

18 Mar 08

Session of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church
9A Gilstead Road
Singapore 309063

Please refer to your letter signed by Clerk of Session Deacon Tan Cheow Hock dated 1 Mar 08.

I apologise for not replying for the past two years regarding my membership in Life BP Church. You note correctly that I have not been worshipping there for some time. Your letter, providentially sent in God's perfect timing, gives me the opportunity to tell you why.

Word of God

Life BP Church was where I was convicted by the Holy Spirit to receive Jesus Christ as my Saviour. Life BP Church was, as I knew it then, a Bible-believing church. And, as I was made to understand, such a church believes in what the Bible says. It believes that the truth is found in the Bible, which is the Word of God. Having had a brush with charismatism, I was so thankful for the fundamental doctrines that were preached from the pulpit of Life BP Church. These doctrines, I was taught, were based on the Bible and Bible alone – Sola Scriptura. I learnt not to mess around with the Word of God, not to add to or subtract from it, but to treat it with great reverence and fear. God said it and that settles it. The Word of God, not the words of man, was the cornerstone and starting point for everything that affected our lives. God was sovereign, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, in total control of everything. Faith in God and His Word was the basis of this relationship with God that Life Church had grounded in me.

It was thus a tremendous shock to me that certain leaders in the church, whom I had held in high esteem as true men of God and pillars of the church, began to campaign for a position that I find even now very confusing, bewildering and bizarre. First they said that the KJV Bible is “the very Word of God and fully reliable”. Amen! But in the same breath they “do not believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that underlie the KJB are perfect” because these texts “which are copied copies of the Divine Originals are not the exact replicas of the Original Writings (i.e., Autographs) of the inspired authors”. In other words, according to them, God did not fully and perfectly preserve His Word to the jot and tittle. If that is the case, I have always wondered how the KJV can be “OK” if the texts from which it is translated are “not OK”! As if that is not enough to confuse me, they went on to “reject any accusation that our position implies that we are saying that the Bible, the Word of God, has mistakes” as they “firmly believe that the Bible is infallible and inerrant, the very Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life”. And yet, the two then assistant pastors could not take the Dean Burgon Oath.

I do not understand how a Bible-believing church can claim to believe in a God that is perfect and all powerful and who does not make mistakes, and can claim to believe in all His promises given in His inspired, infallible and inerrant Word, but cannot and

will not believe in the promise that this same God made with regard to His Word – that “till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt 5:18) and that “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35). I do not understand how a leader of a Bible-believing church can place greater credibility in what man claims to be true and say he has to re-examine what God says. Were we not taught in Life BP Church that God says it, we believe it, that settles it? Or has that changed to “God says it, we examine it, we settle it”?

Please tell me – how did this come about?

Life BP Church has always upheld, has it not, Chp 1, Art 8 of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and cites it in its writings and statement of faith even now, does it not? The article says that:

“The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.” (emphasis added)

Well then, I checked Collins Cobuild, which explained “pure” as “not mixed with anything else” and “complete and total”. Simple clear English words which I am sure all of us who went to school (and some even to higher institutions of learning, attaining doctorates and professorships) should easily and correctly understand. If that is the meaning of “pure”, then surely “kept pure” means kept perfect, preserved 100% intact, with no mistakes. Perfect means perfect. (A perfect score means 100 out of 100, or 80 out of 80 – 100%. Does it make sense to say a perfect score of 95% or 99% perfect?) Pure means pure! What else can it mean? And if not pure today as it was in the past, then how is one able to “finally appeal unto them”? If the pure is to be found only in the past and is no more in the present, then where do we go for our final appeal? So if Life BP Church upholds this WCF article, why then does Life BP Church reject VPP? Why does Life BP Church insist that it has never believed in VPP because it is not in its constitution? But Life BP Church upholds Chp 1 Art 8 of the WCF, doesn't it? So Life BP Church surely must believe in VPP.

Now, if the Westminster divines said “kept pure in all ages”, and then some people come along today and write a book “One Bible Only?” and say “oh no, the Bible has mistakes”, then – which is the new doctrine? VPP is as old as the WCF, if not older, is it not? How is it a “new doctrine”?

But now the leadership in Life BP Church is accusing those who believe in VPP of being heretics. VPP is a heresy, they cry. If the Westminster divines were alive today, would they not be the ones to cry “God forbid, to say that the Bible has mistakes is heresy!”?

I ask you, wouldn't the Westminster divines be correct? If we believe that God is perfect and does not make mistakes, then isn't it more intuitive and more logical to see heresy in anything that goes against the perfection of God? We say He is perfect,

we acclaim His perfect will, His perfect plan, His perfect timing, His perfect everything.....but not His words. Why? Why is defending the Word of God to be perfect condemned as heresy, especially when Scripture contains countless promises and assurances that the Word of God is pure and perfect? Why are the VPPists accused of putting words into God's mouth when all they are doing is quoting the scriptures – the very scriptures that are inspired by God Himself? And why is attacking the Word of God as having mistakes not heresy? Where is the scriptural support for it being the truth? Until now, the leaders of Life BP Church have not produced a single Biblical verse or passage to support their view that God did not promise to preserve His words to the jot and tittle. If you believe that God is perfect and cannot make mistakes, then how can you believe that He will allow His Word to have mistakes – unless you do not believe John 1:1? If you do, does it not make you tremble in fear of the Living God to say that there are mistakes in the Bible? By questioning the perfection of the scriptures, are you not questioning the integrity and perfection of Jesus Christ?

Lastly, how can you expect me to believe that the Bible has mistakes just because man said so, when all along Life BP Church has taught me that I must put God's Word first and trust in it with all my heart? Can you not see how much sadness is in my heart when I see the leaders in Life BP Church doing all this? I cannot worship in a church whose leaders take such a low view of God's Word and believe that they know better than the Author.

God honouring and glorifying?

I, and many others, I am sure, are still waiting for a clear, consistent and unequivocal statement explaining the non-VPP position of Life BP Church. From day one –1 Dec 02, when the Sunday School classes were herded into the sanctuary where two elders (and not the two then assistant pastors) were waiting to present a paper entitled “Preserving Our Godly Paths”, there has been no serious attempt to defend the non-VPP position based on Scripture. I had gone to the sanctuary to listen to an exposition on their paper, as had been promised, but what I heard was nothing but a vicious attack on the VPP stand, distorting its position and making a mockery of the issue. I went home with a sick and heavy heart. 1 Dec 02 was a Black Sunday for Life BP Church.

Even now, there has been no clear, honest Biblical defence of your non-VPP position. If you really believe that your position is the right one, please answer all the questions that FEBC and others have been asking you. Why do you ignore those questions and not answer them? Instead, all you have done is to attack the VPP position, and now even to condemn it as heresy. I ask you please – after condemning VPP as heresy, how can you say that “the Church has been very restrained in our responses”? What are all the “vehement attacks” and “provocative taunts”, compared to your condemnation of heresy? They pale in comparison, like pin-pricks compared to your stab into the heart. And yet you keep crying about the “harsh rhetoric and scathing personal attacks on the characters of the leaders of the Church”. Why do you cry foul when you have just unleashed the harshest of rhetoric, and hurled the most scathing personal attack against the characters of the supporters of VPP by condemning them as heretics?

Do you really think that everything FEBC does is not glorifying to God, and whatever you do is honouring and glorifying to God? Let me ask you to please search your hearts honestly, and tell me:

- (i) Were the proceedings in the church sanctuary on 1 Dec 02 God honouring and glorifying?
- (ii) Were the proceedings during the session meeting on 20 Aug 03 God honouring and glorifying? If the meeting was merely one where “two major issues were discussed”, then it cannot explain why one Elder left in disgust and told his wife he had to leave as he was afraid he may end up coming home in a coffin! Rev Tow himself testified later how they “lambasted” him till he could take it no more. If VPP was the issue, and if all of you say you respect Rev Tow, then why were you spending so much time each session meeting finding fault with him and taking him to task for things he did in the past? What was your intent and what did you hope to achieve?
- (iii) Was the statement issued on 24 Sep 03 by the session of Life BPC, telling the congregation that Rev Tow “resigned on his own accord during the August Session Meeting (20 August 2003)”, God honouring and glorifying? Was not that statement nothing but a written public attack on Rev Tow, disguised by a crafty pen as a “Summary of Facts Relating to August 2003 Session Meeting and Other Issues”. Saying that Rev Tow quit “on his own accord” is like saying there is smoke without fire! Please think carefully – if a lengthy lambasting by session members at a session meeting had taken place immediately before Rev Tow declared he would resign, do you expect us to believe that there was no causal relationship between the two events? How can you wash your hands from any responsibility for his resignation, which was clearly a reaction to what he had just been subjected to, and then go round telling people that Rev Tow had been thinking of resigning for some time, and accusing Rev Tow of “deserting his flock”? Is that God honouring and glorifying?

I ask you please, were the leaders of Life BP Church able to read Rev Tow’s mind? As your pastor, who was then assistant pastor, himself told the Combined Fellowships Meeting on 27 Nov 02, he could not. When asked why would Rev Tow resign, when he had repeatedly expressed his wish to serve till 95 or till the Lord called him home, your pastor replied that he could not read Rev Tow’s mind and one had to ask Rev Tow himself. Well then, if he could not read Rev Tow’s mind, how could he know that Rev Tow had planned to resign all along?! Can your pastor tell me when he can mind read and when he cannot?

- (iv) Was the conduct of the ACM of Life BP Church on 25 Apr 04 God honouring and glorifying? The Elder (from another church) who was supposed to be the “election officer” or neutral observer to ensure that the proper procedures were adhered to took over the proceedings, rammed through the resolutions, refused to allow questions to be asked and all of Life BP Church sat in the sanctuary and applauded. Deacons (some of whom have become Elders) jeered when some people tried to ask questions and cheered when the “election officer” stopped them, the mike was turned off, youth leaders led in the calling for the ballot boxes to be brought in even when questions were waiting to be asked, ballot boxes were

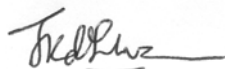
assigned to specific pews, and even the youths were pulled in to help in the administering of this farcical election. Have you read in the newspapers about EOGMs held in condos to vote for en bloc? Well, I have attended a few. And it is so sad – it is hard to tell the difference between that ACM and the EOGMs in the condos. By the way, may I ask – are the subsequent ACMs of Life BP Church still conducted in a similar manner as it was on 25 Apr 04?

- (v) Is it God honouring and glorifying to use a Sunday School class to take a swipe at FEBC and the founding pastor of Life BP Church, whom the Sunday School teacher professes to love and respect? He asks “where is the element of love”. That’s right! Where? He and all of you keep accusing FEBC of not practising love..... have you been practising love towards the founding pastor and FEBC?
- (vi) If you really and sincerely love Rev Tow, then why did all of you who oppose his VPP position not leave the church and establish your own church? Would that not have been God honouring and glorifying? But by staying in Gilstead Road, and taking over what God appointed another man to build – is that God honouring and glorifying? Claiming self-righteousness that the church belongs to God and not to Rev Tow does not exonerate you or make what you did right.

If you truly and sincerely possess the “spirit of Christian brotherly love” and “spirit of being amicable for the testimony of Christ and the edification of all believers”, that you profess to have, in your communications to FEBC, then why do you keep sending ultimatums demanding unconditional undertakings by FEBC? Why will you not accede to a meeting with FEBC as they have requested? In all these years since the VPP issue arose, the session of Life BP Church has stubbornly refused any dialogue with FEBC’s board of directors. Why? Do you believe that your continued refusal to reply to any of their questions posed to you to clarify points and issues in your statements and actions, and continued sending of ultimatums manifest “a spirit of being amicable for the testimony of Christ and the edification of all believers”?

May you be guided by the Holy Spirit as you think about the questions I have raised, search your hearts and ask yourselves honestly – what will your Creator and Master say to you when you stand before Him one day: “Well done thou good and faithful servant” or “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity”?

In Christ,



Judith d’Silva

PS – I attach my form, duly filled.

cc

True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church
Far Eastern Bible College