

**VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION
AND
HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY**

THE LAW OF INALTERABILITY IN THE BIBLE



RA CHAEWON, Ph.D.

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SAMPLE PAGES

All Glory and Praise
to God
My Lord and Everlasting Father
and the Eternal Truth

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Problem

If someone asks Christians what the only element that cannot be omitted is, it is the Bible. It is not the church building, congregations, or offerings that form the basis of Christian faith, but only the written Word of God, the Bible. The biggest problem with existing churches today is the absence of the Bible. It does not mean that there is no Bible itself, but that there is no confidence and trust in the Bible which God Himself wrote and has preserved. Today, churches seem to have their own buildings filled with congregations and raise their operational funds through the offerings from their congregations. However, God's Word, which should be there, is relatively devalued or neglected from the outset. And this ultimately results in the absence of the Bible within the churches; they use and read the Bible, but there is no conviction that it is 'the' Bible, which has been preserved by God Himself, the very same as the originals (autographs) written by God's inspiration. This absence of confidence in God's written Word, the Bible, has a fatal effect on confidence and trust in the words that are preached. Even if the preacher studies and preaches God's Word, it leaves some room for doubt because he is not completely sure that it is 'the' Bible which God wrote through His prophets and apostles. And the 'room' eventually provides an excuse for man's arbitrary thinking to intervene in the interpretation of God's Word: not by the principles of the Word, but by man's judgment. The interpretation of the Bible, involving man's arbitrary judgment, is the same as distorting the original intention of God, the original Author of the Bible, and putting man's thoughts in place of God's Word. It results in the delivering of the word of man, not the Word of God. Then, the congregations eventually experience the absence of God's Word. This is not only a preacher's problem. Even when the preacher correctly interprets and properly preaches the Word according to the principles of the Bible, if the congregations are not convinced that the Word preached is 'the' Word that was written by God's inspiration and has been perfectly preserved without any error or mistake, they will not accept it as it is. The lack of trust in God's Word, delivered accurately and correctly, eventually provides an excuse for arbitrary and biased acceptance and application by the congregations themselves. It is not to correct their thoughts and opinions based on the inerrant and infallible Word of God, but rather to change the Word according to their thoughts and opinions. The arbitrary alteration of God's Word is, after all, nothing but just accepting their thoughts, not God's Word.

As such, confidence and trust in God's Word have an important effect on both the preacher and the congregations. This is very crucial for the inerrant and infallible Word of God, which is necessary and sufficient for man, to be communicated and accepted by them as God originally intended at His writing: positively and negatively as well. Confidence and trust in God's Word, inerrant and infallible, does not stop at the fact

that the Bible was written by God's inspiration (Verbal Plenary Inspiration, 2 Tim 3:16). It must be accompanied by the fact that God, the original Author of the Bible, has preserved His written Word to this day (Verbal Plenary Preservation). It is because, if God's written Word has not been perfectly preserved by God Himself to this day, it is actually meaningless that He wrote it by His inspiration through the pen of human writers (Verbal Plenary Inspiration). When God gave His Word through 'writing' by His inspiration, His intention was to preserve and transmit it not only at the time of its writing but also to the distant future.^{1,2,3} Moreover, the 'preservation' of the Word is the promise of God, the original Author of the Word. God promised to preserve His truth forever, without being bound by the limited time of man (Mt 5:18; 24:35; 1 Pet 1:23-25; Ps 12:6-7). Therefore, as Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Scriptures is secured according to God's promise, its Verbal Plenary Inspiration also has a significant meaning today as it was when the originals (autographs) were written. In other words, Verbal Plenary Inspiration, the principle of God's writing of the Bible, and its consistent on-going preservation, i.e. Verbal Plenary Preservation, are essential and indispensable elements of each other, in both their existence and function.

Most Bible-related problems today arise from denying or rejecting Verbal Plenary Preservation. The faction that denies Verbal Plenary Preservation admits Verbal Plenary Inspiration, but claims that Verbal Plenary Preservation is impossible or non-existent. Their denial or distrust of Verbal Plenary Preservation stems from how they view the process of preserving the Bible itself: not from a Word-based perspective, but from a human perspective. However, one thing they are mistaken is that the Subject who performs the preservation of the Bible is not man. Through His Word, God has already directly promised to preserve it by Himself, and it is clearly stated in the Bible: For instance, Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:18, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." This is not a guarantee of man, but a confirmation by Jesus Christ, who is God Himself. Not only in the New Testament, but through David's mouth in Psalm 12:6-7, God specifies the preservation of His Word. Particularly David says in verse 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Here, "them" means "the words of the LORD" in the previous verse (verse 6), revealing that it is God Himself who is keeping the Word.⁴ In this way, God had already promised through His Word that He would preserve it forever, and today He still continues to faithfully keep His promise. Therefore, the problem with Verbal Plenary Preservation is not from God; all the problems that arise from it come from the perspective of how a man views

¹ Lloyd L. Streater, *Seventy-five Problems: with Central Baptist Seminary's Book - The Bible Version Debate* (Lasalle, IL: First Baptist Church of LaSalle, 2001), 126.

² Kent Brandenbug, ed., *Thou Shalt Keep Them: A Biblical Theology of the Perfect Preservation of Scripture* (El Sobrante, CA: Pillar & Ground Publishing, 2003), 65-68.

³ G. John Roy, *Concealed from Christians for the Glory of God: The 1611 KJV - The King James Bible Authorized Version* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, Inc., 2019), 35-37.

⁴ The discussion of the conflict between the feminine Hebrew noun representing "words" and the masculine suffix "them" in Psalm 12:6-7 will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

the Bible. In other words, all that matters concerning the preservation of the Bible is that of believing it as the Word that God wrote by His inspiration and still provides today as He has preserved it to the present day. And it eventually results in the matter of faith in God, the Subject who promises and keeps the preservation of the Word.

Purpose of the Research

As discussed above, God has perfectly preserved His Word, which He Himself wrote through men, according to His promise. God has preserved it through His chosen prophets and apostles, and through His faithful Church, which has been established by Jesus Christ Himself. And in the course of its preservation, the Word of God has been preserved to this day in the 'apographs,' which are the faithfully copied Scriptures, namely: the 'Masoretic' Old Testament Text written in Hebrew (and Aramaic in some parts), and the '*Textus Receptus*' - the New Testament Text in Greek. And all the believers in the churches today can still access the original words written by God's inspiration through these faithful traditional texts. Therefore, God is not responsible for the problems arising in connection with the perfect preservation of His written Word, the Bible: for He has faithfully and surely kept His own promise about His Word. Thus, the responsibility of all debates about the preservation of the Bible ultimately boils down to men. It has to do with man's view and attitude toward God's promise, which is still valid today through His written Word. Thus, this study is to examine human responsibility in relation to the perfect preservation of the Bible, God's written Word. There have been several studies dealing with Verbal Plenary Preservation in terms of God's promise. However, in the biblical refutation of the Preservation-related debates, few papers specifically address this issue in terms of human responsibility. And human responsibility for the preservation of the Bible must be reviewed focusing on the command of God, as the leading Subject of Verbal Plenary Preservation. It is God Himself who must preserve the Word, but in the process of preserving the Word as in the writing of it, God has used man as His instrument. Just as God used human writers to pen the words He inspired, He has made His faithful Church take part in the process of preserving His written words. Therefore, the Church, given the opportunity to participate in the process of preservation of the Word, must keep in mind and obey God's command for the God-written-and-preserved Word as well as His promise about it. This determines the Church's thoughts and attitudes toward God's Word; and, in the end, her thoughts and attitudes toward God Himself, the original Author of the Word.

This study aims to examine the issue of Verbal Plenary Preservation, especially focusing on God's 'command' for His completed written Word, which He has repeatedly emphasized in it. Like God's immutability, His Word also never changes (Ps 12:7; 1 Pet 1:25). Without stopping there, God severely and sternly forbids man from attempting to change the Word He completed. The most representative example of God's command regarding the prohibition of changing His Word is Revelation 22:18-19, the last chapter of the last book of the Bible. However, the same command is found in the very first book

of the Bible: meaning that this command is consistently applied from the beginning to the end of the 66 books of the Bible. The writer of this study calls this consistent command of God, which strictly forbids any alteration by man, ‘the Law of Inalterability,’ focusing on human responsibility for Verbal Plenary Preservation. Since God is faithful and still keeps His promises also faithfully, He demands the same attitude from His Church. However, all the debates that have accumulated thus far in relation to Verbal Plenary Preservation have resulted from man’s disobedience to God’s commands related to it, ‘the Law of Inalterability.’ Therefore, in order to grasp the core of this matter and to accurately diagnose it, it is necessary to study what ‘the Law of Inalterability’ is. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the Scriptural texts related to how God commands ‘the Law of Inalterability’ from the beginning to the end of the Bible and to see how it relates to Verbal Plenary Preservation. Furthermore, the writer observes what practical phenomena appear in the process of preservation of the Word, due to disobedience to ‘the Law of Inalterability.’ In other words, an empirical analysis is conducted to compare the result of faithful obedience to ‘the Law of Inalterability’ with that of disobedience to it. To this end, this study contrasts the critical texts (Nestle-Aland 27th and 28th editions) with the *Textus Receptus*, specifically targeting the General Epistles. The *Textus Receptus* is the received New Testament Greek text that God has preserved through His faithful Church. Meanwhile, the Nestle-Aland editions based on the critical texts has been most widely used for the translation of modern versions. Therefore, the comparison between these two Greek texts can be a good observation which clearly shows the result of whether or not to obey God’s command, ‘the Law of Inalterability,’ given to His Church that has been involved in the process of God’s faithful preservation of His written Word. And since the controversies related to Verbal Plenary Preservation are mainly concentrated in the New Testament rather than the Old Testament, it is meaningful to compare the outcomes of obedience or disobedience to ‘the Law of Inalterability’ with the General Epistles. It is expected that this will be useful to discuss how the reactions of obedience or disobedience to ‘the Law of Inalterability’ that God commands throughout the whole Bible come out differently, and how they relate to the controversies over Verbal Plenary Preservation.

Methodology of the Research

‘The Law of Inalterability’ and Verbal Plenary Preservation are God’s command for and promise of His Word. Therefore, in order to deal with the issue of ‘the Law of Inalterability’ with Verbal Plenary Preservation, its basis must be the Word of God itself. It is because God’s Word is self-interpretive, and thus working as the best tool and commentary for its interpretation.⁵ In other words, God’s written Word, the Bible, is a necessary and sufficient standard for judging right and wrong and for making the correct diagnosis. Westminster Shorter Catechism Question No.2 answers the final authority of

⁵ Robert E. Clayton, *All Scripture Advocate* (Maitland, FL; Xulon Press, 2003), 141. Clayton says, “All of Scripture provides us with the only standard of our faith and practice.”

the Bible⁶: “The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.” And its Question No.3 states, “The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.”⁷ Therefore, there is no better material than the Bible itself in studying God’s command of ‘the Law of Inalterability.’ It is based on the Bible, but other theological books and articles related to ‘the Law of Inalterability’ and Verbal Plenary Preservation are also used as references. And the *Textus Receptus* (Scrivener, 1908) is used for an empirical analysis related to ‘the Law of Inalterability.’ And as a control group for the *Textus Receptus*, Nestle-Aland Greek text, the 27th and the 28th (the most recent revised) editions, is also put together for an empirical analysis. Since the first edition of Nestle-Aland Greek text was published in 1898, it has been constantly revised. The 27th edition was published in 1993; and in 2008, Jack Moorman reported in his book that over 8,000 differences were found between it and the *Textus Receptus*.⁸ But without stopping at the 27th edition, it was revised again. Accordingly, the 28th edition, the latest version of Nestle-Aland Greek text, was published in 2012, 21 years after the 27th edition was published. However, there has not yet been any book comparing the 27th and 28th editions of Nestle-Aland Greek text with the *Textus Receptus*.

The study proceeds as follows: In CHAPTER I, the doctrines of the Bible are explained first. ‘The Law of Inalterability’ is a command for God’s Word. Therefore, before looking earnestly into ‘the Law of Inalterability,’ the core doctrines of the Bible, which is God’s written Word and the basis of ‘the Law of Inalterability,’ must first be understood. Here, two core doctrines of the Bible are discussed: the principle of God’s writing of the Bible (Verbal Plenary Inspiration) and His promise on its preservation (Verbal Plenary Preservation). CHAPTER II discusses the subject of this study – ‘the Law of Inalterability.’ After first examining the features of the truth, Bible-based textual studies of ‘the Law of Inalterability’ are conducted. In addition, the link between ‘the Law of Inalterability’ and Verbal Plenary Preservation is examined, and further, some practical issues related to the two are also dealt with. In CHAPTER III, an empirical analysis is conducted to observe the actual phenomena according to ‘the Law of Inalterability’ and people’s reaction toward that command (obedience or disobedience). For empirical analysis, a comparative analysis is performed between the critical texts (Nestle-Aland 27th and 28th editions) and the traditional/received text (*Textus Receptus*), focusing on the General Epistles of the New Testament. Then, based on the results of the comparative analysis between the two texts shown in the General Epistles, observations with interpretations are made on where the differences come from. This is to find out in which part of the General Epistles of the critical texts arbitrary alterations were attempted

⁶ Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines, “WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM: WITH PROOF TEXT,” A Puritan’s Mind, accessed on December 23, 2019, http://www.reformed.org/documents/wsc/index.html?_top=http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC.html.

⁷ Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines, *ibid*.

⁸ Jack Moorman, *8,000 Differences Between the N.T. Greek Words of the King James Bible and the Modern Versions* (London, England: The Old Paths Publications, Inc., 2008).

due to disobedience to ‘the Law of Inalterability.’ Then, it is diagnosed whether obedience or disobedience to ‘the Law of Inalterability’ affects the attitudes and outcomes of those who have been participating in the preservation process of the Word of God. Finally, from the results of all reviews and analysis of this study, a comprehensive conclusion regarding ‘the Law of Inalterability’ is drawn.

SAMPLE PAGES

CHAPTER I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE: VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION AND VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION

1.1 Verbal Plenary Inspiration: God's Principle

1.1.1 Biblical Definition of Verbal Plenary Inspiration

The primary Author of the Bible is God Himself. God used the hands of the human writers who were chosen by Him according to His holy will to pen the Scriptures, but everything written in the Bible is undoubtedly the Word of God coming out of Himself. First, the Bible consistently describes that all the written words are spoken directly from the mouth of God. Proverbs 2:6 said, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Also, the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed many times that every word he spoke was God's own word from His mouth, and it must be fulfilled (Isa 45:23; 48:3; 55:11). The Hebrew preposition "מִן" that is used here basically means 'from' or 'out of,' but also implies 'source or origin.'⁹ Deuteronomy 8:3 is what God said was declared to the Israelites through Moses and also recorded ("... man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live"). Here, the Hebrew word נִסְּךְ for "proceedeth" has its root in נָסַךְ, which means 'going out/forth' or 'utterance.'¹⁰ All these records show that the Utterer of all the words of the Bible is God Himself. John W. Burgon declares this through the following statement. This declaration concisely but clearly shows the faith in God's perfect and pure Word and the higher view of the Bible:

The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne! Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High! The Bible is none other than the Word of God: not some part of it more, some part of it less; but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne; faultless, unerring, supreme!¹¹
(emphasis added)

In addition, the Bible testifies that God is the direct Writer of His Word. Exodus 20:1-17 speaks of a scene where God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments through Moses. On Mount Sinai, God first gave His words onto the two tablets that were made by God Himself and then given to Moses (Exod 31:18, 32:16). Here, the important thing is that God wrote them all by His own hand ("two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God," Exod 31:18). This principle remained consistent even when God gave the very same words a second time after Moses broke the first stone

⁹ Ronald J. Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 122-123.

¹⁰ F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 425.

¹¹ "Dean Burgon Oath," Far Eastern Bible College, accessed on February 06, 2020, https://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/article/def_the_dean_burgon_oath.

tablets due to the golden calf incident (“I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest,” Exod 34:1b). The point here is “I will write upon these tables”: just like the first ones, God once again wrote the very same words by His own hand and gave it to Moses. This is recorded once more in the recollection of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut 9:9-21).

All the written words of God, the Bible, were directly spoken by God Himself as the original Author, but in the process of ‘writing’ the Bible, He used human writers that He specifically chose. However, this does not mean that God intended to depend on their human power. They, their individual competencies, were only chosen by God to be used as humble instruments for the original writing of God’s Word. God does not need human power at all to accomplish His work, but rather man absolutely needs God’s almighty power.¹² Since the Bible is the very Word of God, every letter written by human writers is very important and vital. However, since it was impossible to pen the Word of God without any mistakes by their own means, it was necessary for human writers to ask for the help of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all human writers chosen by God’s special providence completely had to rely on the special cares of the Holy Spirit to do their writing works of His inspired Word. The help of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to those human writers because the Holy Spirit is none other than “the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Thus, the Holy Spirit works for and with the Word of God, the truth. In addition to 2 Timothy 3:16, there are more evidences in the Bible that the Holy Spirit is with God’s Word and works for it.

In the New Testament. First, John 15:26 says: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” Here, “Comforter” is another name for the Holy Spirit, whose role is to testify and teach about Jesus Christ, the living Word, and His words (Jn 14:26). The Apostle John testifies in another epistle that the One who testifies of Jesus Christ is none other than the Spirit of truth (1 Jn 5:6-7). Also, the fact that the early church members experienced ‘speaking in tongues’¹³ at the scene where the Holy Spirit descended, as at the Pentecostal event as described in the Acts of the Apostles, is thoroughly related to the speaking, hearing, and understanding of the Word of truth (“as the Spirit gave them utterance,” Acts 2:4; “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word,” Acts 10:44; emphasis added). In this way, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. In particular, Acts 2:4 indicates that the Holy Spirit directly gave what

¹² In Exodus 3:14, God defines Himself as “I AM THAT I AM.” God is not created by someone like all things in this world: He is self-existent. Therefore, God is already the perfect Being Himself, without any need to rely on anything. Rather, human beings are fragile beings that cannot exist without God.

¹³ ‘Speaking in tongue’ was to prove the authenticity of the words spoken by the Apostles, along with other miracles God had allowed. But after the completion of God’s written Word, the Bible, all of them were completely stopped. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 is the proof text for this fact. Especially in one of the phrases of 1 Corinthians 13:8, “whether there be tongues, they shall cease,” the Greek verb for “shall cease” here is written in the future middle deponent, indicating that ‘speaking in tongue’ was stopped ‘by itself’ with the completion of the written Word (1 Cor 13:10; τὸ τέλειον as a ‘neuter’ noun).

the Apostles would say.¹⁴ In other words, it means that the actual Speaker is the Holy Spirit Himself, even though He used the Apostles' mouth.

In the Old Testament. Further evidences are observed from the Old Testament where the Holy Spirit spoke the Word of God. 2 Samuel 23:2 says, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." David's words imply that he was used as a prophet, just as a tool to deliver the word of the Lord, not his own word. And in the expression "his word," David testifies that the Holy Spirit, who was dwelling in him, placed the word of the Lord in his mouth, which he should deliver. Isaiah 59:21b says, "My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth." Here, "My" stands for "the LORD," showing that God, who came as Redeemer¹⁵ to His people with the presence of the Holy Spirit, put His words ("my words") into the mouth of the prophet Isaiah. Therefore, the Old Testament also testifies that the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are inseparable.

Word Study of Inspiration: 2 Timothy 3:16

God also left a record in the Bible about how He wrote His Word. Verbal Plenary Inspiration is the principle by which God wrote His Word, and the clear fact that the Bible was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was recorded in the Greek original text and King James Version for 2 Timothy 3:16 respectively as below:

πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἔλεγχον, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ [*Textus Receptus*]
All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness [King James Version]
(Emphasis added)

The word "inspiration of God" in the Greek text is θεόπνευστος, which is from two different compounds: θεός and πνέω. Thayer's lexicon defines this word as "inspired by God," which in particular refers to "the contents of Scripture" in combination with "scripture" (γραφὴ). Here, θεός is a noun meaning 'God' and πνέω is a verb meaning 'to breathe' or 'to blow.'¹⁶ These two words are combined to mean 'God-breathed.' This word signifies Divine inspiration, and is a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, used only once in 2 Timothy 3:16.

The verses that express God's Word in relation to His 'breath' can also be found in the Old Testament. Among them, Psalm 33:6 praises God's power of creation made through His words: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." What is interesting here is that 'synonymous

¹⁴ Who the "them" in Acts 2:3 is must be interpreted according to the context. In the later part of Acts 1, the remaining eleven apostles selected Matthias as a new apostle for the vacant seat of Judas Iscariot. Immediately thereafter, Acts 2:1 puts "And" (Καὶ) at its very beginning, indicating that it is a continuation of the narrative from the last part of Acts 1. In this context, it can be understood that "they" in Acts 2:1 (also in 2:4) are 'the' apostles, and also "them" in 2:3.

¹⁵ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (New Zealand: Titus Books, 2014), 7069.

¹⁶ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), 287-288, 524.

parallelism' is used, in which "by the word of the LORD" is expressed in parallel with "by the breath of his mouth." The highlight here is "breath." In the Hebrew text for the same verse, רִחַן was used, followed by "his mouth" (פִּי), showing that "breath" is "God's breath." The Septuagint (LXX) adopted the Greek word πνευματι for "breath" in the same passage. In the same vein, Zechariah 7:12 writes that the words transmitted through the mouth of the prophets are "the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit." Here, the Hebrew equivalent of "in his spirit" is בְּרוּחוֹ, which is the same context as רִחַן used earlier in Psalm 33:6.¹⁷ רִחַן as used herein all means "spirit" or "breath," and has the same meaning as πνέω used in 2 Timothy 3:16. Another word derived from πνέω is πνεῦμα, which has the meaning of 'breath' in the same context as πνέω. Also, in addition to 'spirit' in the general sense, πνεῦμα stands for 'the Holy Spirit,' especially in relation to God.¹⁸ Robbie F. Castleman cites the words of William D. Mounce in his book, defining the "inspired" of 2 Timothy 3:16 as "from the mouth of God." He also describes "the Spirit" as "the very breath of God."¹⁹ This is in line with "by the breath of his mouth" of Psalm 33:6, showing that 'the breath of God' is used interchangeably with 'the Spirit of God' as the same meaning. Therefore, as can be seen from all these facts, 'God-breathed' and 'the Holy Spirit' are mutually inseparable. That is why 'the Word of God' and 'the breath of God (from His mouth)' are connected in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, which means 'the Spirit of God.'

On the other hand, there is one more important note in 2 Timothy 3:16, that the object to which is pointed by θεόπνευστος is nothing but γραφή itself. In πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος, πᾶσα γραφή as the subject is modified by θεόπνευστος. Thus, its Greek scripture shows that when God used the human writers as His instruments to pen His words, He "breathed" through the Holy Spirit to the product of their writing works (i.e. the Word of God itself), not to the writers themselves. In other words, θεόπνευστος or "God-breathed" in 2 Timothy 3:16 is a tangible expression that the process of writing the Word of God was completely guided by the Holy Spirit; Not only that, θεόπνευστος is a word revealing that 'all words' in the Bible are perfectly penned according to God's intended will without any error or mistake, through the thorough lead and guidance of the Holy Spirit, even though God used each human writer's personality, thoughts, or judgments. The King James Version translated θεόπνευστος as "inspiration," and Richard A. Muller, integrating "God-breathed" and "inspired," defines "the human authors of Scripture as acted upon by the Spirit in their work of writing and the character of the resulting written text as Word of God."²⁰ That is to say, θεόπνευστος is the wording to reveal the fact that the Author of the written Word, the entirety of the Scriptures, is none other than God Himself.

¹⁷ Septuagint (LXX) also adopted πνευματι the same as in Psalm 33:6.

¹⁸ Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 520-523.

¹⁹ Robbie F. Castleman, *Interpreting the God-Breathed Word: How to Read and Study the Bible* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 14.

²⁰ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 304.

1.1.2 Literature Review on Verbal Plenary Inspiration

Charles C. Ryrie defines ‘inspiration’ as follows: “God’s superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs.” Along with this definition, he also introduces various mistaken views about ‘inspiration’ into seven categories.²¹ Each of these views has some elements that are against the true principles of writing the Bible, which God says in 2 Timothy 3:16:

First, ‘natural inspiration’: In this view, the human writers of the Bible are considered as prodigious geniuses like any other geniuses in history. This is a view that denies God’s supernatural providence and treats the Bible just as the inspired writings of those geniuses in general meaning. Therefore, the term ‘inspiration’ here means something completely different from that of 2 Timothy 3:16.

Second, ‘mystical inspiration’: This is also called ‘the illumination view of inspiration,’ as a view that treats the human writers of the Bible as the “Spirit-filled and guided” Christians, just like ordinary believers. Thus, this view asserts that even ordinary “Spirit-filled Christians” can write the Bible, and that the writers of the Bible were only inspired to a greater extent than those ordinary ones. In this view, it is denied that God chose those human writers in His special providence for the penning of His written Word.

Third, ‘inspiration as dictation’: This view is that God allowed His human writers only to passively write down His words, completely ignoring the characteristics and traits of each writer. However, if any brief review of the Hebrew or Greek Scriptures is made, this view is immediately refuted, because God used writer-specific characteristics and traits, including their writing styles.

Fourth, ‘partial inspiration’: This is the view that only certain parts of the Bible were supernaturally inspired. This is in line with the modernistic view of the textual critics like Westcott and Hort about the Bible. By deliberately altering 2 Timothy 3:16 in the translation of the Revised Version, they denied God’s Word that the entire Bible was inspired.²²

Fifth, ‘conceptual inspiration’: In this view, it is argued that the concepts, not the words of the Bible, were inspired. This view denies the complete accuracy of all the words written in the Bible, and thus stands against the Bible’s inerrancy and infallibility.

Sixth, ‘the Bible as a witness’: This view is of the neoorthodoxy or the Barthian, accepting the liberal views of the Bible. They claim that the Bible ‘becomes’ the Word of God. In other words, they admit that Christ is primarily the Word, but the Bible, the written Word, is considered just as a product of fallible writers, with full of errors. Therefore, in this view, it is argued that the Bible becomes the Word of God as a witness to Christ, only when it is preached to the people and bring about faith in Christ.²³

²¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1972), 28-29.

²² Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2001), 143-144.

²³ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2007), 75.

Seventh, ‘purposeful inspiration’: This is an over-focus on the “doctrinal integrity” of the Bible, with the view that there is no real error or difference in contents unless there is a problem in the core doctrine, which God intends to reveal through the Bible (especially the doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ). Thus, paradoxically, this view basically presupposes that the Bible contains errors, but nevertheless asserts that if the doctrine is revealed, it has accomplished God’s purpose through the Bible. Thus, despite being more conservative than the Barthians, it is the same in denying the inerrancy and infallibility of the whole Bible (as the entirety of the Bible).

However, these views do not accept the principle of writing the Bible that God has already said, but incorporates human thoughts and interpretations into it. Verbal Plenary Inspiration is not a new doctrine, but the principle that God has already clearly revealed through His written Word, the Bible. Here, all the dictionary definitions of ‘verbal’ are related to ‘words’ themselves, having the meanings “of, relating to, or consisting of words” or “of, relating to, or involving words rather than meaning or substance.”²⁴ Thus, ‘verbal’ used in the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inspiration refers to all the words themselves written in the Bible; ‘Plenary’ is “complete in every respect: absolute, unqualified,”²⁵ being used to speak the entire Bible. Thus, Verbal Plenary Inspiration means that every word in the Bible and the Bible itself as a whole was inspired by God, based on Matthew 5:18 (“one jot or one tittle”) and 2 Timothy 3:16.²⁶ Also, Verbal Plenary Inspiration is the principle that goes for the original languages (the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic, the New Testament in Greek) in which God wrote His Word, not the translated versions. Paché defines Verbal Plenary Inspiration as meaning that, throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit guided even the expressions the human writers used without the effacement of their own personalities in the composition of the original manuscripts. Since the words are inseparable with the messages intended to be communicated through them, the Divine revelations God wants to communicate through the Bible also have an inseparable relationship with the languages used for writing the Bible. Therefore, since the entire Scripture is composed of the God-breathed words, it eventually means the inspiration of the Scripture itself.²⁷ H. D. Williams reflects all of these contexts and exegetically defines ‘inspiration’ in his book as follows: “Inspiration is the miracle whereby the Words of Scripture in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek were God-breathed and once delivered using holy men of God and their vocabulary, who perfectly recorded them once as they were moved along by the Holy Spirit in such a way that all the Words written are infallible and inerrant in the sixty-six books of the canon of Scripture.”²⁸ Therefore, Verbal Plenary Inspiration is God’s

²⁴ “Verbal,” Merriam-Webster, accessed on May 07, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/verbal>.

²⁵ “Plenary,” Merriam-Webster, accessed on May 07, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plenary>.

²⁶ George Skariah, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Perfect Preservation of the Holy Scriptures” (PhD diss., Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2005), 2.

²⁷ René Paché, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 71-79.

²⁸ H. D. Williams, *The Miracle of Biblical Inspiration* (Cleveland, Georgia: The Old Paths Publications Inc., 2009), 27.

principle that contains the necessary validity of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. Many faithful church fathers, reformers and even modern writers have also stuck to the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Scripture. Shortly after the Apostolic age, well-known church fathers such as Clement, Irenaeus, and Augustine affirmed the Scriptural inerrancy without any doubt. Calvin, along with Luther, also affirmed the infallibility of the Scripture, saying, “the apostles were the certain and authentic scribes of the Holy Spirit, and therefore their writings are to be received as the oracles of God.” And Wesley also had the high view of the inspiration of the Bible, so he never allowed the idea that the Bible was errant. Meanwhile, Edward J. Young, a leading modern writer and reformed scholar, also wrote a statement enunciating the inerrancy of the Bible in 1957 when he was serving at the Westminster Theological Seminary. As such, their reliable and express testimonies of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scripture show that this important fact and core doctrine can only be trusted by the Holy Spirit’s internal testimony in the mind of genuine believers.²⁹ Thus, the principle of the written Word inspired by the Holy Spirit, which God clearly revealed through His Word, and of course the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scripture following that principle, are the important doctrines requiring genuine faith and testimony of the Holy Spirit.

However, the core doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inspiration (the Bible as the God-breathed written Word) has faced oppositions and attacks from those who deny it. The representative deniers are the liberals or the modernists. Machen points to the unbelief of the modern liberals in the doctrine of plenary inspiration. According to Machen, the liberals also deny the doctrine of inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible as well as that of plenary inspiration, because of their preconception that the Holy Spirit was “mechanically dictating” to the human writers of the Bible, and their way of thinking that puts more emphasis on their experiences than the Word itself. Even the liberal theologians show a “mechanical response,” advocating the “mechanical” theory, but rejecting the review of the existence of errors. However, Machen again points out that this phenomenon is observed not only in the liberal camp, but also in many other Christian camps. The modern liberals even dismiss the value of the Bible as a reliable ordinary book, and more than that, even the Gospels of Christ that is the only part accepted by them are selectively mangled by the textual criticism they ardently advocate. Because of this kind of low view and dismissal of the Bible (with abysmal skepticism), they bring down even Christ, who is the real Authority of truth proclaimed through the Bible, to the level of general morality.³⁰ Representative liberal theologians include Briggs and Thayer, who were active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They reacted against Warfield and Hodge, who were the representative Old Princeton theologians and defended the “biblical inspiration.” Briggs was a devotee of higher criticism, relying on human reason to deny God’s transcendental history. In advocating the inspiration confined to the

²⁹ Stewart Custer, *Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy? A Study of the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration in the Light of Inerrancy* (Nutley, New Jersey: the Craig Press, 1968), 63-67.

³⁰ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1923), 69-79.

spiritual message in the Bible, he rejected the doctrine of verbal inspiration and inerrancy as unfounded. What's worse, Thayer of Harvard University supported Briggs' claim who advocated the scientific worldview as well as higher criticism as a modernist. Briggs and Thayer were representative liberals who insisted on changing the understanding of Christianity and biblical authority based on modern thoughts and higher criticism. However, on their claim, Warfield proved that this important core doctrine, biblical inspiration and inerrancy, has been continuously affirmed by the Westminster Standards, as well as by Calvin, and even by Augustine, the representative first Church father.³¹

1.2 Verbal Plenary Preservation: God's Promise

1.2.1 Biblical Definition of Verbal Plenary Preservation

Another important doctrine of the Bible is Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Scriptures. Verbal Plenary Preservation means God's 'special providential preservation of the Scriptures,' which is distinct from His general providence. If God's general or ordinary providence (*providentia ordinaria*) is the way God rules and preserves this world through the instrumentality of secondary causes in accordance with the natural laws, His special or extraordinary providence (*providentia extraordinaria*) means his special acts or miracles, going beyond the normal possibilities inherent in secondary causality.³² In other words, Verbal Plenary Preservation means that God performed 'special acts': He 'inspired' His own words at the penning of human writers and 'has preserved' them continuously. The Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1.8 describes God's special providential preservation of the Scripture as "by his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages." And, in addition, it is to say that the Old and New Testaments were written and have preserved to this day by God's direct intervention, in Hebrew and in Greek, respectively.³³ Since the original texts (autographs) that God wrote through human writers no longer remain, He has preserved His Word through the exact and identical copies (apographs) of the original texts (autographs).³⁴

God has already promised in many places in the Bible the preservation of His Word. The most representative proof text for Verbal Plenary Preservation is Matthew 5:18, in which Jesus Christ declared that until the fulfillment of all His words, the Word of God, even any smallest thing, would never be damaged: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." In Matthew 24:35, in the same context, He said that His words will never

³¹ Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*, ePub ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 91-93.

³² Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 252.

³³ "Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scripture - no.8," Bible Presbyterian Church General Synod, accessed on March 29, 2020, https://bpc.org/?page_id=542. In other words, Verbal Plenary Preservation states that God wrote the Old and New testaments both by His direct inspiration and has preserved them in Hebrew for the Old Testament, the language of Israel who are the people chosen according to God's special providence, and in Greek for the New Testament, the common language at the time when the New Testament was written.

³⁴ Discussions related to the manuscripts of the Scripture will be covered in more detail later in this chapter.

go away but be preserved: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” Also, through the Apostle Peter, God says that all things in this world will wither and disappear, but His words will last forever (1 Pet 1:24-25). And in Psalm 12:6-7, the psalmist praises the pure words of God that will be preserved forever: “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”

Word Study of Preservation: Matthew 5:18

Verbal Plenary Preservation already connotes its meaning within the definition of the term itself. First, the dictionary definition of ‘verbal’ is “consisting of or in the form of words” or “expressed in spoken words.”³⁵ In other words, ‘verbal’ refers to “words,” and in relation to the preservation of the Bible, it refers to God’s written Word itself. “Plenary” means “full, complete” or “entire,” meaning the entirety of the Bible from beginning to end. Thus, when these two words are combined with “preservation,” Verbal Plenary Preservation is to say that God preserves all the words of the Bible, which He wrote as the original Author. Along with God’s promises of preservation described in the Bible (Mt 5:18; 24:35; Ps 12:6-7; 1 Pet 1:25), Verbal Plenary Preservation can be defined in more detail as follows:

The whole of Scripture with all its words even to the jot and tittle is perfectly preserved by God without any loss of the original words, prophecies, promises, commandments, doctrines, and truths, not only in the words of salvation, but also the words of history, geography and science. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter is infallibly preserved by the Lord Himself to the last iota.³⁶

In Matthew 5:18, God says through the Greek New Testament (*Textus Receptus*) as follows: ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανοῦς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται. Here, ἰῶτα is “jot,” which is the smallest of the Hebrew letters, the “yohd” (י); κεραία or “tittle” is also a very tiny extension among the Hebrew letters.³⁷ That is to say, “jot” and “tittle” are both expressions used to symbolize the smallest part of the Hebrew language system.^{38, 39} Therefore, now God is saying that even the smallest part in the Bible He wrote will never disappear. Also, in the original Hebrew Scripture, νόμου (from νόμος meaning “law”) represents “the Torah” or “Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch)” in a broad sense,

³⁵ “Verbal,” Dictionary.com, accessed on March 29, 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/verbal>.

³⁶ “Definition of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP),” Far Eastern Bible College, accessed on March 29, 2020, https://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/article/verbal_plenary_preservation.

³⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), 40.

³⁸ “ἰῶτα/Matthew 5:18,” *Textus Receptus Bibles*, accessed on March 29, 2020, <http://www.textusreceptusbibles.com/Strong/40005018/G2503>.

³⁹ “κεραία/Matthew 5:18,” *Textus Receptus Bibles*, accessed on March 29, 2020, <http://www.textusreceptusbibles.com/Strong/40005018/G2762>.

sometimes referring to the entire Old Testament.⁴⁰ Not only that, in verse 17 immediately preceding, Jesus Christ said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” Here, “the law, or the prophets” refers to the entire Old Testament. Then, He referred to νόμου in verse 18. Therefore, when considering not only the meaning of the Greek word itself, but also the contexts of verses 17 and 18 together, νόμου refers to the entire Old Testament, not part of it.⁴¹ During the earthly life of Jesus Christ, only the Old Testament was the entire Bible of the Israelites, because the New Testament was not yet written. Thus, here Jesus Christ was affirming “the utter inerrancy and absolute authority of the OT as the Word of God” through this expression referring to the Old Testament.⁴² Lastly, the aorist subjunctive (παρέλθῃ) is used together with οὐ μὴ as the “emphatic negative future,”⁴³ to emphasize that this will never happen (“shall never”). Putting all these together, Jesus Christ affirms that all of His written words will be preserved intact and untouched until every single word is fulfilled. This is a certain promise of the preservation of the Word made by Jesus Christ, who is God Himself and the living Word.

A similar remark is recorded in Matthew 24:35, where it is even expressed as “Heaven and earth shall pass away.” This is one step further from the expression of “Till heaven and earth pass” mentioned in Matthew 5:18. Also, this verse directly refers to the Word of God as λόγοι. And in the Greek scripture of this verse, οὐ μὴ and the aorist subjunctive are used together in the same way as in Matthew 5:18. Hence, Matthew 24:35 also emphasizes that even if heaven and earth are gone, the Word of the Lord will never be lost but preserved.

1 Peter 1:24-25 further explains what “the word,” which will never go away, is. ῥῆμα used in verse 25 means “utterance,” and in the second half of the same verse, it is explained in detail that ῥῆμα is none other than “the gospel.” From the very first time, as soon as the fall of man shortly after creation, God had already proclaimed this message of the Gospel by Himself (Gen 3:15; the first Gospel, *protevangeliū*⁴⁴), and it continued until the first coming of Jesus Christ. In addition, the New Testament is to testify of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, who already came, especially of His redemptive work He had accomplished; and to prophesy His return to come. Therefore, since the entire Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament delivers the message of the Gospel, “the gospel” mentioned in verse 25 can be regarded as the entirety of the Word, the Bible, in a broad sense. Although this very Word had been preached to people through the mouths of prophets and apostles, it clearly shows that its direct Speaker is none other than

⁴⁰ “νόμος/Matthew 5:18,” *Textus Receptus Bibles*, accessed on March 29, <http://www.textusreceptusbibles.com/Strong/40005018/G3551>.

⁴¹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 208-209.

⁴² MacArthur, *ibid*.

⁴³ J. W. Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 163.

⁴⁴ E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1970), 13-24.

“the Lord” Himself (Κυρίου as the ‘ablative of source’). And it is also proclaimed through the Apostle Peter that “the word of the LORD” is eternal (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα).

Syntactical Argument on Preservation: Psalm 12:6-7

Psalm 12:6-7 is one of the proof texts for Verbal Plenary Preservation: “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” The debate related to this scriptural text starts from the question of who “them” in verse 7 is pointing to. The fact that this is the subject of a heated debate can also be observed from the modern versions with the various different translations of this same verse (Ps 12:7):⁴⁵

King James Version	“Thou shalt keep <u>them</u> , O LORD, thou shalt preserve <u>them</u> from this generation for ever”
New American Standard Bible	“You, O Lord, will keep <u>them</u> ; You will preserve <u>him</u> from this generation forever”
New International Version	“You, Lord, will keep <u>the needy</u> safe and will protect <u>us</u> forever from the wicked”
New Living Translation	“Therefore, Lord, we know you will protect <u>the oppressed</u> , preserving <u>them</u> forever from this lying generation”
Revised Standard Version	“Do thou, O Lord, protect <u>us</u> , guard <u>us</u> ever from this generation”

(emphasis added)

When considering these translations, the modern versions other than the King James Version interpret “them” as referring to the preservation of people rather than that of the Word. Thus, the supportive role of this verse for Verbal Plenary Preservation can be confirmed when the object of “them” is accurately identified in the original Hebrew Scriptures.

This debate is about how to understand the two pronominal suffixes used for תשמרום הצרני of verse 7 in the Hebrew Scripture.⁴⁶ First, שמר, the root word of תשמרום, was used 468 times in the 440 verses of the Old Testament. As in Psalm 12:7, it was most commonly used in the Qal stem to mean “keep,” followed by “observe,” “heed,” or “preserve” in frequency. The root word of the second word הצרני is צר, which is used a total of 63 times in the Old Testament. This verb also takes the Qal stem, which is most often used to mean “keep,” followed by “preserve.” The controversial part of these two verbs is the pronominal suffixes attached to the end of each verb. תשמרום takes the suffix ׁ of the third person masculine plural form, and הצרני takes the suffix ׁ with the energetic nun, which can be interpreted as either the third person masculine singular or the first person plural. However, the Hebrew noun for “words” in verse 7 is either אִמְרוֹת or אִמְרוֹת,

⁴⁵ “Psalm 12:7,” Bible Gateway, accessed on March 30, 2020, <https://www.biblegateway.com>.

⁴⁶ It is verse 8 in the Hebrew Scripture.

both of which are in feminine plural form. Here, the issue of the gender or number mismatch emerges.

First, the discrepancy between ׀ in וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם and וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם in אֲמַרְתֶּם or אֲמַרְתֶּם can be explained by the exception of the principle of gender agreement in the Hebrew Scriptures. Sometimes the distinction between masculine and feminine in the Hebrew Scriptures is ambiguous or weakens.⁴⁷ This is especially observed in the plural form, and the most representative example is the plural form of the masculine noun אָב (father) - אֲבוֹתָם (fathers). Also, as in Job 1:14, the suffix of the masculine plural form is sometimes used for the female plural antecedent.⁴⁸ Therefore, the gender mismatch problem between ׀ and וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם can be interpreted in this context. Meanwhile, וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם in וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם should be reviewed in other aspects. This suffix וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם with the energetic nun has two possibilities: the first-person plural or the third-person masculine singular. Here, the plural form exists only in the first person, and the interesting thing is that this first-person plural form can be applied to all other plural forms. That means וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם can be interpreted as the third person masculine plural rather than the first-person plural. However, it is impossible to interpret וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם as the suffix in the general third person masculine singular form. It is because the subject אֲמַרְתֶּם refers to the immediately following וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם, if it is an object in the general third-person masculine singular, it becomes the meaning of “the LORD will keep Himself.” This is not logically tenable. However, when the energetic nun is used with a verb, it serves the purpose of giving greater emphasis on the verb.⁴⁹ For this purpose, especially in the sense of “each one (of them),” it is used to highlight each belonging to a particular group. And the gender mismatch problem between וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם and וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם can be interpreted in the same context as the problem between ׀ and וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם.

However, when trying to understand and interpret the Bible, the most important thing is its ‘context.’ What must be kept in mind here is that this is the Psalm. Thus, it should be considered along with the literary nature of the Psalms that God used the individual intellectual competence and personality of each human writer involved in the writing work of the Bible. In addition, from verse 1 to 5 of Psalm 12 (to verse 6 in the Hebrew Scripture), the psalmist speaks of men’s untruthful, proud, and evil words; but in verse 6 (verse 7 in the Hebrew Scripture), he suddenly mentions “the words of the LORD.” This is to contrast the untruthful, proud, and evil words of men mentioned above with the “pure words” of God. Therefore, in verse 7 (verse 8 in the Hebrew Scripture), it is clear that “them” the LORD keeps is “the pure words of the LORD”: for God will never preserve men’s untruthful, proud, and evil words. Therefore, it is the matter of context before that of grammar or syntax, and the grammatical and syntactical interpretation described above must also be understood in this context. All these rationales taken

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. & enl. E. Kautzsch, 2nd English ed. A.E. Cowley from the 28th German ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1910), 440.

⁴⁸ Young Gil Shin, “God’s Promise to Preserve His Word: An Exegetical Study of Psalm 12:5-7” (Master’s thesis, Far Eastern Bible College, 1999), 36-37.

⁴⁹ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 157-158.

together, Psalm 12:6-7 (12:7-8 in the Hebrew Scripture) is definitely the supporting text for the preservation of God's Word.

1.2.2 Literature Review on Verbal Plenary Preservation

Verbal Plenary Preservation, along with Verbal Plenary Inspiration, are the two core doctrines of the Bible. As explained in Verbal Plenary Inspiration, 'verbal' and 'plenary' refer to the 'words' and 'the entirety of the Bible' composed of the 'words,' respectively. Therefore, Verbal Plenary Preservation is God's promise to preserve all His words, which were written by inspiration, purely without any damage. It is also the promise that has lasted from the moment God completed the writings of the Word through the Apostles to the present and forever. The following reviews have been made in connection with this important core doctrine of the Bible - Verbal Plenary Preservation:

George Skariah introduces four prevailing views of the preservation of the Scripture:⁵⁰

First, 'the special providential preservation view': It is a view that many people, from the 16th century reformation, could witness God's providential guidance for the godly men (such as Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza) to recognize His inspired Word through the Masoretic text for the Old Testament and the *Textus Receptus* for the New (from the Byzantine Text). This view had continued until it was challenged by the modern critics such as Westcott and Hort in the 19th century.

Second, 'the heavenly preservation view': This view is that God preferentially preserves His Word in heaven forever and unchanged. Hence, the proponents of this view claim that God is responsible for preservation of the Word in heaven, and God's people on earth. However, it ignores the original purpose of God's giving of His Word to man (to let the people on earth know God Himself and His will) and the fact that the Subject of preservation is God Himself, not man.

Third, 'essential preservation view': This view, also called the "totality of manuscript," was advocated by some Fundamentalists. It is believed that there is the Word of God somewhere among numerous Greek manuscripts, and this view eventually provided an ammunition for textual criticism. Hence, the proponents of this view think that man is responsible for restoring the preserved Word by finding 'the' manuscript through the application of textual criticism.

Fourth, 'no preservation view': This is the view that completely denies the doctrine of the preservation of the Scripture, and the representative person is Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary. He accused the doctrine of preservation, of a merely subjective assumption of which is the truth and only a recently created doctrine without a scrutinized exegetical basis. However, this view is based on a humanistic approach to history and faulty biblical hermeneutics.

Skariah conducts a thorough exegetical scriptural analysis on the first view: the special providential preservation view. This is to scripturally substantiate the doctrine of

⁵⁰ George Skariah, *ibid.*

preservation, from both the Old and New Testaments. Through the exegetical scriptural analysis, he demonstrates that the preservation of the Scriptures is derived not only for the autographs, but also for the inerrancy and infallibility of the apographs in God's extraordinary providence. Not only that, he shows from his findings that God has perfectly preserved His entire inspired Word (entire preservation) without any dispersion, but through the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek *Textus Receptus* (underlying the King James Version) and through the faithful believers in His Church, who accept all of His Word in faith. Therefore, it is proved once again from his study that the perfect written Word, completed by God's inspiration, is still being delivered into our hands today.

Samuel Eio carries out a historical verification of the constant attacks and plots to do harm to God's written Word.⁵¹ In particular, his study attempts a historical understanding of the preservation of the Bible from the completion of its writing to this day. This is to trace how God's promise of the preservation of His Word has been realized in the real field of history, and to confirm that the God-breathed Word is still valid today. In particular, his study highlights the development of the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation since the 16th century Reformation and the Westminster Confession in the 17th century, and its maintaining process in church history to the 20th century. He establishes the historic presence of the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation within the apographs and the authorized King James Version, and examines how it has been mentioned in systematic theologies to this day. This allows for the discovery of which parts of the doctrine modern perspectives have missed or contaminated, and to see what the doctrinal stance on the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation is today.

According to Eio, in the 16th century, it was a fight against the Roman Catholic Church's challenge to the authority of the Bible based on textual criticism. The issue of the authority and preservation of the Bible, which had no problem from the Apostolic period until the Reformation, was escalated to the fight between the apographs and the Latin Vulgate of the Roman Catholic Church, which insisted on the dual authority. Despite Calvin's affirmation of the self-attestation and self-authentication of the Bible, this fierce fight with the textual critics, including the Roman Catholic Church, on the doctrine of Divine preservation of the Bible continued on through the reaffirmation of the Westminster Confession of Faith in the mid-17th century, and till the early 18th century. However, views of the Bible based on the liberalism and the textual criticism of the 19th-century modern theologians have gradually erased the providential preservation of the Bible from their systematic theologies. Even in some cases, Divine inspiration has also been denied. The issues of the authority and preservation of the Bible are interlinked, but the voices, undoubtedly supporting this important doctrine that God has preserved the whole (plenary) and written words (verbal) of the Bible, are almost gone in theology and denominations today. Instead, rampant are a reliance on human judgment, not the Word

⁵¹ Samuel Eio Tze Liang, "Towards a Historical Understanding of the Doctrine of Biblical Preservation" (Master's thesis, Far Eastern Bible College, May 2014).

of God, alongside an abundance of doubt regarding the error and preservation of the Bible and eclecticism to wrap up those doubts.

Studies on Verbal Plenary Preservation are by no means common and really limited to some scholars today. This reflects the situation in which only few advocates of the doctrine of Preservation have been retained since textual criticism took control of academic and religious circles. However, the preservation of the Bible was already affirmed by Jesus Christ Himself. Jeffrey Khoo says that during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament words quoted by Jesus Christ many times fully demonstrate the existence of the doctrine of Preservation. At the time of Jesus Christ on earth before the New Testament was completed, the Old Testament was the Bible itself, which had been perfectly preserved by the Israelites (especially by their priests, scribes, and scholars). “One jot or one tittle” mentioned in Matthew 5:18 refers to the smallest letter and a very tiny extension in Hebrew, which Jesus Christ was saying about the certainty of the preservation of His Word through the Old Testament written and transmitted in Hebrew. More than just a simple quotation from the Old Testament, Jesus Christ explained in detail the original meaning of that quoted word (e.g. Matthew 5:21-24). This was possible because the certainty of error-free transmission and preservation of the Old Testament quoted by Him was premised. Thus, Khoo reiterated Edward Hills’ words, explaining that it was “an absolutely trustworthy reproduction” of the Old Testament by Jesus Christ. Khoo also proves that the New Testament has been fully preserved by God through His “universal priesthood of believers,” who are genuine and faithful Christians as the members of His true Church. This led to the *Textus Receptus* with the development of printing technology, which is the Word of the New Testament that has been preserved by God with His special providential care, underlying today’s King James Version. In God’s providence, the process of preservation leading to the *Textus Receptus* is a collaboration of the faith, circumstances, and also manuscripts that God has preserved.⁵² In this same context, Dean Burgon said that in God’s providence, the preservation of His written Word (especially focusing on the New Testament Gospels) has been made in peculiarly varied ways to preserve its integrity: First, God, in the safest way from fraud, has kept His Word through multiple copies. These copies are the majority texts⁵³ that have been used in His Church, representing the sacred autographs

⁵² Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages*, 33-36.

⁵³ Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, ed., *A History of Biblical Interpretation, Volume 2: The Medieval through the Reformation Periods* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 229-230. Unlike the critical texts, the majority Greek texts, called the Byzantine texts, had been used in the Eastern churches centring on Constantinople. Then, those majority texts, which had been preserved and used in the Eastern churches, were introduced into the Western churches through various paths such as the Crusades. Only then, the majority texts were recognized again by the Western churches, around the fall of Constantinople (1453) in the mid-15th century. This was possible because the Greek-speaking personnel, along with the majority texts, were also brought into the Western churches. Thus, the apographs that had been carrying on the legacy of the autographs did not ‘disappear and suddenly appear again one day’; it had not yet been discovered by the Western churches during the disconnection period between the Western and Eastern churches. This is a fact that history proves. Rather, the corrupted manuscripts, which textual criticism claims to be the older, were of no use by the churches at that time.

themselves, self-evident and without any doubt; Second, there have been the Bible versions based on the need to be translated into various languages for use in different branches of the early churches. There are many authentic records of the existence of the New Testament during the first centuries of the Christian era; Third, the fact that the early church fathers quoted the existing codices (which they were personally familiar with) many times at that time is also a testimony to the contents of and a safeguard of its integrity of the Bible that God wrote and left in the hands of men.⁵⁴

Paul Ferguson discusses the historical positions on Verbal Plenary Preservation from the Reformers to the present day. In the providence of God, the Beginner and Controller of human history, the Reformation was the opportunity to enthrone the Bible again out of the dark ages. This was facilitated by the widespread use of the received text with the development of printing technology, and under the consensus of the reformers to the core doctrines of the 66 books. The issue of Bible preservation also adhered to the received text, based on the reformers' unwavering confession of faith that God's inspired Word, from the autographs to the apographs, has been preserved by God Himself, the very original Author, not others. Their confession of faith was thoroughly observed through '*Sola Scriptura*.' Of course, the Preserver and Guardian of God's Word is its original Author, God Himself; but the reformers including Calvin, who belonged to His Church universal, had fought their hearts out as the faithful and sincere witnesses to the Word. Nevertheless, the textual critics condemned their efforts for the Bible as "bibliolatry," and the received text was attacked by the Roman Catholic Church, for the Catholic Church recognized only Jerome's Latin Vulgate as the authentic Bible. Then, came the Revised Version and textual criticism under the advocacy of the Roman Catholic Church, which is based on human reason and science, not in God. Nevertheless, during the Reformation and post-Reformation periods, all Bible translations by the reformers were thoroughly of the received text, not of the critics with doubts on the apographs. Their true beliefs related to the preservation of the Word are also very well expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-1648) and the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (1675).

However, these reformative efforts based on the absolute belief in God's absolute Word, the Bible, escalated into sharper confrontations with the modernists and the liberals in the 19th and 20th centuries after the introduction of Modernism in the 18th century. The liberals such as Briggs and Hort even fiercely attacked Divine inspiration and inerrancy of the written Word, even not hesitating to utter blasphemous remarks, saying "human search precedes Divine revelation." The modernists and the liberals emphasize that a rationalistic and skeptical approach to the Bible must be taken. Only then can it be said to be 'acceptable' as God's inspired Word. This is just a subtle whispering, looking at the Bible from a perspective thoroughly based on textual criticism,

Thus, they were found by a close call, just before being discarded by the churches because of their valuelessness in use. The critics are now claiming it as authentic just because it is older.

⁵⁴ John W. Burgon, *The Revision Revised: A Refutation of Westcott and Hort's False Greek Text and Theory* (Collingswood, New Jersey: Dean Burgon Society Press, 1883), 8-9.

to turn their eyes from the apparently extant perfect Bible by the perfect preservation of God, its original Author, and eventually to make them deny it on the pretext of finding the originals. While the modernists and the liberals have been trying to fit Divine inspiration into their modern view based on higher criticism in the name of demythologization, it is, after all, a pun and reckless attempt to disregard and confine the intentions and providences of the Triune God, the original Author of the Bible, under the limits of human reason. In the world occupied by the modernists and the liberals, the perfect preserved Bible of God is no longer God's 'absolute' Word to them, and it is just to deal with the Bible as no different from other human literatures, by saying that the Word of God 'becomes' in accordance with human standards.

Thus, the doctrine of the perfect inspiration and preservation of the Word of God was the universal view of the Christian world, until textual criticism, boasting its short history, shook theology with the influence of rationalism emerging alongside 18th-century Modernism. In particular, the modernists and the liberals have raised a strong question about the fact that the autographs which God wrote by His inspiration have been preserved equally inerrant and infallible through the faithful apographs. The lack of faith in God's promise of the providential preservation of the Word is the driving force that has made the critics continue their fruitless works of textual criticism. For them, evidence-based academic search is more important than doctrinal certainty based on God's Word. They thoroughly reject the presuppositional beliefs and thoughts based on the Bible. These absolute doctrines of the perfect inspiration and preservation about the Bible, especially the preservation matter, are ignored today even by the new fundamentalists and set aside as the targets for total suspicion. Even with advocacy and toleration of the critical texts, the historic view of perfect preservation has been the target of their heavy blows. Turning their backs against the preservation of the Word is the same as saying openly that God's certain promise to preserve His Word has completely failed. This is to mock the infinite Word of God, leaning on limited human reason and scholarship. Their unbelief in God's absolute Word and their methodological premises of textual criticism eventually led them to the tragic conclusion that they do not know where God's Word is. Their attitude is the same for the King James Version, the most accurate and faithful translation based on God's preserved apographs (the Hebrew Masoretic Text for the Old Testament; the Greek *Textus Receptus* for the New Testament). The modernists and the liberals, i.e. the textual critics, lack the certainty of God's Word: as they themselves claim, 'for them' there is no certain Word in existence that God Himself wrote and has preserved.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ P. S. Ferguson, "The Historic Views of the Church Concerning Preservation," Confessional Bibliology Blog, retrieved May 19, 2020, <https://confessionalbibliology.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/pb-preservation-quotes.pdf>.

Counterarguments on Preservation and Problem:

Textual Criticism and Verbal Plenary Preservation

The Enlightenment, which emerged in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, denied anything transcendental beyond human reason and attempted to understand everything within the limits of reason. In keeping with that, the Christian faith as well as the Bible, which had been regarded as an absolute value until that time, were also considered as the objects of reinterpretation and re-evaluation based on human reason. In the meantime, the modern biblical criticism was also beginning to come up. After the first printed Greek text of Erasmus in the 16th century, the proposition that had been considered in the Church without any need for discussion was that the *Textus Receptus* was the very Word of God, with the obvious fact that it was written by God's inspiration through the penning of the Apostles, inerrant and infallible, and had been preserved by God and transmitted through His faithful Church. Here, the theological approach was applied on the premise that, following Erasmus, the *Textus Receptus* was edited in accordance to the divine providence and guidance of God. However, all these things were denied with the rise of the skepticism based on the naturalistic textual criticism following 17th-century rationalism and 18th-century enlightenment. The assumptions of those 'isms' were completely dependent on human thought and rationality. For example, Bengel formulated the rule of "the harder reading is to be preferred to the easy reading." And Griesbach, based on Bengel's formula, additionally formulated the rule that, of the many variant readings in one place, the reading which preferred the orthodox dogma was questionable. His skepticism that all extant New Testament texts were just the editorial revisions of the critical texts, which were damaged by Christians, had deeply influenced later the ideas of many codicologists. Also, Semler, who claimed himself as the "one of the first modernists," argued for artificial editing by the ancient scribes, denying Divine inspiration itself. This modernistic skepticism culminated in the mid-19th century, with two manuscripts (*Aleph* and *B*) that were made available by Tregelles and Tischendorf's efforts, introduced by Westcott and Hort as the almost complete reproduction of the original New Testament. The corruption theory of the early days and skepticism were again popular among the modernists, as Westcott and Hort actually followed Griesbach's opinion along with a refutation to the accessibility to the original texts; and they have continued to this day. Nevertheless, the corrupted manuscripts introduced by Westcott and Hort have continued to be the foundations and subjects of major theological studies. All such theories that deny and criticize this traditional theological approach basically exclude the two doctrines of the Bible themselves – Divine inspiration and providential preservation of the Bible. All of these serious symptoms originated from the attempt to tamper with the Word with human thoughts, judgments, and standards, instead of believing God's promise that He Himself has preserved His Word written by Himself. In all these doubts and arbitrary assumptions, there is a heavily layered distrust in God's providential preservation and a groundless assertion of the