

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

Speaker 1 – Tom Juodaitis: The teaching of the Bible alone is that sinners are saved by grace alone, through faith or belief alone, in Christ alone so that all the glory goes to God alone.

Speaker 2 – John Robbins: The law is given for the knowledge of sin. It is not given for the justification of the believer. That is the legal use of the law. To try to use the law in a way of justifying oneself is an illegal use of the law.

Speaker 3 – Gordon Clark: Protestant Orthodoxy taught that man was a sinner, depraved in all his parts and functions and, therefore, desperately in need of divine grace.

Steve Matthews: You're listening to Trinity Foundation Radio. I'm your host, Steve Matthews. Thanks for joining me for episode number 12. Today, I have a special guest on with me. It's New Testament scholar, Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering. Dr. Pickering, welcome to the program.

Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering: Thank you.

Steve: All right. Just what I'd thought I'd do here, in case maybe some of our listeners aren't familiar with your work, is just read a brief introduction. This is something that I took from one of your books, *The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken*, the *New Testament Translation with Commentary*. Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering is a Christian missionary living in Brasilia, Brazil. He has a ThM and PhD in Linguistics. Of those actively involved in New Testament textual criticism, no one holds a more radical view in defense of the inerrancy and objective authority of the Sacred Text. This includes the position that the precise original wording has been preserved to our day, and that we can know what it is.

That's a very exciting claim, and I can't wait to have a chance to talk to you about that. Maybe what I thought we'd do to get started is just to ask you this: I know you've been involved in New Testament scholarship since the 1960s. You wrote your—I think it was your master's thesis in 1968. I want to find what first drew your interest to the study of the Greek New Testament.

Dr. Pickering: When I was still in college, I went to Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee. As you know, that's a Christian college. We had obligatory chapel every day. One day, the speaker was a single woman translator. We get our Bible translators from the Philippines. She talked about 1,000 languages and so on and whatnot, and the science of linguistics, phonetics, and whatnot. God used that to call me to be a Bible translator, in particular, the New Testament for some language that didn't have it yet. Personally, I did not feel that I wanted to accept the responsibility of translating the New Testament if I could not appeal to the original text, namely the Greek text.

However, of course, I very soon bumped my nose against [chuckles] the problem that everyone faces when they do that. As a matter of fact, no one seemed to know for sure what the original wording was. There are a number of different printed Greek

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

texts on the market. The ruling paradigm at the time, and still, which is the eclectic approach, is based on the false presumption that the original wording was lost and beyond objective recovery. Anyway, I didn't know all that at the beginning, but when I graduated, I wanted to get Greek at that time. I felt that Dallas Theological Seminary had the best Greek department of any conservative school in the country.

That was in 1956. You have to go back quite a ways. I went to Dallas to study Greek. In God's sovereign purpose and pleasure, when I was a first year at master's degree, there was a four-year program, Zane Hodges was in the fourth year of his master's program there. We were both single men, and we therefore were—They had a dormitory for single men and, of course, they had a dining hall to feed the single men. They had to eat. As it happened, both of us got a job to help us with our expenses. Both of us worked in the kitchen, preparing the breakfast and cleaning up afterwards and so on. There I was with Zane Hodges, and he was already into the *Textus Receptus*, the *Received Text*. We just kept our mouths working all the time. Our hands were working, but that didn't bother our mouths. We were just jabbering all the time about textual criticism and the problem of John Burgon and so on and so on. Anyway, that was how I got started. I became convinced reading Burgon that the Westcott and Hort and all that stuff was totally mistaken. In fact, I wrote my master's thesis on John Burgon and so on.

Steve: Great. John Burgon, that's a very important name among New Testament scholars. We'll come back to that in a moment here. I wanted to follow up with the next question here, and that would be this. Most New Testament Greek scholars follow Westcott and Hort, a couple of names you already mentioned here. They follow Westcott and Hort's theory of textual criticism, and you do not. What are some of the major differences between your approach to the study of the Greek New Testament and that of Westcott and Hort and their followers?

Dr. Pickering: You have to understand, sir, that textual criticism is something that is only done to a text that is deemed to be lost. No one does textual criticism on today's newspaper or yesterday's news magazine. No one even does textual criticism on the 1611 *King James Version*. Why not? Because we still have a copy in the British Museum, or the British Library as it's now called. The very idea of textual criticism presupposes a lost text. I do not have a theory of textual criticism. I have a theory of preservation of the New Testament text.

I am not a textual critic. I am a student of the text. A critic is above the text. The text is above me. Very crucial difference.

Steve: That is a great answer.

Dr. Pickering: What not everyone knows is that John Fenton Anthony Hort did not believe that Jesus was God. He did not believe that the New Testament was inspired. As soon as Darwin published his Theory of Evolution, Hort embraced it with both arms, so he probably did not even believe in God for that matter. Now then, his theory states very plainly—I read every single word of his introduction, 327 pages of fine print, very difficult reading. I read every word of it. I had to read some pages

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

three or four times before I figured out that I thought I had understood what he said. The man writes in a very complicated fashion—or wrote. He's been dead for a long time. Hort's theory starts with the declaration that the New Testament is not inspired. We are dealing with an ordinary piece of literature like Homer or Aristotle or whatever. Therefore, he brings over from the Alexandrian school of textual criticism, working on the classics, their canons of criticism, which are things like the shorter reading is to be preferred, the harder reading is to be preferred, the reading that best explains the origin of the others and so on and such, the general principles that are used by the other side.

That, of course, is presupposing no supernatural participation absolutely. Satan doesn't exist. God doesn't exist. Neither of them has anything to do with this situation. We are going to handle the New Testament just like God didn't exist, Satan doesn't exist, and it's just a piece of literature. I reject all of that. As a matter of fact, I have a book that God has [preserved His Word]—*The Divine Preservation of the New Testament Text*—it's now in the fourth edition, where I just go down piece by piece, item by item, beginning with the Apostles, I give you the historic evidence that shows that the New Testament text was never lost; that it was recognized from the beginning and so on and so on.

This is in print. If you don't want to buy it, you can download it free from my website. Hort had to get rid, of course, of the *Received Text*. The *Textus Receptus* was the New Testament of the Protestant Reformation. In God's providence, it is a good text. It's not a perfect text, but it's a good text. It's good for just about every practical purpose. I would say the *Textus Receptus*, the *Received Text* is perhaps off about 2% of the words in the New Testament, but it's small stuff, it doesn't hardly make a difference in the meaning. Whereas the critical text, on purpose, has introduced errors of fact and obvious predictions into the text so that you can use it, their text; you can no longer defend inerrancy of the text. Then, good old Hort had to get rid of the *Textus Receptus*, because that was what dominated the Anglican Church. He was a professor at Cambridge.

The Anglican Church has a prayer book and so on. Their prayer books and everything were based on the *Textus Receptus*. How was he going to explain the fact that 95% of the Greek manuscripts represented a basic line of transmission that they call the Byzantine Text, nowadays; he called it the Syrian Text? How was he going to explain that a single sort of text dominated 95% of the transmission down through the centuries? This is a fair assignment. What he did was to declare—he did not prove anything—he simply posited three texts I see, what he called the "Neutral," which was Codex B, Vaticanus, assisted by Codex Aleph, now in the end, the Sinaiticus.

Then, the offshoot event that he called Alexandrian, but those two, the Neutral and—are today called the Alexandrian Text. There was the Western text which was basically Codex D or Bezae, and then what he called the Syrian Text. It was like everything else. He trotted out eight supposed examples of what he called conflation. A conflation is if you have—a clear example is at the very end of *Luke*. It says they were constantly praising and blessing God in the temple. I forget which one it is, but

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

the Alexandrian says "praising God," and the Western Text says "blessing God," and all the rest of the manuscripts, "praising and blessing." You have praising and blessing. He argued that the fuller text was a conflation, that is, it was this piece and that piece and put them together and made the bigger reading, and this is a conflate.

If that is actually what happened rather than each of the others dropping a piece of the longer original, then of course you have a secondary reading. If you have something that was built on two prior pieces, this is obviously secondary. This was his argument. He trotted out eight examples, and none of which are valid, but that's showing that the Syrian Text was secondary, that is, it was based and then built on— He also trotted out arguments from the ancient Christian writers, the church fathers as they are called, and alleged that no Syrian readings were found in the Father before Chrysostom. Chrysostom was in the fourth century.

Even so, he's got a problem. How are you going to explain that this conflated, constructed, invented text took over 95%? He trotted out the idea of a formal ecclesiastic revision, that is an authoritative revision, imposed on the churches by an authority. He claimed Lucian of Antioch, who died around 318 or so, I forget. Now we know that Lucian produced an edition of the *Septuagint*. That is clear, we have that. That is historic, but there is not one solitary single shred, not even a shadow of evidence, that he ever did anything with the New Testament. It is a total fabrication, absolute fabrication on the part of Hort. That was the essence of Hort's theory. The New Testament is not inspired, therefore the wording was lost.

We bring over the Alexandrian text critical dealing with Homer and whatnot. The conflation, and the church fathers, and finally, a Lucianic recension, but he never explained to anyone since that point because it is a total fiction. How could Lucian, who was not a pope, [chuckles] how he could he impose his text on the whole world? Please, trot out some evidence, if you would. Of course, it's a total fiction, so there is no evidence. Anyway, that's Hort.

In my book which is the first edition, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* which came out in 1977, that's 44 years ago, I explained very carefully Hort's theory, and I then tore it apart piece by piece and showed it was totally false. So far as I know, in 44 years, no one has been able to defeat my criticism of Hort. As far as I know, no one has been able to undo my criticism of Hort because I have the facts. The facts are kind of inconvenient things.

Steve: All right. Well, what I wanted to ask you next here—This was actually something that was drawn from Gordon Clark. Writing in his book, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism*, Gordon Clark who thought very highly of your work, noted the following: "In particular, he," and he's speaking of Wilbur Pickering, "contrasts the painstaking procedures of the usually despised Bishop Burgon with the sloppy methodology of his detractors." You mentioned John Burgon earlier, so who was John Burgon, and why is his work on the Greek New Testament important for Christians today?

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

Dr. Pickering: John William Burgon was a dean in the Anglican Church. He was not a bishop; he was a dean. That's why he is called Dean Burgon. In the Anglican Church, you have your ordinary pastors or whatever you want to call them there; I forget what the Anglican Church calls them. Your more affluent cathedrals or churches would hire a scholar. They paid him to do scholarly work on the New Testament or on the Bible, and John William Burgon was hired. He was the Dean of Chichester. The word is Chichester but if you know, the English don't pronounce all this. I believe they say Chester, but if you read it, you think it's Chichester. Anyway, he was the Dean of Chichester. That would be the cathedral in that city. He did not start on New Testament textual criticism until he was 60 years old. He was a bachelor, he never married, so he didn't have, if you pardon the expression, the distractions of a family [chuckles]. He could dedicate his whole time to what he was doing, and he saw clearly from the very beginning that the Hort theory was just a bunch of smoke. It was just a bunch of lies. His criticism—He immediately started; he published in the periodicals of that day, under religious periodicals. He published all sorts of criticism. No one ever answered Burgon because he had the facts. He himself collated about 50 manuscripts.

Inevitably, he never published the results of his collations. That is very sad, because we have lost that work, we don't know what he did. A contemporary of his, Scrivener, also collated, and he did publish the result of his collations. That was very valuable, that was very helpful to me because he did several dozen, but he published the results so, now, the rest of us can have the advantage of his work. I thank Scrivener for doing that. Unfortunately, Burgon did not.

Steve: Burgon wrote, I think, quite a number of books though, or several books on New Testament criticism. Is that correct?

Dr. Pickering: Yes, *The Revision Revised* is the main one. It was three lengthy articles published first in some periodical, and then he put the three together; but he also had two others, *Traditional Texts of the New Testament* [and *The Causes of Corruption of the NT Text*]. Those were the three main ones that he wrote on the subject of New Testament textual criticism. His successor, his disciple, whatever you want to call him, Miller, George Miller, I think as a matter of fact, he published the second two posthumously, but he also wrote some things. Those three books are Burgon's main ones. I have a copy of the three. I have read them all.

Steve: They might be a good resource for people who are interested in studying some critics of the Westcott and Hort approach to the text.

Dr. Pickering: Excuse me, let me say one more thing here which has to be said to be fair to Burgon and the people at that time. At that time, no one had collated a sufficient number of manuscripts to know what the facts were. You have to go back to the Protestant Reformation, and you may recall that among the things [they recovered], the Protestant Reformation—*Sola Scriptura*—they resurrected the Greek text of the New Testament, because as you know, the Roman Church had been using Latin for over 1,000 years. They never did use the Greek text after the third century.

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

The Latin *Vulgate* was used, but the people, the ordinary people, were not allowed to read the Bible. Only priests could read it, and only the pope could interpret it. It's hard for us to understand this, but in the 16th century, that's the way the Roman Catholic Church was. Only the pope had the right to interpret Scripture, and only priests could read it. Satan really did a good job here to try to get rid of it, because there were Greek manuscripts in the National Library. In the National Library of France, the National Library of England, and whatnot and who-not, but the ordinary people were forbidden to look at it. These were just museum pieces, no one could use them. They were there.

Then comes the Protestant Reformation. They now start talking about Scripture. Scripture is above the pope. They even said that every Christian has the right to interpret Scripture. Oh, wow, this is bad. Then, you have the Reformation, if you will. That's when they introduced the apocryphal books into the Bible because they had to have *Maccabees* to have purgatory and whatnot and who-not. What the Counter-Reformation—the Roman Church did, was to throw in the face of the Reformers the variation among the Greek manuscripts. To this day, the Vatican library has the largest single collection of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in the world that we know of.

In the second place is the Saint Catherine's monastery there in the Sinai desert. Rome had scads of manuscripts, and again, the *Gospels* at least, probably no two of the manuscripts they had are identical. In shorter books like *Philemon*, I myself have collated 29 books that are identical to the book *Philemon*. I have collated, I have in my hand 29 different manuscripts that are perfect for *Philemon*. Of course, *Philemon* is one chapter. You get books like *Matthew* and *John*—that's a different world. These are huge books.

What is the Reformation going to do? What the Reformation has is the *Received Text*. By Burgon's time, this was the traditional text. But it was simply based on a small handful of manuscripts that Erasmus found in the National Library of France and Paris, or whatever, a few other places. Now, in God's providence, if you have 95% of the manuscripts basically in basic agreement, no matter if you just go and pick without knowing what you're doing, but you're going to come up with a handful of Byzantine manuscripts. I mean, that's what there is.

Beginning before that, already by the 1800s or late in 1700, mainly they were Germans who started it, but they started paying attention to a few older manuscripts that were coming in, started coming to light, and following the superficially logical idea that closer to the source of a stream, the purer the water is going to be, the older manuscripts ought to be better than the more recent ones. They started paying special attention to the older manuscripts.

The reason, of course, that they survived was that they were so bad that no one wanted to use them. If you use a book, you wear it out. I have myself worn out five or six Bibles. I don't have a copy anymore but, for years, I had a copy of the *RSV*. It was in perfect condition, sitting on my bookshelf, because I never used it. Someone

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

in 1,000 years later will find my library and say, "Oh, he used the *RSV*." No, the only reason it survived was I never used it.

I use the *King James*, now the *New King James*. I've worn out several copies. Anyway, I'm defending Burgon. The whole point of this harangue is I'm defending Burgon. In his day, no one had collated a sufficient number of manuscripts to be in possession of the necessary information to understand how the transmission of the texts have gone through the centuries and to be able to defend, therefore, the *Textus Receptus*, or the traditional text, or the vast majority of manuscripts but on objective scientific terms that hadn't been done. The information wasn't available.

The manuscripts were in the museums or in the libraries, but no one knew what they had. I myself have collated over 50 manuscripts for each of the four *Gospels*. Now, I know what I'm talking about. I've been there, and I've come back. I have dealt with the evidence. There's nothing like a firsthand acquaintance with the evidence. You see, although Burgon had himself collated 50 manuscripts, and he probably is the only person living or dead who had ever personally—he, John William Burgon, personally collated *Codex Vaticanus*, *Codex Sinaiticus*, *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* as *Codex C*, and *Codex B*. In his days, those were the big four codices. The first three have most of the whole New Testament, *Codex B* only has the *Gospels* and *Acts*. Burgon knew what he was talking about because he had gone through the evidence. He knew that the *Codex B* and *Codex Aleph*, for instance, just in the four *Gospels*, they disagree over 3,000 times just between themselves. *Codex B* and *Codex Aleph* disagreed between themselves over 3,000 times in the four *Gospels*. That's not talking about differences in spelling. These are real differences.

Well, kind friends, those are not good manuscripts if you got two manuscripts [that] disagree over 3,000 times. You try to copy any book in the world and see if you can make 3,000 mistakes. You can't do it, sir. It has to be deliberate. There's something really strange going on here. You cannot just accidentally make 3,000 mistakes in four *Gospels*. Okay, Burgon had the facts, but who else had the facts? I don't suppose Hort [did], for instance—As far as I know, Hort never collated a single manuscript in his whole life. Hort simply theorized. Anyway, Burgon did what he could with the information that he had in his day.

Steve: Yes, I can see the point there. I mean, Burgon was a careful scholar, he actually went to the evidence. He did the work, the hard work. It sounds like Hort, as you just said, he theorized, but he didn't really get his hands dirty with looking at the manuscripts. Yes, thank you for that. That's a fascinating explanation. I wanted to turn now to something that you wrote in the book, *God Has Preserved His Text*, third edition.

This is what you wrote: "The discipline of textual criticism of whatever text is predicated on the assumption, allegation, declaration that there is a legitimate doubt about the precise original wording of the text." I know you had spoken to that a little bit earlier. Later in the same book, you wrote this: "Since the original text," that is the text of the Greek New Testament, "was never lost, there's no legitimate textual criticism of the New Testament, and therefore no science as such. Since New

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

Testament textual criticism, as practiced by the academic community during the past 130 years, depends on a false presupposition, it cannot be a science."

Those are some powerful statements. Many New Testament Greek scholars, I would suppose, would consider that controversial. What reasons do you give in support of your position that the original New Testament text was never lost and your view that the academic community's approach to textual criticism of the New Testament is incorrect?

Dr. Pickering: Well, it's like this. *God Has Preserved His Text* is now in the fourth edition. What I do, if you will read right at the beginning, I start out and I start with the apostles, and I prove that the apostles knew that they were writing Scripture, and that the apostles knew that their colleagues were writing the Scripture. I proved that the early Christians from the very beginning recognized these things are the Scripture. They used them as Scripture from the very beginning. This was through, as you know, the synagogues in Jesus' day, what they did was they would read from the text about Jesus himself. He had them, he read from *Isaiah*, and then he proceeded to preach on the basis of that text from *Isaiah*. This is what they did. When the Apostle Paul and Barnabas and Silas went around whenever there was a synagogue in the place, they always went to the synagogue. What happened? They would read Moses and the prophets. That's what they did.

Since most of the early Christians were either Jews or proselytes, that is God-fearing Gentiles, they would obviously keep on doing what they'd always done, namely, in their weekly meetings, they would read Scripture only. They immediately began using the New Testament along with the Old Testament. I give you the facts here. You don't have to believe me. I quote from all these guys, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Polycarp, and whatnot. It's all right here.

If you don't like to read, you can go to my website, and there, you have on YouTube, I have in both Portuguese and English 17 videos, wherein what I basically do is simply read this book, at least the first two parts of it. If you don't like to read, you can just turn on my video and listen to it and watch me, if you can stand my ugly old face.

Anyway, I'm not defending pie in the sky. I'm talking about historic evidence, based on what it said. The other side, the eclectic camp, whatever you want to call it, they rigorously, determinedly ignored the historical evidence. They refused to look at the evidence. If you look at the evidence, you cannot defend what they defend that the original wording was lost. The only way you can defend that is by refusing to look at the evidence, which they refused to do. Unfortunately, I can't help that. That's why I say what I say. I have the facts here. I've trotted them out. You can read them.

My criticism of Hort has been on the market for 44 years and has never been dismantled, as far as I know. Now, my work with *Family 35* began in the year 2002. I started out with the Majority Text along with Zane Hodges and Art Farstad and so on, because that was all we had at that time. By the year 2002, God led me, using, as a matter of fact, the critical apparatus of Hodges and Farstad, or in the adulterous woman based on von Soden, and in *Revelation* based on the complete collation of

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

220 manuscripts done by Herman C. Hoskier, which he published around 1925, I think it was. Of course, I have a copy, two volumes. There, you're talking about facts, because the adulterous woman, this is *John* 7:53 through 8:11, von Soden said that he had collated 900 manuscripts. Oh, probably he did. That's a bunch of manuscripts. Even though it's only 12 verses, but if you collate 900 manuscripts for 12 verses, that's a lot of work, sir. I know what I'm talking about. I've done it. There may be 1,700 altogether manuscripts there, so you do 900, that's virtually 50%. Von Soden posited seven lines of transmission. They're actually more than that, but that's what he posited.

Hodges and Farstad, in their apparatus, they based those 12 verses, their apparatus is different from any place else because that's based on concrete evidence. That is some collation of a minor manuscript. In *Revelation* also, their critical apparatus is totally different because it's based on fact. It's based on Hoskier's collation of 220 manuscripts. Hoskier did that during the First World War, and because of the First World War, he could not have access to quite a few manuscripts. You can understand that. I'm amazed that he got 220, but to this day, we don't have more than 300 manuscripts of the *Revelation*. That was the book that was the least copied of all, at least of the copies.

At those two places, as I looked at the evidence, I saw that what I call *Family 35* was the oldest and the best of the line in the transmission that was objective. I have evidence in support of what I say. The New Testament was never lost. It was recognized from the very beginning as a Scripture by the early Christians, and it was protected and preserved. There was a normal process of transmission down through the centuries. I even argued that the autographs may have been produced. I can't prove it, of course, but it may have been produced as multiple copies.

You have a guy like Peter, in his first letter. It says that the five provinces in Asia Minor, today Turkey, five different provinces. Now, if he wrote on papyrus—I myself have worked with papyrus. As you know, it's vegetable; it's very fragile; if it gets wet, goodbye. Not only that, [but] papyrus is [also] impermeable. That is, the ink does not seep into papyrus. The ink dries on top. It's just the crust. If you flex it like this, there goes the ink. It doesn't leave any marks on your palimpsest or on leather, on parchment, because as you know, leather has pores. Animals have hair just like we do, and so the ink would sink into the leather, but ink does not sink into papyrus. Anything written on papyrus, by the time it had been handled 20 times, is falling apart. Even if Peter did not send five copies, one to each province, just imagine Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia. The churches—that's plural. There's more than one church in Galatia. Paul writes a letter to the churches of Galatia. You are a pastor or an elder, you are an authority in the first church that gets this letter from Paul, but along with the letter, you get the instruction, you got to pass this on. You are a responsible person in that congregation, that assembly, and you have to pass it on, that instruction that came with it. What are you going to do?

Steve: I'm going to copy it.

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

Dr. Pickering: I would most certainly make a copy. Look, I have to pass it on, all right? I have to pass it on. That's the order. No, sir. I'm going to make a copy myself, and I'm going to verify it, make sure it's exact. I have a copy, then I got to pass it on. I'm going to obey the order. I'm going to pass it on. What you have, sir, is with total certainty, you had a proliferation of well, carefully made copies from the very beginning. Each church is going to want a copy. You got to pass on the original, okay, but you're going to make a copy.

Even if Peter or Paul or whoever did not make themselves multiple copies, the churches would make copies. The word gets around and say the other church over somewhere else, "Oh, hey, come on. No, I want that." They send someone over here to this one, "Hey, please let me copy that." However, sir, anytime you're copying a book, you are working with it, okay? It's a book. The Old Testament was written on scrolls, but the New Testament, I believe, from the very beginning, was in books. Why? Because the manuscripts all are written on two sides of the page, whereas in the Old Testament, they're on the one side of the page. That's a scroll. If you're working with a book, sir, and especially if it's on papyrus, you're going to wear it out. I'm sorry about that, but you're just going to wear it out, even if it's on leather. The originals are destroyed by use. No, there wasn't any malice involved. It's just the demand was such that there were copies, copies, copies, and it simply wears out. The book wears out. Sorry about that.

We don't have any original manuscripts. Why not? Because they were worn out. We don't have any of their children because they were worn out, and we don't have any of their grandchildren because they were worn out. What we have is—I don't even know how to talk about the 10th or the 15th generation on down of copies, but copies that were faithfully made by people who believe they were dealing with an inspired text. How did I get into that? What was your question? Why do I recheck the other side? All right. I'm dangerous that way. I get carried away.

Steve: Well, it's a fascinating discussion, and I appreciate you sharing that with us.

Dr. Pickering: You're going to edit [this]—you can cut out the stuff that you don't want?

Steve: I don't plan on cutting out any of it. I'd love to have our listeners to have the privilege that I do of listening to you talk about this, because I think it's really fascinating. Why do you reject the—I guess you've really given the reasons. The question was, what reasons do you give in support of your position, which you've certainly given, and your view that the academic community's approach to textual criticism is off on the wrong track?

Dr. Pickering: Sir, this is very controversial, but to understand what has happened, you must pay attention to the spiritual realm. That is something that the other side absolutely refuses to do because the other side excludes the supernatural from their model. They pretend like neither God nor Satan exists. That is stupid. I mean, pardon my blunt language, but that is totally, ridiculously stupid. Both God and Satan most certainly exist. Both of them have an active interest in the New Testament text.

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

To approach the New Testament ignoring absolutely [the supernatural]—"No, God doesn't exist. Satan doesn't exist," you are condemning yourself to never, ever, ever, ever, ever understand what happened, because you've excluded the most crucial evidence. I have an article on this. If you'll send me your email, I'll send you a copy of it. I have it in both English and Portuguese, where I talk about the spiritual factor. Like the Sovereign Jesus when he was here, in *Matthew* and *Luke*, he said, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever is not gathering with me scatters." You know that text. Look, there's no neutral ground. Sovereign Jesus himself said these. You're either with me or you're against me. You're either gathering with me or you're scattering. There's no third party. There is no neutral ground. There are only two spiritual kingdoms of this world, Jesus' kingdom, and Satan's kingdom. No neutral ground. There is no genuine agnosticism. Agnosticism is a passive rejection of the claim of Heaven. Jesus says, "I am God." You say, "Well, I'm an agnostic." You have rejected the claim, you're not fighting it, but you haven't accepted it. Agnosticism is a passive rejection. Even what we do, you're gathering, scattering, that is activity. It's not just what you think it's what you do.

Everything we do is either serving one side or the other. He also said something, Jesus said, "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, I'm going to be ashamed of him before my Father. If you deny me here, I'm going to deny you there." To be ashamed of Jesus' words means you do not accept what he said. You see, Jesus was very emphatic about the inspiration of the Old Testament and the divine preservation of the Old Testament says not one jot, not one title. In the very last verses of revelation that start with glorify, Jesus is speaking, and he says, "Whoever adds one word to this prophecy, may all the plagues be added, and whoever takes away, may his name be taken up."

That's the glorified Christ. Anyone who denies the inspiration of the New Testament is automatically against Jesus. That's Jesus himself is saying, "If you aren't with me, you're against me. If you don't believe like I believe you're out. If you're ashamed of my words." His words are what he taught. His word is what he believes. The other side is against Jesus, because they have rejected the inspiration of the New Testament. Now, they are not going to thank me for saying that. That is not a politically correct thing for an old man to say, but I'm 87 years old, I'm a widower. I live alone. I don't care what you think. All you can do is kill me. So what? I'm about there anyway. That's one advantage of being an old man, without anyone in the house. You can say what you want. You can say what you think. If the other side doesn't like it, you have to pay attention to what the apostle says in *Ephesians* chapter 2:2 – a statement that "the spirit now at work in *the* sons of *the* disobedience." "Now at work"—present tense. Satan is actively at work in the mind of any servant of the enemy. You have the critical texts prepared by four servants of Satan.

The four men who prepared the first edition there of the UBS [United Bible Society] and so on. Not one of them believed that it was God's Word. What does Satan do with four of his servants who are preparing the New Testament texts? He gets them to introduce errors of fact and contradictions to louse it up. The Eclectic Text has cut out 10 full pages of the original wording—10 full pages gone, cut out, and on and on

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

and on. Like I said, you send me your email, and I'll send you the article, and you can read a detailed explanation of what I'm saying.

Steve: I would love to read that. So yes definitely.

Dr. Pickering: No one else is saying this or at least I haven't heard it, because if you say that you're going to be crucified, you're going to be massacred. It just so happens that the sovereign Jesus himself gave the example. Look, the demons knew who you are, and he said, "You are the Son of God. You are the Son of God." That was true. Perfectly true, 100% true what they were saying, but did Jesus like it? No, he didn't like it. He did not. He said he cut me there. Shut up. Shut up. Shut up. Shut up. He kept things up. What they said was true but Jesus why not?

Well, here in Brazil, I don't know about where you are out there. Every time there's an election, some candidate will say, "I refuse the approval or the support of John Doe." or "I reject the support of Joe Blow." What's the problem? Well, they do not want to be associated with what John Doe represents or what Joe Blow will represent. We can understand that. All right. For my point of view, the other side has people who are serving the enemy. I just don't need their recognition. Thank you very much. Just like Jesus did not need the recognition of the demons. I do not need the recognition of the academic world. The academic world is totally controlled by Satan. I say that, and I can prove it. I have two master's degrees and a doctor's degree. I know a little bit about the academic world. I've been there. It's dirty. It's a dirty place. Anyway. I'm too busy. My time is too important to be worried about the opinion of the academic community. They are on the other side. They're going in a different direction than I am. Let them go.

Steve: Well, thank you for that testimony, Dr. Pickering. I really appreciate that. You don't generally hear, and I think it would be fair to call you an academic. You certainly, as you said, you've got two masters, you've got a doctorate, but you understand, you have a Christian understanding of what it means to be a scholar. I really appreciate that. I wanted to ask you one last question here and it had to do with something you brought up early. We're talking about Family 35. I know you published the book *The Greek New Testament according to Family 35*, 2nd edition. That's the one that I have. In a note in the preface to the Greek text, you wrote this: "I venture to affirm to the reader that all original wording of the New Testament is preserved in this edition, if not in the text, at least in the apparatus." If you could maybe tell me a bit about Family 35 and your edition of the Greek New Testament that's based on it?

Dr. Pickering: Well, like I already said, it was in 2002, I believe that God called my attention to what I now call Family 35. In the adulterous woman, von Soden called that M seven—M the first letter of adultery in the Greek. Hoskier called it Family C or complication in the *Apocalypse*, but as a matter of fact, they're the same families, the same group. I started out calling it Family 18 because as maybe a matter of saving ink and space, whenever a group of manuscripts that can be reduced to a family in textual critical circles, we use the letter F for family, and then we used a number to

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

identify the family. The number is the number of the smallest number of any of the manuscripts that make up that family.

In the *Gospels*, you have any critical apparatus will tell you F1 and F13. Well, F1, manuscript number one is the smallest number of the 10 or so manuscripts that make up that family. Manuscript number 13 is the smallest number of the 10 or 12 manuscripts that make up F13. I did the same thing. Of course, I started out with F18 because manuscript number 18, which is in France and Paris has the whole New Testament, actually, and it is the smallest number of the manuscripts that make up that family. Only in *Revelation*, it goes somewhere else, that there has a different text.

The next number, which is number 35, also held, by the way, in Paris, France, has the whole New Testament. Although its text in *Revelation* is not good, it's still within the Family 35. Also, I had a second reason for choosing 35. Von Soden was determined what he called his *KR*, revision of his *KX*. He was determined to put it in the 12th century but of course, manuscript 35 is from the 11th century and this is inconvenient, you can't have a manuscript such if it wasn't created until the 12th. Von Soden really did acrobatics trying to get 35 out of the 11th century. I myself now have at least 10, if not more manuscripts as copies of manuscripts from the 11th century. Von Soden's effort was really wasted effort.

However, I chose Family 35. In the gospels that represents more than 250 manuscripts in the other place that goes down because in the *Gospels* we have perhaps a total of 2,000 continuous text manuscripts, including fragments, many fragments, several hundred fragments. In any given verse, like in *John 17:3*, you might have 1,651; 1,700 manuscripts that are extant at that point, because some manuscripts have lacuna and whatnot. In the second place is the Pauline Corpus, 14 letters including *Hebrews*. About 800 manuscripts total.

Again, in any given spot, you're not going to have more than maybe 700. After that comes *Acts* with about maybe up to 700 copies. Then the seven general epistles all have about 650 copies and in last place is *Revelation* with 300. Obviously, the number of manuscripts that make up any line of transmission is going to change because of the total. I would say that in Paul probably the Family 35 has at least 100.

In the seven general epistles, it's 84 that I have identified so far. In *Revelation*, it's 43. There is something very curious about what I call Family 35, but some of you call it *KR*. Even von Soden recognized there is comparatively very little fluctuation between or among the manuscripts that make up that family. He called it a controlled text. He said there was an ecclesiastical authority that controlled it; only he, of course, never said who or what that authority was because that is impossible. I have Family 35 manuscripts that I have copies. I myself don't have the original, I have copies of manuscripts from five centuries, the 11th to the 12th, the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th century. Actually, I have one 16th, five centuries. From isolated monasteries scattered all over the Mediterranean world. Now tell me please what authority anywhere could control what was happening in isolated manuscripts or monasteries around the world for five centuries. It doesn't exist, sir. It's stupid; that's ridiculous;

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

that's perverse. The Roman church was using Latin, they didn't care about the Greek text. What does the Roman church care about the Greek text? They use Latin. There was never any centralized authority in the Orthodox churches, Greek orthodox, but also the Russian Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox. There was never any centralized authority in the Greek Orthodox churches and certainly nothing they could control what was happening in monasteries all over the world for five centuries, no it never existed there. This nonsense about a controlled text is simply perverse; it's stupid; it's false. That said, however, the manuscripts that make up Family 35 are incredibly consistent, coherent, faithful, whatever you want me to say. So much so that with three or four manuscripts that Scrivener had collated and published, with just three or four manuscripts from that family I was able to pause it, a putative archetypical form for Family 35.

I prepared an initial Greek text of the family based on three or four or five manuscripts. I made a few changes after that. By the time you've done 10 or 15 or 20 or 30, I made an occasional change. But for something the size of *Matthew* I didn't make more than 20 or 30 changes for the whole book because just three or four of them were so consistent. I myself have collated over 50 manuscripts for each of the four *Gospels*. All nearly ho hum, not so good but all right Family 35 manuscript will have one error one transcriptional mistake every two pages of printed Greek text. That's just one of the middle ho hum.

A good manuscript you'll have to go four or five pages to find one mistake and of course, for shorter books, it'll be perfect because for shorter books are all there. An average Byzantine block that is the rest of the big Byzantine block, an average manuscript on the Byzantine block will have between three and five mistakes every page. Your so-called Alexandrian text it is impossible to posit in archetypical form for the Alexandrian text. Ernest Cadman Colwell who came to be president of the University of Chicago back in his day. He attempted this for one chapter. The first chapter of *Mark* he took the 13 manuscripts that were supposed to belong to the Alexandrian family at that time to try to objectively empirically on the basis of a majority vote set up what would be the original form of the Alexandrian text. It was so bad that he threw out seven of them and just worked with six and prepared then an average text on the basis of six, which is one chapter of the first chapter of *Mark*. The great *Codex B – Vaticanus* was off 24 times. *Codex B* was off 24 times in one chapter. Colwell was on the other side; he did not like the Bible. He was an enemy of the Bible, but Coldwell said such a text never existed.

Colwell said that it never existed. That is not me saying, that was Ernest Cadman Colwell said that. It doesn't exist. If you had *Codex B* and *Codex R* all disagree 3,000 times in the four *Gospels* you don't have a text, sir, you have individual manuscripts. There were at least 11 different gnostic denominations in Egypt and so they made all sorts of mess. In average, Alexandrian manuscripts if there are any such would have 15 to 20 mistakes every page. Obviously, the people in Egypt didn't believe that was Bible. You can't make 15 or 20 mistakes every page if you're serious about what you're doing; don't do it. Your monks have produced a Byzantine block they might make three mistakes.

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

These are not serious mistakes, these are simply you dropped off a letter, you missed an article what not, small stuff. They were monks doing a religious obligation, that was their obligation and that was their assignment in the monastery. They were not personally committed to the text. I take it that the monks who made the copies of Family 35 they really believed that they were copying Scripture. How do I say that? Because they were so careful. You compare the care of their work with all the others, the difference and average Byzantine is three to five per page, even a ho hum Family 35 one mistake every two pages.

I say to myself, "What's going on here? How can we explain this incredible commitment to faithful copying with just one line of transmission, that's a Family 35? No other line of transmission has that, just this one family. How come? How are you going to explain that? All over the world, isolating monasteries." The answer I give is that they simply had a conviction about the precise identity, and for them, this was God's Word, and they were treating it that way.

Whereas the other lines of transmission, they know basically God's word, but they knew that they had been—Whatnot. What I am carrying on about this, what not everyone knows that even good old von Soden observed that only Family 35 has an elaborate critical apparatus in the margins for the church elections. There are readings every Sunday and every day of the week—only manuscripts of Family 35 had this. In the middle of the text they have beginning, [foreign language] but that's in a different color ink because whoever is reading has to know when to start and where to stop, or else you're going to make a mess of it. As you may know, there are also something called lectionaries. We have at least 2,000 copies of the so-called lectionaries, and those are compendia of the lections that were read in churches services as Scripture but only that. They're not complete texts; they're church readings. It should be obvious that anyone who prepares a lectionary is supposed just to serve churches that only were worried about reading on Sunday. They weren't studying the text at home. But obviously, it's going to take less ink and paper and time to prepare a lectionary, which is much shorter than the complete running text.

That being the case, and since the earliest copy of a lectionary we have is from the fifth century—the fifth; that's old; the fifth goes way back. The oldest manuscript we have from the fifth century is lectionary. If all you want to do is know what to read on Sunday you don't need a continuous text manuscript, all you need is a lectionary. Why, why, why would anyone go through the extra work of taking a continuous text manuscript but adding into a critical apparatus of the lectionaries in a different color. Red, usually. Now look, you don't have to be a PhD to understand that it takes more money, more time, and more effort to produce something in two colors than in one color. We can understand that? That's all right? Why would they do that? That's money. That's time. I can't prove it, but the answer I give is that that was what the monasteries read in their communal meals.

Four or five years ago, I went to Mount Athos Peninsula in Greece. They have 20 independent monasteries there, plus a few dependent ones. I spent nine nights on that peninsula. Normally, visitors only spend three. I was there for nine. I visited five, the top four in the hierarchy. There's a hierarchy. *Megisti Lavra's* umber one.

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

Valopedi, number two. *Ivirion*, number three [unintelligible]...I was in all four of those. I slept in three of them and I ate meals in two of them.

Now, in the meals, it's a communal meal. No one says a word. Everyone is in complete silence while one brother reads Scripture out loud. All the time we are reading. To this day, sir. Today, to this day, that's what they do in the monasteries during the communal meals. You talk to these guys, and they are heavy on tradition. They are, "Our tradition goes back to the earliest time." Well, of course, the public reading goes back to number one. In my opinion, you have an ingrained conviction above the exact line of transmission that was preserving the original wording.

This could not be imposed by any. This is something that comes from way back because it is in all your monasteries all over the world. This was a little central, it's something that comes from way back. This conviction about the text, and their respect for the texts was such that they did not want to use a lectionary. We have 2000 lectionaries. "No, no, no." Every monastery has lectionaries so why would they prepare a continuous set of manuscripts with an elaborate apparatus and with different color? Because their respect for the text was such that they knew that a lectionary with just pieces was not the same as the complete text. Because of that respect but they were still doing the public reading and added this apparatus to the continuous text to use. Why is it, sir, that no matter where you go, there are more Family 35 manuscripts than anything else? The four *Gospels*—we have over 250 manuscripts that belonged to Family 35. Number two, the next line, even if it is a single one, is still more than 100.

But by the time you correlate all the major, you have to split it up several times. Now, why is it that the monasteries were copying this one line and only Family 35 has this apparatus? All of the manuscripts have it. All of the Family 35 manuscripts have it. Why did they do it? The answer I give, it may not be correct, but it makes sense to me. If what you were reading in every meal is Family 35, you're going to be wearing out those books and you don't want to be left without any copies.

Any self-respecting Abbott, who's the boss in the monastery, he's going to have his men prepare backup copies of the texts that they're reading every day, every meal, but no one's going to waste their time preparing backup copies of any other line of transmission. Why would you do that? But it's backup copies that were never used that are going to survive, because they're backup copies. That's why we have scads more Family 35 than any other single line of transmission.

But also, it is, by far, the most careful. Oh, you can explain that the way you'd like, but the way I explain it is that from the very beginning, the church knew what the original wording was. They kept track of it and they preserved it faithfully, transmitted it down through to us. Whether there was the conviction that this is God's word, and therefore it must be handled with reverence and with care. This came all the way down to the 15th century. By then, of course, you had the printing press. Erasmus's first edition was 1516. Once you get printed New Testaments, then there's not much point in making handwritten copies anymore because making a handwritten copy, sir, is a lot of work.

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

Steve: Yes. Amen to all of that.

Dr. Pickering: Like I said, I'm dangerous. You turn me loose, [and] I'm going to stay more than you bargained on.

Steve: Just in closing here, I wanted to ask you. I know we've covered a lot of ground; did you have anything else, maybe, that I haven't asked you about that you wanted to speak to?

Dr. Pickering: No. I would simply say this: If God exists, and if he has spoken, there's nothing more important for us than to know what he said. Because he's going to demand an accounting—what we did and what he gave us. I say to anyone who wants to listen. I say, "If God went to the trouble to deliver an inspired revelation to our race and if he gave himself the trouble of preserving intact that revelation down through the centuries, that's because he expects us to pay attention to it."

In *2 Chronicles* 16:9, I think it is somewhere in there, says "The eyes of Jehovah roam the whole world looking for anyone whose heart is loyal to him in order to show himself strong on behalf of that person." That's not the one I wanted. The one I wanted, I think, it's chapter 16:1. It says, "Speak of this word, which is determined for 1,000 generations." It's also repeated in one of the *Psalms*, "1,000 generations." Since Adam, there's only been 300 generations.

A word that is determined for a thousand generations. That's until the end of the world. There are a number of texts that say that God want us to preserve us. He didn't say how he was going to do it, but he's going to do it. Like the Lord Jesus himself. He says, "We are to live by every word that comes out of God's mouth." If you're going to live by every word, you've got to have every word. That makes sense. 2 + 2 equals 4. If you're going to live by every word, you got to have every word, and we do. We have every word, and God's going to require it.

Steve: That's a wonderful way to end. Thank you so much for your testimony. I appreciate that Dr. Pickering. I guess one last thing I did want to ask you. I know you mentioned about a web site before, if people are interested, they'd like to maybe look at some of the work you and I have talked about, where can they go to see that?

Dr. Pickering: My website is PRUNCH. P-R-U-N-C-H. PRUNCH is Project Underground Church. The first two letters of each word. Project, P-R, Underground, U-N, and Church, C-H. P-R-U-N-C-H. Prunch.org. Or it may come up .com.br because in order to handle the YouTube, we started a parallel domain. No matter what, you'll wind up at the same page. Both of those will give you the same page. You'll see my ugly face there. It starts out in Portuguese, but up here at the top, you have three little flags. The Brazilian flag, English flag, the United Kingdom, and Spain because I have three languages on my site. It starts out in Portuguese, but all you have to do is pick on the British flag and everything becomes English. Actually, there's more stuff in English than there is in Portuguese. There's also stuff in Spanish. That's much less. It's the work of our other brother in Honduras. He translates them into Spanish. He has translated a bunch of my articles.

Trinity Foundation Radio Episode 12
Interview with Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering
June 2021

Anyway, on my site everything that I have published. I have 10 books that I published on Amazon. It's all free. If you don't want to buy my book, I'm not here to make money. I'm here to promote God's Kingdom. You can download for free everything I've ever written. However, there is a slot there, at the top that says books. There, you will find the link for each one of my books. That link will take you straight to Amazon where you can order the book you want.

But if you don't want to, you can find the book somewhere else and download it free. Of course, you'd have to print it if you'd like to read something printed, but there is just an awful lot of stuff there on a variety of topics.

Steve: Well, thank you so much for that. I know that I've been on your website here and I can testify. There's a lot of great information, so if any of the listeners would like to look into your work further that's a great resource to go to Prunch, P- R- U- N- C- H. Is it.org you said, or what is it?

Dr. Pickering: .org or .com.br. The two go for the same thing.

Steve: Okay. Outstanding. Well, Dr. Pickering, thank you so much for your time. You've been very generous with that here today. For Tom Juodaitis, and for all of us here at the Trinity Foundation, this is Steve Matthews. Thanks so much for joining me today. I hope you come back for future podcasts of Trinity Foundation Radio. Until the next time, I wish you the best and the Bible alone is the word of God.

Tom: This is Tom Juodaitis, thanking you for listening to Trinity Foundation Radio. Please join host Steve Matthews, next time for another episode of Trinity Foundation Radio. For more information about the Trinity Foundation, please visit our website at www.trinityfoundation.org. We have over 300 articles you can read, download, and or print, and over 200 MP3 lectures that you can listen to, download, or you can also request CDs in the MP3 format. We also have over 65 books in print and other media, which you can purchase from our website. Again, our website is www.trinityfoundation.org. Remember, the Bible alone is the word of God. Thank you.