

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

Number 377 Copyright 2024 The Trinity Foundation Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692 April, May 2024
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God's Sovereignty Over His Word

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

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A few months ago, I was doing research in the historical archives of a leading religious college in the American Midwest. This college was once a bulwark of Biblical evangelicalism. Today it is far from that. During my visit one of the archive curators engaged me in conversation. Knowing my position on the sole authority of the Bible, he asked me: "How would you describe the state of the evangelical church today?"

My answer, I told him, would be a single word: *confusion*. "The root of evangelicalism's confusion today is wrong thinking about the nature of the Bible," I explained. "Most self-described evangelical scholars take a naturalistic view of the Bible. Their theology is no longer founded on the principle that the Scriptures are supernaturally given – uniquely God-breathed – and therefore the Bible alone is the Word of God. It does not merely *contain* the Word of God, but is *entirely* the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word. When the scholars tell their students to think of the Bible in a naturalistic way, they will have little or no real confidence in the Bible. The result is the widespread spiritual confusion we find in our pulpits, among church members, in Christian schools, and on the mission fields."

To my surprise, the curator agreed with me. He said, "If you were to ask ten professors at this college, 'What is the Word of God?' you would probably hear ten different answers, and perhaps one of them – *perhaps* one, certainly no more – would be what the Bible actually says."

The situation at this college is not unique. And so it should not surprise us that a generation has grown up to lead society and populate our pulpits and pews with little or no confidence in the authenticity and absolute authority of God's written Word.

How must we deal with this plague upon our world? Those who remain true to the Scriptures must declare Authentic Christianity on the foundation of Authentic Scripture. The purpose of this essay is to better equip believers to meet this challenge, and to encourage them in this stand.

Holy Scripture is a Declaration of God's Eternal Decree

We will gain a proper footing to meet this challenge by understanding this transcendent truth: God is sovereign over His Word, because it is the written embodiment of His Sovereign Decree –

Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.
Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
You established the Earth, and it abides.
They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants.

Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction.
I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life.
I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts.
The wicked wait for me to destroy me, but I will consider Your testimonies.
I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad.
(*Psalms* 119:89-96)

If we examine the original language of this passage, we find that the psalmist is speaking of the Word of God in a way that is much more comprehensive than we might think at first. He is not merely speaking of the five books of the Mosaic Law, nor is he merely speaking of the books of the Old Testament that had been given in written form by the time this *Psalms* was written. He is, in fact, speaking of the Word of God as the written embodiment and declaration of God's eternal decree. Several things in the language of this passage demonstrate this.

First, in verse one, we find the Hebrew word that is here translated "forever" does not merely indicate a forward look or a future view. The word indicates three things: antiquity, futurity, and perpetuity. In other words, it speaks of *eternality*. The psalmist is not speaking merely of a word given to Moses and others in written form as the Holy Spirit moved them. Yes, that is certainly in view. But what is much more broadly in view is the fact that the Word of God is just as eternal as the God who gave the Word. Such a fact is far beyond the comprehension of our finite minds – but here it is, plainly stated.

The second indication we have of a far greater scope of meaning here comes as the psalmist addresses God as "O Lord". He uses the covenant name of God, Jehovah – the self-existing, ever-existing One who is without beginning and without end.

A third indication of the greater scope of meaning comes in the juxtaposition of Heaven and Earth in verses 89 through 91. The word that is translated "in Heaven" in verse 89 can indicate the abode of God – that is, the place outside of the created universe where His throne abides. But this word can also be

used to denote the heavens of the created universe, God's created order. That is the way the word is most often used in the Old Testament.

Two other things in this passage tell us that the word "Heaven" is being used in the latter sense. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the Earth, and it abides. *They*" – the heavens and the Earth, the two elements of the created order – "continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants."

We have a further indication in verse 91: "they continue this day according to Your *ordinances*." The word translated "ordinances" is only used in this particular form in this passage in the entire Old Testament, and it indicates *a plan enacted by a decree*. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, a historic summary of key Biblical truths written in 1647 during the Protestant Reformation, says this in chapter 3:

God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.... Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions; yet hath He not decreed any thing because He foresaw it as future, as that which would come to pass, upon such conditions.

We find virtually identical wording in the *London Baptist Confession* published in 1689, and similar words in other historic summaries of orthodox Christian doctrine.

We have one further indication of the scope of the words in this section of the *Psalms* in verse 96: "I have seen the consummation [that is, the limit] of all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad." The actual word order in the original Hebrew is, "exceedingly Your commandment is broad." The emphasis is on the word *exceedingly*.

The word translated "broad" indicates vastness, extensiveness, and comprehensiveness. The historic confessions echo this: "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain *whatsoever* comes to pass." In his *Commentary on the Psalms* published in

1556, John Calvin wrote this concerning *Psalms* 119:96:

The prophet...here asserts, that there is nothing under Heaven [that is, nothing in this created order] so perfect and stable, or so complete, in all respects, as not to have an end; and that the Divine Word alone possesses such amplitude as to surpass all bounds and limits.... It is termed broad, to denote that, though a man may mount above the heavens, or descend into the lowest depths, or traverse the whole of space from the right to the left hand, yet he will not reach farther than the truth of God conducts us.

The inescapable conclusion we must draw as we look at the language of this passage is this: God's written Word is a written declaration of His eternal decree; it is an integral part of His eternal decree. It is a declaration of the "whatsoever" that God has decreed, and it is also the central element of the "whatsoever". God is sovereign over His Word, because it is the written embodiment of His Sovereign Decree.

Since God Is Sovereign Over His Word, We Can Be Certain He Has Preserved It

This leads us to a further vital conclusion: If the written Word is the embodiment of God's eternal decree, forever settled, forever standing, then it is inevitable that we will find that God has preserved His Word as He originally gave it by the Spirit through holy men of God – not one bit of it lost or adulterated. God would not be God, God would not be sovereign, if He did not maintain absolute control of the text of His written decree, in all generations. If God has not preserved every word, every letter of Holy Scripture as He originally gave it, then He has been defeated by Satan. We know this is not true. God would not be God, God would not be sovereign, if He did not maintain the integrity of the text of His written decree, in all generations, despite sinful man's continued efforts to adulterate it.

That is precisely the promise that we find in the pages of Scripture:

Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles, and the judgments He pronounced, you His servants, the descendants of Israel, His

chosen ones, the children of Jacob. He is the Lord our God; His judgments [more literally, His ordinances] are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the promise He made, for a thousand generations.... (*1 Chronicles* 16:12-15)

Furthermore, we have the words of Jesus himself: "For assuredly, I say to you, till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled" (*Matthew* 5:18).

The "jot" (Hebrew *yod*) is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The "tittle" is the smallest stroke in a Hebrew letter. This indicates the extent of the detail of God's preservation of His Word – every word, every letter, down to the last fragment of a letter. Also here again we have the use of the terms for the created order in relation to God's Sovereign Decree, just as we found them in *Psalms* 119:89-91 – "till Heaven and Earth pass away...."

Furthermore, we have God's commands concerning our handling of His Word, the embodiment of His eternal decree. Moses gives these commands to the children of Israel as the spokesman for Jehovah: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (*Deuteronomy* 4:2). "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it" (*Deuteronomy* 12:32). Also, later in the Old Testament: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (*Proverbs* 30:5-6).

And at the end of the Bible, we find these chilling words:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this Book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this Book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this Book. (*Revelation* 22:18-19)

Verse 16 of the same chapter tells us that this dire warning comes directly from the mouth of the Lord

Jesus himself – “I, Jesus...the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star.”

If God has not preserved every jot and tittle of His Word down to the present day, and will not preserve it for eternity, then God is a liar. If this were so, we would have no grounds for believing His Word, no reason for obeying His Word, and no basis for believing that He has ordained all things by His Sovereign Decree. We would have no reason to believe that the Gospel is true. If God were not sovereign over His Word, then we would be doomed.

Today’s Evangelicals: Embracing Ambiguity & Uncertainty About the Bible

But that is what growing numbers of evangelical preachers and scholars are effectively telling us today. We live in a time of open denial of an authentic, authoritative Word from God. Such denials were once the domain of open apostates, the liberals of past generations. And of course the liberals still hold such a debased view of Scripture. But today we find the same attitudes growing even among evangelicals. This increasingly prevalent way of thinking has its roots in Satanic lies.

In thousands of pulpits and hundreds of Bible college and seminary classrooms, self-described evangelicals are denying that God is sovereign over His Word – and instructing an entire generation of Christians to think that way. We find hundreds, indeed thousands of examples of this today. Here I will cite just two that are typical.

Dr. Daniel B. Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary is one of the leading New Testament Greek scholars of our time. He identifies himself as an evangelical. He is also the president of an organization called the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts which does very useful work in digitally preserving ancient manuscripts. But Dr. Wallace wrote this in the foreword to a book titled *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*:

We do not have now – in our critical Greek texts or any translations – exactly what the authors of

the New Testament wrote. Even if we did, we would not know it. There are many, many places in which the text of the New Testament is uncertain... The new generation of evangelical scholars is far more comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty than previous generations. They know the difference between core beliefs and those that are more peripheral. They recognize that even if we embrace the concept of absolute truth, absolute *certainty* about it is a different matter.¹

That is an astounding statement. It is an open denial of an authentic, authoritative Word of God. It is a denial that God is sovereign over His Word.

But this kind of thinking is increasingly typical among self-identified evangelical scholars and pastors. In *Colossians* chapter two, the Apostle Paul warned the church against a triple threat of Satanic attacks against God’s Word in the forms of worldly philosophy, legalism, and man-made doctrines. In statements such as Dr. Wallace’s we find all three. Such thinking builds on the false foundation of worldly philosophy by making man the arbiter of the authenticity of Scripture. It embraces legalism by establishing a set of man-made text-criticism paradigms that effectively supersede Scripture. It institutes man-made doctrines by falsely asserting that there can be “absolute truth” without “absolute certainty” as to what is true. It is utter nonsense.

But the evangelical church is embracing this nonsense. Christian academia is embracing it. Let us examine one further example.

Dr. John MacArthur over the course of his ministry has preached through the entire New Testament, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. His last message in that decades-long series was on the last chapter of the *Gospel of Mark*. It was titled “The Fitting End to Mark’s Gospel.”² MacArthur asserted that the last eleven verses of the book of *Mark*, verses 9 through 20, are not original. He asserted that they do not belong in the Bible. He claimed that it is completely appropriate that the *Gospel of Mark* should end with verse 8, which reads, “So they went out quickly and

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, writing in the Foreword to *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* edited by Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (InterVarsity Press, 2019). Italics original.

² John MacArthur, “The Fitting End to Mark’s Gospel,” <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/41-85/The-Fitting-End-to-M> as viewed on 12/15/2023.

fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

John MacArthur, and many others, assert that the *Gospel of Mark* ends on a note of fear and uncertainty. That is exactly what Daniel Wallace described: “The new generation of evangelical scholars is far more comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty than previous generations.”

I submit to you that the newer generations of evangelical scholars and preachers – and some of them, like John MacArthur, are now quite well along in years – do not believe that God is sovereign over His Word. Logically they cannot. It is impossible. They may say that they do, but their own statements demonstrate that they do not. Such men – and we find such thinking in thousands of pulpits and hundreds of Bible college and seminary classrooms today – are leading the church away from the truth. As we have seen, God addressed these words to such men: “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (*Deuteronomy* 12:32).

Answering the Higher Critics

What is the answer to those who claim that the church must be satisfied with “uncertainty” and “ambiguity” about the Word of God?

In August of 2023 this writer, along with Andrew Uibel, our Director of Media, had the privilege of spending an intensive week in Brazil with Dr. Wilbur Pickering. Dr. Pickering is unquestionably the leading living expert on the manuscripts of the New Testament. It is no exaggeration to say that no one else in the history of the church has studied the New Testament manuscripts in the way and to the extent that Dr. Pickering has. Dr. Pickering pursued a bachelor’s degree in mathematics, holds a master’s degree in theology with a specialization in New Testament Greek, another master’s degree in linguistics, and a Ph.D. in linguistics.

After decades working in the field of Bible translation in Brazil, he has spent the last twenty-four years gathering, collating, and comparing thousands of New Testament manuscripts from every part of the world. Dr. Pickering is now nearly 90 years old but still occupied full-time in this work. He has traveled to libraries, monasteries, and study centers around

the world to examine ancient manuscripts firsthand. The availability, in recent years, of growing numbers of digital images of the manuscripts on the internet has broadened, deepened, and intensified his efforts. It has been, as he describes it, “slave labor” to do this work ten hours and more each day for over two decades. But as he puts it, “I have been God’s slave for this. It is the task He gave me to do – to empirically demonstrate the objective authority of the Sacred Text. The painstaking process of collation is the only way to conclusively demonstrate that God has preserved His text as He promised. There are no shortcuts.”

During our visit we recorded over 14 hours of video interviews with Dr. Pickering. We are documenting his life for a written biography, God willing. During part of these interviews, he explained on-camera the methods he has used to empirically demonstrate beyond doubt that God is sovereign over His Word.

Dr. Pickering has entrusted to our ministry much of the work he has done – tens of thousands of pages of manuscript evidence, with his notations, demonstrating beyond a shadow of a doubt that the text of the New Testament as given by the Holy Spirit has not been lost, as the critics claim, and as many evangelical pastors and scholars now mistakenly believe. Dr. Pickering has given us full and free rights to use and to enhance all that he has written over a lifetime of work. We have become the stewards of a great treasure.

Let me share with you an example of what Dr. Pickering has written about those who would claim that the church must be satisfied with “uncertainty” and “ambiguity” about the Word of God. In what follows he deals specifically with the falsehood that the closing verses of the *Gospel of Mark* are not in the original text. (Dr. Pickering has demonstrated empirically that they are unquestionably original.) But what he says applies not only to the ending of *Mark* but to the full body of Scripture from *Genesis* to *Revelation*:

The Holy Spirit inspired Mark’s *Gospel*. And why would He do something like that? Evidently God wanted subsequent generations to have an official biography of Jesus Christ, a description of His life, death and resurrection whose

accuracy was guaranteed and whose content was sufficient for His purpose. (The fact that there are four official biographies written from different perspectives does not obviate the integrity of each one individually.)

I find it inconceivable that an official biography, commissioned by God and written subject to His quality control, should omit proofs of the resurrection, should exclude all post-resurrection appearances, should end with the clause “because they were afraid”!

But most modern critics assure us that such is the case, that the genuine text ends at verse 8. So where was God all this time? If the critics’ assessment is correct, we seem to be between a rock and a hard place. Mark’s *Gospel* as it stands is mutilated (if it ends at verse 8), the original ending having disappeared without a trace. But in that event what about God’s purpose in commissioning this biography? Are we to say that God was unable to protect the text of *Mark* or that He just could not be bothered? Either option would be fatal to the claim that Mark’s *Gospel* is “God-breathed”.

If God tried but was powerless to prevent the mutilation of *Mark* in this way, how can we be sure that the book has not been mutilated in other ways and places, or even systematically? For that matter, how can we be sure that other New Testament books have not been mutilated too, or maybe even all of them? Anyway, the degree of mutilation would no longer be an issue because if God was powerless to protect His Word then He would not really be God, and it would not make all that much difference what He says. The Bible would lose its authority and consequently its importance.

What about the other option – that God could have protected *Mark* but chose not to? Of what value would quality control be if it extended only to the writing? If God permitted the original ending of *Mark* to be lost before any copies were made then the biography was “published” in a seriously incomplete form, and it becomes

decidedly awkward to speak of its “verbal, plenary” inspiration.

If God would permit a mutilation of such magnitude, then what assurance do we have that He would not permit any number of further mutilations? Again, the problem extends to the other New Testament books. Quality control would be gone out the window and we would be left “whistling in the dark”. If God is not going to protect His text, will not the purpose of inspiration be frustrated?³

Embracing Uncertainty and Ambiguity About the Bible: What Happens to the Church?

Since God is sovereign over His Word as He is over all else, the purpose of inspiration has not been frustrated. God has not been defeated. But what happens when Christians accept false arguments about the text of Scripture that effectively say that God’s purpose has been frustrated? Let me share two encounters from our recent trip to Brazil.

A Pastor’s Crisis of Faith

During our visit we spent many hours in the home of Horacio Vieira, who is the pastor of Comunidade Crista de Brasilia (Christian Community Church of Brasilia), which Dr. Pickering attends. Horacio told us that the Protestant Bible that has long been used in Brazil is the *Versão de João Ferreira de Almeida* (the Almeida Version), a Portuguese translation produced in the second half of the 17th century by a Portuguese pastor-scholar who worked in Dutch Reformed missions. The Almeida New Testament is a translation of the Received Text of the New Testament, the same Greek text that was used to produce English versions such as the *Geneva Bible*, *King James Bible*, and *New King James Bible* as well as versions in many other languages.

Horacio told us what happened when revisions of the Almeida Version, based on the corrupted Critical Text of the New Testament (also known as the Westcott-Hort, Nestle-Aland, and United Bible Societies texts), began to appear in Brazil. These adulterated Bibles came on the scene at a time when there had been a revival among some of the

³ Willbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, fourth edition (Brasilia, Brazil: Project Underground Church, 2014), 299-300.

evangelical churches in Brazil. There was a moving of the Spirit. People were being saved, and some Christians were realizing, in a deeper way than they had before, the need for sanctification. But Satan came to steal the seed of the authentic Word. Jesus warned, in the parable of the sower, that the great enemy of the Word would do such things: “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart” (*Matthew* 13:18-19).

The word that is translated “understand” in this passage is the Greek *synientos*, which carries the sense of understanding the whole of something. Adulterating the Scriptures robs the reader of the complete sense of God’s message, undermining confidence in the Word, and can lead to many misunderstandings and errors.

Horacio told us, “I and most other pastors had been using the faithful translation of the Scriptures during all of the years of our ministries. And now here were these new translations [principally produced in 1993, 1995, and 2009] sweeping their way through the Brazilian evangelical churches. These ‘revised and updated’ versions were missing entire passages. There were thousands of omitted words. There were also many additions, and changes of wording that changed the meaning. Many words were in brackets, indicating that the textual critics said that they were not part of the original Bible.”

“Our people were asking hard questions, mainly this one: Which is the truth – the Bible we have been using all our lives, or this new one? As a young pastor I was asking those questions myself. What am I supposed to preach? What is actually the truth? With each ‘revised and updated’ edition there were more changes, more revisions. More words and phrases and whole passages in brackets, indicating that they were not in the original text.”

Horacio further told us, “I came to a crisis point in my ministry as a pastor in my early thirties – a crisis of faith. It took some time and considerable study before I understood that these new Bible versions were based on corrupted texts, and that I as a pastor had to reject them, and I could with confidence tell my people that they needed to reject them.”

“Some other pastors saw this as well. But many other pastors were confused and remain confused.

Some left the ministry. Others are still preaching using that corrupted Bible, and other corrupted translations that have followed. They are being led astray, and so they are leading their people astray. I thank the Lord that He preserved some of us from that, and one of the main reasons was the influence of Dr. Pickering. And so we have worked together to hold workshops for pastors to explain all of this. We have had as many as 70 pastors at a time come for these meetings. We also had a Greek professor come from one of the Protestant seminaries in Brazil. After the workshop he said to Dr. Pickering, ‘You have restored my faith in the authentic text.’ The next year, he came again, because he wanted to hear everything a second time.”

An Encounter in Panama

After our intensive week with Dr. Wilbur Pickering, Andrew Uibel and I left Brazil at 1:45 AM on a Sunday morning to return home. At dawn we landed in Panama for a connecting flight to Washington, D. C. While we were in the airport, the Lord in His providence gave me the opportunity for a long conversation with a young lady who said that she is an evangelical Christian, a member of a non-denominational church in Idaho.

She, her sister, and her parents are all medical professionals, and they were on their way to Ecuador to look into an opportunity to be involved in medical missions there. She asked about our travels, and what we had been doing in Brazil. I told her that we had been meeting with the leading expert on the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, who has demonstrated beyond any doubt that God has preserved His Word exactly as the Holy Spirit originally gave it through chosen men – not one word or letter lost.

This young woman’s reaction was precious. It was as though she was relieved to know that such a thing was possible. She said that for many years she has been told, by a succession of pastors, that she needs to accept the idea that many places in the Bible are uncertain. I observed that in teaching this, and in using translations that introduce such uncertainty, pastors and scholars are putting themselves in authority over the Bible, instead of submitting to the authority of the Bible. She enthusiastically agreed. “Yes, I feel that my pastors have been doing that.”

As we continued to talk, this young lady showed that she understands the problem that pervades so much of Christian academia and the church today: If God is not sovereign over His Word, we have nothing. We have no God. We have no Savior. We have no hope. The Bible has no inherent, objective authority. There is no such thing as truth.

The Problem of a Naturalistic View of the Bible

Jesus' parable of Satan's theft of the Word cited above manifested itself almost immediately in the church soon after His return to Heaven. In the opening verses of *2 Corinthians* chapter 4, the Apostle Paul spoke of the fact that even in the early days of the New Testament church some men were already adulterating the written Word of God:

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (*2 Corinthians* 4:1-2)

Here is the essence of what Paul is saying in verse two when he declares that he and those who ministered with him had not handled the Word of God deceitfully. Literally, he is saying, we have not falsified, adulterated, or corrupted the Word of God. He goes on to say that because of this steadfastness their ministry has been characterized by "manifestation of the truth" – literally, a plain and forthright disclosure of revealed truth.

In other words, the Apostle Paul and his associates were simply obeying the Bible's own commandments about how it is to be handled. We have already noted *Deuteronomy* 4:2, where God through Moses said this to the nation of Israel as they were about to enter the promised land: "You shall not add to the Word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

Why were men adulterating the Word of God in Paul's day? Why are men doing this in our day? They are sowing these seeds of doubt and confusion because they take a naturalistic view of the Bible. They do not understand and acknowledge the

supernatural character of the Book. It is the Word of God, not the word of man. It is an essential element of God's Sovereign Decree. Some of these men are deceivers; many others are being deceived because they ascribe to the deceivers greater authority than the Holy Spirit. Their thinking is not gripped by the fact this is the only supernatural Book – that it is God-breathed, that holy men of God wrote as they were driven to write the actual words by God the Holy Spirit, and that God has promised to supernaturally preserve His supernatural Word in all ages.

If God Is Not Sovereign Over His Word, What Are the Implications?

What if the textual critics were right? What if the pages of the Bible are indeed littered with wordings and passages that are "uncertain" and "ambiguous"? We may answer that question by asking a further series of questions:

How can there possibly be in the present day what the Apostle Paul spoke of as a plain and forthright disclosure of revealed truth, if God has not faithfully preserved His revealed truth in the original languages for us?

How can the people of God possibly obey God's commandments about not adding to or taking away from His Word, if we are not certain what the Word of God actually is?

How can we possibly know when we are adding to or taking away from His Word – and how can a holy God judge us for such a thing – unless there is an inerrant standard in existence in our time, and in all times?

How can we possibly know if we are turning even to the slightest degree to the right or to the left doctrinally, if we do not have an absolutely reliable compass?

How can we know when someone is handling the Word of God deceitfully, adulterating the pure Word of God, unless the pure Word of God exists?

Furthermore, how can we trust God the Holy Spirit – the author of all Scripture – to aid and to guide us in the interpretation of His Word as Christ has promised, if we cannot trust that the same God has preserved His Word intact and free from error?

The answer to all of these questions is simply this: God can and does make such a promise to His people

in all ages, and He is not to be found a liar, because He has providentially and supernaturally preserved His Word. God is sovereign over His Word.

The only way that God could command such things of His people in all ages, and the only way He could command such things of His ministers, is because authentic Holy Scripture in the original languages is still available – absolutely free from error, in all ages, as He has promised. Not one jot or tittle passing away. Dr. Wilbur Pickering’s life’s work has empirically demonstrated this fact beyond the shadow of a doubt, and God willing we hope to make his work more accessible to a worldwide audience.

In the verses just preceding the great roll call of faith in *Hebrews* chapter 11, the Holy Spirit through the human writer reminds His readers that they had “endured a great struggle with sufferings”. They had done so with confidence in the promises of God revealed in Scripture, “knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in Heaven.” He then continues,

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. (*Hebrews* 10:35-39)

In a time when textual critics seek to undermine our confidence in Authentic Scripture, may we not “cast away [our] confidence, which has great reward.” May it be said of us what the Apostle Paul said of the believers in Thessalonica: “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (*1 Thessalonians* 2:13).

Our Sovereign Creator is indeed sovereign over His Word – His written revelation to humanity. He has preserved that revelation intact to this day, to the extent that we can know what it is based on objective criteria. He will preserve it forever. The original wording was never lost. The hallmark of its faithful

transmission down through the centuries has been providential preservation. The authentic text was recognized by believers as inspired Scripture from the beginning. It was handled accordingly with great care through the generations, so that every word and every letter of the original has been faithfully transmitted through a particular line of manuscript transmission that gives us the ultimate proof that God has preserved the text – that God is indeed sovereign over His Word. “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.”

For more information on Dr. Wilbur Pickering’s work on the New Testament visit his website: prunch.org – Project Underground Church.