



*The Lost World of Scripture:
Ancient Literary Culture and
Biblical Authority*

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“A must-read for serious students of the Bible”

From Dr. John H. Walton, author of the bestselling *The Lost World of Genesis One*, and Dr. D. Brent Sandy, author of *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, comes a fascinating new book that asks where scriptural authority was derived from in ancient oral cultures and how it informs our doctrine of scripture today.

“For decades, I have worked closely in the text of Scripture, examining it word-for-word, seeking to understand why specific words were used to convey certain ideas, and pondering the processes of inspiration and preservation. While I have always held a high view of Scripture, the evidence in the Bible itself didn’t seem to fit what many people understood inerrancy to be,” writes Sandy. “I’m not the only one that has agonized over this mismatch. . . . Growing out of discussions about what to say to our students, John Walton and I came to the decision to write this book.”

“This book is about a lost world,” write Walton and Sandy. “But it’s not about a search for lost books, or lost chalices or the lost Atlantis of Plato. This is a search for a lost culture that had a significant effect on how the Bible was written. . . . In this book we are exploring ways God chose to reveal his word in light of discoveries about ancient literary culture. 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.”

Praise for *The Lost World of Scripture*

“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

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ENDORSEMENTS

John H. Walton (Ph.D., Hebrew Union College) is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. Previously he was professor of Old Testament at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. Some of his books include *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, *The Essential Bible Companion*, *Old Testament Today* (with Andrew Hill), *Genesis* (NIV Application Commentary) and *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (with Victor Matthews and Mark Chavalas).

D. Brent Sandy (Ph.D., Duke University) teaches New Testament and Greek at Wheaton College. His books include *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*. He also edited (with Ron Giese) *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*.

“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**

“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**

“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**

“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**