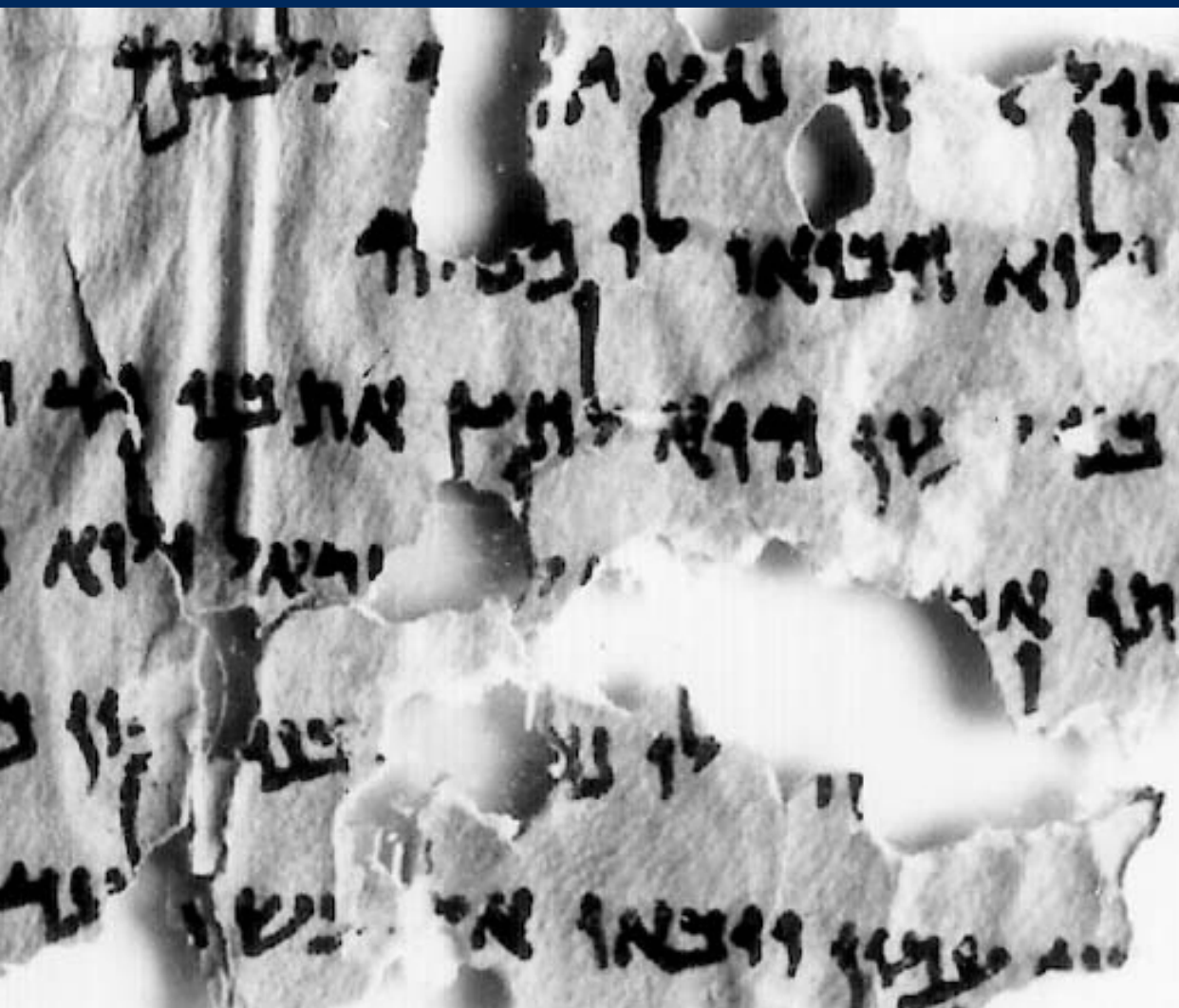


# DEAD SEA SCROLLS



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## *Dead Sea Scrolls*

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*But we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*

*2 Peter 1:16*

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

*Hebrews 11:1*

Christianity wages warfare against two opposing worldviews: mysticism, which would dismiss reason entirely, and scientism, which would exalt reason unduly. Both are manifested in contemporary culture. For many in our age, modern science seems to be dissolving before the acidic onslaught of a mystical postmodernism. Even more recently, a resurgent militant atheism has attacked any form of theism as incompatible with enlightened rationality. As an historical and intellectual yet spiritual and simple faith, Christianity takes firm stands against both the mystical and the scientific errors. On the one hand, our faith depends upon the eyewitness of the apostles, who literally saw the God-man die and were then amazingly transformed by Jesus' bodily resurrection. On the other hand, our faith is based on a hope that we ourselves may neither see nor measure in the same way that a geometrician calculates the hypotenuse of a triangle or a physicist measures the speed of light. Christianity does not fit within the modernist or the postmodernist worldviews, because it sublimely integrates historical objectivity with spiritual fideism.

This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* maintains that balance by concerning itself with the amazing developments surrounding the discovery and dissemination of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the last half century. First, Eric Mitchell of Southwestern Seminary reminds the reader of the history of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which is, according to him, nothing less than a miracle. Their discovery has forever shifted the fields of biblical archaeology and Christian apologetics as well as those of biblical textual studies and biblical hermeneutics. Second, Peter W. Flint of Trinity Western University contributes an essay on the significance of the biblical scrolls found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. While relaying the importance of the scrolls for affirming the content of our Bibles, he details in particular the

impact their discovery is having upon lower or textual criticism, the determination of the earliest readings of the perfect Word of God.

The next two articles of this issue on the Dead Sea Scrolls delineate the importance of the scrolls for our understanding of hermeneutical and theological trends contemporaneous with the ministry of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Herbert W. Bateman IV of Southwestern Seminary writes a groundbreaking essay on the hermeneutical practices of the extra-biblical scrolls and how they shed light upon the similar hermeneutical practices of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews. Bateman's essay will doubtlessly be considered a hermeneutical *tour de force* and we are elated he contributed it to this journal. Next, Ryan E. Stokes of Yale Divinity School considers the theological ruminations of both the extra-biblical and biblical authors of the Second Temple period regarding the origin of human sinfulness. Stokes' reflections upon the doctrines of humanity, original sin, free will, and angels shed light upon the contextual options present to the apostles.

Finally, Steven M. Ortiz, Associate Professor of Archaeology and Biblical Backgrounds and Director of the Charles D. Tandy Archaeology Museum at Southwestern Seminary, threads his way through recent archaeological debates regarding the identification of the uses and communities affiliated with the Qumran site where most of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. Appreciation is extended to Professor Ortiz for his incalculable assistance in collecting the essays for this issue.

It should also be mentioned that Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has received and is in the process of obtaining more of these important archaeological literary remains known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. These acquisitions make the Fort Worth, Texas seminary a central location for both specialists and the broader public, which has shown an abiding interest in their import for biblical archaeology and Christian apologetics.

The continuing study of the Dead Sea Scrolls provides scholars with data that simultaneously affirms and challenges our perceptions of the biblical faith once for all delivered to the saints. This is a cause for intellectual and Christian (as well as Jewish) rejoicing. The contributions of these archaeological finds cannot be underestimated. On the one hand, the Dead Sea Scrolls reinforce the cry of Blaise Pascal against optimistic scientism, "Humble yourself, impotent reason. . . . Listen to God!" On the other hand, they remind us that the texts upon which our faith is built have a demonstrably ancient and prestigious history.