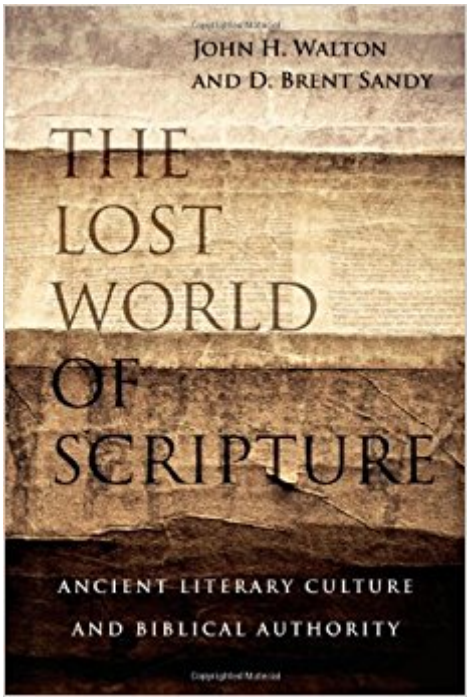
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The Lost World Of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture And Biblical Authority



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Synopsis

2014 Readers' Choice Awards Honorable Mention Preaching's Preacher's Guide to the Best Bible Reference for 2014 (Scripture/Hermeneutics) From John H. Walton, author of the bestselling Lost World of Genesis One, and D. Brent Sandy, author of Plowshares and Pruning Hooks, comes a detailed look at the origins of scriptural authority in ancient oral cultures and how they inform our understanding of the Old and New Testaments today. Stemming from questions about scriptural inerrancy, inspiration and oral transmission of ideas, The Lost World of Scripture examines the process by which the Bible has come to be what it is today. From the reasons why specific words were used to convey certain ideas to how oral tradition impacted the transmission of biblical texts, the authors seek to uncover how these issues might affect our current doctrine on the authority of Scripture. "In this book we are exploring ways God chose to reveal his word in light of discoveries about ancient literary culture," write Walton and Sandy. "Our specific objective is to understand better how both the Old and New Testaments were spoken, written and passed on, especially with an eye to possible implications for the Bible’s inspiration and authority."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[T]here is much to think about in this volume. I recommend it as a thoughtful reflection on the intricacies of an important doctrine." (Richard A. Taylor, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 57-4)"The Lost World of Scripture carries a lot of bang for the buck. It is high time for a book such as this, and we are glad it has been written." (Sawyer Nyquist with Abraham Kuruvilla,

Bibliotheca Sacra, April-June 2015)"The Lost World of Scripture is clearly written and carefully reasoned; the authors have laid out the chapters in propositions to help readers follow the logical progression of the contents. Recommend this book especially to pastors, seminary and Bible college students, and other serious students of the Bible." (Daniel Johnson, CBA Retailers + Resources, December 2013)"The nineteenth-century doctrine of inerrancy is gently introduced to the twenty-first century by two sympathetic insiders. As an inerrantist myself, I fret that Scripture is being stretched Procrustean-style onto an Enlightenment framework. There's nothing inherently wrong with the doctrine; it's merely a poor fit. Elsewhere, I argued that modern authorship describes poorly NT letter-writing customs. Walton and Sandy take those same concerns to the entire canon. Noting that Scripture arose in a 'text-possible-but-hearing-prevalent society,' they argue that text-dominant cultures like ours inappropriately emphasize documents (versus texts which can be oral or written). We tend to view oral societies as the uneducated country cousins of our more sophisticated, urban, literate societies. For us, an oral story is just intrinsically inferior to a written story, and thus we want our Scriptures to have been written texts from the very beginning. This is our bias, not God's. He spoke, not wrote. While evangelical systematic theologians rally for traditional inerrancy, evangelical biblical scholars (who are more likely to wrestle with the origins of the text) see how inerrancy works better for Luke than it does for Jeremiah. Walton and Sandy suggest a model that emphasizes an authority as the 'fountainhead'; they posit a process that resembles more Wikipedia than our solitary, contemporary author but still results in an inerrant canonical text. Jeremiah was the authoritative prophet who first spoke, not the author of the final book. Admittedly, this is hard for modern Westerner evangelicals; however, our digital age may carry us back to the future where a solitary author stops being the sole model for authority. Writing to fellow inerrantist scholars, Walton and Sandy ask all the right questions--the questions many are afraid to ask--and they seek to affirm the absolute authority of Scripture as the inerrant, infallible Word of God. Some will hail them as paving the way forward; others will paint them as caving to liberalism. All of us need to read this book." (E. Randolph Richards, professor of biblical studies and dean, School of Ministry, Palm Beach Atlantic University)"Clear, rigorous, innovative, well-informed and honest wrestling with a perpetual problem: how the phenomena of Scripture and the doctrine of inerrancy interrelate. Its application of cultural theory ('oral' vs. 'literary' cultures) and speech-act theory bears much fruit. Rich food for thought for students and scholars alike." (Robert Hubbard, professor of biblical literature, North Park Theological Seminary)"In The Lost World of Scripture authors John Walton and Brent Sandy have put together in a reader-friendly format the results of several decades of learned scholarship in ancient literacy and book culture. Scholars and laity alike

have not understood well this vital topic, often unconsciously reading (and judging) the Bible with modern expectations and then either criticizing or defending it unfairly and unrealistically. Lying behind this thinking is often a brittle fundamentalism, whether motivated by skepticism or zealous apologetic, that simply does not understand what biblical literature really is. Walton and Sandy expose the confusion and provide readers with a reliable road map. This book belongs in every library." (Craig A. Evans, Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Acadia Divinity College, Nova Scotia, Canada)"Walton and Sandy have given us an important, even courageous, book. Firm advocates of the high authority of Scripture, they fully understand the deficiencies of many evangelical conceptions concerning the Bible's literary production as well as its interpretation. Those who read and appreciate this book will find their understanding of Scripture enriched and their love for God, its ultimate author, deepened." (Tremper Longman III, Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies, Westmont College)"Exciting discoveries are occurring in the field of biblical studies, providing insights for the interpretation of biblical texts. Walton and Sandy discuss some of these findings--specifically, how the oral culture and the biblical literature proceeding from it were not concerned with reporting events with a modern idea of precision. This finding touches directly on the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. While both authors teach at Wheaton College and hold the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, they contend that the term 'inerrancy' may have become inadequate for defining 'our convictions about the robust authority of Scripture' and propose alternate language for discussing biblical authority. This well-written volume provides a fresh, careful and timely contribution to the field of biblical studies and is a must-read for serious students of the Bible." (Michael R. Licona, associate professor of theology, Houston Baptist University)"Walton and Sandy are to be commended for giving significant time and thought to the theological implications of their propositions. Lost worlds are attractive to explorers for the wonders to be found there, and this book has the potential to help a wider audience find the joy of a scholarly and trusting reading of the Bible, rather than merely seeing the dangers of modern scholarship." (Lyndon Drake, Pacific Journal of Baptist Research, November 2014)

John H. Walton (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School. Previously he was professor of Old Testament at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago for twenty years. Some of Walton's books include The Lost World of Adam and Eve, The Lost World of Scripture, The Lost World of Genesis One, Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament, The Essential Bible Companion, The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis and The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament (with Victor Matthews and Mark Chavalas).

Walton’s ministry experience includes church classes for all age groups, high school Bible studies and adult Sunday school classes, as well as serving as a teacher for "The Bible in 90 Days." John and his wife, Kim, live in Wheaton, Illinois, and have three adult children.Sandy (Ph.D., Duke University) teaches New Testament and Greek at Wheaton College. His books include Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic.

This was an excellent read. I didn’t understand their determination to hold onto the label of "inerrancy" as a general descriptor for the bible when the content of the book seemed to militate against it, but the deep discussion of orality in the cultures of the bible helped to fill in some important gaps in my understanding on how to approach these ancient texts.

Very helpful insights about the difference between Oral Cultures and Literary Cultures and the dangers of anachronistically reading the Bible as a book produced in an essentially Oral Culture in light of the criteria of Literary Cultures, and how this can lead to serious misreadings of Scripture. Their argument is sound but unnecessarily technical. A serious re-editing could make their argument much clearer and more accessible to a wider audience.

Fantastic. Where has this been all my life?

Very good for opening our eyes to the oral dominant culture the Bible was birthed in, and how that affected how the Bible was written. Reveals some of the text dominant blinders we have on when interpreting the Bible.

Great book! A worthy addition to my collection.

The issue of the authoritative nature of scripture is a crucial and sensitive matter. These authors took steps to ensure academic rigor was applied to their research, while allowing for those who in the general public to read and understand the issues as well as their perspectives. I recommend this for anyone - whether that person is a self defined follower of Christ or someone who just wants to understand how the scriptures came into being over the course of time.

This book blew my mind. I had never been exposed to to the concept of ancient oral text transmission until this. It forces you to look at questions of biblical "authorship" and ask "is that even

a relevant question?". So good and highly recommended.

Context is everything, and this book provides a perspective about the origin of the biblical books that can help us understand and interpret the Bible on its own terms.

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