

# Why Preservation Matters: Flow Chart of Ehrman's Error

Between 1860 & 1900 Protestant Bibliology was rewritten in response to the following forces: 1) Evolution, 2) Liberalism/Modernism, 3) German Higher Criticism, and 4) Rationalism.

- *Inspiration*—was limited to the nonexistent original autographs, Divine Dictation is dropped a descriptor for how inspiration was accomplished.
- *Preservation*—the promise of preservation was dropped from doctrinal statements.
- *Inerrancy*—formal doctrine developed that limited inerrancy and infallibly to the nonexistent original autographs; took shape in a logical syllogism that meet the German Higher Critics on their own terms.
- *Textual Criticism*—was completely reworked starting with the rationalistic/naturalistic notion that the Bible is like any other book and should be treated in like manner to any work of antiquity. Replaced the text of the Reformation (*TR*) with a “new and improved” Greek text. Modern Textual Criticism is built on top of the Rationalistic suppositions of Westcott & Hort.

Became the new Protestant Orthodoxy on the Bible and was carried forward into the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Fundamentalists in their doctrinal statements.



In the 1970s Bart Ehrman attended Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College where he was taught the new Protestant Orthodoxy on the Bible that had been forged in the crucible of controversy between 1860 & 1900 (See previous box.). This Orthodoxy is devoid of the promise of preservation. Having been removed from Protestant doctrinal statements for the better part of a century, modern Systematic Theology books as well as Christian higher education do not teach the doctrine of preservation. Ehrman questioned the feasibility of his formal education along the following lines: 1) only the original autographs were inspired, 2) the original autographs are not extant, 3) all we possess are copies which are subject to error, 4) therefore, the doctrine of inspiration was a doctrine of the scholarly elite since it required knowledge of Hebrew and Greek in order to really know what God said, 5) knowledge of the original languages is of no practical consequence given the nonexistent nature of the inspired original autographs.



In the 1980s Bart Ehrman enrolled in Princeton Theology Seminary to study textual criticism from Bruce M. Metzger, the world's leading expert in the field. While at Princeton, Ehrman came to believe that Mark made a mistake in Mark 2:26 in identifying the high priest. This along with his previous misgivings led Ehrman to completely rethink what the Bible is. Ehrman explains this process in his 2005 book *Misquoting Jesus* in which he states that if God could not **preserve** His words there was no reason to think He **inspired** them perfectly in the first place. Recall that Ehrman was not taught to believe in the promise of preservation because it had been dropped from Protestant Bibliology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this way Ehrman is followed his education to its logical conclusion and reasoned that without preservation, inspiration is meaningless.



Ehrman's denial of inspiration lead to the logical conclusion that the Bible “was a human book from beginning to end.” Recall from above that Westcott & Hort began their textual work with the premise that the Bible was the same as any other book and should be treated accordingly. In this way, we see in Ehrman, the logical outcome of the train of thought initiated by Westcott & Hort. When dealt with honestly, in the absence of the promise of preservation, the Protestant Bibliology forged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century logically leads to the conclusion enunciated by Ehrman. In his argumentation there are no formal or informal fallacies that I am aware of and his conclusion naturally follows from his premises. To follow the same line of reasoning and arrive at a different conclusion is dishonest and fallacious. More recently, theologians such as Daniel B. Wallace and W. Edward Glenny have spilt much ink denying the Biblical promise of preservation. The *a priori* belief in the dogma of preservation is excoriated by Wallace as a hindrance to objectivity. Yet Wallace insists upon “faith” in the scholars ability to reconstruct the text in order to avoid Ehrman's conclusion. Ehrman essentially says, “you Christians don't actually have the word of God.” Meanwhile, Wallace who is supposed to be opposing him says, “you are right Bart but some day we will and when we do you will be sorry.” In the end, it seems that Ehrman the Agnostic, has been more honest about where the prevailing Orthodoxy leads.