

Step Three: Preservation

The third step in the transmission of God's Word is that of its preservation through the process of copying. Here we must ask the question, "Has God caused His inscripturated revelation to be purely preserved?" To this question we must give a mixed answer. If by "purely preserved" one means "inerrantly preserved," then the answer is no. But if by "purely preserved" one means "uncorruptedly preserved" in the sense that no teaching of Scripture (either in whole or in part) has been corrupted, then the answer is yes.

For example, in the more than 600 manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament there are about 284 million letters. Among these 600 plus manuscripts there are about 900 thousand variations in the text. At first blush 900 thousand variations certainly seem to indicate that the text has become hopelessly corrupt! However, of these 900 thousand variations, 750 thousand are the negligible variations between the similar-appearing Hebrew letters *waw* and *yodh*. The remaining 150 thousand do not affect any part of the system of doctrine discoverable in Scripture nor any individual teaching of the Bible as a whole. It should be pointed out that 900 thousand variations sounds like a great many, but 900 thousand variations distributed among 284 million letters amounts to one variation in 316 letters. And if the 750 thousand negligible variations between *waw* and *yodh* are discounted, the 150 thousand variations distributed among 284 million letters amounts to one variation in 1893 letters. Think of that level of accuracy for an ancient text, parts of which are anywhere from 2400 to almost 3400 years old! By way of comparison, this amounts to the misspelling of one letter in about a half-page of this paper!

John H. Skilton, in whose article some of these statistics are to be found, makes a statement which neatly summarizes this point. He writes:

We will grant that God's care and providence, singular though they have been, have not preserved for us any of the original manuscripts either of the Old Testament or of the New Testament. We will furthermore grant that God did not keep from error those who copied the Scripture during the long period in which the sacred text was transmitted in copies written by hand. But we must maintain that the God who gave the Scriptures, who works all