

Theology on the *Web.org.uk*

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Scripture* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_scripture-01.php

SCRIPTURE

THE QUARTERLY OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION

VOL. IV. No. 7

JULY 1950

EDITORIAL

After two years of unremitting labour, our Treasurer, Mr Charles Oulton has had to relinquish his office owing to pressure of other work. It has indeed always been a matter for amazement how he has managed to do all the work entailed, in view of his many commitments, which necessitate travelling to various parts of the country. Yet he has in fact conscientiously cared for the affairs of the Catholic Biblical Association as if he had nothing else to do. He hands over now to Mr L. H. Thwaytes, 141A Kensington High Street, London, W.8, to whom we extend a cordial welcome. There is unfortunately another change of address to record. Your editor and secretary, after a short period in Kensington, has now been appointed Rector of Warwick Street Church, and his address will in future be 24 Golden Square, London, W.1. Some consolation, however, may be derived from the fact that this appointment is a good deal more permanent than the previous one. Changes of address are irritating to members but not less so to those who change. Were the Association able to afford the expense of an office of its own, no doubt this would be avoided, but we have no capital worth speaking of, and our income only just about covers expenses, even though the services of the committee are given gratis. With further help, however, now being obtained in the way of propaganda, it may be hoped that our position will soon be improved.

The Dominican School of Biblical Studies, Jerusalem. Some months ago the Dominicans of Jerusalem hit upon the happy idea of issuing from time to time a '*Lettre de Jérusalem*' addressed to friends and past students of theirs. The varying fortunes through which the Holy Land has passed in recent times naturally stimulates our interest, not to say anxiety, and it is encouraging to know that in spite of the damage suffered, the Dominican School has been able to start lectures again this year with seven students. The second Letter describes much else: the fire at the Holy Sepulchre, Christmas at Bethlehem, heavy snowfalls in January, results of examinations, archæological excursions, recent publications of the school. We look forward to further news and further progress.

Biblical lectures. The course on *The Background of Bible Study* given by Dr Leahy during last autumn and winter at the Newman Centre, Portman Square, London, was reasonably well attended—the average attendance being about thirty. The interest shown was good and sustained. Altogether it was an encouraging beginning of what we trust will be regular series of lectures at the Newman Centre. Other courses are at present in preparation and these will be notified to members and advertised.

THE ORDER OF THE GOSPELS

THE object of this note is to inquire into the grounds upon which the traditional order of the Gospels is based. Is it a chronological order, or a literary one based upon the greater or lesser similarity between them? And is the testimony of tradition of such a strength as to compel us to accept the present order as a well established and indisputable fact? Let us examine as briefly as possible all the available evidence.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE. 1. *Manuscript evidence.* We have no evidence of the manner in which the original manuscripts of the Gospels, or the first copies, were collected and united into one book. During the papyrus period, which extended to the beginning of the fourth century A.D., each Gospel was written on a separate scroll; the four Gospels, or any two of them would require a roll much larger than the normal size (F. G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 1912, p. 35). The first complete Bibles belong to the fourth and the fifth centuries, and in them the order Matthew, Mark, Luke, John appears already fixed. We can go a century further back. In the Chester Beatty collection of biblical papyri, recently published by Sir F. G. Kenyon, there is a manuscript of the third century, in a codex form, containing fragments of the four Gospels in the order Matt. Mark, Luke, John. There is therefore evidence reaching into the third century for the present order of the Gospels.

Some MSS, however, arrange the Gospels in a different order. Thus the Codex Bezae of the fifth or the sixth century arranges the Gospels in the order which was very early adopted in the Western Church, i.e., Matt., John, Luke, Mark. In the Washington Manuscript of the Gospels (*W*) of the fifth century the order is Matt., John, Luke, Mark. In the Old Latin version they are arranged in the order Matt., John, Luke, Mark. In the Curetonian Syriac version (fifth century) the order is Matt., Mark, John, Luke.

Therefore the majority of Greek MSS of the fourth to the sixth centuries exhibit the usual order Matt., Mark, Luke, John, while the