

Who Decided Which Writings Were Inspired by God?

As Ellen White (in Early Writings p 220) and the Bible itself warns that to find truth, the Bible student must dig deeply as for buried treasure (Matthew 13:44) – linking line upon line and precept upon precept; here a little there a little' (Isaiah 28:9, 10), until it all harmonises as a perfect chain which uphold the foundational principles of God's government – the 10 commandments which express infinite, unselfish love. According to Ellen White, anything else can be safely discarded.

Ellen White, Pacific Union Recorder, 31 December, 1903

“I am instructed to say to our people, Let us follow Christ. We may safely discard all ideas that are not included in His teachings.”

The Old Testament

It is accepted that Christ definitely authorised certain passages of the Old Testament scriptures. These passages are primarily those which were prophetic and which predicted certain aspects of the Messiah and the moral law of God. But, aside from these numerous passages which Jesus confirmed Himself and by indeed being the promised Messiah, how 'sacred' is the Old Testament record?

In answer to a question, on the “Ask the Rabbi” website, the Aish Rabbi wrote the following:

*The first thing to know is that **the Torah consists of two parts: The Written Torah, and the Oral Torah.***

The Written Torah totals 24 books, including the Five Books of Moses and the prophetic writings – e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Psalms, Proverbs, etc.

*The Five Books of Moses – comprised of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – **was written down by Moses in 1273 BCE, and includes all 613 commandments (mitzvahs).***

Perhaps part of the reason for your confusion is that the Five Books of Moses has many names. It is referred to as the Bible (meaning "book" in Greek), the Chumash (Hebrew for "fifth"), the Pentateuch (Greek for "five scrolls"), or generically "Torah" – Hebrew for "instructions," because its purpose is to instruct. (Jews consider it insulting to call it the Old Testament, as this implies a New Testament, which Jews reject.)

But whatever the name, it refers to the best-selling, longest-running book in the history of mankind.

*So what is the **Oral Torah**? Its name derives from the fact that **it was not allowed to be formally written down but had to be taught orally. It contains the explanations of the Written Torah. One cannot be understood without the other.***

*In 190 CE, persecution and exile of the Jewish people threatened the proper transmission of the **Oral Torah**. Therefore, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi **compiled written notes on the Oral Torah called the "Mishnah"** (Hebrew for "teaching"). Rabbi Yehudah arranged the Mishnah into six sections: Laws of*

Agriculture, Festivals, Damages, Marriage, Purity, and Offerings. Rabbi Yehudah wrote the Mishnah in code form, so that students would still require the explanation of a rabbi – since this information was meant to remain oral.

In 500 CE, the Jewish people again suffered an uprooting of their communities, and two Babylonian rabbis – Rav Ashi and Ravina – compiled a 60-volume record of rabbinic discussions on the Mishnah, called the "Gemara." Together, the Mishnah and Gemara comprise what is commonly called the "Talmud."

The Oral Torah also includes the Midrash, an explanation of the Written Torah, comprising both ethical and legal components. Much of this material is also contained in the Talmud.

The Oral Torah also includes the works of Kabbalah, a tradition of mystical secrets of the metaphysical universe received by Moses at Mount Sinai. It was first published as "The Zohar" by R' Shimon bar Yochai (170 CE), and elucidated by the Arizal (1572 CE).

Torah is not to be regarded, however, as an academic field of study. It is meant to be applied to all aspects of our everyday life – speech, food, prayer, etc. Over the centuries great rabbis have compiled summaries of practical law from the Talmud. Landmark works include: "Mishneh Torah" by Maimonides (12th century Egypt); "Shulchan Aruch" by Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century Israel); "Mishnah Berurah" by the Chafetz Chaim (20th century Poland). http://www.aish.com/atr/Torah_versus_Talmud.html¹

The famous Jewish website claims that the books of Moses were written in 1273 BC (BCE). It is also maintained that the Written Torah can not be understood without the Oral Torah, which was not written down until 1572 BC (BCE), almost 300 years later. What is most interesting, is that ***"The Oral Torah also includes the works of Kabbalah, a tradition of mystical secrets of the metaphysical universe received by Moses at Mount Sinai."***

This mystical religion was being taught orally to the Israelites from the time of Mt Sinai.

Jeffrey H. Tigay from the University of Pennsylvania, in an article dated 13 October, 1999, called, **The Bible "Codes": A Textual Perspective** comments:

"It is not that we lack good texts. All forms of the Tanakh used today are forms of what is known as the Masoretic Text, abbreviated "MT," named after the medieval scholars (the Masoretes) who labored for several centuries to produce the most accurate text they could. The MT in use today is based on Masoretic manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries C.E., themselves based on older manuscripts. It has been largely unchanged since late Second Temple times (ca. the third century B.C.E., as

¹ Since its launch in February 2000, Aish.com has become the leading Jewish content website, logging over a million monthly user sessions with 380,000 unique email subscribers. It claims to have published over 10,000 articles. Aish.com, is a 3-time winner of USA Today's Hot Site award.

reflected in the earliest of the Dead Sea scrolls from Qumran).”
<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jtigay/codetext.html>

The article below is taken from **The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge**, Edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908-1912).

*“The extant Hebrew text of the Old Testament text is commonly called the Masoretic, to distinguish it from the text of the ancient versions as well as from the Hebrew text of former ages. **This Masoretic text does not present the original form but a text which within a certain period was fixed by Jewish scholars as the correct and only authoritative one.** When and how this official Masoretic text was fixed was formerly a matter of controversy, especially during the seventeenth century. One party headed by the Buxtorfs (father and son), in the interest of the view of inspiration then prevalent, held to the absolute completeness and infallibility, and hence the exclusive value, of the Masoretic text. They attributed it to Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue, who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were supposed to have purified the text from all accumulated error; added the vowel points, the accents, and other punctuation-marks (thus settling the reading and pronunciation); fixed the canon; made the right division into verses, paragraphs, and books; and, finally, **by the providence of God and the care of the Jews, the text thus made was believed to have been kept from all error, and to present the veritable Word of God.** This view of the text prevailed especially when Protestant scholasticism was at its height, and may be designated as the orthodox Protestant position.”*
<http://www.bibleresearcher.com/hebrewtext.html>

John H. Skilton, **The Transmission of the Hebrew Text**

“The text of our Hebrew Bible goes back, first of all, to the Masorettes, a succession of Jewish scholars, notably connected with a school at Tiberias, whose painstaking work on the text began about A.D. 600 or before. The Masorettes introduced into the text an intricate system of accent and vowel notations. Since the Hebrew alphabet was entirely consonantal and since in earlier times no full-fledged system of vowel notation had been employed in the manuscripts, readers had been required to supply vowels to the text. The Masorettes also provided notes on the text, notes of such abundance and detail that from them alone it is possible to a considerable extent to reconstruct the text. 9 They mentioned even what they regarded as unusual accents, vowel points, and spelling. They recorded a number of variant readings — on the average of about one to a page of a printed Hebrew Old Testament 10 — and they made reference to eighteen corrections attributed to the scribes before them. 11 But the Masorettes did not originate the Hebrew traditional text. 12 They received from their predecessors a text already traditional which they treated with great reverence. Their high regard for the text that had come down to them is evidenced by their placing in the margin readings which they

*believed to be correct and leaving the text itself unaltered. The Masoretes were heirs of the text in use when the Talmud was written, a text which, as is clear from the Talmud itself, had previously been in a relatively fixed condition....We may be confident, according to Albright, that the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with remarkable accuracy. He maintains that the Masoretic text of the earlier books of the Bible can be followed back to the **Babylonian Exile, when he believes they were edited**. After the Exile, he holds, these fixed texts were taken back to Palestine. There the consonantal text was copied and transmitted with exceptional fidelity.... ” <http://www.bible-researcher.com/skilton1.html#28>*

Menachem Cohen, Professor of Bible, Bar-Ilan University; Director, Miqraot Gedolot HaKeter Project writes in **The Idea of the Sanctity of the Biblical Text and the Science of Textual Criticism:**

*“The Hebrew vorlage of the Septuagint text-type was undoubtedly used by the Jews of Alexandria in the late centuries BCE, as this was the version chosen for the Greek translation. The ...“Samaritan text-type” found at Qumran was also common in the Land of Israel, adopted by the Samaritans who added their ideological changes to that version. It can also now be proven beyond doubt that the author of Chronicles used a version of Samuel different from the MT and closer to the Lucianic version of the Septuagint, whose Hebrew prototype was found at Qumran. **All the evidence we possess points to textual pluralism in the Second Temple era, as opposed to the notion of a single sacred consonantal text as later conceived. ...** There are several signs that Pharisaic circles attempted to reject the multiple text-types long before the destruction of the Temple, while at Qumran there are no such signs until close to the destruction of the Temple, when the sect ceased to exist.... It can be said that the unification of the text was hastened by two parallel processes: (1) rejection and removal of “deviant” text-types like the Septuagint and the Samaritan texts, which left the MT as the single legitimate text-type; (2) the formulation of one particular consonantal text and its prevalence in as wide a circle of transmission as possible. A realistic examination of matters shows that the first process was the main cause for the relatively sudden and swift changeover to the single-text-type reality; the second process rapidly spread the notion of a sacred consonantal text, but it did not succeed in uprooting the variety of sub-types which existed within the MT framework even before an official text was fixed. The battle between the Authorized Text or the textus receptus and other shadings of this text-type continued another 1,500 years, until the era of print.”*
<http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/opinions/CohenArt/>

Net Ministries (1996):

“It is not known how the original collection process happened, although there is reference to the early collections of books, and the authors of the books in the Babylonian Talmud. Apparently various books were accepted

as scripture by the early rabbis and gathered for reading and study in the synagogue. Scripture was determined based on the fact that the author was considered to be a prophet, that is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This fact was accepted by Jesus as evidenced by his use of the Old Testament. The term 'Old Testament' makes sense only to Christians, who declare that there is indeed a 'New Testament'. Although much of the 'Holy Scriptures of Judaism' are the same as the Old Testament, they are not identical. Aside from the order of the books being different, there are additional books included in the Roman Catholic Old Testament canon, the 'reformed' Old Testament canon, and the Orthodox collection. This uncertainty about what is part of the Old Testament still exists today, although some official canons were declared over the past centuries. In 170 A.D., Melito of Sardis declared the collections of Jewish scriptures found in the Jerusalem church to be the official OT canon for Asia Minor. This also became the OT canon for the Egyptian church. But later, in 348, Cyril of Jerusalem, declared the OT canon to additionally include the book of Baruch, and the Letter of Jeremiah. The African churches at the synods of 393 (Hippo) and 397 (Carthage), had an enlarged collection of books which include what we today call the 'deutero-canonical' books of the Roman Catholic Church. Protestant churches rejected this canon however accepting only the Scriptures of Judaism."

<http://netministries.org/Bbasics/BBOOrig.htm>

Sir Godfrey Driver, **Introduction to the Old Testament of the New English Bible**

"Very few manuscripts are said to have survived the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Soon after that disaster, therefore, the Jewish religious leaders set about defining the canon and finally standardizing the text. This last process went on for many centuries and resulted in the production of an eclectic text based on arbitrary rather than scientific principles. This was the Massoretic (so called from the Hebrew massorah, 'tradition') or traditional text found in all Hebrew Bibles....The Old Testament consists of a collection of works composed at various times from the twelfth to the second century B.C.; and much of it, e.g. genealogies, poems and stories, must have been handed down by word of mouth for many generations. It contains, however, scattered references to written texts; but how extensive or widely current these may have been cannot be said, as no manuscripts have survived from the period before the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jews into exile in 587/6 B.C. The text therefore is not infrequently uncertain and its meaning obscure." <http://www.bible-researcher.com/driver1.html>

It can be seen that even by the time of the second temple, there were various renditions of the sacred text. Jesus obviously recognised which sections were authentic and chose to quote and confirm those passages which coincidentally, harmonise with the 10 commandments, the Messianic prophecies and the loving character of God.

The New Testament

While the New Testament is much more recent than the writings of the Old Testament, a glance at the historical record reveals that even the New Testament was not without threat from editors.

Ellen White, *Early Writings* p 220

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, **learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.**”

From an excerpt from *The Bible the Book the Bridges the Millennia*, Maxine Clarke Beach (1998) outlines the formation of the Holy Bible – the canonised Scripture.

*“The early church made decisions about which writings should be considered authoritative first in local councils of elders, and later, as the church became institutional, through councils of bishops. **Criteria used for selection of texts included orthodoxy, apostolic origin, general acceptance by the churches, and whether they had been cited by bishops.** The earliest list we know of Christian books judged as Scripture is the Muratorian Canon from the late second century. **Its stated criterion is that a book must be suitable for reading in church.** This canon did not include the letter to the Hebrews or those we know as James, 3 John, and perhaps 1 and 2 Peter. ...By A.D. 200 there was general agreement by the major Christian communities on the core of our New Testament canon: the four Gospels, Acts, Paul’s epistles, 1 Peter, and 1 John. By the late fourth century, the twenty-seven books we now have had been generally accepted, with Revelation the last and most controversial...”*

It is interesting to note that Athanasius, the man who introduced the doctrine of the trinity into the church, was the very same man who took it upon himself to declare **which** writings were canonical – (i.e. divinely inspired) and **which were not inspired**. In short, Athanasius declared which writings were able to be considered as part of the New Testament Bible.

Prior to Athanasius' decree, all sacred writings had been determined by investigating whether they were upholding Godly principles e.g. **Its stated criterion is that a book must be suitable for reading in church.**

Why should that criteria be suspect today? Why should Christians believe Athanasius that the books belonging to the Arians or semi-Arian “heretics,” were not divinely inspired messages from God?

Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria was born around 293 AD in Alexandria and he died in 373 AD. He was the 'saint' who was made famous by triumphantly introducing the doctrine of the trinity, vanquishing the Arian (and semi-Arian) opposition. Athanasius was the **defender of the trinity doctrine.**

The Arians and Semi-arians were persecuted and killed as heretics for holding a nontrinitarian position, which prior to the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, had been the orthodox position i.e. the

non-trinitarian position which was held by the majority of the population.

(Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol 3 p 627, 628).

Arians believed that:

“The son is not unbegotten, nor part of the unbegotten in any way, nor is he derived from any substance; but that by his own will and counsel he existed before times and ages fully God, only-begotten, unchangeable. And before he was begotten or created or appointed or established, he did not exist; for he was not begotten. We are persecuted because we say the Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning. For that reason we are persecuted and because we say that he is from what is not. And this we say because he is neither part of God nor derived from any substance. For this we are persecuted.” Letter written by Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia in 312 AD.

Herbert Krosney, in The Last Gospel, (2006) p 200-201 writes:

*Athanasius dedicated his life to the fight against whoever or whatever would undo the work of the Council of Nicea. He was arrested and sent into exile three times. He experienced thirty years of conflict and instability as different forces fought for supremacy within Christianity. Within this context of turbulence – between 330 and 380 (AD) – the final framework of the Christian canon crystallized. It represented a significant step toward a denined body of holy literature that was recognzied by all Christians. **Athanasius played the critical role in achieving this unified vision.** In his thirty-ninth festal letter, written in 367, he basically defined what was acceptable and what was not. He gave a stamp of approval to the New Testament, as it was already generally formulated.”*

Maxine Clarke Beach (1998) comments on Athanasius' role in selecting the 'inspired writings of the Bible.'

*In his Festal Letter for A.D. 367, St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, was the first to list the twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament. He.... claimed that "in these alone is the teaching of true religion proclaimed as good news; let no one add to these or take anything from them." He distinguished canonical from apocryphal...By A.D. 400 these twenty-seven books were generally accepted as Christian Scripture, although no official action was taken by the church until 1546. **The canon was not actually formally ratified until the Council of Trent, when the Roman Catholic Church was fine-tuning its teachings and beliefs in reaction to the Protestant Reformation. Protestants have accepted this canon, without the Apocryphal books, by common consent.for some 400 years after the life of Jesus the church was still determining what would be the normative texts.”** <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/bible/canonselct.html>*

Glenn Davis, also comments on the manner in which the New Testament, under the authority of Athanasius, came to be accepted as **exclusively sacred**.

*“Saint Athanasius, theologian, ecclesiastical statesman, and Egyptian national leader, was the chief defender of Christian orthodoxy in the 4th-century battle against Arianism... Athanasius attended the Council of Nicaea (325) and shortly thereafter became bishop of Alexandria (328). For the rest of his life he was engaged in **theological and political struggles** with the Emperor and with Arian churchmen. It was an ancient custom for the bishop of Alexandria to write, if possible, every year soon after Epiphany a so-called Festal Epistle to the Egyptian churches and monasteries under his authority, in which **he informed them of the date of Easter and the beginning of the Lenten fast**. By fixing the date of Easter, this yearly epistle fixed also the dates of all Christian festivals of the year. In view of the reputation of Alexandrian scholars who were devoted to astronomical calculations, it is not surprising that other parts of Christendom should eventually come to rely on the Egyptian Church for information concerning the date of Easter, made available to the Western Church through the bishop of Rome, and to the Syrian Church through the bishop of Antioch. <http://www.ntcanon.org/Athanasius.shtml>*

From Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter in the year 367:(AD)

*'Since, however, we have spoken of the heretics as dead but of ourselves as possessors of the divine writings unto salvation, and since I am afraid that -- as Paul has written to the Corinthians [2 Cor. 11:3] -- some guileless persons may be led astray from their purity and holiness by the craftiness of certain men and begin thereafter to pay attention to other books, the so-called apocryphal writings, being deceived by their possession of the same names as the genuine books, I therefore exhort you to patience when, out of regard to the Church's need and benefit, I mention in my letter matters with which you are acquainted. It being my intention to mention these matters, I shall, for the commendation of my venture, follow the example of the evangelist Luke and say [cf. Luke 1:1-4]: “**Since some have taken in hand to set in order for themselves the so called apocrypha and to mingle them with the God-inspired scripture, concerning which we have attained to a sure persuasion, according to what the original eye-witness and ministers of the word have delivered unto our fathers, I also, having been urged by true brethren and having investigated the matter from the beginning, have decided to set forth in order the writings that have been put in the canon, that have been handed down and confirmed as divine, in order that every one who has been led astray may condemn his seducers, and that every one who has remained stainless may rejoice, being again reminded of that.**’ ... **In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them...** But for the sake of greater accuracy I add, being constrained to write, that **there are also other books besides these, which have not indeed been put in the canon, but have been appointed by the Fathers as reading-matter for those who have just come forward and which to be instructed in the doctrine of***

piety: the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobias, the so-called Teaching [Didache] of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. And although, beloved, the former are in the canon and the latter serve as reading matter, yet mention is nowhere made of the apocrypha; rather they are a fabrication of the heretics, who write them down when it pleases them and generously assign to them an early date of composition in order that they may be able to draw upon them as supposedly ancient writings and have in them occasion to deceive the guileless.” <http://www.ntcanon.org/Athanasius.shtml>

Athanasius considered certain additional books to be worthy of reading for instruction in the doctrine of piety. It might be accepted that he considered them 'not as inspired' as the other 'sacred writings,' which **he declared constituted the New Testament 'Word of God' based on their acceptance and use by other bishops.**

Questions

- What creditability does Athanasius possess that Christians readily accept his decision?
- Why should Christians place unswerving confidence in the Egyptian bishop's selection of what he considered was the 'only inspired' writings to make up the New Testament?
- Why should Christians rely on the clergy, instead of God, to instruct them?
- Was Athanasius' wisdom, spiritual discernment and decision trustworthy?
- What were the fruits of Athanasius' character?

Recall that Athanasius:

- was involved in theological and political struggles with the Roman Emperor;²
- prayed that “rather than the church be disgraced, that Arius might die;”³
- persecuted heretics (non-trinitarians – i.e. Arians and semi-Arians);
- determined that heretics considered **other** writings to be inspired - which he rejected.

Perhaps the rejected writings (which Athanasius labelled as 'heresies') were of a distinctly non-trinitarian nature ;

- determined the dates (from the moon's position) upon which the churches of the empires would celebrate the pagan Easter festival and all other church feasts;

2Emperor Constantine denounced Athanasius as “proud, turbulent, obstinate and intractable.”

Encyclopedia Britannica

3The Arians, under the authority of the emperor, threatened that the next day, Sunday, they would force their way into the church, , and compel the admission of Arius to full membership in good and regular standing. Upon this, the Athanasian party took refuse in 'prayer;' the bishop prayed earnestly that, rather than the church should be so disgraced, Arius might die; and naturally enough, Arius died on the evening of the same day. In Constantinople, where men were familiar with Asiatic crimes, there was more than a suspicion of poison. But when Alexander's party proclaimed that his prayer had been answered, they forgot what then that prayer must have been and that the difference is little between praying for the death of a man and compassing it. (Draper, 'Intellectual Development of Europe,' p 358; cited by Lynnford Beachy, in *The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity* p 15 www.presenttruth.info)

- was beatified (recognised as a saint) because of his service to the Roman church – the system which inflicted the '1260 years of persecution' upon God's people;
- considered writings were inspired on the basis that church leaders' already approved of them; and
- was not a prophet and does not appear to have been given special divine insight.

Were the transcripts which the ancient Jewish leaders and Athanasius declared to be exclusively, divinely inspired, without error?

Barry Setterfield, in ***Creation and Catastrophe Chronology***, (1999) in section titled, *Comparing NT Quotations of the OT*, comments:

*“Ezra and Nehemia are usually accredited with assembling the original, complete Old Testament around 440 BC. These writings became known as the 'Vorlage Text'⁴ of the Old Testament in paleo-Hebrew. With time, the Vorlage gave rise to three 'recensions.' The first of these was the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), again in paleo-Hebrew about 408BC. The second recension was the Septuagint Greek (LXX) which was translated from the Vorlage Test about 250 BC by 72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria. The third recension was the Masoretic Hebrew Text rewritten in square 'modern' Hebrew characters at the Council of Jamnia around 100 BC with vowel points added around 900AD. In “Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts” p 49, authored by Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, Sir Frederick Kenyon commented that **this dual procedure could easily be 'one considerable source of corruption'** in the MT [Masoretic Text]Confirmatory evidence of the acceptance of the LXX as an accurate reflection of the Vorlage comes from the NT quotes by Christ and the Apostles from the OT. Compare, for example, Christ's quote of Psalm 8:2 in Matthew 21:16 or the Apostle Paul's quote of Hosea 13:14 in 1 Corinthians 15:55, or his quote from Isaiah 64:4 in 1 Corinthians 2:9. From such comparision it is obvious that the NT quotes almost exactly follow the LXX. By contrast, when the NT quote is compared with our modern OT we find our OT version is deviant. It is significant that our OT is translated from the MT (Masoretic text). Some differences can have major implications such as Paul's quote in Hebrews 1:6 of Deuteronomy 32:43 from the Vorlage. **There he argues that Messiah had to be Divine.** Paul writes: “But again, when He brings the first begotten into the world, He says, 'And let all the angels of God worship him.' On checking that Deuteronomy passage in the AV or NKJV, **we find that Paul's important quotation on Messiah's Divinity is simply not there!** It is omitted on the MT, but is still recorded in the LXX just as Paul quotes it. In fact the MT omits another significant part of that verse as the LXX goes on to say of Messiah: **'and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him.'** The LXX thus seems to be at least a more complete translation of the Vorlage Pentateuch” (Barry Setterfield:*

4“The Vorlage Text is quoted in scrolls from Qumran and Masada written prior to the Council of Jamnia. After that Council, the Jews used the new Masoretic Text exclusively and destroyed all other versions. But Christ, the Apostles and Josephus all quote from the Vorlage, and its LXX translation as did the Church Fathers. In most matters, the differences between the texts are usually relatively minor, however the chronologies have some significant differences.”

Creation and Catastrophe Chronology, 1999).

Dr Paul L Maier, Professor of History of Western Michigan University, casts some light on the preservation of the Bible during a time of great instability in Europe. It was at the turn of the first millenium when the great libraries were often burned, that Irish monks recopied manuscripts and preserved and edited certain famous works. Dr Maier states:

"I think it would be safe to say that every book written before 1000 AD – that includes all of the Greco-Roman classics, that includes all of the Holy Scripture, Old and new Testaments, that includes all of the theological works and the Jewish side from Josephus or from Augustine or anyone else - we would not have these books today if it were not for manuscript recopying in these monastries." Christianity, the First Thousand Years (1998) A&E Television Networks, Magna Pacific - DVD

It is not the author's aim to suggest that the Old Testament prophetic passages are not divinely inspired, or that the Masoretic Text is not generally reflective of the earliest manuscripts which have been dated from the first century BC, however, it must be noted that some errors through copying are present and that by comparing all the existing manuscripts it can be seen that some errors have been introduced. The errors are obviously not God's words, but those of men who translated or copied the sacred writings.⁵

Ellen White, *Early Writings* p 220

"I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, **learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.**"

When Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, He clearly endorsed those passages of Scripture written by the prophets who predicted His coming and which identified Him as the Messiah. Thus the credibility of the Messianic prophecies are clearly established by Christ Himself. He also quoted the moral law also.

Further Christ endorsed the great principles of the law of God (Matthew 5) which revealed the unchangeableness of God's loving character, despite the erroneous traditional beliefs which the Jewish religion had unknowingly absorbed.

Christ repeatedly contrasted the Jewish leaders beliefs with the truth about His Father's character which He demonstrated through parables and by quoting relevant passages from the Old Testament. It was also important to see that Christ did not quote certain passages.

Summary

These preceding factors certainly appear to need careful consideration, but God's people need not fear being deceived. Jesus promised that He would instruct His people, through His spirit. Jesus declared that no other human intercessor was or is required to lead His

5 For an interesting article on the copied mistranslations in the Bible, refer to "Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties" by Gleason L Archer p 19-44

<http://lambsound.com/Reading/books/Bible%20Difficulties.pdf>

people into all truth.

John 16:13

“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.”

Prior to the giving of the 10 commandments on Mt Sinai, God's people were aware of His laws and His character (e.g. Enoch walked with God – Genesis 5:22-24). Today, when every wind of doctrine is blowing, God can still be relied upon to lead His people. His still small voice still speaks through human consciences. The 144,000 will have their Father's name – His character – written in their foreheads. They will be taught of the Lord; will know their God and reflect His character perfectly (Rev 14:1; Isa 54:13; Dan 11:32). They will know which writings reflect the character of God as they are tested by the great standard – the law of God as seen in the faith and character of Jesus.