Clement, 34.2–5). Other early church writers who quoted or referenced Hebrews (going from early second century onward) were Barnabas, Ignatius, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, probably Irenaeus, Tertullian, Pinytus and Theophilus of Antioch. It was omitted in Marcion’s and the Muratorian canons (along with 1 Peter and James) (Moffatt, pp. 430–431). “The circulation of [Hebrews] as an edifying treatise, however, was wider than its recognition as a canonical Scripture, which was slow and fitful, especially in the West. It was eventually included in the Syrian canon of Paul’s epistles, and



accepted even at Rome as Pauline and therefore canonical (or, as canonical and therefore Pauline)” (Moffatt, p. 431).

Zahn admits that Hebrews was slow to gain acceptance in many areas, but that this was due to its uncertain authorship. “Regarding the opinion which prevailed among the Greek Churches in Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece in the time of Clement and Origen with reference to the origin of Hebrews we have no direct information. In the West, Hebrews was not unknown from early times, but until after the middle of the fourth century it was excluded from the collection of Paul’s letters and from the New Testament in general” (Zahn, vol. 2, p. 301). Zahn’s belief that Hebrews was excluded from the New Testament canon prior to the fourth century is significant, in Zahn’s mind, in light of the fact that it was considered to be “an important didactic writing by Clement of Rome, Justin, who wrote in Rome, the younger Theodotus ... Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian, but which nevertheless was persistently excluded from the New Testament canon in Italy, North Africa, and Gaul” on the basis that it was intended for the Hebrews (Jews) rather than for the Gentile Christian church. But since it was purported by many to have been authored by Paul, and due to his great acceptance in the Christian churches, it was finally accepted. The fact that the Gospel of Matthew, which was originally designed for the Jews and Jewish Christians, was accepted into the canon of the entire Gentile Christian church made justifiable the acceptance of Hebrews (Ibid.). Zahn agrees with Moffatt in his assessment that much of the debate over the acceptance of Hebrews into the New Testament canon was not over the contents of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but on the basis of the unresolved issue as to its authorship (Zahn, vol. 2, pp. 301–302).

A modern theologian who does not agree with Scott and Zahn is Dr. Franzmann. With regard to the period A.D. 170–20 Franzmann writes, “Three fathers of this period have in their writings left us a fairly complete picture of the situation in various parts of the church; they are Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul ..., Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian of Carthage. Their writings indicate that all but one of the 27 books were somewhere known and accepted in the Christian church; the exception is the Second Letter of Peter. They also show that there was practical unanimity in the churches on all except seven of the New Testament books. The seven are the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letter of James, the Second Letter of Peter, the Second and Third Letters of John, the Letter of Jude, and Revelation” (Franzmann, p. 290).

Prof. Gaussen’s writings in the mid-nineteenth century agrees with Franzmann. “[Hebrews and Revelation] were both recognized universally and without dissent during the first two centuries of the church, ... [which is why] Eusebius [the church historian] places them ... among the books which he calls homologomens, or undisputed” (Gaussen, p. 30).

Next we look at Fisher’s testimony. Though he does not specifically mention Hebrews, this book was considered to be of Pauline authorship by many in the early church, so we could infer that Hebrews is implied in this quotation. “There is evidence that within thirty years of the apostle’s [John] death all the Gospels and Pauline letters were known and used in all those centers from which any evidence has come down to us. It is true that some of the smaller letters were being questioned as to their authority in some quarters for perhaps another fifty years, but this was due only to uncertainty about their authorship in those particular locales. This demonstrates that acceptance was not being imposed by the actions of councils but was rather happening spontaneously through a normal response on the part of those who had learned the facts about authorship. In those places where the churches were uncertain about the authorship or apostolic approval of certain books, acceptance was slower” (*The Origin of the Bible*, Fisher, p. 70). He then goes on to note that “... Clement, Barnabas, and Ignatius all draw a clear distinction between their own and the inspired, authoritative New Testament” (*Ibid.* p. 71). This shows that there were two classifications of writings by the end of the first and beginning of the second centuries: inspired and authoritative (apostolic) and everything else.

Prof. Harris offers some expert testimony on Revelation’s slow acceptance, which gives insights into the reasons why some books were slow to be accepted in the early church as authoritative and canonical. The Book of Revelation was “[w]idely accepted in the early days, [but] was later questioned, but soon regained its place and has been secure in orthodox circles since 400. The earliest writers, Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, do not mention it. This is not too surprising, ... for in Clement’s day it had scarcely been written, and in Ignatius’ time it was perhaps not yet well known in Antioch. ... Justin mentions the book by name.... The Muratorian Canon includes the Apocalypse and ascribes it to John.... Irenaeus clearly accepts the book as from John the apostle and ascribes it to the end of Domitian’s reign (96 A.D.). Tertullian also quotes it frequently, saying it is by John the apostle. Clement of Alexandria does the same” (Harris, p. 258).

With regard to the Book of Hebrews, Harris writes that “[t]his Epistle can claim an ancient pedigree, as it

was referred to numerous times by Clement of Rome in 95 A.D., but not by name. Justin Martyr does the same as do various heretic writers” (p. 264).

We find Prof. Trobisch agreeing with Franzmann and Gaussen, but he comes at the argument from a different and novel angle. He remarks that if Zahn, Moffatt and others had had access to the ancient biblical manuscripts that have since their day been discovered, their conclusions about Hebrews probably would have been different. He writes, “There is no need to speculate about whether the Letter to the Hebrews was part of a collection of Letters of Paul in the second century, because a second-century exemplar [copy of a book or writing] of the Pauline letter collection (document Papyrus 46††) containing the letter at issue, actually exists.” [Chester Beatty discovered them in 1930 and his collection is currently on display in Dublin, Ireland and at the University of Michigan.] In light of these facts, Trobisch continues, “Are we not forced by the evidence to interpret the discussion in the early church about the authenticity of certain biblical writings as a reaction to an already published book? From this perspective, the same documented debates that are usually evaluated to demonstrate a gradual growth process of the canon serve instead as proof that the Canonical Edition of the Christian Bible [a first century published version of the Apostolic Scriptures] was finished, published, and widely used” (Trobisch, p. 37). Commenting on Zahn’s evaluation of the Book of Hebrews’ questioned place in the canon of the early church Trobisch states, “It is not Theodor Zahn’s fault that he did not appropriately evaluate the manuscript evidence. The Codex Sinaiticus had just been discovered when Zahn published his work, and a reliable transcript of the Codex Vaticanus was not yet available. The high value of both witnesses for the reconstruction of the original text was not yet established among scholars. The impressive number of papyri accessible to us today had not yet been discovered. Zahn certainly is not to be blamed. Today, however, New Testament research has to deal with and evaluate the rich new manuscript evidence” (Ibid.).

Those who presently question the place of Hebrews in the canon, according to modern New Testament literary scholar, Prof. David Trobisch, are operating on outdated information based on the opinions of nineteenth-century scholarship. Since that time, many new ancient manuscripts have been discovered that lay to rest the notion that Hebrews was disputed and lay outside the recognized canon until late in the fourth century. Otherwise stated, in analyzing all the facts and evidence currently available on the subject, the conclusion is inescapable that Hebrews belongs in the canon, and that the apostles placed it there themselves in the first century. We will discuss this issue further below.

In review, we see that prior to the fourth century A.D. in certain quarters there was a debate as to the veracity of several New Testament books. That debate was due in part to the lack of instant and mass communications we enjoy in our modern world. News traveled slowly. Some books were not accepted because there was no quick way to determine their authority. Keep in mind that the heretics were also very active at this time writing many books of their own claiming that they were written by the apostles or ancient biblical writers. Furthermore, in the early years of the Common Era, the Christian church did not resemble modern denominational Christianity. There was, as of yet, no over-arching governing body or council to which all churches in all cities could look for final authority on any matter. The final authority was still the bishop or overseer over each local congregation. Therefore, it was up to each local shepherd to watch over his local flock and to not allow spurious or heretical materials to come into his assembly. (Interestingly, this is currently the exact state of affairs in the modern day Messianic/Hebrew Roots Movement.) This fact accounts for much of the debate over several of the disputed books of the canon.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was but one of several such disputed books. In fact, as we have seen, long after Hebrews was accepted by the majority of churches there was still much debate as to whether 2 Peter, Jude, James, 2 and 3 John should be accepted. If one can reason that there are grounds for tossing Hebrews out of the canon, then one can reason that there are even more grounds for removing the other five. This is dangerous ground to tread. Woe be to the man that ventures down this path!

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††“The earliest substantial New Testament manuscript known to exist is a slightly mutilated codex of Paul’s epistles from about the year 200. It consists of eighty-six leaves, measuring originally about 11 by 6½ inches. It is thought originally to have contained 104 leaves, with eighteen leaves now missing from the front and back. The existing leaves contain (in this order) the last eight chapters of Romans; all of Hebrews; virtually all of 1–2 Corinthians; all of Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians; and two chapters of 1 Thessalonians. All of the leaves have lost some lines at the bottom through deterioration. Leaves of the manuscript first came to light in 1930 among the wares of a native antiquities vendor in Cairo, and these were immediately purchased by a private collector, Mr. Chester Beatty of London. Soon afterwards the rest of the manuscript was acquired from the same dealer by Beatty and by representatives of the University of Michigan. 30 of the leaves are now at the University of Michigan and 56 are in the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin, Ireland” (Quoted from <http://www.bible-researcher.com/papy46.html>; see also the University of Michigan’s web site on this document: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/pap/kr2/reading/Paul/about.html>).

While the above-quoted scholars debate the disputed books and attempt to prove their acceptance on the basis of quotes from the writings of the early church fathers, Trobisch, in analyzing the same historical document comes to an entirely different conclusion, thus challenging the conventional wisdom as to the time frame of the canonization of the Apostolic Scriptures. He says, “The authority of specific writings was questioned as early as the second half of the second century. Many older studies of the history of the canon, in my opinion, have drawn the wrong conclusion from this observation. The traditional interpretations assert that these discussions reflect a debate about which writings should be included in the Christian Bible. But with the uniform manuscript evidence in mind, the critical remarks of the church fathers can be better interpreted as a historical critical reaction to an existing publication.” He says that this debate as to the authorship and authority of individual writings continues among biblical scholars to this very day, but the publication to which the early church fathers were referring was what Trobisch calls *The Canonical Edition of the Christian Bible*—a version of the New Testament that was both canonized by the apostles and their assistants and published in the first century! This version included all the current books of the New Testament including the so-called disputed books (Trobisch, p. 35).

## In the Writings of the Early Church Fathers All the Books of the Canon are Mentioned

In this section we provide evidence from the historical record itself showing how the early church fathers themselves used and quoted the Apostolic Scriptures—specifically which books. In the very early part of the second century nearly all the books are referenced. Certainly by the late second century all the books of the present New Testament canon are accounted for.

In epistle of 1 Clement [the bishop of Rome writing about 95 A.D.], written around A.D. 95, there are allusions to or quotations from five of Paul’s epistles (Rom., 1 Cor., Eph., 1 Tim., Titus) as well as from James, John’s Gospel and Acts. Additionally, Clement quotes directly from the Epistle to the Hebrews five times. In reference to Clement, Harris states, “His clear reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews is of special interest, since that letter was later denied in some quarters” (p. 203). “Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, who was martyred before 117 A.D., has left us seven letters and is another very important witness which goes back virtually to the days of the apostles. Like Clement, Ignatius refers once to a Pauline epistle by name: Ephesians. Westcott shows reference also to 1 Corinthians, Philipians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon” (p. 204).

On Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John and was martyred in 155–156 A.D., Westcott says that Polycarp’s use of Scriptural language is so frequent that it is wholly unreasonable to doubt that he was acquainted with the chief parts of our canon. Westcott shows Polycarp referencing Matthew, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 Peter, and 1 John (Harris, p. 206). Not only that, but Polycarp quotes Psalm 4:5 and Ephesians 4:26 side-by-side and calls them the “Sacred Scriptures” and “Scriptures” (*Epist. of Polycarp*, chap. 12). This is the first instance of an early church father placing a book of the New Testament on a par with the Hebrew Scriptures. This was not the Catholic Church of the fourth century making this statement, but Polycarp within fifty to sixty years after the death of the Apostle John stating this!

Harris then summarizes the writings of the first thirty years after the death of the last apostle with regard to their referencing the books of the New Testament. “[I]n a casual but revealing manner, the bulk of the writings of the New Testament were already, in this early age, known, and used, as profitable. Each of the three orthodox authors recommends at least one of the Pauline Epistles ... by name, and by Basilides, the heretic, two are specifically called ‘Scripture.’ Barnabas similarly refers to Matthew. All the Gospels except Mark (and this so closely parallels Matthew in material that it, too, may be included) are utilized, as are all of the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews (not to prejudge its authorship). In addition, James, 1 John, 1 Peter, and probably 2 Peter, and Revelation are witnessed to, leaving only the two small Epistles of John and the single chapter of Jude without attestation. ... Before the close of the first thirty years after the death of the apostle John, there are three quotations of different New Testament books (including a Gospel) as Scripture, and by twenty years after John’s death, three other Epistles of Paul are referred to by name in a manner implying the fullest authority—there is no contradictory voice” (Ibid., pp. 208–209).

In addition, Harris notes that Justin, writing about 148 A.D. references the four Gospels, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews and Revelation (Ibid., pp. 212–213). Harris adds, “Tertullian

[A.D. 150–220] ... is explicit and quite in accord with the views of the Fathers back to Clement, one hundred years earlier, in so far as these men have spoken. He has a corpus of Scripture of absolute authority equal to the Old Testament. He refers by name or number to the four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen Pauline Epistles, Hebrews, Jude and Revelation. He quotes also from 1 John, 1 Peter, but omits reference to James, 2 and 3 John, and 2 Peter” (Ibid., p. 253). Furthermore, “Eusebius [writing in the fourth century] says Clement of Alexandria [born about 150 A. D. and to be distinguished from Clement of Rome] used all the books of our New Testament except 2 Peter and 2 John. Clement uses the phrase ‘Law and Prophets, and Gospels and apostles.’ He ascribes full authority to the apostles” (Ibid., p. 254). And finally, Origen who died in A.D. 254, according to Westcott, was “acquainted with all the books which are received at present, and received as apostolic all those which were recognized by Clement. The others he used, but with a certain reserve and hesitation, arising from a want of information as to their history, rather than from any positive grounds of suspicion” (Ibid., p. 255).

## Conclusion

In this work we have attempted to provide ample scholarly and historical evidence to demonstrate the following:

- ☞ The 27 books of the Apostolic Scriptures would not have been acknowledged as being “Canon” if they had not first been recognized by the apostles of Yeshua and the Body of Believers in the first and second centuries A.D. as having the same authority as the earlier Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). And the latter Christian church would not have accepted these books as canon, and subsequently affirmed their canonicity if they had not felt that these books carried the weight of apostolic authority. This is perhaps the most important point we have made in this work. Historical records from the first and early second-centuries show us that the early Believers had faith in the same Apostolic Scriptures that we have today, so why shouldn’t we?
- ☞ Not all New Testament scholars believe that the Apostolic Scriptures were canonized by the early Catholic Church in the fourth century.
- ☞ There are many scholars who, though holding to the fourth century canonization view, still admit that (a) the Apostolic Scriptures were written and accepted as authoritative by the end of the first century, and (b) a de facto canon was in place at that time, though no over-arching ecclesiastical body had yet recognized it, since no such body was to exist for another 250 years or so!
- ☞ There is substantial evidence from the earliest church fathers writing in the period from A.D. 95 to 120 that all the present books of the New Testament were used and recognized as authoritative.
- ☞ Not only were all the writings of the apostles recognized and quoted from, but these same early church writers recognized them as Scripture.
- ☞ There is substantial evidence within the Apostolic Scriptures themselves to give credence to the idea that some body of individuals under the auspices of the apostles themselves edited, then published, in effect, canonizing the Apostolic Scriptures by the end of the first century.
- ☞ If the Book of Hebrews was later questioned by church leaders, it was not because Hebrews was not accepted as canonical by the earliest church leaders, but because of confusion by later church leaders over the authorship of Hebrews. We could find no record that Hebrews was added later by church leaders because it somehow substantiated their anti-nomian (anti-Torah) theologies. Those who assert this have yet to produce historical evidence to justify their claims. Therefore, until they do, their claims should be considered biased and bogus.
- ☞ If it can be proven that the Book of Hebrews does not belong in the canon because of its being one of the “disputed” books, then we have even a greater justification, based on the historical record, to question, if not jettison entirely, the books of 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James and Jude from the canon of Scripture.

These are the facts from the historical record and from the world’s leading authorities on the subject. Until new historical evidence and data comes to light these are the facts we currently have to work with. One can choose to ignore the facts or to accept them. That is a matter of personal choice. But whatever side of this debate you choose to agree with, you must live with the eternal consequences of your actions.



As a former shepherd and defender of sheep from predators for many years on the family farm, and now as a shepherd (pastor) of YHVH's precious spiritual sheep, this author feels a great responsibility to be a watchman over YHVH's sheep and to defend them from spiritual predators (false teachers). If you have fallen under the influence of teachings currently circulating that question the books of the New Testament, and if you are at all toying with the notion of eviscerating portions of the New Testament, you are strongly urged to reconsider. This is a very serious issue. Admittedly, in most of our English Bibles there are some anti-Torah translation-bias issues that need correction, but that does not justify removing books from the canon of Scripture.

What your responsibility is, therefore, in light of these issues is to roll your sleeves up, get to work as a good Berean, search out the Scriptures and study them to show yourself approved as a good workman learning to rightly interpret YHVH's Word. Study the original languages. Pray for wisdom and discernment from the Father above. Then never forget one thing: If you do not understand a passage of Scripture, the problem is not with the Scripture (unless it has been poorly translated from the original language), it is with your understanding of it! Never, ever abdicate to someone else, no matter how anointed they may seem or how popular they may be, your responsibility before your Creator and Judge to study the issues yourself.

We conclude with these scriptural warnings about false teachers in the last days:

Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron. (1 Tim. 4:1-2)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not. (2 Pet. 2:1-3)

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