

The Attackers: Integrity of the Masoretic Text Confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls; Principles from the Doctrine of Inspiration; Time & Decay Required Making Copies of Original Manuscripts; the Advent of Gutenberg Press & Photocopying Preserve Accuracy; Textual Criticism Verifies Divine Preservation of the Bible; the Biblical Record Refutes Popular Scientific Theories

63. The answers were revealed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For details we consult *A General Introduction to the Bible*:

The original manuscripts (autographa) of the Old Testament are not available, but the Hebrew text is amply represented by both pre- and post-Christian manuscripts. As a result, the reliability of the Hebrew text can be evaluated from available manuscript evidence. Sir Fredric Kenyon ... wrote, "Does this Hebrew text which we call Masoretic faithfully represent the Hebrew text as originally written by the authors of the Old Testament books?" The answer to that question arises from a careful examination of the number and nature of Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament. (p. 357)

The first collection of Hebrew manuscripts, made by Benjamin Kennicott (A.D. 1776–1780) and published by Oxford, listed 615 manuscripts of the Old Testament. Later Giovanni de Rossi (1784–1788) published a list of 731 manuscripts. The main manuscript discoveries in modern times are those of the Cairo Geniza (c. 1890ff.) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947ff.). In the Cairo synagogue attic storeroom alone were discovered some 200,000 manuscripts and fragments, some 10,000 of which were biblical. According to J. T. Milik, fragments of about 600¹ manuscripts are known from the Dead Sea Scrolls, not all biblical. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein estimates that the total number of Old Testament Hebrew manuscript fragments throughout the world number in the tens of thousands. (pp. 357–58)

The most remarkable manuscripts are those of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. They include one complete Old Testament book (Isaiah) and thousands of fragments, which together represent every Old Testament book except Esther. (p. 360)

¹ The actual total of scrolls exceeds 950. "These manuscripts constitute the oldest evidence for the text of the Hebrew Bible. Approximately two hundred copies of biblical books, most of them very fragmentary, were found at Qumran, encompassing almost all the books of the Hebrew Bible (with the exception of Nehemiah and Esther)" ("The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls: The Project," <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/project>, [Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2011]). © 2011 by The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. All rights reserved.

The scrolls give an overwhelming confirmation of the fidelity of the Masoretic Text. Millar Burrows, in his valuable work entitled *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, writes, “It is a matter of wonder that through something like a thousand years the text underwent so little alteration. Herein lies its chief importance, supporting the fidelity of the Masoretic tradition.”

Gleason Archer observes that the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave I “proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.”² (pp. 366–67)

64. The issue here has to do with the doctrine of inspiration. Four principles adequately define this doctrine for our present application:
- (1) God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture, that without waving their human intelligence, vocabulary, individuality, literary style, personality, personal feelings, or any other human factor, His complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship.
 - (2) This is called verbal plenary inspiration of the Scripture: (a) Verbal means that the Bible in its original words, from first to last, is the exact record of the mind and will of God as He intended it to be.

² Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible: Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, 1986), 357–58, 360, 366–67.

(b) Plenary means the entire text is equally from God but not necessarily equally important or equally indispensable; for the Bible quotes human and satanic lies, and erroneous views of false prophets. Therefore, inspiration guarantees the accuracy of what is there, but it does not condone or sponsor errors, evils, or falsehood; it merely explains them in detail.

(c) Man is the instrument, but not the author of the Word of God. 2 Peter 1:20-21, "Know this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation; for no prophecy was ever made by the design, will, or purpose of mankind, but men communicated from God, being carried along by means of the Holy Spirit."

(3) The Holy Spirit's involvement in inspiration is very important, as taught in Acts 28:25, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers."

(a) The Holy Spirit communicated to the human authors of Scripture God's complete and coherent message for both that immediate generation and all generations to follow. Inspiration guarantees that the canon is accurate.

(b) Verbal inspiration applies only to the original languages of Scripture--Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and therefore, the human writers wrote down in their own language the divine message to mankind under the power of the Holy Spirit.

65. The skeptic usually argues that there are no longer any autographs of biblical manuscripts. Consider this: On Memorial Day 2011, our special study was *The Scalp of Miss Jane McCrea*, a study of the Saratoga Campaign. A major reference for that study was E. S. Creasy's *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World: Marathon to Waterloo*. I happen to own a copy published in New York by A. L. Burt, Publisher in 1851. I had to be extremely careful in turning its pages because during the 160 years since publication they have become dry, brittle, and inflexible. Consider the problem time inflicts over 3,000 years.
66. It is a common practice in the publishing industry to do reprints of books, for example, Creasy's *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* was released in both hardcover and paperback in 2007.
67. Gutenberg's invention of movable type in the mid-1450s allowed for multiple publication of works which were previously restricted to handwritten copies. His first major publication was the Bible, released in 1455 and known as the 42-line Bible.
68. Chester Carlson's invention of photocopying in the early twentieth century enables today's publishers to reproduce an exact copy of an out-of-print book.
68. Prior to Gutenberg, reproduction of manuscripts was accomplished by hand in what were called scriptoria, copying rooms for scribes, especially in medieval monasteries. The Masoretic Text was their source for making transcriptions of the Old Testament books.
69. This brings us back to the question of inerrancy: How pure were the Masoretic copies after a thousand years had elapsed from when the Hebrew canon was completed around second century B.C.?

70. The Dead Sea Scrolls answered the question when the science of textual criticism confirmed that the Masoretic Text was virtually an exact copy of the Scrolls. To understand the positive impact of the Scrolls, a definition of textual criticism is necessary:

Textual criticism, biblical: the study of existing biblical manuscripts and textual traditions in order to reconstruct as closely as possible the original biblical text. Most ancient writings have survived only in the form of copies that in turn are copies of a now lost original autograph; these copies differ from each other to a greater or lesser extent. The textual critic collects all the available manuscript evidence and compares the variant readings in any given passage in order to explain how each variant originated and, by a process of elimination, selects the reading that appears to approximate the original most closely.

The sources used by the textual critic include: manuscripts containing either part or all of the particular book in its original language, early translations and commentaries, and the biblical quotations contained in the writings of the early Church Fathers.³⁴

71. The Dead Sea Scrolls provided textual critics a trove of manuscripts that enabled them to compare copies that were extremely close to the originals with those of the Masoretic Text completed a thousand years later.
72. The oldest complete Hebrew Bible is a Masoretic effort referred to as the Leningrad Codex, which was written around the year A.D. 916. Its origin is thought to be Cairo, Egypt, but is presently possessed by the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg, Russia.
73. This excerpt elaborates on the authenticity the Scrolls granted the Masoretes' efforts:

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls our oldest Old Testament manuscript was the Leningrad Codex, dated A.D. 916. Now we have manuscripts of Isaiah and Daniel dated a hundred years or so before the birth of Christ, and fragments of many of the other Old Testament books.

³ Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Augustine, et al.

⁴ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979), 9:916.

All orthodoxy needs to claim in this regard is that errors of transmission touch nothing vital in Scripture. There is no question that the most faithfully transmitted manuscripts from antiquity are the Old and New Testaments. For proof of this assertion with reference to the Old Testament we cite [William H.] Green: "It may be safely said that no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted."⁵ The texts of Daniel and Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls are substantially Masoretic and so further confirm this claim of Green.⁶

74. Logic demands us to conclude that if God desired to communicate to mankind, then it follows it would be His responsibility to preserve His message in perpetuity.
75. Our brief look into the preservation of the Old Testament canon over the course of twenty-one centuries reveals that this divine preservation was successfully accomplished with only minor exceptions which in every case did not compromise the divine message to man.
76. Our studies of canonicity and the preservation of Scripture were necessary to document this principle noted earlier:

With regard to creation, whether instantaneous of our singular universe including planet earth, or the manual creation of Homo sapiens from the elements of the earth, we have consulted the biblical record and discovered the truth about each.⁷

77. It is exceedingly arrogant of scientists to assume they are capable of determining details of events that occurred before human history while secondly asserting that the long-preserved biblical record is unreliable since it is a "religious" source and gives credit to "God."

⁵ William H. Green, *General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Text*, 181.

⁶ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 208–209.

⁷ Joe Griffin, *The Attackers*, (St. Charles, MO: Joe Griffin Media Ministries, 2012), 324, par. 43.

78. They, on the other hand, give credit to themselves and place their faith in the laws, theories, and hypotheses of higher math. Lawrence M. Krauss is the author of the book *A Universe from Nothing: Why There is Something Rather than Nothing*. A review included this comment:

The staggeringly beautiful experimental observations and mind-bending new theories are all described accessibly in *A Universe from Nothing*, and they suggest that not only *can* something arise from nothing, something will *always* arise from nothing.⁸

79. Those professing to be wise are willing to “suggest” outlandish “new theories” in a desperate desire to authenticate their commitment to the lie and in so doing have become fools (Romans 8:22).
80. Driven by the worldview “there is no God,” they are burdened with the task of explaining the creation while ignoring the Creator. They have taken the obvious fact that the earth rotates around the sun and developed a philosophy that demeans the dignity of the human race.

⁸ http://www.amazon.com/Universe-Nothing-There-Something-Rather/dp/145162445X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1326508431&sr=1-1