

# Has the Bible Been Accurately Transmitted and Preserved Through the Centuries?

## An Areopagus Forum With Dr. Daniel B. Wallace

When you read the Bible – or hear it referred to as “the Word of God” – how do you know that what you’re reading is what the authors originally wrote? This is a question that skeptics often raise, but in fact it is a perfectly legitimate issue that all serious Christians should understand.

The field of study that deals directly with this issue is known as biblical textual criticism – a term that is somewhat misleading because the word “criticism” usually connotes something negative (as in “to find fault with”). But as scholars use the term, it refers to biblical textual analysis – the art and science of comparing the variant readings in biblical manuscripts in order to restore, as accurately as possible, the original wording in the original texts.

Biblical textual criticism is a tedious and complex process, but it is necessary for two reasons:

(1)None of the original documents are extant (i.e., none have survived through the centuries); and (2)the existing copies that we have all contain variant readings.

In the process of being hand-copied from generation-to-generation, the texts were altered – usually by mistake but sometimes intentionally. Therefore, it is necessary to compare the variant readings in various manuscripts in order to

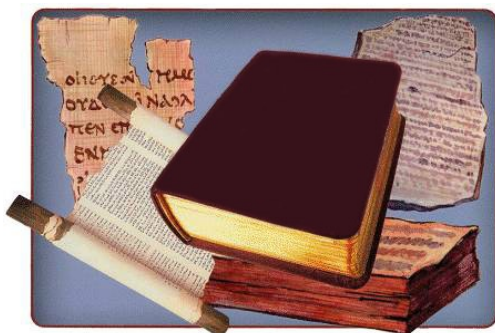
determine what the texts originally said.

So why is biblical textual criticism such a vital issue? First, because the Christian faith is based on exclusive truth-claims which, if true, render it the only belief system in the world that is absolutely true. Second, because these truth-claims – including virtually everything Christians believe about God, human nature, the character and mission of Christ, and the path to spiritual salvation – depend upon the veracity of the Bible. And third, because if the Bible has been corrupted in the transmission process through the

centuries, then the Christian faith rests on extremely shaky ground.

Biblical textual criticism has been a controversial issue for over 200 years, and it remains a major line of demarcation between

theological conservatives and liberals. Conservatives believe the Bible to be divinely-inspired, historically reliable, and doctrinally authoritative. Further-



(Continued)

### The Areopagus Calendar

#### Upcoming Seminars

**A History of Christianity In America: From the American Revolution To the Civil War**

Wednesdays, Aug. 29 - Nov. 14  
7 PM

Johnson Ferry Baptist Church



#### Upcoming Forums

**“Has the Bible Been Accurately Transmitted and Preserved Through the Centuries?”**

**The Issue of Biblical Textual Criticism**

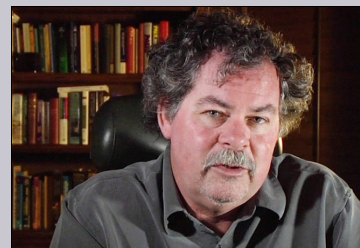
Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>  
7:30 PM

Perimeter Church

A presentation by

**Dr. Daniel B. Wallace**

Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, Executive Director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, and author of numerous books including *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Misdemeanor Popular Culture*



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more, conservatives hold that the Bible contains moral absolutes that are universally applicable, and that God has preserved the essential integrity of the texts throughout history. Liberals, on the other hand, tend to regard the Bible as essentially a product of human thought and imagination that contains some profound moral wisdom and some accurate history, but also considerable legend and mythology mixed in with some antiquated social and moral concepts that are no longer relevant. Furthermore, liberals doubt that the biblical texts have been transmitted and preserved accurately over the centuries. In effect, skeptics typically hold that the Bible has been so corrupted in the transmission process over time as to be unreliable.

**Dr. Daniel B. Wallace**, our Areopagus Forum speaker on May 17<sup>th</sup>,

is one of the world's foremost experts in the specialized field of biblical textual criticism. As a professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and the executive director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM), Dr. Wallace and his team have been involved for several years in photographing and preserving the oldest and most 'at risk' biblical manuscripts in the world. In the process they have discovered many manuscripts that were previously unknown to exist.

The Areopagus is honored to have Dr. Wallace with us, and I hope you will join us for this fascinating presentation as he explains why we can trust that the Bible has been accurately transmitted and preserved through the centuries. — *Jefrey Breshears*

The Areopagus Calendar

## Upcoming Forums

**"Breaking the Spiral of Silence"**



**STAND UP and SPEAK OUT for Life, Marriage, Religious Liberty!**

*"Why do people go along with the crowd even when they know it's wrong?"*

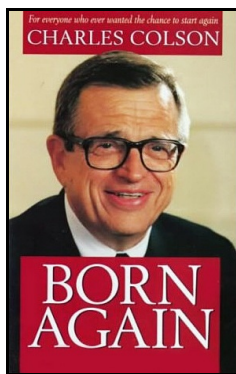
Thursday, June 21<sup>st</sup>

7:30 PM

Perimeter Church

## *A Tribute to Charles Colson*

(1931-2012)



Evangelical Christianity lost one of its most influential and respected voices with the death of Charles W. "Chuck" Colson on April 21, 2012.

Forty years ago, shortly before being sentenced to federal prison for his role in the Watergate scandal, Colson experienced a life-changing spiritual conversion – in part through reading C. S. Lewis's classic, *Mere Christianity*. Following his release, he devoted the rest of his life to ministry. In 1976 he founded **Prison Fellowship**, the world's largest outreach ministry to prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families, and in the early 2000s he established the **Colson Center**, a Christian education and training center designed to help Christians live out a consistent and wholistic biblical worldview.

As a national Christian leader, Colson worked to build a strong alliance between Evangelicals and other Christians on a wide range of theological and social issues. Accordingly, in 2009 he was one of the principal authors behind the **Manhattan Declaration**, a statement that called on Evangelicals, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians to commit to actively support the pro-life movement, traditional marriage, and religious freedom.

Colson was also the host of the nationally syndicated "**Breakpoint**" radio program and a prolific author whose books included *Born Again* (1976), a *New York Times* bestseller and one of the most popular books of the 1970s; *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (co-written with Richard John Neuhaus, 1995); and *How Now Shall We Live* (co-written with Nancy Pearcey, 1999), a clarion call for Christians to become informed and involved in the great social and moral issues of our time.

For the last half of his life Chuck Colson was one of the most articulate and thoughtful Christian leaders in America, a humble yet passionate voice of reason and moral sanity in a society that is rapidly unraveling. Perhaps another such leader of his stature will emerge, but particularly at this critical juncture in our nation's history, the loss seems irreplaceable.

