

Why the Inspired Biblical Writings Disappeared

What Happened to
the Original Text(s)
of the First Testament?



ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

POVERTY RUSSIA

UKRAINE

INVASION

PUTIN ZELENSKY

COLLAPSE PRICES

BIDEN

POOR CHILD POVERTY

HIGH FOOD COSTS

SAUDI ARABIA



A large, 3D-rendered red button with the word "RESET" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The button is positioned in the upper center of the frame, appearing to float above a view of the Earth from space. The Earth shows the Americas and parts of Europe and Africa, with a blue atmosphere and white clouds. The background is a dark blue space with several white stars.

RESET

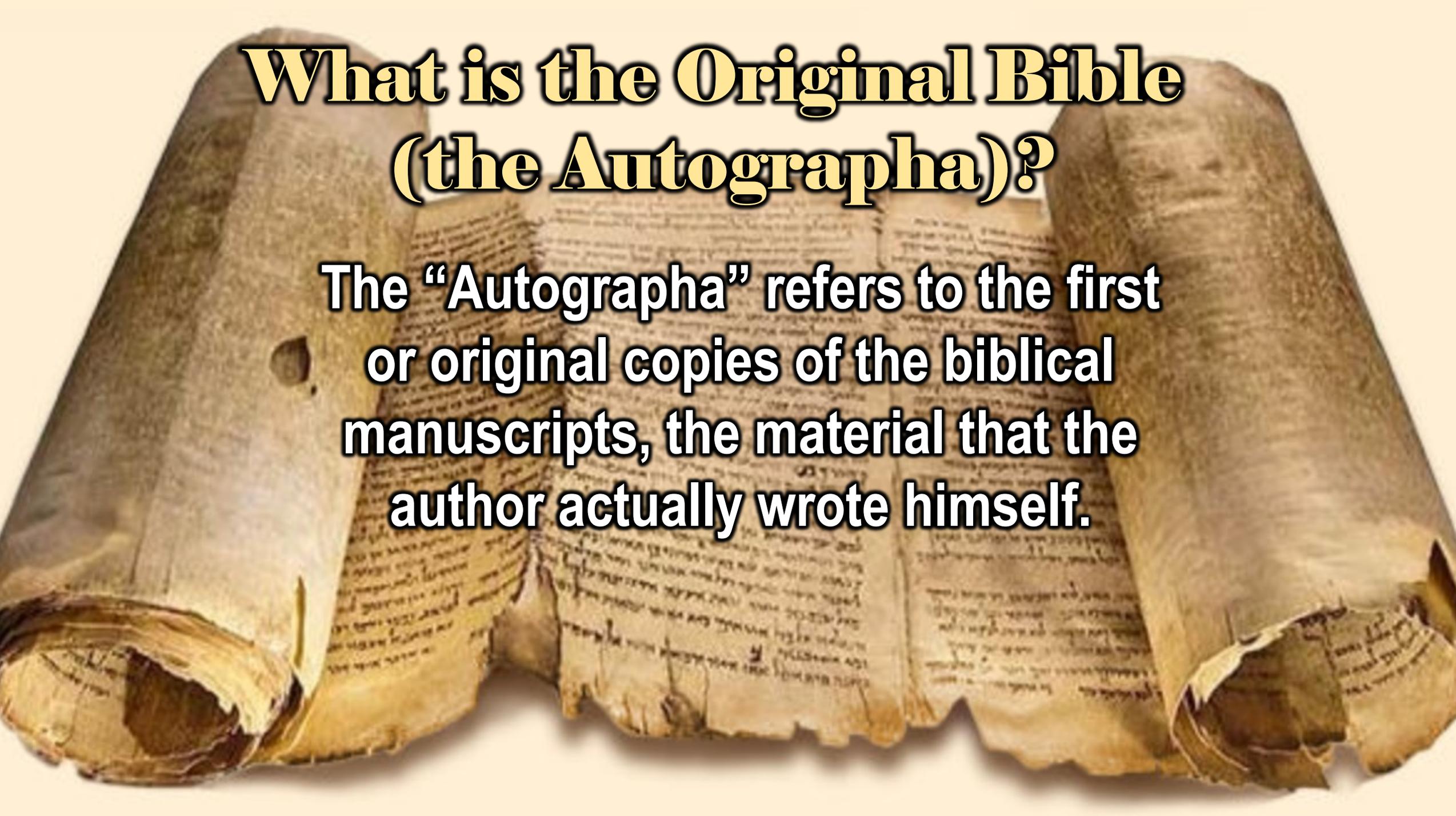
**Critical Issues
for Understanding
the Old Testament Text**



“Those in ministry must close the gap between the church and the academy. We have to educate believers. Instead of trying to isolate laypeople from critical scholarship, we need to insulate them. They need to be ready for the barrage, because it is coming. The intentional dumbing down of the church for the sake of filling more pews will ultimately lead to defection from Christ.” **Daniel B. Wallace**

Evangelical Theological Society Doctrinal Statement (1949)

**“The Bible alone,
and the Bible in its entirety,
is the Word of God written
and is therefore inerrant
in the autographs.”**



What is the Original Bible (the Autographa)?

The “Autographa” refers to the first or original copies of the biblical manuscripts, the material that the author actually wrote himself.



**We do not have
AUTOGRAPHS
(original manuscripts)**

**We have
APOGRAPHS
(manuscript copies)**

The disappearance (or absence) of the original inspired manuscripts affects the issue of inspiration and inerrancy in relation to the Bible we possess.

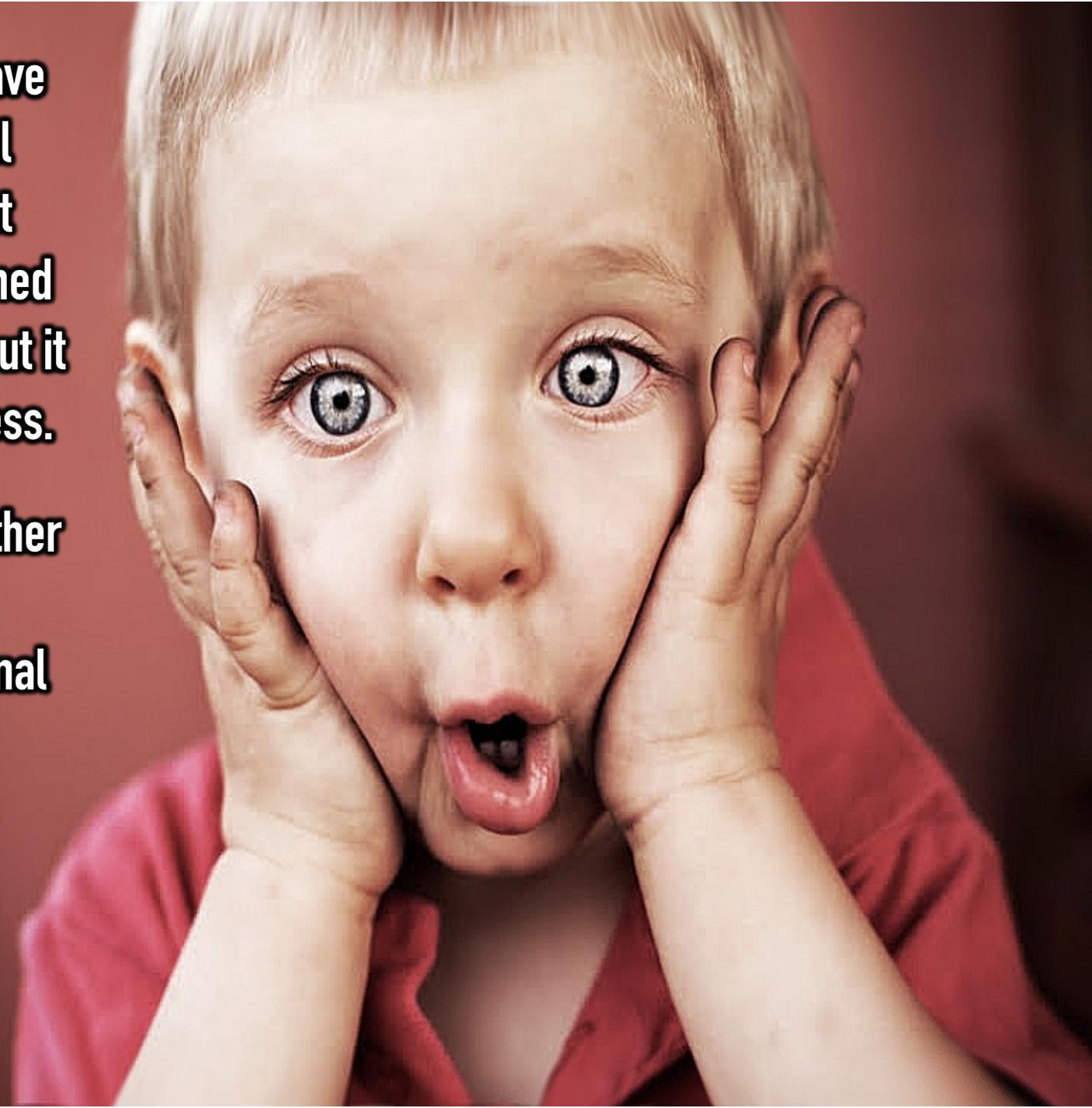
CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

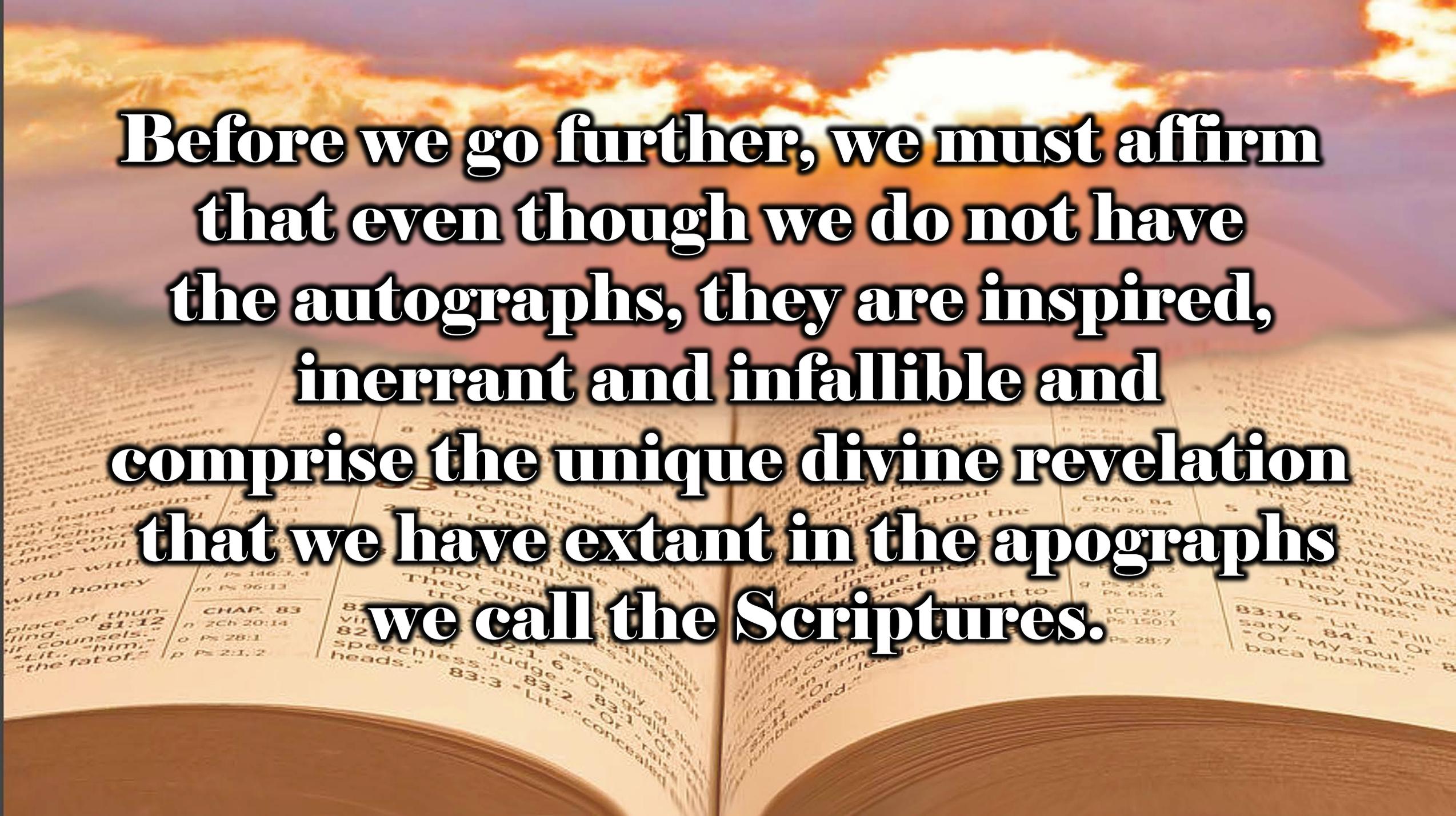
The Question of Textual Integrity

At present we have no manuscripts of the Old Testament between the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls (2nd century B.C.) and the Masoretic Text (10th century A.D.). The differences that exist between the MT, the Dead Sea texts, the Samaritan Pentateuch and versions of the Hebrew Bible (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate, Ethiopic, Coptic, et. al.), forms the debate on the integrity of the underlying Hebrew text of the MT, from which our English Old Testaments are translated.

The average Christian likely believes, if they have ever thought about it, that there was an original manuscript of the Bible from which our present English Bibles were copied. Maybe it is enshrined somewhere in some cathedral or monastery, but it was just an older version of the ones we possess.

They are often quite surprised to learn that neither we Christians, nor Jews, nor Muslims nor any existing religion, possesses a copy of the original text of their sacred scriptures. The issues connected with this reality and the differences among our existing English translations may cause believers to doubt the accuracy and therefore the truthfulness of their Bibles.



An open book is shown from a top-down perspective, with its pages slightly curved. The background is a vibrant sunset or sunrise with a bright sun partially obscured by clouds, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. The text is overlaid on the book's pages.

Before we go further, we must affirm that even though we do not have the autographs, they are inspired, inerrant and infallible and comprise the unique divine revelation that we have extant in the apographs we call the Scriptures.

The Fact of Inscripturation

“All Scripture is *inspired by God* ...”

2 Timothy 3:16

πάσα γραφή

The totality of sacred Scripture
(the entire Old Testament)

For inclusion of the New Testament
by this term see 2 Pet. 3:15)

θεόπνευστος

God-breathed

Cf. Syriac: “All scripture
which by the Spirit
is written”

God’s involvement in the process of inscripturation, during which the entirety of the Scriptures came into being, demonstrates those Scriptures came from him.

The Act of Inscripturation

“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever *made* (ἤνέχθη) by an act of human will, but men *moved by* (φερόμενοι) *the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*” 2 Peter 1:20–21

ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι

“by the Holy Spirit were carried along”

ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ “spoke from GOD”



“And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, **the Word of God**, which also performs its work in you who believe.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13



**What Scripture says,
God says.**



Belief and the Bible

At the heart of the question of what to believe about the Autographa is the question of whether or not we can *believe* the Bible. After all, if the Bible can be thought to have been changed or lost in part, or to be missing parts that tell a different story, why should it be believed? Faith is the absence of doubt, so if the Bible is in doubt, faith in its message is conflicted, if not constrained. However, even if the choice of some words in the Bible or the understanding of some events in the Bible are difficult for scholars to decide, this does not discount the whole of the Bible.

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES TODAY

“Old Testament studies have undergone a remarkable shift in the last 50 years . . . from arguing that the unique features of the Old Testament must presuppose revelation in some form to denying that there are any unique features since we know that revelation is an impossibility. Nothing has changed in the biblical statements that earlier scholars found so radically different from those of Israel’s neighbors. Rather, it is the conclusion that the biblical ideas *must* have evolved from the ancient Near Eastern ones . . . the biblical ideas *cannot* be essentially different but *must* be essentially the same with only superficial differences.”

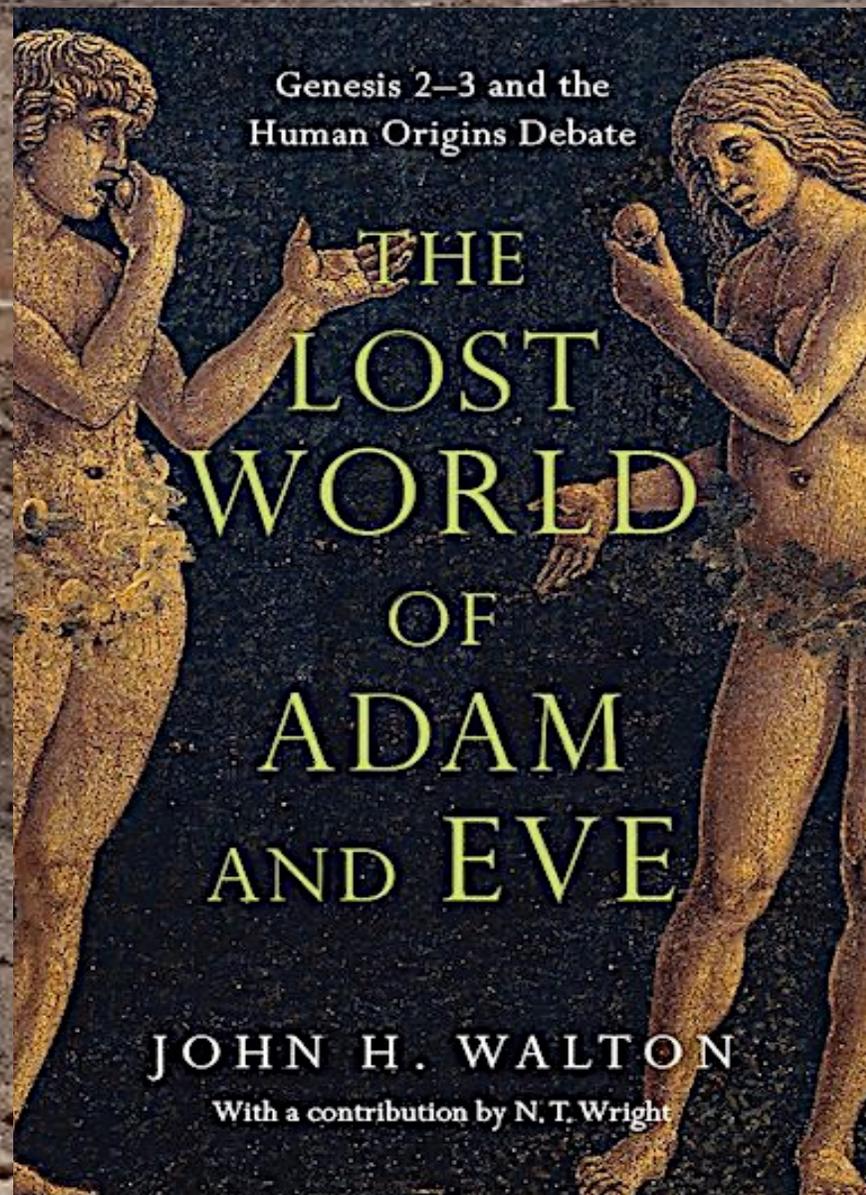
**John N. Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009) , 171
(emphasis in the original)**



WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

What has caused a reassessment of the traditional evangelical view of biblical inerrancy in the last 50 years?

1. The onset of postmodernism in evangelicalism has reduced confidence in the propositional claims of the Bible (overemphasis on the relational aspects of biblical revelation, rather than its foundational doctrinal truths: less exposition, more story-telling). This has led to Cognitive Dissonance and Deconstructionism.
2. The increasing number of evangelical students graduating with doctorates in biblical studies and theology from non-evangelical institutions (assimilation of non-evangelical perspectives such as higher criticism of the Bible, resulting in revision or modification of former views as they become professors in schools).
3. The exposure of evangelical laypeople to television programming, popular novels, and movies based on non-biblical worldviews and higher-critical assumptions with little or no refutation from the local church.

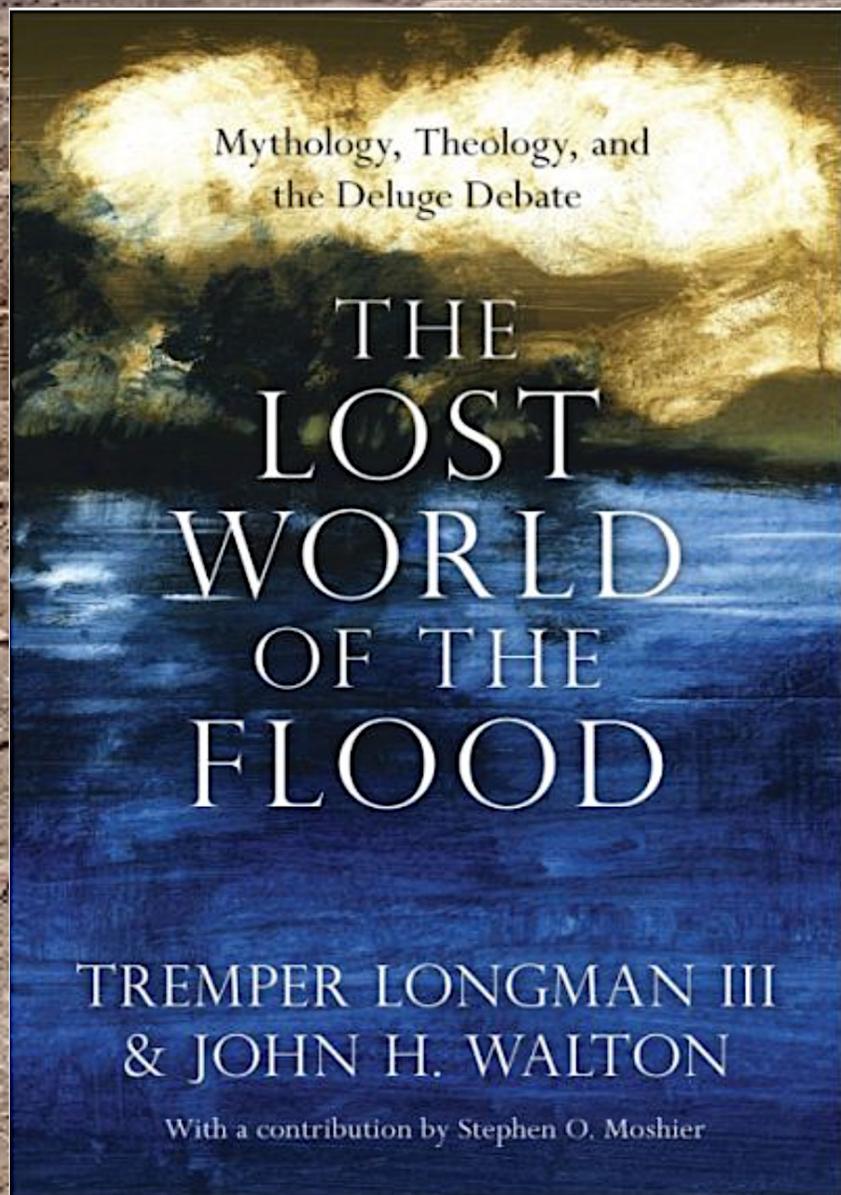


Genesis 2–3 and the
Human Origins Debate

THE
LOST
WORLD
OF
ADAM
AND EVE

JOHN H. WALTON

With a contribution by N. T. Wright



Mythology, Theology, and
the Deluge Debate

THE
LOST
WORLD
OF THE
FLOOD

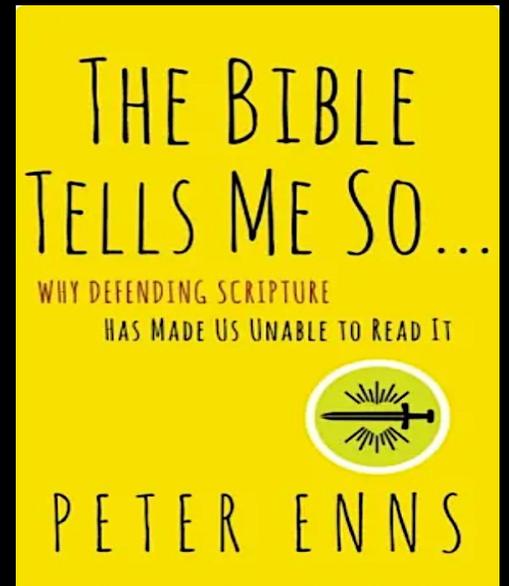
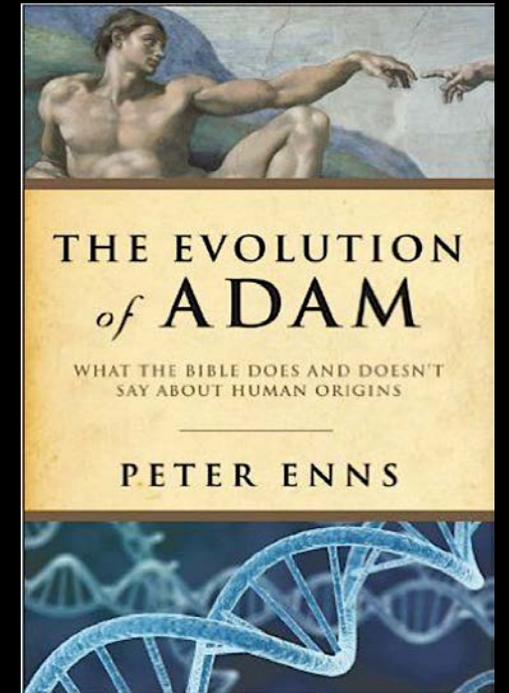
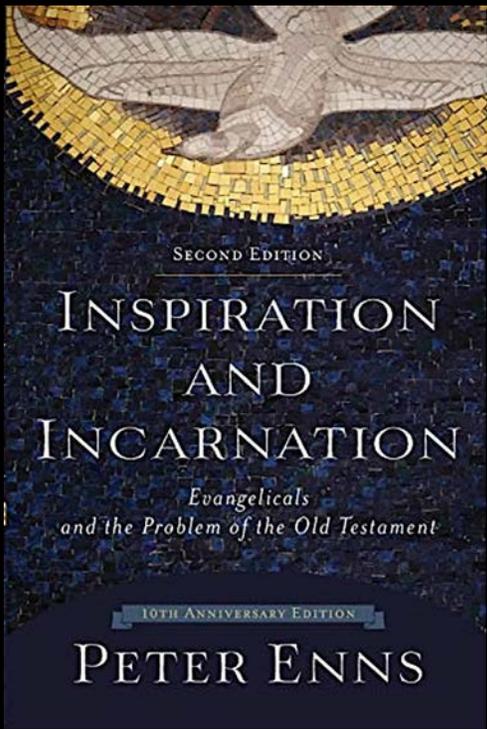
TREMPER LONGMAN III
& JOHN H. WALTON

With a contribution by Stephen O. Moshier

Peter Enns

Former Westminster Seminary professor, prolific author and a producer of homeschool Biblecurriculum, Dr. Enns now says he has outgrown evangelicalism and encourages others to do the same. He believes right-thinking people should simply discard the history presented in the Bible by relegating it to the status of Israel's national myth. Only then can they benefit from its rich story-telling.

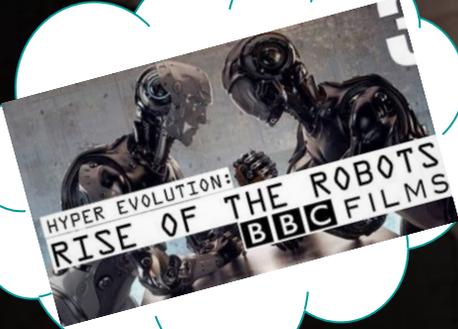
Enn's book, *Inspiration and Incarnation* challenged conservative Evangelical methods of biblical interpretation (especially inspiration and inerrancy) and was endorsed by evangelical scholars as Hugh G. M. Williamson, Bill T. Arnold, David W. Baker, Tremper Longman III, and Joel Green. He followed this work with others such as *The Evolution of Adam*, criticizing the historical Adam, and *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It*. He is a major contributor to BioLogos.



Challenges to the Old Testament in Evangelicalism

- 1. OT is Ethically Objectionable - Events considered morally wrong that redefine the character of God (violence of Flood, Canaanite genocide, slavery, sacrifice).**
- 2. OT is Culturally Unacceptable - Theological ideas that are counter-culture (traditional marriage, role of women, racism, homophobic, gender exclusive).**
- 3. OT is full of Contradictions – Two accounts of creation, differences in genealogies, different numbers for same event, gods in competition with God.**
- 4. OT is Scientifically Inaccurate – No Creation, Adam and Eve, Flood, miracles.**
- 5. OT is Historically Inaccurate – Archaeology has disproven Israelite origins (Patriarchs, Exodus, Conquest, kingdoms of David and Solomon are legendary).**
- 6. OT refuted by Jesus – Don't keep Law, Jesus' mercy and love vs. God's wrath and punishment, salvation by works in OT vs. faith alone in NT, forgive enemies vs. imprecatory psalms (cursing enemies), NT use of OT changes meaning.**

**Imbedded lies
cause doubt
of biblical truths**



“The Old Testament cannot tell us *what* happened, but only what people wanted to believe happened ... Genesis is fully mythic” - Peter Enns (Blog, Ep. 56)

Christians Must 'Unhitch' Old Testament From Their Faith, Says Andy Stanley

By [Michael Gryboski](#), Mainline Church Editor 



FAITH

Pastor says today's Christians don't need the Old Testament traditions

Got religion? Well, it's time you lost it, says the Rev. Andrew Farley in his new book, "God without Religion."

IRIE PRICE

Published 9:47 p.m. CT June 27, 2011

Why don't Pastors Preach from the Old Testament?

Ray Pritchard

Keep Believing Ministries

2008

19 Feb



Continuity – The Basis of Mythical Thinking

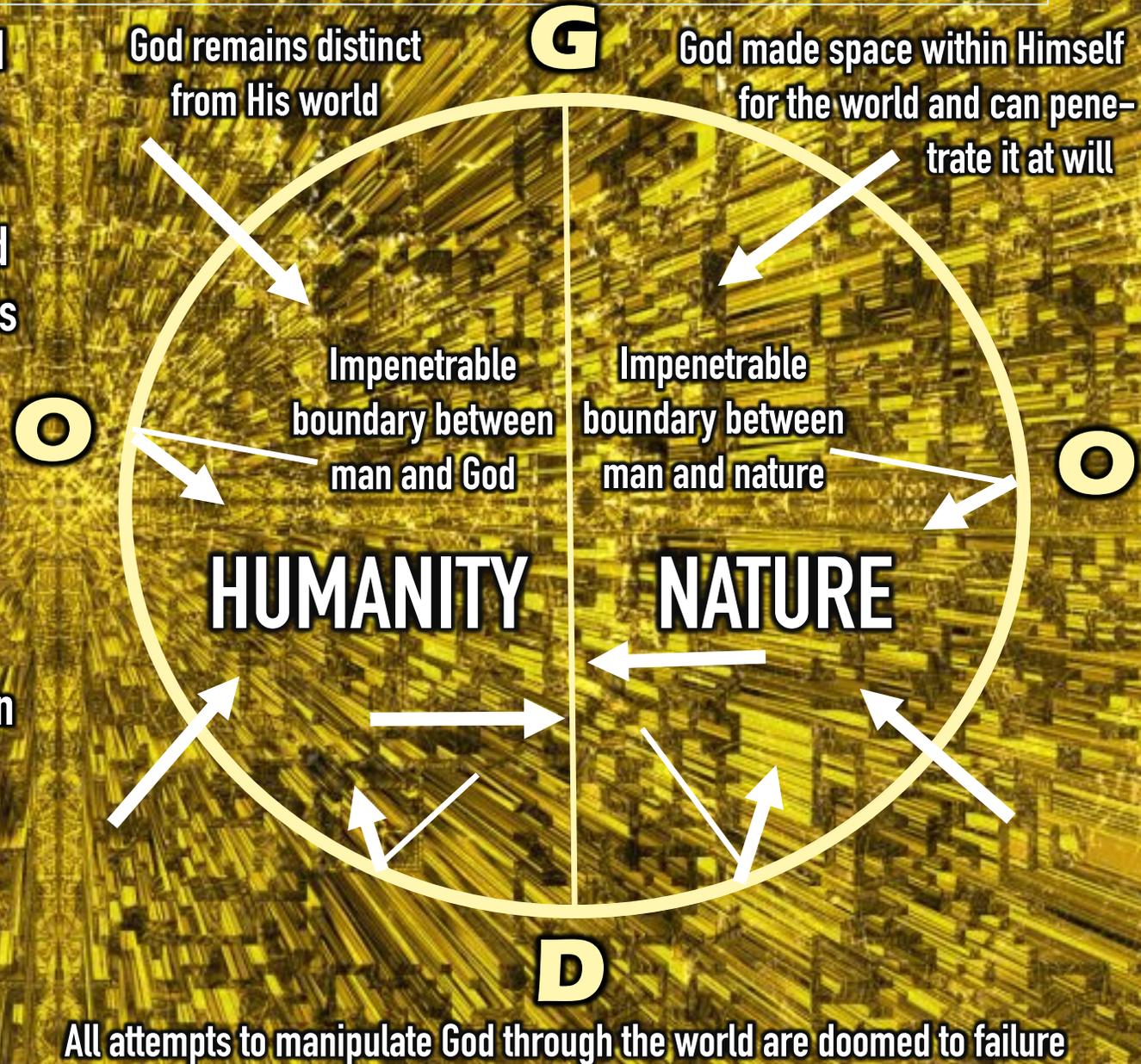
Myth presupposes a worldview of “continuity”: the gods as one with and a part of the cosmos (material creation). The gods in ancient Near Eastern polytheism are personified forces, usually natural ones. What is true for the natural world is true for the divine realm. For this reason, ancient Near Eastern religions are dominated by nature symbolism and obsessed with fertility and potency, being manipulated in the divine realm as in the natural realm by ritual sex, sympathetic or imitative magic. Because the world is multiplex, there must be many gods and the ideal symbol of continuity is the idol, the material image of the god. Other characteristics of mythical thinking is chaos and conflict is the source of life, a low view of the gods and a low view of humanity, personality is not essential to reality, no single standard of ethics, and a cyclical concept of existence.

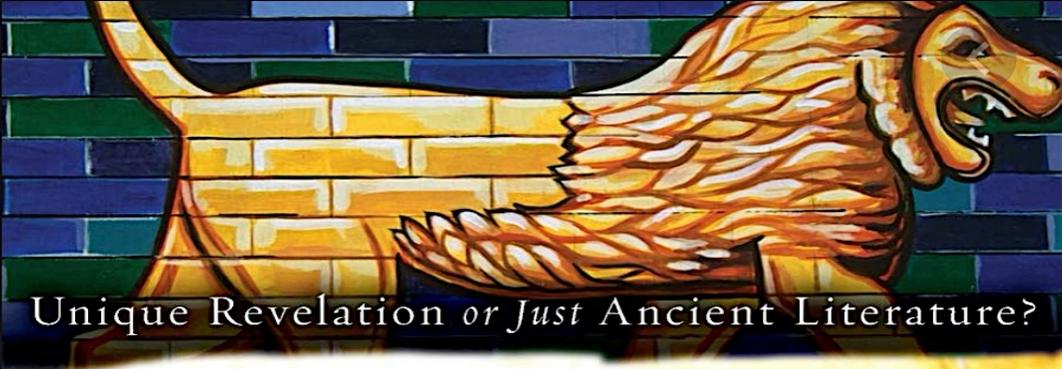


Everything that exists is within the circle and everything within the circle is coexistent with everything else in it.

Transcendence – Basis of Biblical Thinking

A biblical worldview is monotheistic. There is one God and no other being is in the same category with Him. All monotheistic religions derive their monotheism from the Bible which is divine revelation. It is also iconoclastic: God may not be represented in any created form. The Creator is Spirit, not matter, but brought matter into existence. Therefore, Spirit is the basis of every thing and this gives matter's creation a real and lasting significance. God is transcendent – wholly other than the cosmos. Other distinctions: absence of conflict in the Creation process (evil exists after the Creation and only as a result of human disobedience to God), the personal and gracious (not capricious or self-serving) nature of God, the uniqueness (holiness) of God, a high view of humanity, supra-sexual (not a reflection of Creation) and sex is desacralized (not cultic), ethical obedience, magic prohibited.





Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?

THE
BIBLE
AMONG THE
MYTHS

JOHN N. OSWALT



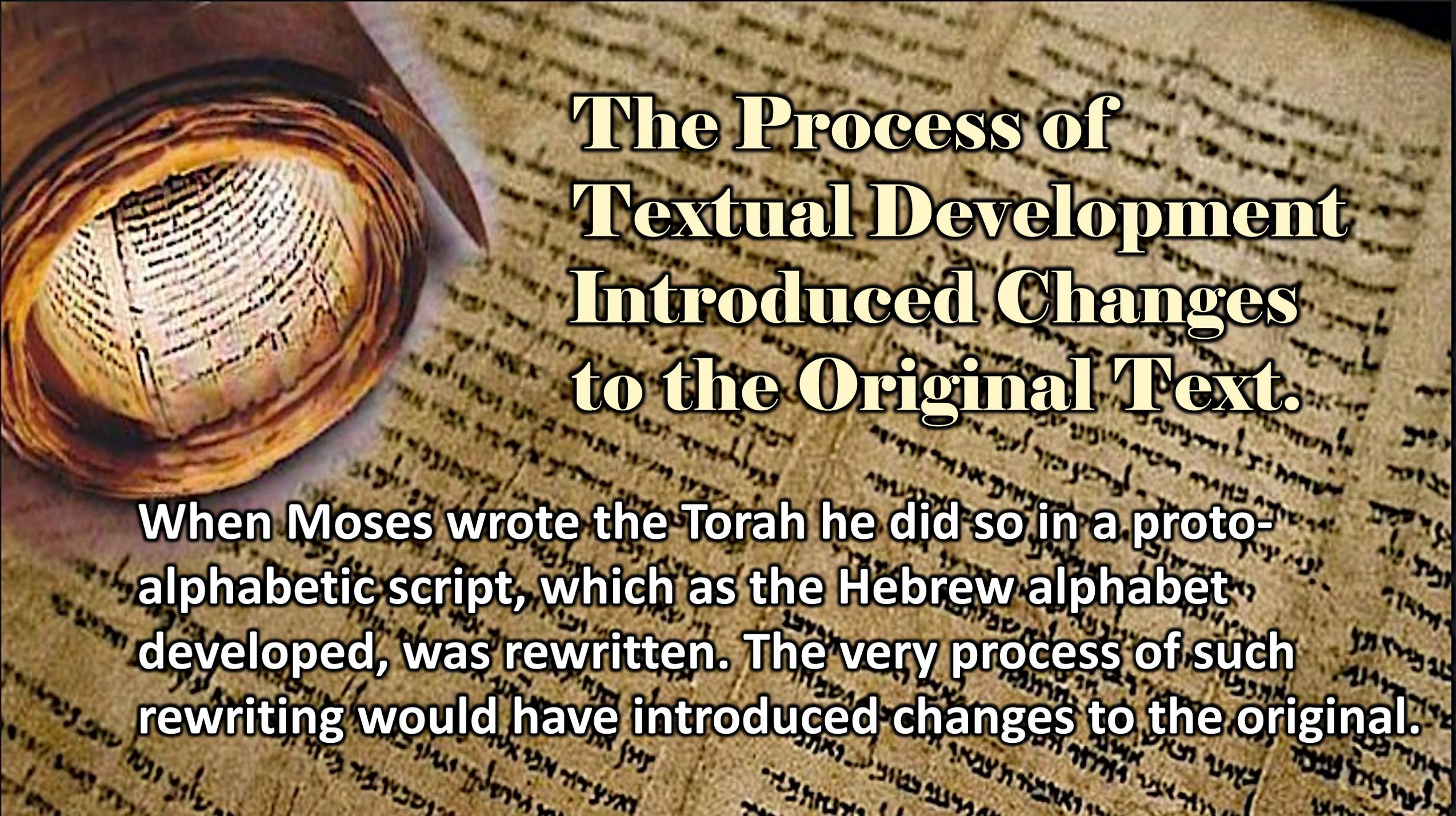
THE OLD
TESTAMENT
Really Matters

*A Call for Believers
to Read the Bible of Jesus
and the Early Church*

WALTER C. KAISER, JR.

What is the Autograph of the Hebrew Bible?



The background of the image is a close-up of an ancient scroll of parchment. The parchment is yellowed and has several lines of Hebrew text written in a cursive script. In the upper left corner, there is a quill pen, likely used for writing the text. The text on the scroll is partially obscured by the title and the explanatory text.

The Process of Textual Development Introduced Changes to the Original Text.

When Moses wrote the Torah he did so in a proto-alphabetic script, which as the Hebrew alphabet developed, was rewritten. The very process of such rewriting would have introduced changes to the original.

Changes in the Hebrew Text Within the Compositional Period

1. Script Changes – Proto-Hebrew to Paleo-Hebrew
to Aramaic Script
2. Semantic Changes – Archaic pronouns, case endings
3. Use of Vowels – Consonants as vowels
to addition of vowel letters
4. Name Changes – Older onomastic titles, toponyms
updated
5. Additions to books – Updates to figures or history

Four Hebrew Bible Scripts

- Hieroglyphic-Hebrew:** Original Phonogrammatic alphabet by Joseph in 1859 BC
- Paleo-Hebrew:** Standardized by Samuel at Naioth in 1050 BC
- Aramaic-Hebrew:** Adopted by Ezra in 458 BC
- Masoretic-Hebrew:** Vowelled Aramaic alphabet: Masorettes and Modern

Mosaic-Hieroglyphic Hebrew 1859-1050 BC

Ten Commandments Book of the Law



Gezer Calendar 925 BC



Siloam Tunnel 701 BC



Silver Scroll 701 BC



Seals and Bullah 587 BC



458 BC-70 AD



Genesis 1 Codex Leningrad (Masoretic) 1008 AD



Modern Hebrew
www.bible.ca/manuscripts

Masoretic Manuscript

Paleo-Hebrew 1050-458 BC



Modern Torah Synagogue Scroll

Aramaic Hebrew "Square Hebrew" 458 BC- 70 AD

Masoretic Hebrew "Vowelled Hebrew" 600-950 AD 1915 AD - Today

Ancient Inscriptions with Scripture

(or possible parts of Scripture)



Proto-Hebrew

Inscription is similar in content to biblical scriptures (Isaiah 1:17, Psalms 72:3, Exodus 23:3), but is not copied from any biblical text.

Khirbet Qeiyafa Inscription



Aramaic-Hebrew

150-100 BC
(Exodus 20:2-17; Deut. 5:6-21)

Nash Papyrus

High Priest's
Benediction
(Numbers 6:24-26)

600 BC
Jerusalem

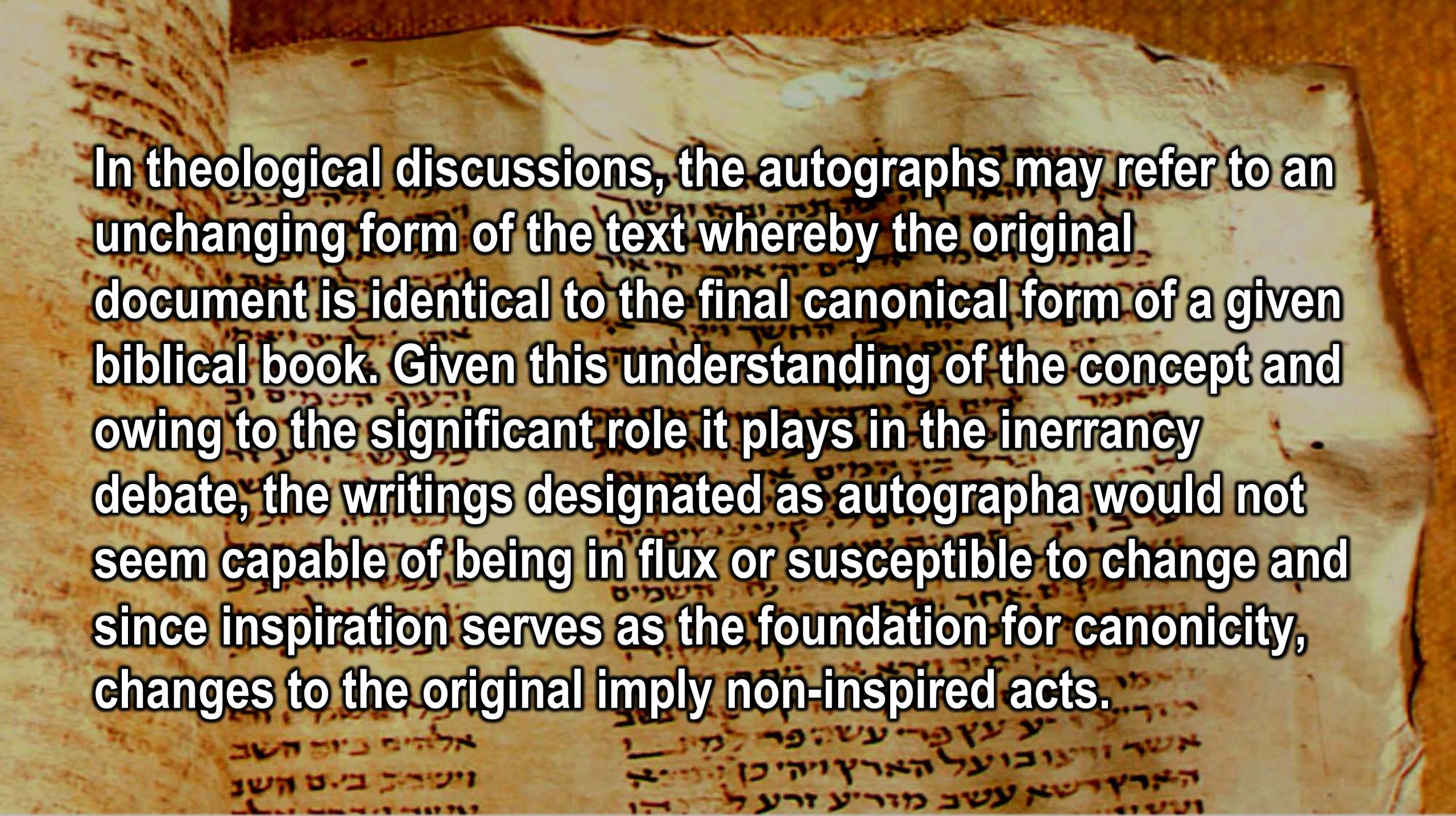


Paleo-Hebrew

Silver Amulet

Clarifying Conventional Terminology

The terms “autographa” and “canonicity,” are usually defined from a New Testament perspective and do not give sufficient attention to the progressive development of the Hebrew text. It is necessary to fine-tune the understanding of how scholars articulate certain aspects of the doctrine of the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture with respect to the Old Testament to include these textual realities.



In theological discussions, the autographs may refer to an unchanging form of the text whereby the original document is identical to the final canonical form of a given biblical book. Given this understanding of the concept and owing to the significant role it plays in the inerrancy debate, the writings designated as autographa would not seem capable of being in flux or susceptible to change and since inspiration serves as the foundation for canonicity, changes to the original imply non-inspired acts.

“While inspiration primarily concerns the quality of the finished product rather than the process of inscripturation, the divine–human authorship of the Scriptures raises the tension as to how those Scriptures came into being . . . According to the customary definition in theological discussions, “autographa” refers to an unchanging form of text whereby the original document is identical to the final canonical form of a given OT biblical book. In light of this understanding of the concept of the “autographa” and owing to the significant role it plays in the inerrancy debate, the writings designated as autographa would not seem capable of being in flux or susceptible to change . . . Unlike the NT books which were composed and compiled over approximately a 60–year period, the books of the OT canon were composed and compiled during a period of 1,000 years, assuming an early date for the Exodus and the close of the canon around 400 B.C. During that millennium, there were multitudes of linguistic, cultural, and geographic changes, to name only a few. The potential for various significant changes of this kind gives rise to the question, ‘Did this long compositional history and the many changes in the world of the Bible impact the process of completion of the Old Testament canon?’”

Grisanti, “Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the OT Canon: the Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of Scripture,” *JETS* 44/4 (Dec 2001), 578–9

Options for Understanding Editorial Activity and the Autographs

Thousand-Year Period of Compositional History
Edits and Updates to Older Texts



Traditional View

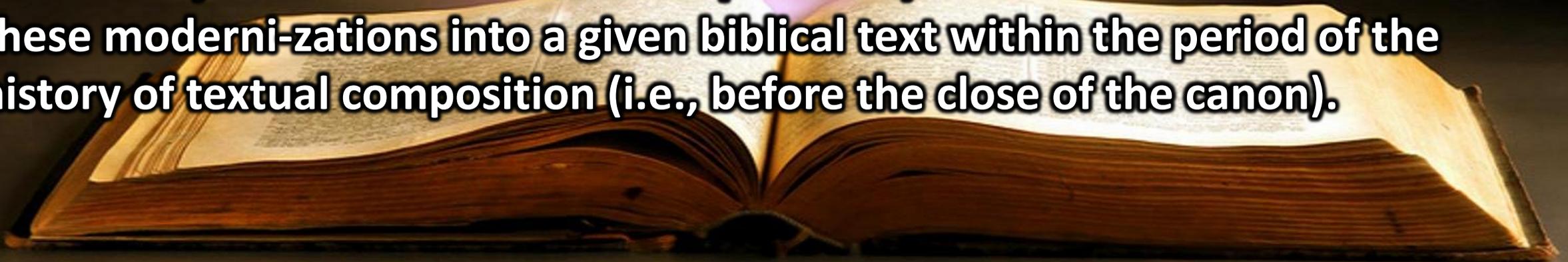
All edits and updates are uninspired scribal glosses to the Autographs and part of the textual-critical debate

Inspired Editorial Update

All edits and updates are part of the inspired composition process that resulted in the Autographs recognized as canonical

Clarification of the Inspired Editorial Update Perspective

Any changes introduced to a biblical book before the close of the canon are regarded as “divinely inspired editorial updates.” After the close of the OT canon, any changes introduced to the biblical text are human variants from the inspired text and are not divine-ly inspired textual updates. Only a prophetic figure (having recognized credibility within the Israelite community as one “under divine inspiration”) would be able to introduce these moderni-zations into a given biblical text within the period of the history of textual composition (i.e., before the close of the canon).



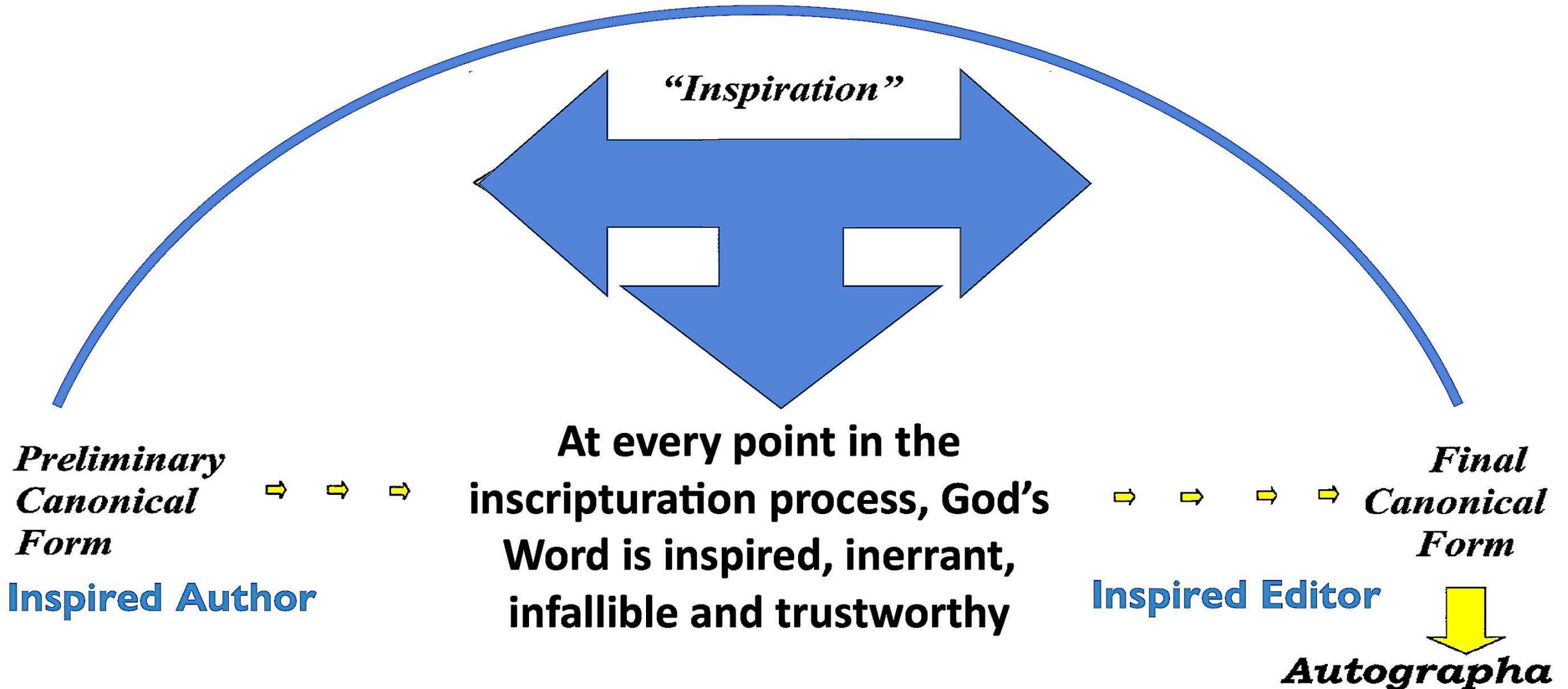
Understanding the Autographa of the Hebrew Bible

Within the canonical process, and subsequent to the initial writing of a biblical book or books, a God-chosen individual or prophetic figure under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit could adjust, revise, or update pre-existing biblical material in order to make a given Scripture passage understandable to succeeding generations. Those revisions, or “maintenance changes” which occurred within the compositional history of the Old Testament and by recognized inspired figures are also inspired and inerrant.

Understanding the Autographa of the Hebrew Bible

Textual updating, though limited in scale, occurs at various points and is not merely a scribal activity after the completion of the autographa of a given book or set of books. Rather, it is part of the inscripturation process that results in God-breathed Scripture. At every point of the inscripturation process, a biblical book is autograph-like, fully inspired and inerrant. On a larger scale, the editorial work of Ezra the scribe made possible a messianic understanding of the whole of the OT before the close of the canon, and with it, the end of compositional history.

Inscription Process and Canonical Form of Hebrew Bible During Composition Period



The Dividing Point Between Inspired Textual Updating and Non-Inspired Textual Transmission

Composition of the Old Testament
(any changes are part of the autographa)

Close of the Old Testament Canon
(ca. 400 B.C.)

The Domain of Textual Criticism
(any changes are variants from the autographa)

Dividing Point

Israelite Community recognized inspired figure

“Inspired” Textual Updating

Old Testament “under construction”

**Rabbinic “Ketiv, Q^ere”
Rabbinic “corrections”
to Messianic Texts**

Transmission of the Text (“hands off” the text)

Canonical Order Revealing Messianic Intent

The Fact & Act of Canonicity

Canonicity is determined by the fact that a book is inspired of God. As God's people recognized the canonicity of a given book by virtue of the identity of the prophetic spokesman through whom the book was given, God's people sought to safeguard it as sacred Scripture.

The Canonization of the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three parts: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. This division is not based primarily on content but was derived from the canonization process in which the three divisions were closed at separate times. The first division of the Bible, the Torah, found preliminary completion in the time of Moses.

TaNaKH

HEBREW BIBLE

תורה

TORAH

PENTATEUCH

נביאים

NEVI'IM

PROPHETS

כתובים

KETUVIM

WRITINGS

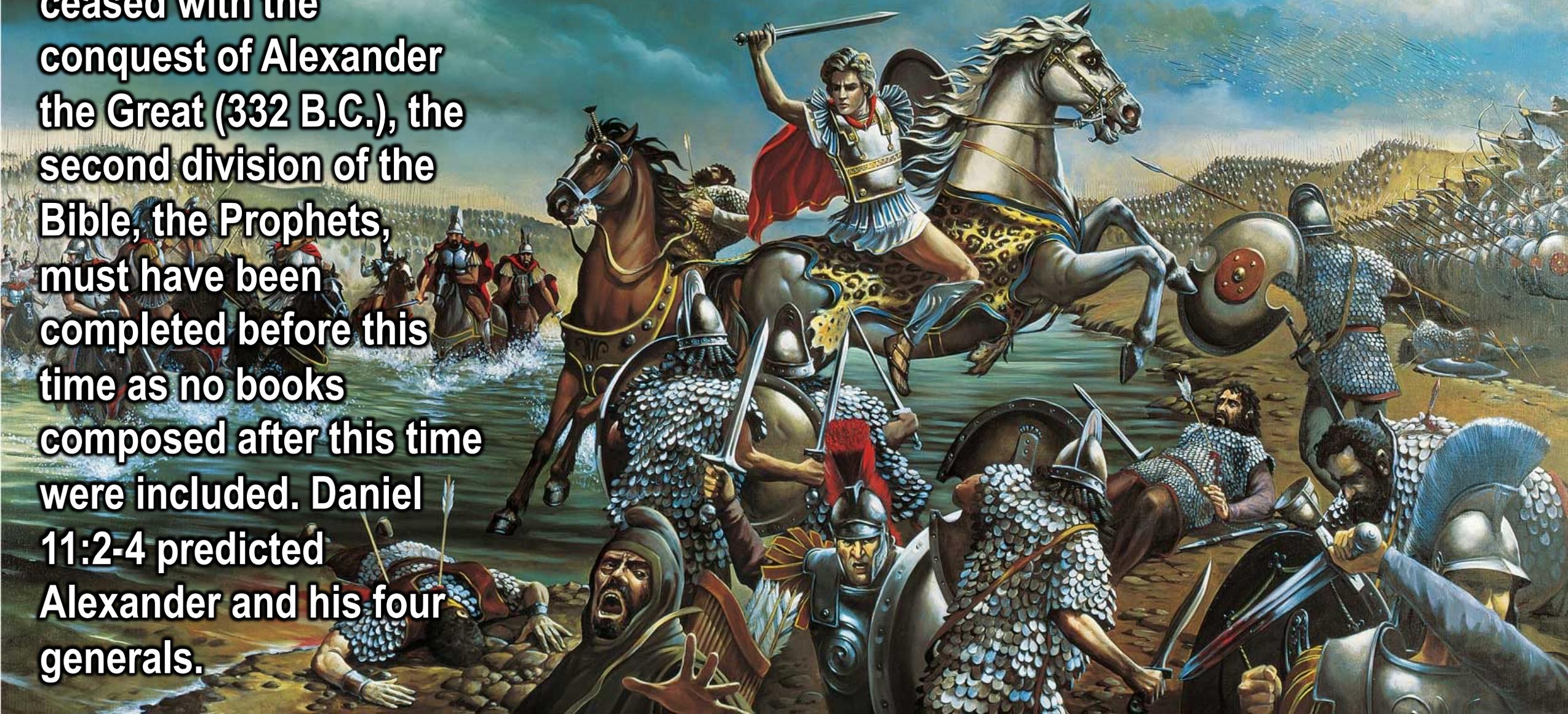
Canonization of the Pentateuch

- By the time of the exile of the Northern Kingdom (722 BC), the Pentateuch was canonized.
- Evidence of this was that upon return from the exile, the Northern tribes already had the precursor of what is known today as the Samaritan Pentateuch.



Based on rabbinic tradition that prophecy ceased with the conquest of Alexander the Great (332 B.C.), the second division of the Bible, the Prophets, must have been completed before this time as no books composed after this time were included. Daniel 11:2-4 predicted Alexander and his four generals.

NEVI'IM



The third division, the Writings, were probably closed by at least the beginning of the Hasmonean period (167 B.C.), as reflected by how they were received by the Qumran Community. We have no earlier copies of the Hebrew Scriptures to enable us to determine the earliest time of the canonization process, but the three-fold division biblical text referenced in the New Testament (Mt. 5:17; 22:40; Lk. 24:44; Jn. 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 26:22; 28:23; Rom. 3:21) and Josephus' (A.D. 37-100) lists of 22 books = our OT 39 (*Apion* 1.38) confirm that Judaism recognized a completed canon by the end of the Second Temple period.

KETUVIM

“For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.”

Josephus, *Contra Apion* 1.38

Tri-partite Division of the OT Canon at Qumran

“We have [written] to you in order that you should understand the Book of Moses [the Torah], [and the words of the Pro]phets, and Davi[d, and the chronicles of each] and every generation.” *4QMMT*^c9-11

“[At Qumran] the Torah and the Prophets and most of the Writings were fully canonized. Only a few books of the Writings remained in dispute, and their status would be resolved early in the mishnaic period, soon after the destruction of the Temple ...”

Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran*. The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 166

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Ezra 7:10

A man with a white beard and a white turban with a gold band is shown in profile, reading from a large scroll. He is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a yellow and gold patterned vest. The background is a bright, outdoor setting with a large crowd of people in the distance.

Ezra was a priest and scribe, offices related to the one great task for which he was remembered, that of an expositor of the law. He was a descendant of Seraiah (Ez 7:1) the last high priest to serve in the First Temple (Kings 2 25:18), and a close relative of Joshua the first High Priest of the Second Temple (2 Chr 1 5:40-41; Ez 3:2). In pre-exilic times, priests were the guardians of the law and taught it to the people. As one who could trace his ancestry back to Aaron, Ezra was clearly fully qualified to continue in this tradition. With the development of Judaism during the Second Temple the class of scribe as a student and teacher of the written Torah came increasingly into prominence. Ezra is portrayed as the first and great example of this class.

In the Apocrypha, Ezra is pictured as the one God inspired to restore to Israel the Scriptures which, it was thought, had been destroyed when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. The presentation of Ezra in this literature probably had as much of an influence on the development of Judaism as did the historical Ezra himself.

Ezra as Inspired Scribe

2 Esdras (= 4 Esdras) is a Jewish apocalyptic book that tradition ascribes to Ezra (5th century BC), but may have been composed between AD 70 – 218. In it Ezra is described as a second Moses who will give inspired understanding and knowledge to Israel. The final vision in a series of visions declares that Ezra will restore Scripture. God appears to Ezra in a bush and commands him to restore the Law.

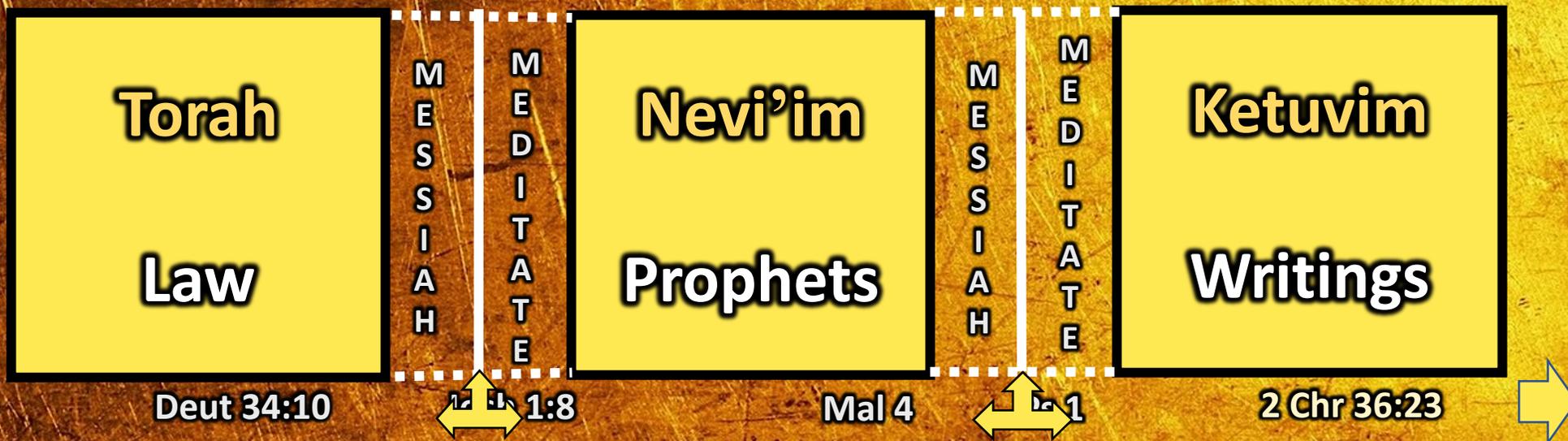


Illumination depicting the scribe Ezra restoring the OT (4 Ezra [= 2 Esdras] 14: 41-48; from the 8th century *Codex Amiatinus*)

Old Testament Canon Set Up to Reveal Messiah

- ◆ Final Shape (Ezra) Ezra 7:10

Messianic seams reveal authorial messianic intent of the OT



- ◆ Last word of OT points to first words in NT

2 Chr 36:23 “Let him go up” is a call for “the one whose God is with him,” who is to *build* the Temple of Jerusalem.

Matthew 1 introduces the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Son of David announced by an angel as the Savior with the title Immanuel “God with us” who claims to rebuild the Temple in 3 days (Matt 26:61; Heb 3:1-6)

Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”

Deuteronomy 34:9–10

“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.” Joshua 1:8

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze ... but for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall Remember the law of Moses My servant ... Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.” Malachi 4

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.” Psalms 1:1–2

Wholistic Reading vs Atomistic Reading

TEXT

VS

EVENT

- Pentateuch = single book
- Allows scripture to interpret scripture (OT can read OT and NT)
- Interpreter uses text as main source to derive meaning
- Form criticism
- Final OT Canon highlights authorial intent as messianic
- MT + Variants

- Pentateuch = Fragmented (JEDP)
- Messianic meaning invalid (NT can't read prophecy into OT which is only history)
- Historian recreates events using all available sources
- Source criticism
- Literal sense = Historical sense only
- Primary Reliance on MT

Old Testament is Not Messianic

“How can we identify a passage as messianic if the Old Testament offers no such support for such an interpretation either conceptually or textually, and the New testament suggests no fulfillment connections?”

John Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 2001), p. 233. The quote questions the classic messianic interpretation of Genesis 3:15.

Old Testament is Not Messianic

“It is impossible to establish that any passage in its original literary and historical context must or even should be understood as portending a future messianic figure.”

Tremper Longman III, “The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings,” in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. S. E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), p. 13

The Importance of the Messianic Interpretation of the OT

“But if it is not in the OT text, who cares how ingenious later writers are in their ability to reload the OT text with truths that it never claimed or revealed in the first place? The issue is more than hermeneutics, it is the authority and content of revelation itself! ... This issue of the interpretation of the Messiah in the OT could be the defining moment for evangelical scholarship and ultimately for the Church’s view of the way we regard Scripture.”

Walter C. Kaiser, “The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts,” *JETS* 42 (1999): 101-102

The Importance of the Messianic Interpretation of the OT

“Seeing the OT as a messianic text is not merely an issue of differing interpretations. Rather, it is of crucial significance. How messianic prophecy is viewed will ultimately affect the evangelical understanding of the inspiration and interpretation of the Scriptures, the defense of the gospel, and the identification of Jesus as the promised Messiah.”

Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* NAC Studies in Bible & Theology 9 (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), p. 12.



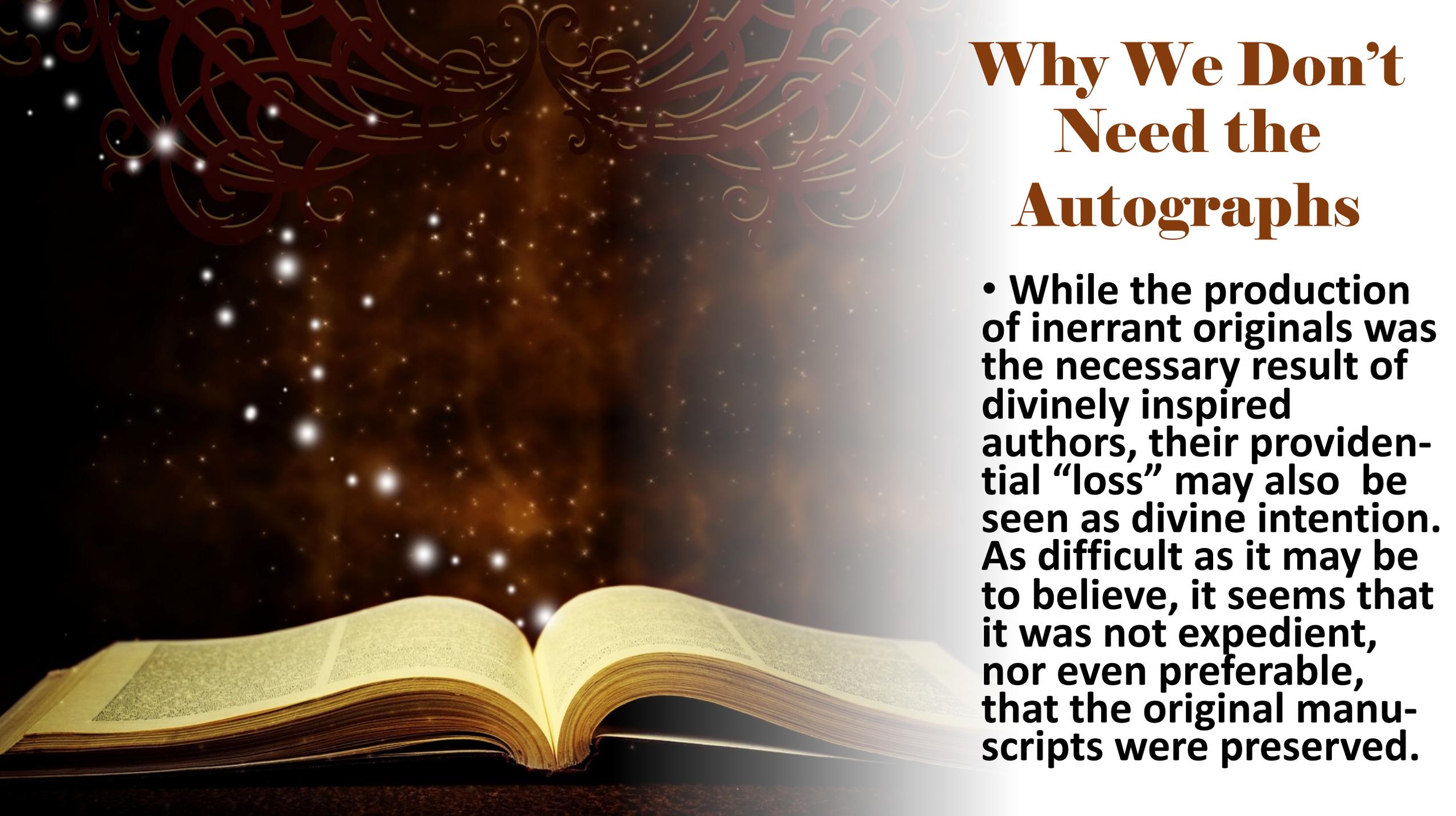
[such opposition to the prophecies are] “the strongest testimony of their truth. For they were fulfilled with such exactness, that to infidels the prophets seemed not to have foretold things future, but to have related things past.”

Jerome (ca. A.D. 348-420)

Did God Promise to Preserve the Original Word?

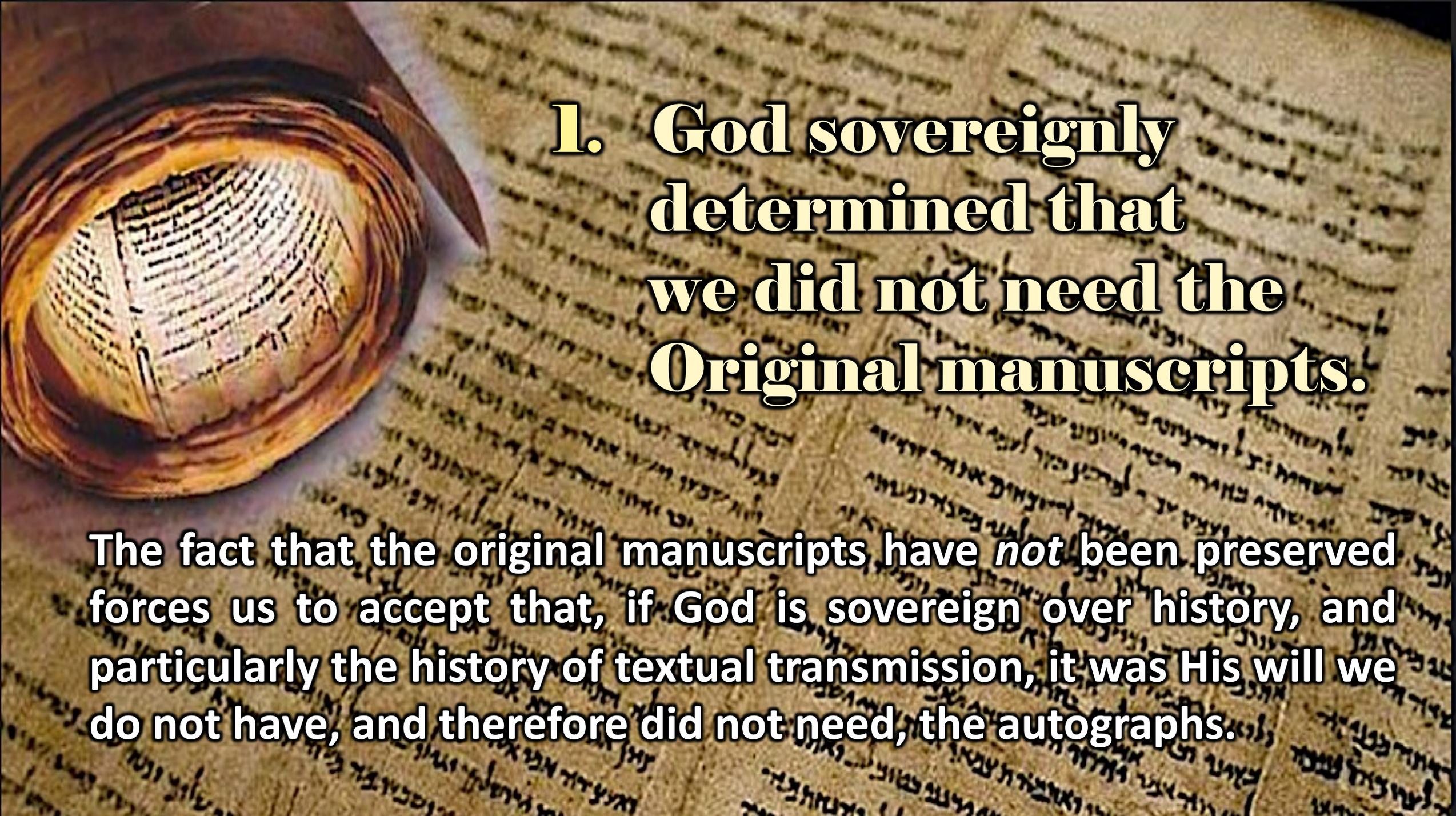
Many believers assume God has preserved the original word. However, even though we have, through the science of textual criticism, brought the state of our present text very close to the original, we do not have *exactly* that original. Thus the issue at hand is whether or not God promised to preserve His Word exactly as it was revealed in the original.





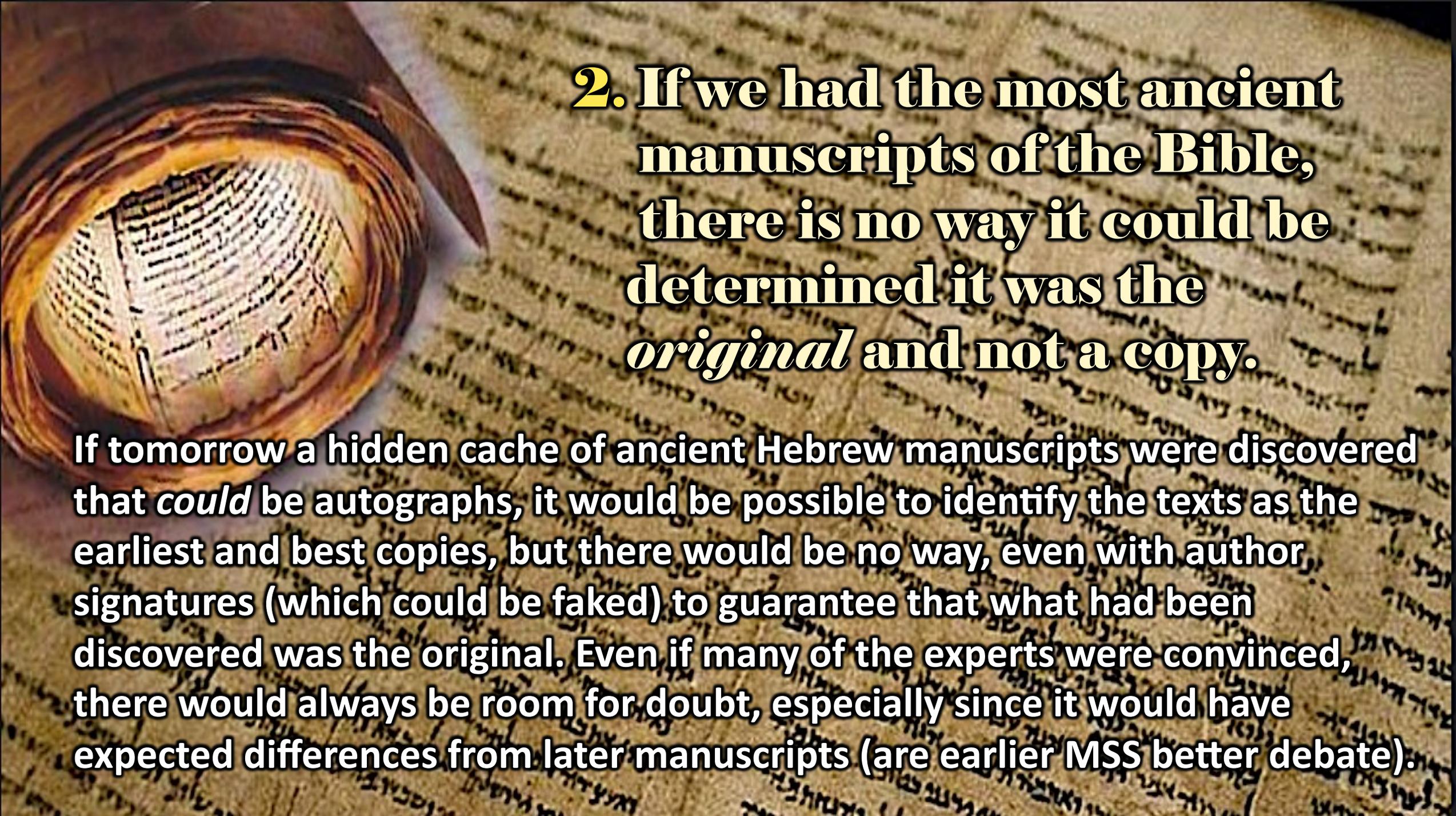
Why We Don't Need the Autographs

- While the production of inerrant originals was the necessary result of divinely inspired authors, their providential “loss” may also be seen as divine intention. As difficult as it may be to believe, it seems that it was not expedient, nor even preferable, that the original manuscripts were preserved.

The background of the image is a close-up of an ancient scroll of parchment or leather, covered in dense, handwritten Hebrew text. On the left side, a portion of the scroll is rolled up into a thick, cylindrical shape, showing the texture of the material and the way the text is packed together. The lighting is warm, highlighting the aged and slightly yellowed color of the parchment.

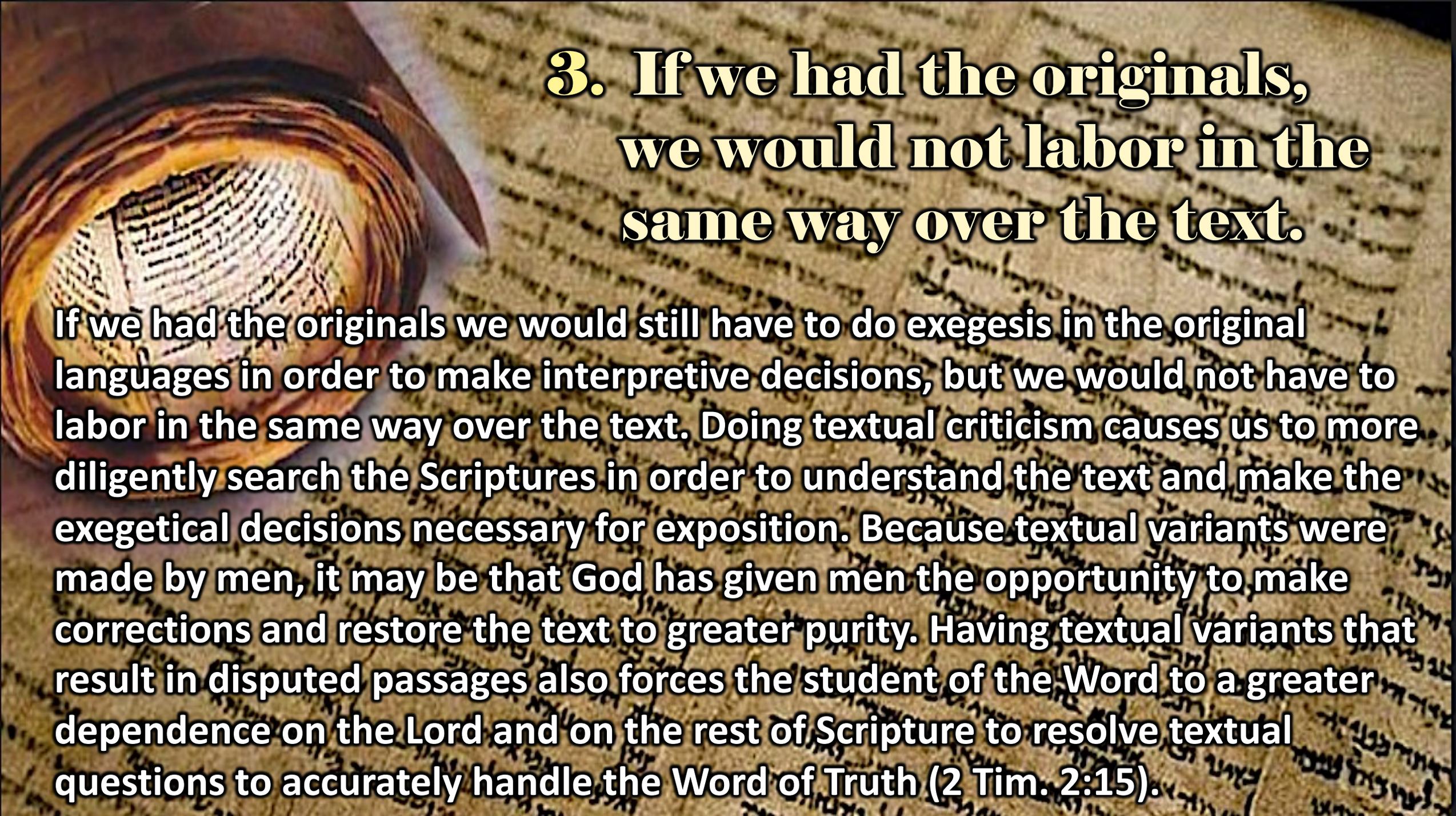
1. God sovereignly determined that we did not need the Original manuscripts.

The fact that the original manuscripts have *not* been preserved forces us to accept that, if God is sovereign over history, and particularly the history of textual transmission, it was His will we do not have, and therefore did not need, the autographs.

The background of the image is a close-up of an ancient Hebrew manuscript scroll, showing dense, handwritten text in a cursive script. In the upper left foreground, a scroll is rolled up, revealing its inner layers and the texture of the parchment. The lighting is warm, highlighting the aged and yellowed tones of the paper.

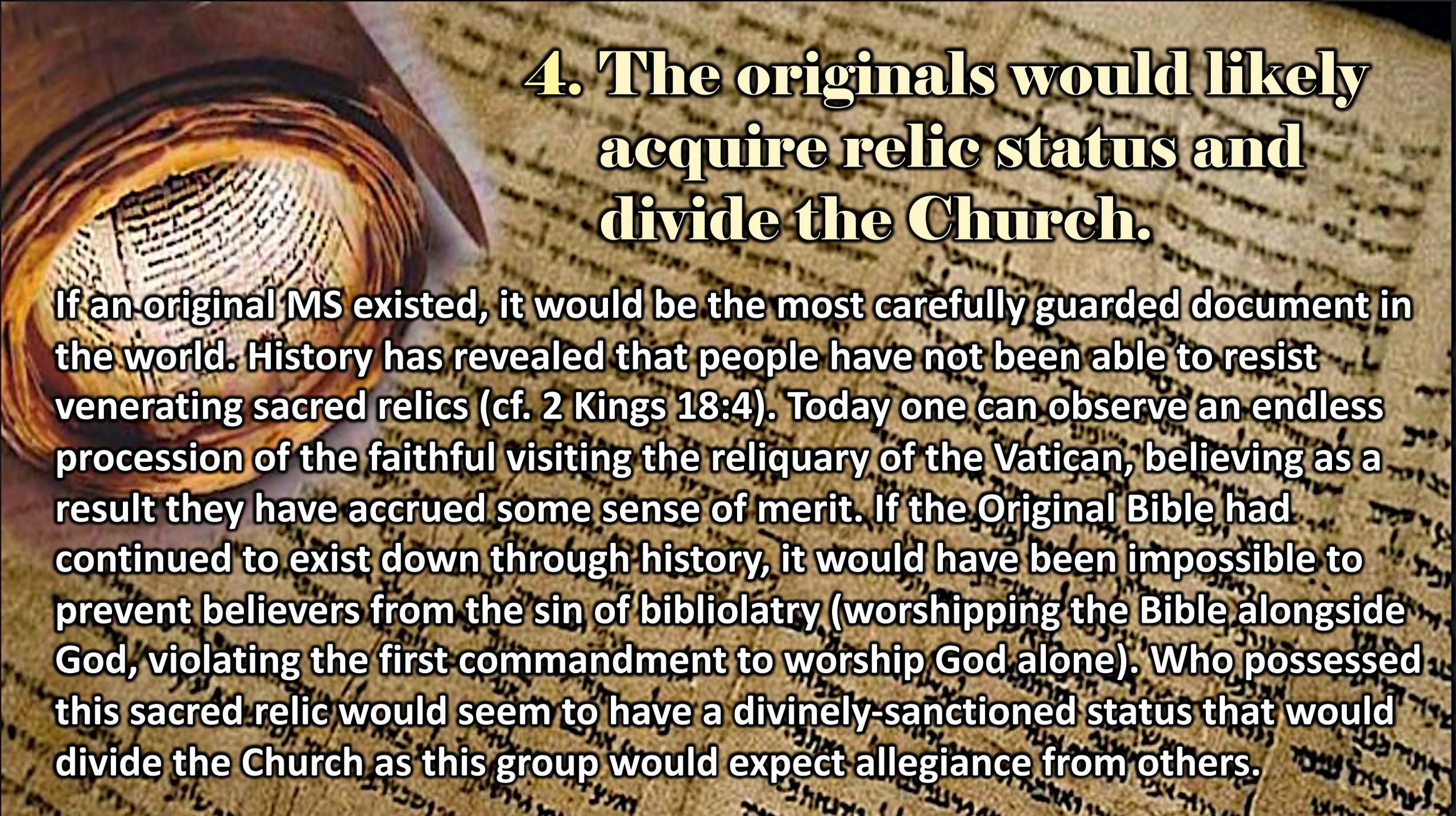
2. If we had the most ancient manuscripts of the Bible, there is no way it could be determined it was the *original* and not a copy.

If tomorrow a hidden cache of ancient Hebrew manuscripts were discovered that *could* be autographs, it would be possible to identify the texts as the earliest and best copies, but there would be no way, even with author signatures (which could be faked) to guarantee that what had been discovered was the original. Even if many of the experts were convinced, there would always be room for doubt, especially since it would have expected differences from later manuscripts (are earlier MSS better debate).



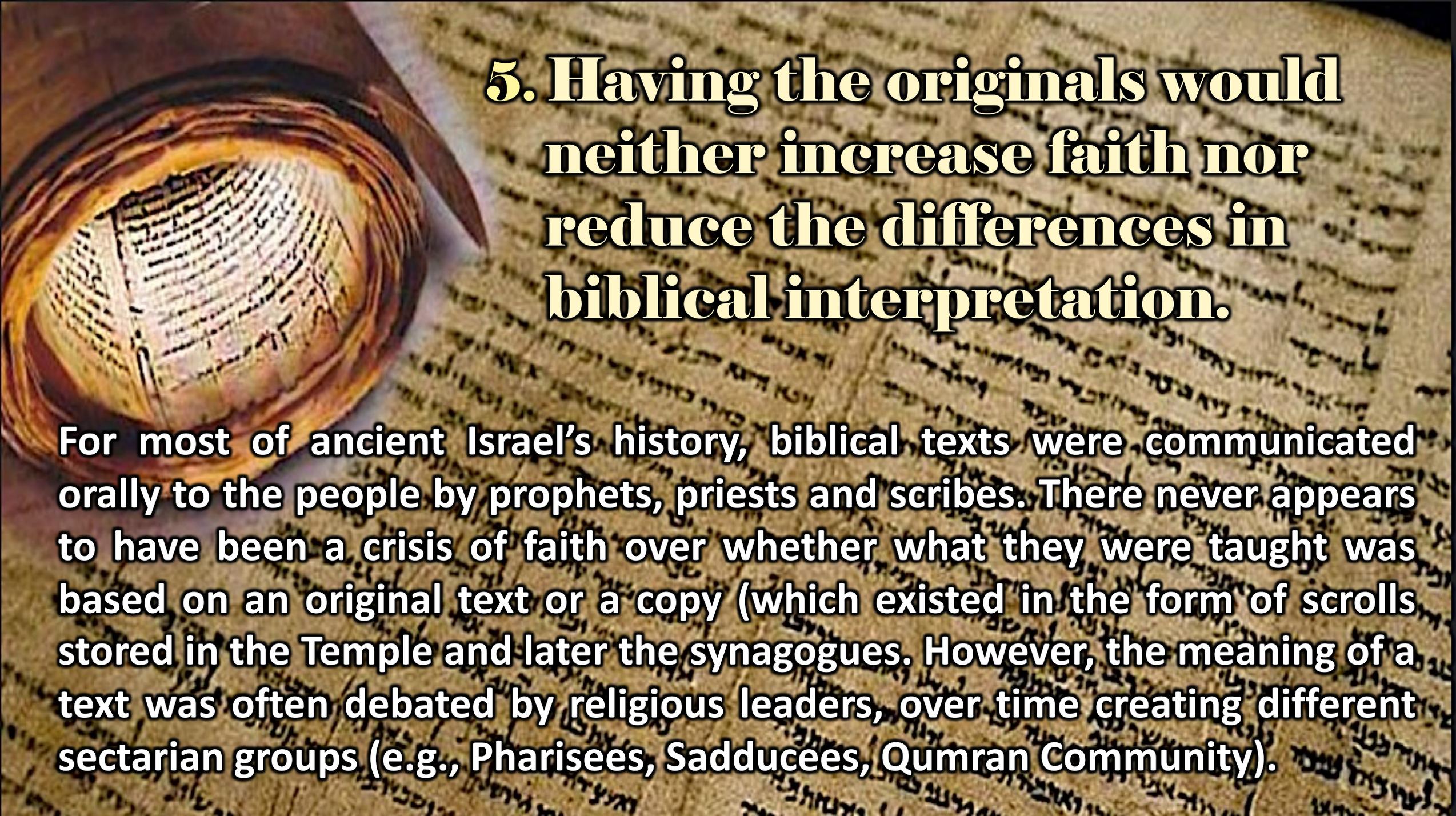
3. If we had the originals, we would not labor in the same way over the text.

If we had the originals we would still have to do exegesis in the original languages in order to make interpretive decisions, but we would not have to labor in the same way over the text. Doing textual criticism causes us to more diligently search the Scriptures in order to understand the text and make the exegetical decisions necessary for exposition. Because textual variants were made by men, it may be that God has given men the opportunity to make corrections and restore the text to greater purity. Having textual variants that result in disputed passages also forces the student of the Word to a greater dependence on the Lord and on the rest of Scripture to resolve textual questions to accurately handle the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15).



4. The originals would likely acquire relic status and divide the Church.

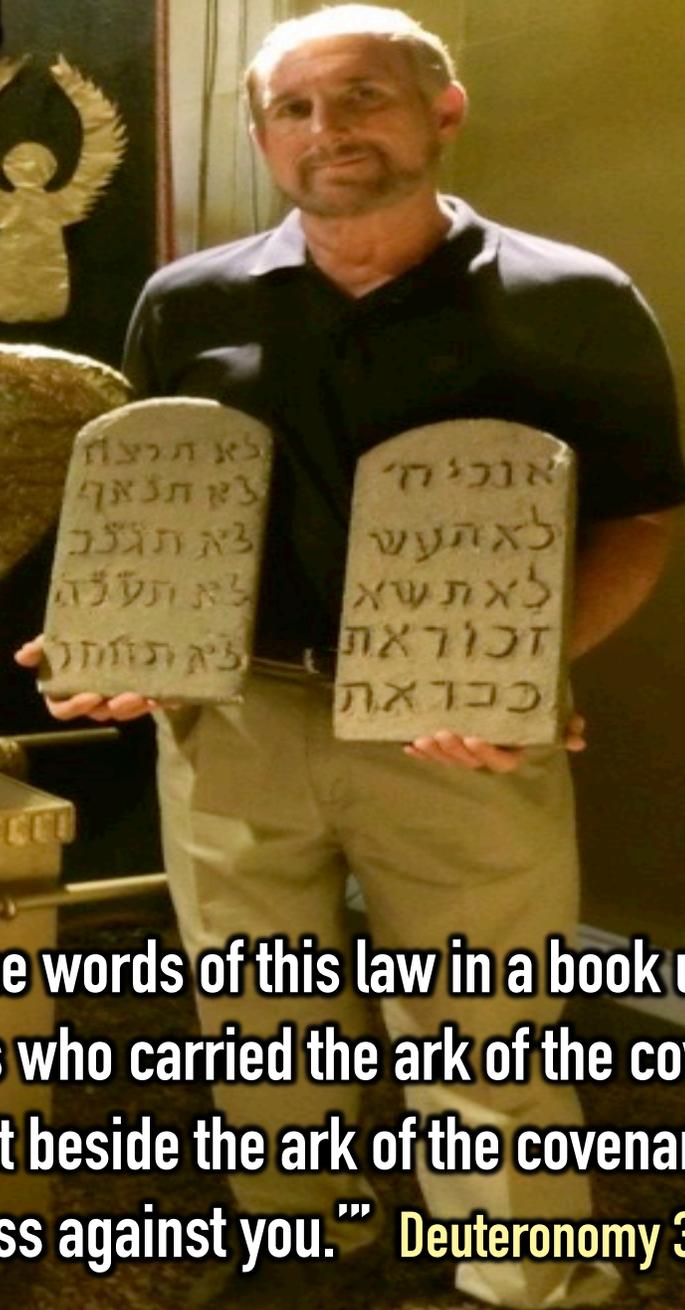
If an original MS existed, it would be the most carefully guarded document in the world. History has revealed that people have not been able to resist venerating sacred relics (cf. 2 Kings 18:4). Today one can observe an endless procession of the faithful visiting the reliquary of the Vatican, believing as a result they have accrued some sense of merit. If the Original Bible had continued to exist down through history, it would have been impossible to prevent believers from the sin of bibliolatry (worshipping the Bible alongside God, violating the first commandment to worship God alone). Who possessed this sacred relic would seem to have a divinely-sanctioned status that would divide the Church as this group would expect allegiance from others.



5. Having the originals would neither increase faith nor reduce the differences in biblical interpretation.

For most of ancient Israel's history, biblical texts were communicated orally to the people by prophets, priests and scribes. There never appears to have been a crisis of faith over whether what they were taught was based on an original text or a copy (which existed in the form of scrolls stored in the Temple and later the synagogues. However, the meaning of a text was often debated by religious leaders, over time creating different sectarian groups (e.g., Pharisees, Sadducees, Qumran Community).

Judaism Believes it has the Original Torah



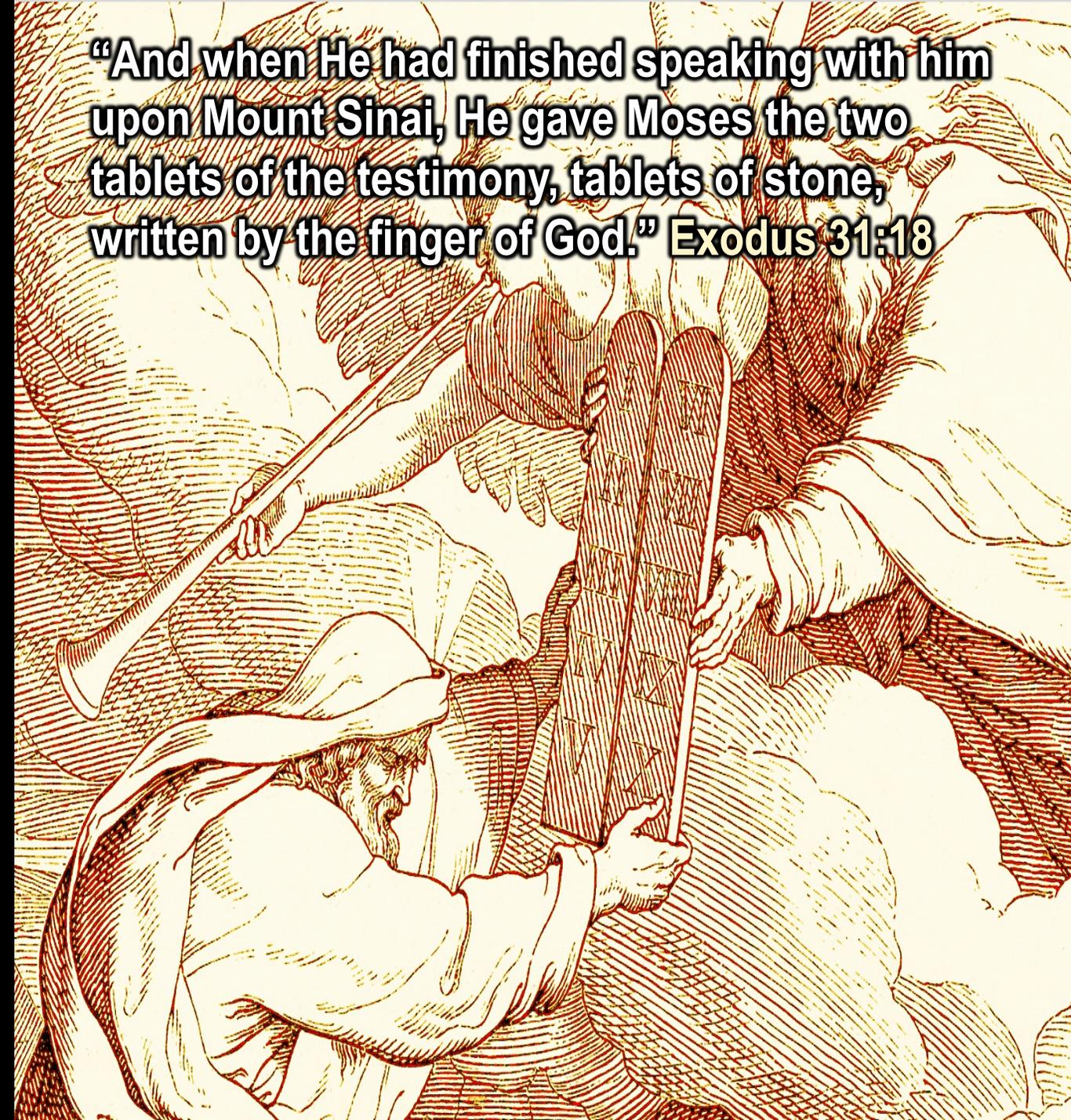
“And it came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, ‘Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you.’” Deuteronomy 31:24–26

The Mosaic autograph of the Torah may still exist



“The 8th fundamental principle is that the Torah came from God. We are to believe that the whole Torah was given us through Moses our Teacher entirely from God ... through Moses who acted like a secretary taking dictation”

Maimonides



“And when He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.” Exodus 31:18

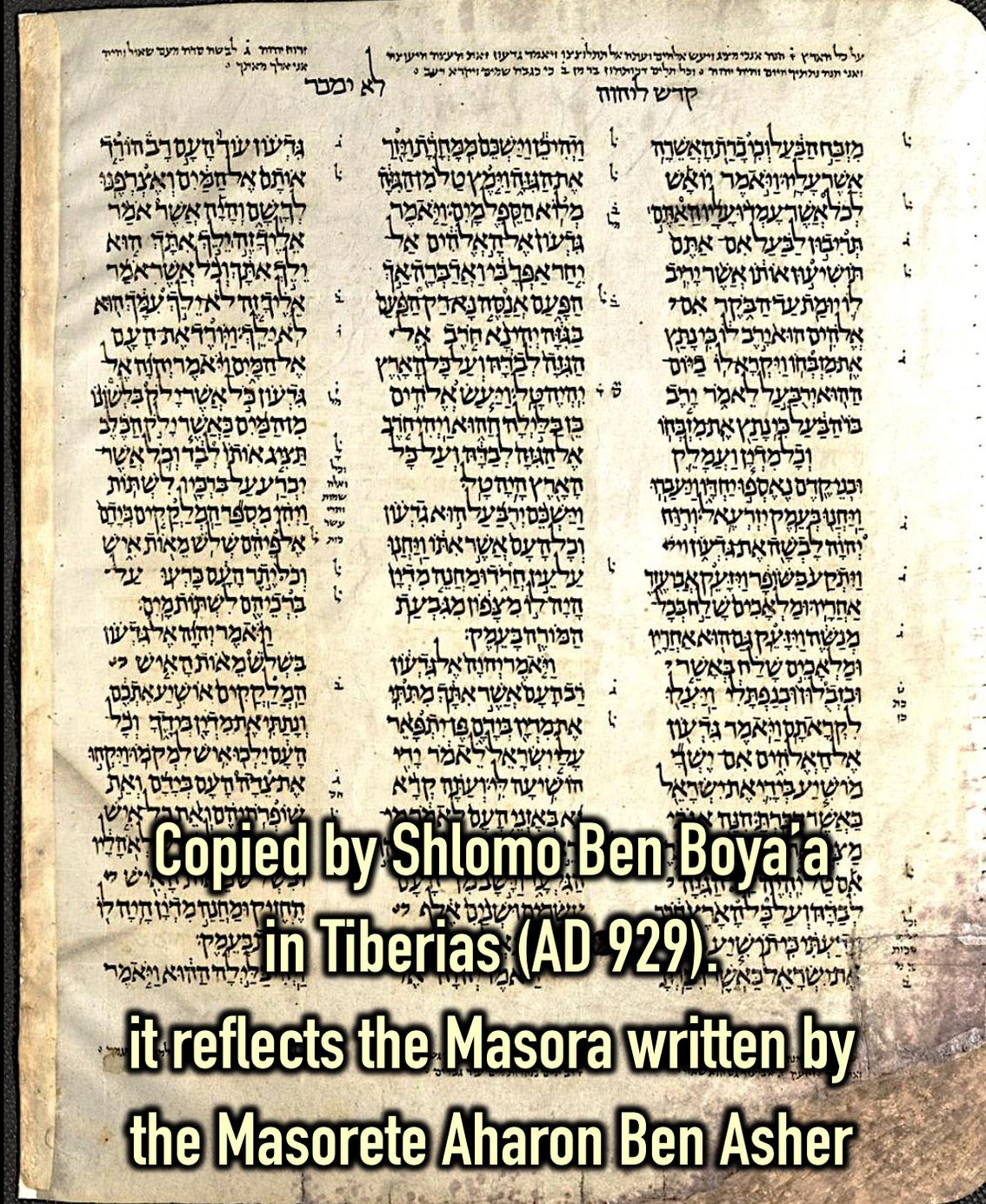
Judaism Believes it has the Original Torah

Jewish survival long depended on Jews believing in a divine text. They held that the Torah was delivered word-by-word to Moses on Mt. Sinai. While the rest of the Tanach was given by God, it was not the unique and special revelation that the Torah is. Jews feared that believing the Torah – or at least the Ten Commandments – was not divine would eventually lead to assimilation. Talmudic study consisted largely of discussions (debates) between rabbinic authorities. In such discussions the problem was not the lack of an original text, since the MT was considered to be the same as handed down from Mt. Sinai. The problem was usually a difference over interpretation and application.

The Masoretic Text

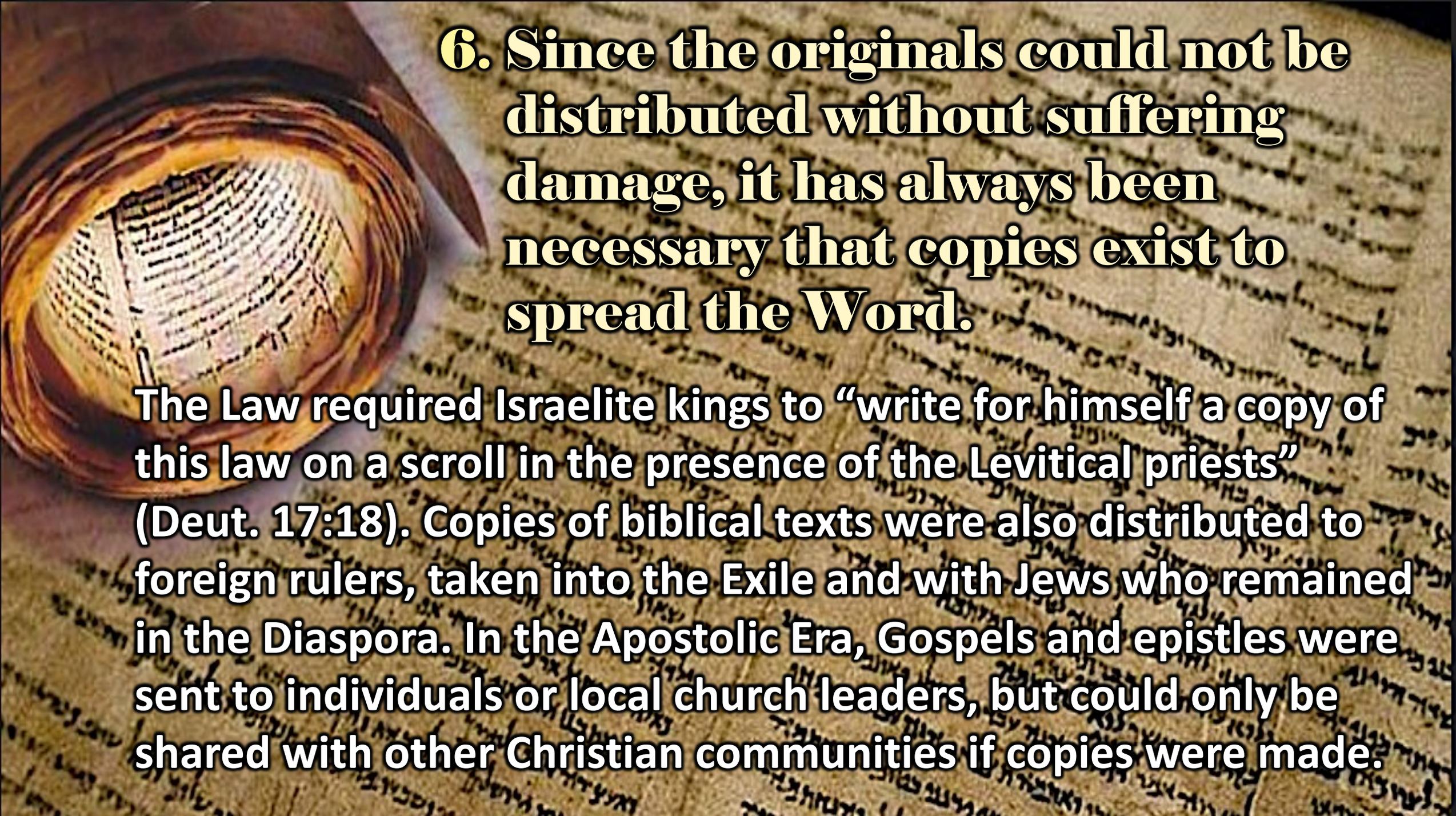
Judaism's "Received Text"

The Masoretic text is universally accepted as the authentic Hebrew Bible. This monumental work was begun around the 6th century AD and was completed in the 10th by scholars at Talmudic academies in Babylonia and Jerusalem. The Jewish scribes made the effort to reproduce, as far as possible, the original text of the Hebrew Old Testament. Their intention was not to interpret the meaning of the Scriptures but to transmit to future generations the authentic Word of God. To this end they gathered manuscripts and whatever oral traditions were available to them. Unfortunately, none of their source texts have survived for comparison.



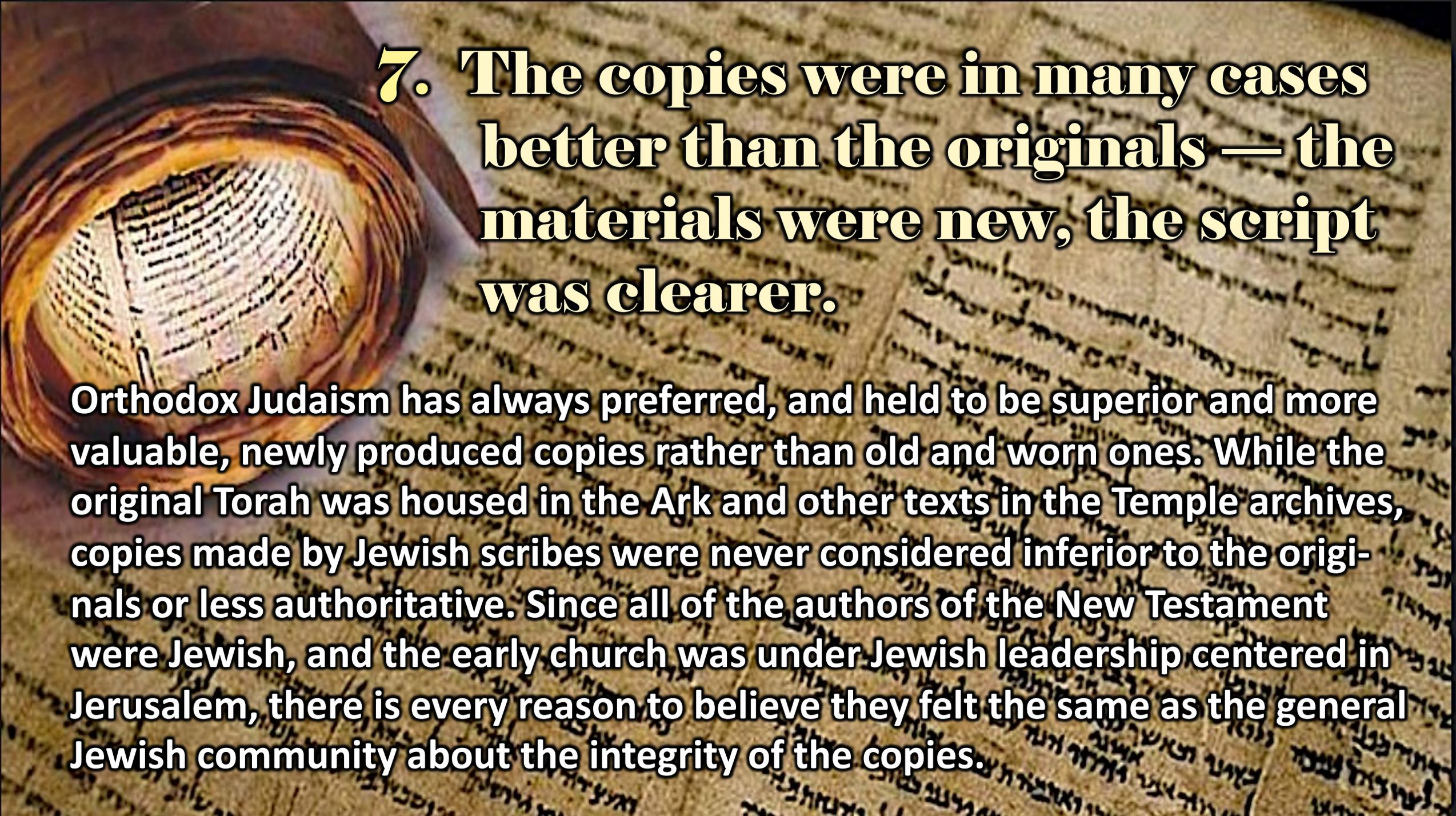
Copied by Shlomo Ben Boyaja
in Tiberias (AD 929)

it reflects the Masora written by
the Masorete Aharon Ben Asher



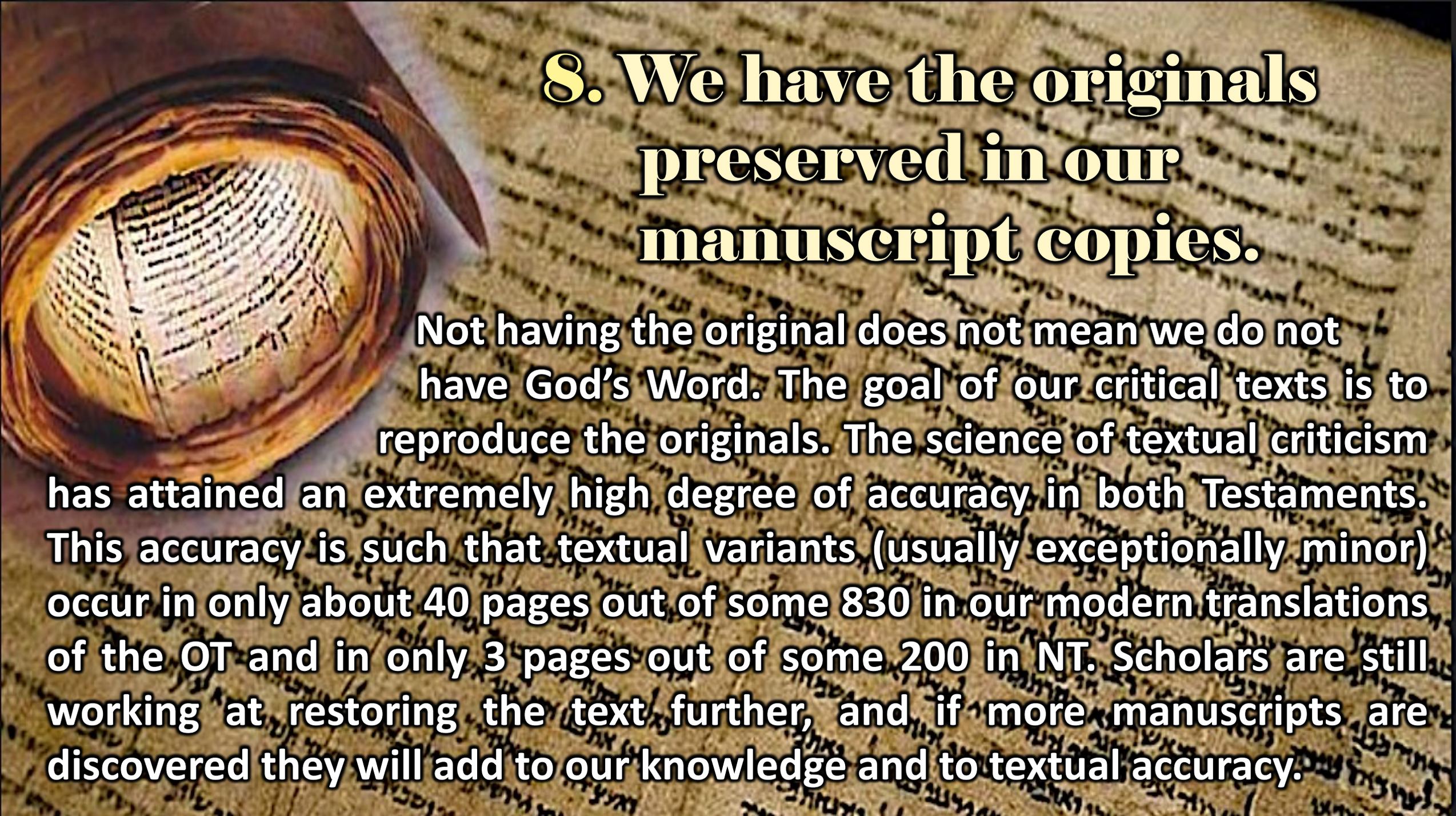
6. Since the originals could not be distributed without suffering damage, it has always been necessary that copies exist to spread the Word.

The Law required Israelite kings to “write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests” (Deut. 17:18). Copies of biblical texts were also distributed to foreign rulers, taken into the Exile and with Jews who remained in the Diaspora. In the Apostolic Era, Gospels and epistles were sent to individuals or local church leaders, but could only be shared with other Christian communities if copies were made.



7. The copies were in many cases better than the originals — the materials were new, the script was clearer.

Orthodox Judaism has always preferred, and held to be superior and more valuable, newly produced copies rather than old and worn ones. While the original Torah was housed in the Ark and other texts in the Temple archives, copies made by Jewish scribes were never considered inferior to the originals or less authoritative. Since all of the authors of the New Testament were Jewish, and the early church was under Jewish leadership centered in Jerusalem, there is every reason to believe they felt the same as the general Jewish community about the integrity of the copies.

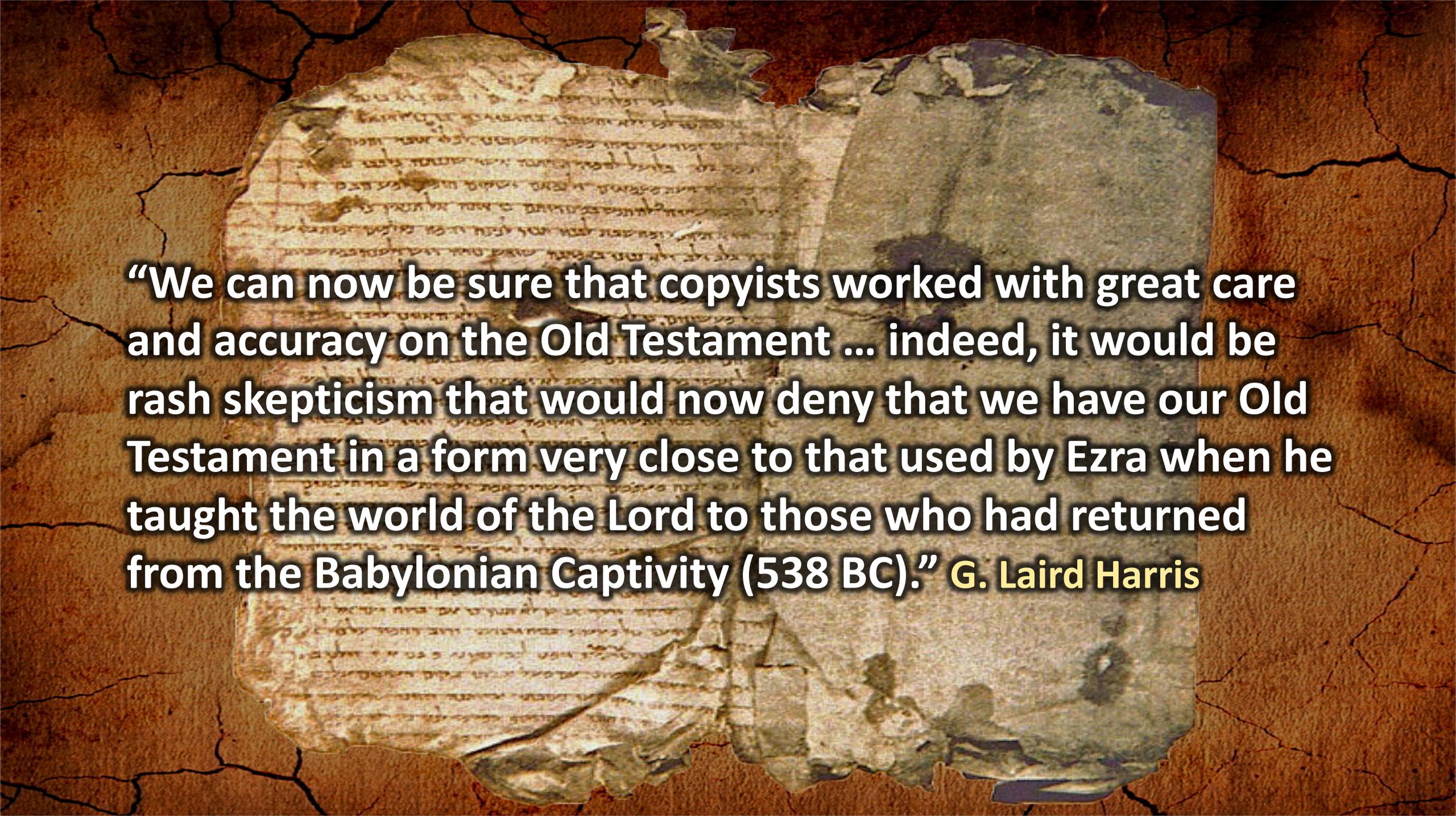


8. We have the originals preserved in our manuscript copies.

Not having the original does not mean we do not have God's Word. The goal of our critical texts is to reproduce the originals. The science of textual criticism has attained an extremely high degree of accuracy in both Testaments. This accuracy is such that textual variants (usually exceptionally minor) occur in only about 40 pages out of some 830 in our modern translations of the OT and in only 3 pages out of some 200 in NT. Scholars are still working at restoring the text further, and if more manuscripts are discovered they will add to our knowledge and to textual accuracy.



“The Hebrew Bible is a carefully annotated product of a centuries long tradition throughout which the sacred words were meticulously guarded, copied, and checked by Jewish experts.” James VanderKam

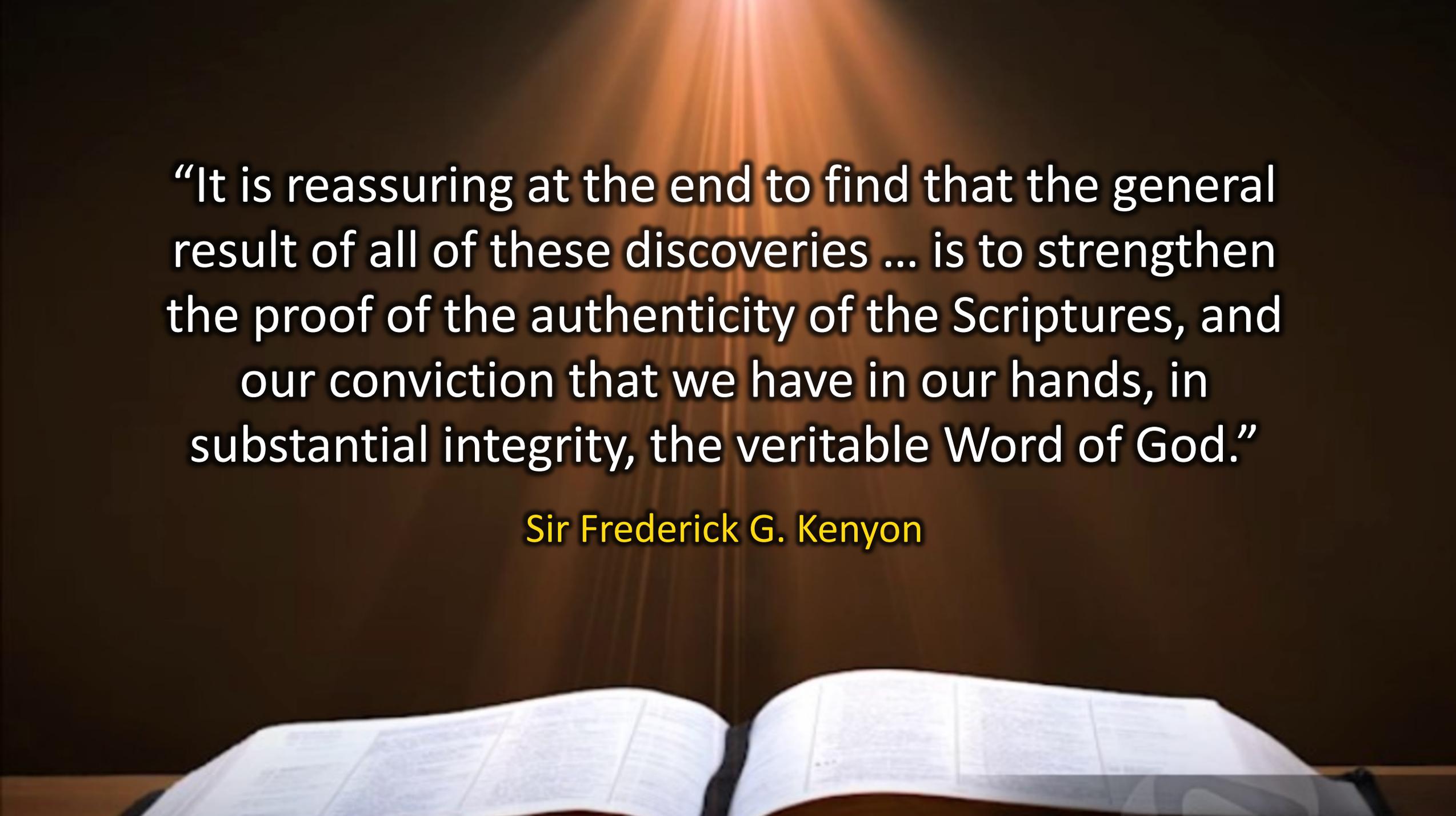


“We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament ... indeed, it would be rash skepticism that would now deny that we have our Old Testament in a form very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the word of the Lord to those who had returned from the Babylonian Captivity (538 BC).” G. Laird Harris

The Text of the Old Testament

“Over 90% of the Old Testament is textually sound and uniformly witnessed to by major exemplars. Of the remaining 10% that exhibits any type of variation, extremely few are of such significance that they would involve any major doctrinal issues.”

– Bruce K. Waltke

An open book is shown at the bottom of the frame, with a bright beam of light shining down from the top center onto its pages. The background is dark, making the light and the book stand out.

“It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all of these discoveries ... is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God.”

Sir Frederick G. Kenyon

GOD'S WORD

Inspired by God | Preserved by God

You've got His Word on it.

Searching for 

THE
**Original
Bible**

- *Who wrote it and why?*
- *Is it reliable?*
- *Has the text changed over time?*

Randall Price

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information on this
topic see my book
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